



# Testimonials

## OUR PATRONS

“Creativity is important...in every aspect of society whether it's business or Government or civil society. It's undervalued in our society, creativity.”

**Professor Alan Fels AO**

“Tania has brought it to the football clubs, the businesses, Government departments. Different groups of people find a common interest that actually loosens up the relationship within any small public group to enable this creativity to take place. I think it's fantastic what she's done.”

**Hugh Morgan AC**

“Initiatives like the *With One Voice* program are essential in developing strong, connected and resilient neighbourhoods and building community wellbeing, skills and employment.”

**Lady Marigold Southey AC**

“Tania is a most inspiring person and I think you all realise she is so creative herself that she inspires us to make an effort to be creative; all of us.”

**The Late Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC, DBE**

## CHOIR PARTICIPANTS

“Suddenly backgrounds, occupation, race, religion and disability disappear and instead there are only voices, song, smiles and happiness.”

The energy and connectness of the people in the choir amazed me and I knew there and then I wanted to be part of it.”

**Liz, Melbourne Sings**

“I had bad anxiety, mainly from not working, which could have become depression if I had not found Greater Dandenong Sings.”

Singing has helped as it makes me happy, it's uplifting, but also talking to people who had similar problems. The choir is supportive. We sing happy songs that give a sense of positive good feeling.

I always look forward to choir. I think I will be singing there until I can't anymore. My wife noticed the difference in me. I'm back to me normal self now.”

**Julian, Greater Dandenong Sings**



*Creativity Australia inspires people to find their voice. We deliver inclusive, creative programs that result in positive social and economic outcomes for individuals, organisations and communities.*

“I have had a spinal operation and since the operation I felt cut off from the rest of the world. My days were filled with unhappiness, that was until I joined the Melbourne Sings Choir and was embraced by compassion and love of truly compassionate people, such as yourself.

Now, I am happy. I can use my voice, my whole heart to thank all of those people who have helped create this wonderful organisation.”

**Xiao Rong Nheu, Melbourne Sings**

“For my first six months in Australia, I was quite isolated because I was sad about what had happened to me and my family. I had no family or friends here and it was very hard for me to adjust. The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre was looking after me and they told me about singing in the choir. I love arts and music, but I’ve never had the chance to sing because there are many fundamentalists in Afghanistan and we weren’t allowed. I have been thinking about human emotions in cultural diversity and how all the emotions are here in a single choir. The beauty of singing is that it lifts you up and keeps you going.”

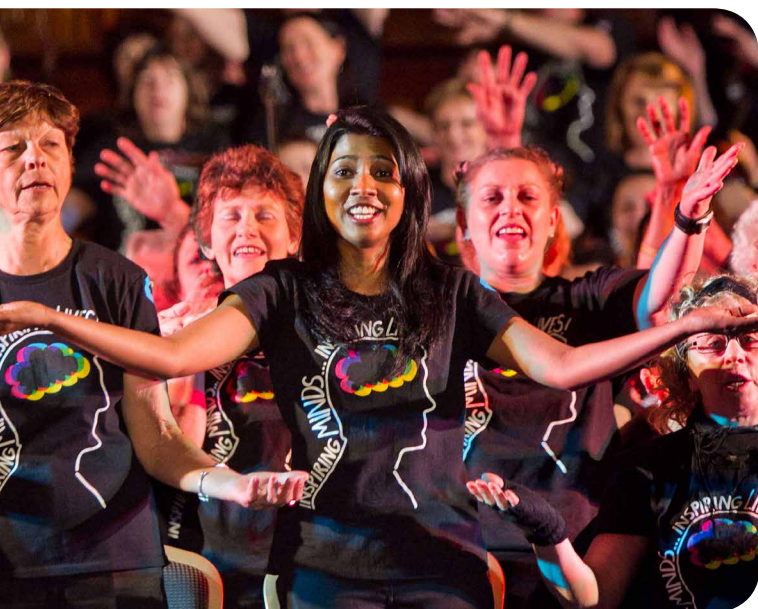
**Abrar (Afghani refugee), Melbourne Sings**

“The choir is a big part of my life - they are like family to me, and are always so encouraging and helpful. I was given the opportunity to sing a solo in the choir, and they helped me believe that I could do it.

People in the choir also helped me to get a job. Chris helped me with my application for TAFE, where I am studying for a Certificate III in Childcare, and let me know how I could get casual work as a childcare worker. Since joining the choir I have asked my two cousins to come along, and they love it as much as me.”

**Thilini (Sri Lanka)**

**Greater Dandenong Sings**



“Thank you Tania, for the opportunity to fulfill a dream I have had since I was 11, and was deemed not suitable for the school choir.”

**Chris, Geelong Sings**

“At Christmas Island at the detention centre, with my friends I was always singing. We believe a tradition in West Papua if we keep singing ... all our prayers will be answered. It makes everyone happy. We’re not just laughing. It expresses from the heart through the body. It makes everyone come together.”

**Adolf (refugee from West Papua), Melbourne Sings**

“Something happened at the Sandown Raceway concert last week – I let go of my fears, inhibitions, self consciousness; and the child within me came to the forefront. I thought “wow, I can sing, I am doing alright, I am part of a large choir”, and my confidence kept growing. I felt on top of the world. I knew I could sing but I lacked the confidence to sing out loud.

This choir has given me this opportunity and has unlocked a potential I never thought I had – singing in harmony, hitting the right notes and keeping in time. Thank you so much.”

**Marie Wright, after Greater Dandenong Sings’ first public performance**

“I always regard singing as a way to express your feeling because people say that your voice is the reflection of your soul. Every time I come I sing very happily. [We] open our hearts and make friends. [It] makes your life rich and also this is a means for us to mix together with Australian society which is very important.”

**Diana (China), Melbourne Sings**

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“I have been a member of the Royal Children’s Hospital Creativity Australia choir since its commencement. I have worked at the hospital in fundraising for a couple of years and really love my job, however the choir also provides me with an added incentive to come in to work on a Monday with our practice something to look forward to.

As a complete beginner singer I have very much enjoyed the opportunity to learn a new skill. I had no prior musical ability and clearly no talent, I was even reluctant to sing in the shower because of the risk to shattering all the glass around me.

However, I love the opportunity to sing in a group and I think this has been a great initiative of the hospital and I recommend it to other organisations.”

**Fiona Ballantyne, Trusts and Foundations Manager, The Royal Children’s Hospital Foundation**

“They stand up for you when you’re in trouble, they can help you. Or when you need to apply for a job.”

**Sarah (former Sudanese refugee), Greater Dandenong Sings**

“I was looking for peace elsewhere, I couldn’t find it. Once I joined this choir I have peace of mind.”

**Sarajini, Greater Dandenong Sings**

“I always loved singing, especially in choirs, because of the interactions between different parts. I just love it. This choir unites a special spirit that uplifts and motivates. I really like that feeling of being around positive people.”

**Lu (international student from China), Melbourne Sings**

**Vancy:** “We met in the choir last week and this is our second time meeting. I feel very surprised and pleased that I can make such a good friend in choir. This is the most important reason for me to come.”

**Beth:** “This choir is extremely important because I’m in a wheelchair. This is why I need friends because I can’t do anything for myself. I can’t feed myself, I can’t do it without friends.”

**Vancy recently arrived in Australia from Guangzhou, China. Beth, born with Cerebral Palsy, is one of Melbourne Sings original participants. Beth’s courage, keen sense of humour and incomparable love of life inspires us every week.**

“Hope you have received many congratulations on the lovely evening that was the gala dinner at the Sofitel. We all loved it and I am confident anyone who knows any of us, knows about Melbourne Sings.

Thanks for your vision, energy and creativity which, as one of my friends wrote, has given Beth the experience of inclusion, friendship, independence, respect and an opportunity to practice and perform – it is to be celebrated on all levels.”

**Rhonda Deed, Beth’s aunt**

“The choir is an escape for me. To open my heart, to be relaxed, happy and forget about all the problems. It’s an open door that you can only see flowers in front and be happy. Enjoy the perfume of the song. The choir really had an important role in my confidence. The diversity in the choir is really huge. Tania, Anton, Shaun... all of them were there for me.

When I got my job interview to prepare they gave me a hand to improve my confidence and to take that step it was really hard for me. I was so nervous, so emotional. I couldn’t believe I would have a job. Then I have the job. I say thanks to BSL, thanks to ANZ who recruited me and most importantly thanks to Tania [de Jong] for her support and all of the members of the choir.”

**Nathalie, (Cameroon), Melbourne Sings**

“I didn’t know it was here. It’s cost me virtually nothing, and yet it’s given me a new dimension in my life completely – as it has the rest of us. You can’t buy that.”

**Gerard (lawyer), Greater Dandenong Sings**

“When I was coming on the first night I was really nervous about singing in front of people – about people hearing my voice. Your voice is such a personal thing. When it’s your voice it comes from deep inside you and when you’re nervous that shows. Your voice trembles or you’ll go out of pitch. It was a great feeling coming to choir and realizing that it wasn’t about listening to “oh gosh that person over there is not singing well”. None of that applied because everyone was just singing freely. Everyone does sing well because I think they’re singing for the joy of it and that’s fun.”

**Jo (Victoria Police), Melbourne Sings**



“The choir offers an opportunity for people to extend their socialisation and build relationships outside of their everyday routines. The positive benefits of this are multilayered. Opportunities to access such groups are often limited or restricted. Geelong Sings is a unique and valuable format to further socialization activities and extend relationships. Congratulations to Creativity Australia for continuing to find opportunities to increase our well-being through song”

**Kellie Stone, Encompass Community Services**

“The immigrants from Asia that have been here for 40 years and came with nothing and have been able to establish an amazing life for themselves here and the confidence they have and the things that I’ve been able to learn from them. Looking at the way they built themselves up from nothing it’s really inspiring and makes me feel that I should do something with my life.”

**Anthony (Jo Fisher Executive) on his connection with multicultural members of Melbourne Sings**

“I was a new graduate with not much working experience in Australia, and pretty worried about how to get my first job here. I applied for so many jobs, without success.

Just when I was wondering and hesitating, I received an email from Creativity Australia telling me there was a job opportunity advertised by a member in choir in their company. I applied for it but did not expect much at first. After two weeks, I got a telephone interview from that company.

When talking about my interest during the second round interview, the interviewer and I found that we were both choir members! Then we talked a lot and he began to understand the difficulties that an overseas student faced in job hunting, and said he would like to help me and provide me an opportunity to prove myself. So, I got the job!

I have to say it is you and the choir that gives me chances to get to know so many nice people. I sincerely appreciate all your help in the choir, which has not only brought us a happy, harmonious and passionate atmosphere which can relieve us from stressful work and study, but also provided us many good job opportunities that are just so helpful!

I really feel honoured and lucky to join this choir, thank you very much!”

**Hui (Cherry), Melbourne Sings**

“I come from Jakarta. I moved to Melbourne four months ago with a transfer for work. It’s never easy to move to a new place, with a different culture, especially when you’re a single girl wearing a headscarf in a secular country. It was Peter from work who told me about this choir. Actually, he was underestimating this choir because it’s far more than what he told me. I hear; I see people who despite their nationalities, their religions, their gender, their races, we sing, we have fun, we love each other and we have these precious moments and that’s really good. I don’t feel so much like I’m alone in Melbourne any more. I wake up happy every Tuesday morning knowing I have this rehearsal. I know it’s silly but that’s the fact!”

**Elok (Indonesia), Melbourne Sings**

“Joy. The difference. The openness and the complete acceptance of whatever your voice is, however you look, whatever background you come from. Everyone just opens their heart and says ‘Let’s have fun.’ Sing it up. Learn from each other. It’s only an hour but it’s one of the most joyful moments of my week.”

**Peter Kronborg (Creativity Australia Deputy Chair), Melbourne Sings**

“We are extraordinarily pleased with the numbers to date and the success of the Choir. It has worked better than we had anticipated and the benefits to those involved are clear.

For staff doing incredibly difficult, taxing and at times quite sad work it has been a wonderful opportunity to do something uplifting and positive with others involved in the service, it has resulted in greater awareness of different parts of our Orygen Youth Health communities work and experiences too amongst all the participants.”

**Orygen Youth Health on their Mind over Music choir program**

“Quizon has completed his training program for the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment Qualification. He is already a highly competent teacher with great experiences from his home country, The Philippines, and has demonstrated his strong capabilities during the APCOT course.

It is very satisfying to be able to provide him with an Australian qualification that will be highly instructive in helping him to gain teaching/training employment in Australia. All thanks in the end to the great work you are doing with the community choir, I’m so glad we’ve been able to connect!”

**Gabrielle, who joined Melbourne Sings and decided to offer a scholarship to a migrant to obtain an Australian qualification**

## PERFORMANCES

“I just now left the Melbourne Town Hall. I am elated by the beauty of this uplifting of voices and the bond of choir and audience. I came not knowing what to expect. What I recieved I cannot express only thank you. I hope to be on that stage next year surrounded with love and light.”

**Dianne**

“Melbourne Sings Choir was inspiring and a perfect ending to a very successful night.”

**Diversity@Work Awards**

“Thank you for leading and organising such an important event when it seems that the world has lost its way. Your approach is unique and succinctly strong showing the light of hope, love and passion. The message has been loud and clear. I will be honoured to be a member of your movement.”

**Dr Quamrul Alam  
Monash University**

“Tania de Jong and her Melbourne Sings Choir played a wonderful part of our event. They struck at the core of what it means to embrace diversity, the innate creativity in all of us and the power of collective energy to create positive change. Their voices and enthusiasm opened hearts and inspired us all.”

**Taren Hocking, Director SWB**

“Thank you for your help organising Melbourne Sings to perform. It was a great end to an inspiring day; they had the audience up and dancing!”

**Breakthrough Conference on Women, Faith & Poverty for the Greenstone Group**

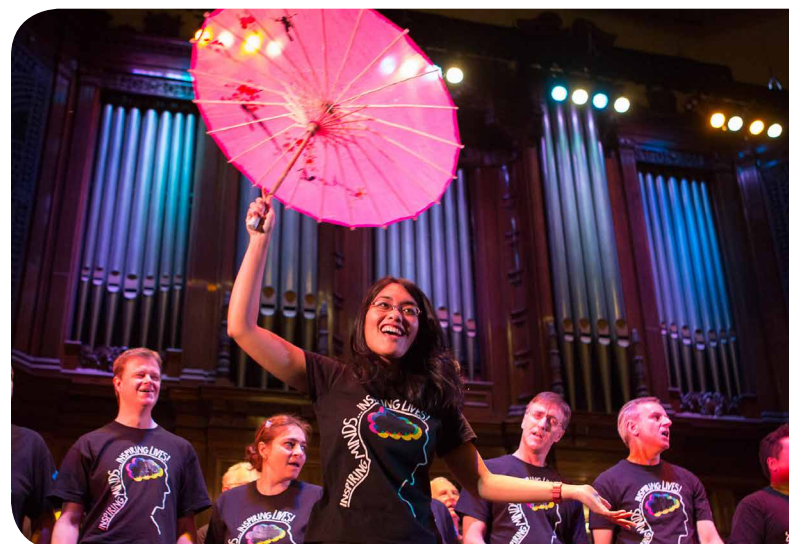
“On 9th October at the opening of the Australasian Integrative Medicine Association Annual Holistic Health Conference, we were privileged to open this conference with the wonderful Royal Children’s Hospital Choir. It was most appropriate to have this great initiative of the hospital involving their staff from many departments come together in such skillful harmony, to perform at our Conference with its emphasis on health and wellness.

The choir sang beautifully and with such passion and joy. The feedback from our delegates was excellent and they appreciated the conference opening on such a high note! Many thanks to Shaun Islip and Tania de Jong from Creativity Australia for organizing this.”

**Anna Ryan, AIMA**

“Melbourne Sings performed at the Opening Ceremony of the 2009 Social Enterprise World Forum. They were incredibly enthusiastic and performed an uplifting song that soon had the audience clapping along. Well done for all involved for a spirited performance!”

**Claire Kearney, Social Ventures Australia**



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