

Bringing creativity back to business

CREATIVITY AUSTRALIA IS THE LATEST PROJECT OF TANIA DE JONG AM. THE INITIATIVE AIMS TO BRING CREATIVITY TO THE BOARDROOM DESPITE CURRENT ECONOMIC DOOM AND GLOOM.

Tania de Jong AM is the co-founder and artistic director of Pot-Pourri and Music Theatre Australia (MTA) – a one stop entertainment consultancy and event production company. She has performed with the Victoria State Opera and as a soloist with a number of orchestras. Her latest project is Creativity Australia, launched in November last year.

Following discussions with CEOs, Board Members and HR Directors, de Jong discovered there was concern in the business community over rising incidences of depression, attracting and retaining talent, and engaging with employees.

"It is staggering to realise that the cost of depression to the Australian workforce equates to around 30 million working days per year with lost or reduced productivity, at a cost to employers of approximately \$10.11 billion a year," says de Jong.

"I started Creativity Australia to bring some music and creativity into business; I thought it may help turn some of these alarming statistics around."

Creativity Australia promotes creativity among individuals, workplaces and in the wider community. The program develops sustainable and innovative mind health and wellbeing programmes and activities to nurture and affirm personal creativity. It also advocates creative leadership and thinking in all walks of life, and encourages policy-makers and business leaders to promote personal creativity in their own decision-making.

"Our vision is to unlock the innate creativity present in all human beings, so as to improve mental health and wellbeing, social cohesion, innovation and productivity," says de Jong.

"To do so we will create targeted creative programs engaging with the right side of the brain. These programs will not only help people's sense of self



Tania de Jong AM aims to bring some creativity to all businesses through corporate choirs.

esteem, connection and wellbeing, but will lead to outcomes including creative leadership, greater innovation and increased productivity.

"Creativity Australia will work with companies and business organisations on an advisory basis to develop and implement creativity activities tailored to individual workplaces and corporate cultures," says de Jong.

One program organised by Creativity Australia is With One Voice: Australia Sings. As part of this program, Corporate Choirs will be recruited and rehearse weekly over twelve months. The choirs will perform at their company events, local hospitals, aged care centres and community groups. Choirs will be encouraged to 'adopt' groups in socially disadvantaged areas, working with them in the common endeavour of tapping individual creativity and imagination.

These choirs can then participate in the Battle of the Corporate Choirs – a

major annual corporate challenge event celebrating the diversity of Australia's organisations through the power of song, and providing an outlet for the creative passions of their members.

"I believe the concept of With One Voice and Battle of the Corporate Choirs will appeal to large, multi-divisional companies that may find it difficult to engage staff in their corporate cultures.

"The programs may also appeal to companies and government agencies who not only want to foster their own teamwork, wellbeing and innovation, but see a social mission in encouraging their staff to engage with people in the wider community experiencing alienation due to socio-economic disadvantage." says de Jong. ■

To learn more about Creativity Australia or for enquiries about their services and for your business to become involved, contact Tania de Jong on phone 03 9682 9686 or visit www.creativityaustralia.org.au