

PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: Monday, March 17 and Wednesday, March 19

MEDIA RELEASE

11 March, 2014

Students get rapped up in project

GEELONG school students are learning how to hip hop, with lessons from members of Australia's first hip hop choir, MASSIVE.

The workshops at Northern Bay College, North Geelong Secondary College and Hamlyn Banks Primary School during the next two months will see students from primary and secondary years practising collaborative rap songs, which they will perform to the public as *Stand Up Sisters and Brothers in Geelong* during the upcoming M~M2014 festival.

The Sisters and Brothers project - a Barkly Arts Centre program supported by VicHealth - engages community members in collaborative and individual arts projects. It uses the age-old practice of music and mass singing to create new friendships and understandings among Geelong school students.

Members of Barkly Arts Centre's culturally diverse MASSIVE Hip Hop Choir will use the school workshops to explore storytelling and collaborative song-writing, using musical rhythms from diverse cultural traditions and role-play.

Stand Up Sisters and Brothers lead artist Mary Quinsacara said making music together created the perfect conditions to talk about difficult issues.

"We love working with school students of all ages because they respond so immediately to music and bring their stories and experiences to the process with such honesty and openness," Mary said.

"Sisters and Brothers opens people's eyes to the way we can all help stop race-based discrimination. Making music together creates the perfect conditions to talk about the hard stuff and how we can all work together. These young people are Australia's future leaders and they want things to change."

Each participating school will take part in three workshops and, along with young leaders of Geelong community service group Diversitat and several community choirs, will create three songs to be performed by 200 voices as *Stand Up Sisters and Brothers in Geelong*.

The May 9 performances will take place inside Geelong Performing Arts Centre at 6.15pm and on the Customs House steps at 10.30pm as part of M~M2014.

Stand Up Sisters and Brothers in Geelong is part of the VicHealth *Arts About Us* Roadshow touring Victoria in 2014. VicHealth has funded seven *Arts About Us* projects over three years to develop arts-based programs, shows and exhibitions that celebrate cultural diversity and help people understand the impacts of race-based discrimination.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the next generation represent hope for ending race-based discrimination in Australia.

"Children are eager to learn more about the world," Ms Rechter said.

"This project nurtures that curiosity. It equips kids with the skills they need to become champions of diversity and to intervene when someone is being discriminated against because of their race.
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“As well as learning about the importance of cultural diversity, children who take part in Sisters and Brothers are able to express themselves freely through dance and song and many will forge new friendships. In that sense, it’s also about putting them on the path to good mental wellbeing. VicHealth is proud to support this inspiring community project.”

Stand Up Sisters and Brothers in Geelong is a partnership between Barkly Arts Centre, City of Greater Geelong, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Diversitat, VicHealth and Artistic Merit. The workshops will also be filmed by Mutiny Media, which will produce three short films for social media.

For further media information, interviews or images, please contact:

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