

Media release: Wednesday, 12 September 2018 – for immediate release
Ten years of changing the world – one voice at a time



Singing can tackle Australia's isolation and loneliness epidemic

Anyone can sing – it's a natural form of therapy that unites people, changes the brain and creates positive human collisions.

For the past ten years Creativity Australia's *With One Voice* program has inspired tens of thousands of lives by enabling opportunities for social inclusion that bring a montage of people and communities together through singing in a choir, sharing supper and helping grant peoples wishes.

On Sunday, 2 December at the Melbourne Town Hall, over 400 voices will sing together to commemorate the *With One Voice* ten year milestone at a celebratory concert: *With One BIG Voice* that will include singing a range of well known favourite songs: *You're the Voice, Hallelujah, Imagine, What a Wonderful World, Can You Feel the Love Tonight* and *Fix You*.

Currently, every week the *With One Voice* program transcends borders by supporting 21 choirs across Australia that include people aged 9 to 90 from children to grandparents and from newly arrived migrants to corporate leaders.

By 2020 and with up to \$10,000 seed funding, Creativity Australia aims to support up to 40 choirs, which will create extremely positive outcomes that contribute to alleviating loneliness, depression and social isolation.

Social entrepreneur, soprano and Creativity Australia founder, Tania de Jong AM, explains that the *With One Voice* choirs empower all participants to find and share their voice in many ways – anyone can sing, there are no auditions and everyone is welcome.

"We recognise that singing in a group improves wellbeing, inspires personal growth and transforms communities. Our *With One Voice* choirs create new social connections and extend opportunities for everyone to participate, celebrate diversity and develop social cohesion," said de Jong.

Swinburne University research showed that 98% of *With One Voice* choir participants experienced less stress, 91% have improved social bonds, 84% made new friends, 71% feel more included and 66% are less depressed.

Neuroscience proves singing increases neuroplasticity – it makes people happier, healthier and more creative.

Recently, during Science Week 2018, Professor Sarah Wilson from the University of Melbourne highlighted that research confirms that singing augments social bonding and empathy – it releases dopamine and endorphins that lift people's mood.

"Music and singing have no barriers of language, politics, religion, culture, ability or disability. Our choir participants collaborate to create something greater than themselves as individuals – the results are transformative. When we come together to create harmony, we feel united, not different," explains de Jong.

Following the weekly group singing and as the feel good vibes kick in, the choirs experience what de Jong describes as "positive human collisions" – they naturally connect over supper and share their stories, experiences, desires and ambitions.

Since 2013 over 3,000 wishes have been granted through the *With One Voice* Wish List initiative, where choir participants have the opportunity to share their wish – no matter how big or small – and other participants have the chance to give back to others and help realise these hopes and dreams.

The Wish List initiative has allowed the *With One Voice* choirs to connect and understand the different aspects of what individuals may need in their lives: friendships, mentors, networks, skill development and employment.

"Through the Wish List we've helped to initiate hundreds of jobs, work experience and mentoring opportunities. We've connected people to health services and we've even had a marriage. And we've united people with incredible hope, joy, happiness and inspiration," said de Jong.

***With One BIG Voice* – With One Voice tenth anniversary concert**

Featuring 400 voices with Tania de Jong AM, Alan Fletcher (*Neighbours*) and Lydia Griffiths (*Les Miserables* – West End)

Date and time Sunday, 2 December 2018 from 3pm – 5.30pm (including interval)

Venue Melbourne Town Hall, 90-130 Swanston Street, Melbourne

Tickets \$15 – \$25 (plus booking fees)

Bookings events.humanitix.com.au/woby

Information creativityaustralia.org.au

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Creativity Australia

Creativity Australia builds a happier, healthier and more inclusive nation – they bridge the gap between people experiencing disadvantage and those more fortunate through the neuro-scientific benefits of community singing and the With One Voice program. Creativity Australia builds supportive networks that help people connect to brighter futures and alleviate increasing loneliness, social isolation and depression in our communities. Creativity Australia has been recognised as one of the top social innovations (Anthill) in Australia for the past five years and received the Melbourne Award 2016 for Contribution to Community by a Community Organisation.

Web creativityaustralia.org.au

Twitter [@CreativityAust](https://twitter.com/CreativityAust)

Tania de Jong AM

As one of Australia's most successful female entrepreneurs and innovators building five businesses and two charities over three decades, Tania de Jong AM is regarded as a leading speaker and soprano with the voice of an angel. Tania is a global authority on creativity, innovation and collaboration. With a grandmother who invented the foldable umbrella, innovation is in her blood. As individuals, communities, corporations and governments face increasing challenges and accelerating change, Tania is able to expand mindsets and inspire audiences to think more laterally and creatively about the future. Tania works across the public, private, creative and social sectors. She is founder and executive producer of [Creative Innovation Global](#) and Creativity Australia's innovative *With One Voice* program – both are recipients of national and international awards. Tania's TED Talk [How Singing Together Changes The Brain](#) has sparked international interest. Her mission is to change the world, one voice at a time. In September 2018, Thinkers50 invited Tania to be a keynote speaker and performer at the European Business Forum in Denmark. Tania was recently announced as one of the 2018 Australian Financial Review 100 Women of Influence.

Web taniadejong.com

Twitter [@TaniadeJong](https://twitter.com/TaniadeJong)

With One Voice – Quick facts

- 2018 is the ten year anniversary of the *With One Voice* program
- 21 choirs across Australia
- By 2020, aim to support 40 choirs
- 6,000+ choir participants
- 100s of volunteers
- 1,000+ inspiring performances at community and corporate events and functions
- 3,000+ wishes granted (since 2013)
- 100s of work experience, skills, mentoring and employment opportunities
- 100s of connections to health and social services
- National and international interest to commence new choirs

Neuro-scientific benefits of community singing

- Studies have looked at groups of people before and after singing, including measuring the levels of oxytocin, (the hormone responsible for pleasure, love and bonding) – it found that these levels increased significantly after the singing sessions.
- Other research has identified that singing can be a benefit to healing strokes, assisting in speech abnormalities and depression.

Isolation and loneliness epidemic

- Social isolation is as damaging to peoples health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.
- People experiencing social isolation have an average of 29% increased mortality.
- 8 in 10 Australians think society is becoming lonelier.
- 6 in 10 Australians say they often feel lonely.
- 640,000 Australians experience complex disadvantage that leads to increased levels of social exclusion



With One Voice – Choir champions

Annabel Carr had been looking for a job for six years when she joined the choir. At her second rehearsal she asked for help to improve her resume and the choir gave her the confidence to persevere in searching for employment. Six months later she found a job in a call centre and has found many other opportunities through her connections with the choir. [Choir: Melbourne, Victoria]

Philomena Macdonald and her husband Jon are both in wheelchairs and really enjoy singing. As a choir volunteer, she encourages anyone to come and give singing a go. She finds that the community within the choir is so kind, supportive and a lot of fun. [Choir: Ashburton, Victoria]

Julian Jacotine (Sri Lankan) joined the choir because he was not working and suffered from anxiety. Singing has helped as it makes him happy – it’s uplifting and gives a sense of positive good feelings. He finds the choir very supportive and he enjoys going each week. [Choir: Dandenong, Victoria]

Nikki Kazas finds the choir a sheer joy and pure delight for her mind, heart and soul. Singing in the community helps her mental wellbeing, makes her feel happy and she plans to keep singing for years to come. [Choir: Melbourne, Victoria]

Beth Barnard’s courage, sense of humour and incomparable love of life inspires the choir every week. Born with cerebral palsy, she feels that she has a really strong sense of belonging at the choir – no one sees her wheelchair; they see Beth, as a person. [Choir: Melbourne, Victoria]

Jessie Harlow finds the choir truly transformative – it’s a wonderful and enriching experience. All the choir members are so supportive, understanding and created a place of belonging – their kindness allowed Jessie to feel safe again and believe in herself. [Choir: Brisbane, Queensland]

Christine Green explains that there is nothing like singing together with 400 other voices. It helps her connect to something much bigger than herself. [Choir: Altona Meadows, Victoria]

With One Voice – up to \$10,000.00 seed funding rounds

- **Round 6** – recipients announced: July 2018, with new choirs in:
 - Victoria
 - ⇒ Coburg
 - ⇒ Footscray
 - ⇒ Mildura
 - New South Wales
 - ⇒ Cessnock
- **Round 7** – scheduled recipient announcement: September 2018
- **Round 8** – applications open: 1 September 2018 and close: 9 November 2018

With One Voice – 12 x Victorian choirs

Location	Founded	Conductor	Choir members	Weekly rehearsal
Altona Meadows	2015	Kym Dillon	18	Wed 2pm – 3.15pm
Ashburton	2011	Kym Dillon	80	Wed 6.15pm – 7.30pm
Ballarat	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	<i>Choir currently being established</i>		
Casey	2017 – <i>New choir</i>	Greg Plant	<i>Choir currently being established</i>	
Coburg	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	Phoebe Deklerk	<i>Choir currently being established</i>	
Footscray	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	Sonia Valencia	<i>Choir currently being established</i>	
Geelong	2009	Kym Dillon	100	Mon 5.30pm – 6.45pm
Dandenong	2009	Nicki Johnston	32	Wed 5.15pm – 6.30pm
Melbourne	2009	Anthony Barnhill	65	Tue 6pm – 7.15pm
Mildura	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	Catherine Threfall	<i>Choir currently being established</i>	

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St Kilda	2011	Anthony Barnhill	60	Mon 6.15pm – 7.45pm
Wantirna	2016	Daniel Brinsmead	32	Tue 3pm – 4.1

With One Voice – 4 x New South Wales choirs

Location	Founded	Conductor	Choir members	Weekly rehearsal
Cessnock	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	Emilie Hallet	<i>Choir currently being established</i>	
Chatswood	2017 – <i>New choir</i>	Wendy Stocks and Elizabeth Lecoanet	30	Tue 5.30pm – 7pm
Sydney	2012	Robert Teicher	89	Tue 5.30pm – 6.45pm
Windale	2017	Gambirra Illume	33	Thu 6pm – 7.30pm

With One Voice – 2 x Queensland choirs

Location	Founded	Conductor	Choir members	Weekly rehearsal
Brisbane	2014	Cath Mundy	58	Wed 5.30pm – 6.45pm
Gold Coast	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	Kelly Shepard	11	Mon 6.30pm – 8.30pm

With One Voice – 1 x South Australian choir

Location	Founded	Conductor	Choir members	Weekly rehearsal
Kingston Park	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	Heather Frahn and Michelle Byrne	<i>Choir currently being established</i>	

With One Voice – 1 x Australian Capital Territory choir

Location	Founded	Conductor	Choir members	Weekly rehearsal
Ginninderry, Canberra	2017 – <i>New choir</i>	Cath Mundy	13	Tue 5.30pm – 7pm

With One Voice – 1 x Western Australian choir

Location	Founded	Conductor	Choir members	Weekly rehearsal
Perth	2018 – <i>New choir</i>	<i>Choir currently being established</i>		