

1 APRIL 2020

MEDIA RELEASE: Singing through the Storm - bringing communities together as 'one voice' during the Covid-19 Isolation

As a charity that was created to address the growing issue of social isolation and loneliness in our community, when *With One Voices'* twenty five inclusive community choir programs suspended in-person rehearsals two weeks ago, Creativity Australia were left with the question, what now? Simply shutting the doors and sending everyone home to isolate was never an option.

Experts warn that a long-term mental health pandemic is looming in Australia that will potentially surpass the physical health impacts of the coronavirus. Frontline charities are suggesting that the effects of the current pandemic on mental illness could be "seven times" worse than the spike in mental illness caused by the recent bushfires.

The *With One Voice* program uses the neuro-scientific benefits of community singing to connect our communities, improve mental health and specifically bridge the gap between people experiencing disadvantage and those more fortunate.

With over 1500 members nationally, the weekly sessions are led by specially trained professional conductors and are followed by supper where people can network and connect with people in their community they possibly wouldn't usually get to socialise with. Through the innovative [Wish List](#), participants grant one another wishes big and small: such as free music lessons, language and computer tuition, assistance with resumes, mentors and finding jobs. The choirs help people connect to whatever they need in life: friends, mentors, wellbeing, self-esteem, networks, skills and employment. Over 4100 wishes have been granted so far!

For some participants, especially those suffering mental illness and depression, the programs are a lifeline and an essential service. They provide a safe haven and a sense of belonging and family for those who have neither. *"At this time of crisis, we don't want to risk our members losing that with the entire community now faced with isolation absolutely everyone needs to think about their mental health. We are all at risk of experiencing depression and hopelessness. We want to support the entire community to maintain their mental health during these challenging times"*, says Creativity Australia founder Tania de Jong AM.

And that is what makes the *With One Voice* programs unique. *"These are not programs just for people with poor mental health. This is a preventative program for the entire community that uses singing and the power of giving to support positive mental health"*, says Tania.

"Our solution was to rally our sixteen wonderful conductors from across Australia and put together a program of live rehearsal sessions for everyone to enjoy every night of the week. Each evening, at least three of our conductors, deliver thirty minute sessions that our members, their families and also the general public can join in with and sing along to. Each session is completely different and includes: vocal warm ups, fun tongue twisters and some well-known, feel-good songs."

"The outcome is improved spirits and members stay connected to their singing leaders, and also experience other conductors from around the country that they wouldn't usually get to see."



Patrons:

Lady Marigold Southey AC
Professor Allan Fels AO
Hugh Morgan AC
Rosie Lew AM

Founding Patron:

The Late DEM Elisabeth Murdoch
AC DBE

Founder

Tania de Jong AM

The response has been fantastic with people commenting and sending in photos of them joining in with their families from home. One member said 'How to have a choir session when the world has tipped upside down. Well done everyone - feeling heaps better already'. Another commented 'Missing choir so much as it's my only social outlet. Thank you With One Voice'.

"This is a time when we need the mental health benefits of singing the most", said Tania. "We would love to be able to continue these online sessions to keep With One Voice choirs running, members feeling connected and our specialist conductors in jobs. In the coming weeks, we will be looking for Government, philanthropic and other support to help us continue this important work throughout the coming months – any financial assistance is greatly welcomed."

Although it's not choir as they know it, choir members are adapting well to a new way of delivering programs whilst keeping everyone safe indoors. The Facebook page has quickly grown in followers who are not official members of the community and Creativity Australia are keen to get the word out to more who want to sing and escape to a few hours of positivity.

While we may have to physically isolate ourselves, we firmly believe that no one needs to be isolated during COVID-19. Let us hold our heads up high and sing through this storm to find better weather in the future.

Ends.

About Us

Creativity Australia (www.creativityaustralia.org.au) is building a happier, healthier, more inclusive nation through the life-changing *With One Voice* program. We bridge the gap between people experiencing disadvantage and those more fortunate through the neuro-scientific benefits of community singing. We build supportive networks that help people connect to brighter futures. Together, we can change the world... one voice at a time.

Creativity Australia's *With One Voice* inclusive community choirs unite hundreds of people aged 9 to 90 across all States and Territories, from all faiths and all walks of life: migrants, people with disabilities, job seekers, executives, seniors, students, refugees, asylum seekers and more . [View member stories.](#)

Creativity Australia is a charity founded in 2008 by award-winning social entrepreneur and soprano Tania de Jong AM.

Please visit: www.creativityaustralia.org.au

Links:

Link to the Live Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/WOVLive/>

Link to With One Voice Conductor, Link to With One Voice Conductor, Elizabeth Lecoanet Session: <https://www.facebook.com/111088220527334/videos/288523785464307/>

Please be inspired by a [short 3 minute video of our programs](#)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E_rLYps57o&feature=youtu.be

Tania de Jong's TED talk ['How Singing Together Changes The Brain'](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E_rLYps57o&feature=youtu.be) -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E_rLYps57o&feature=youtu.be

Please contact Lydia Griffiths, Marketing Coordinator for the *With One Voice* Choirs if you would like to arrange interview, photos or filming.

Lydia Griffiths

Marketing Coordinator

lydia@creativityaustralia.org.au

Tel: 0449 260581