

ENTERTAINMENT

GIVING VOICE TO OUR NEEDS

The success of the With One Voice program shows singing in a group not only improves wellbeing and inspires personal growth but also transforms communities, **Fifi Lim** writes

For a decade, people have been gathering weekly to sing, inspired by Creativity Australia's With One Voice program. And on Sunday, December 2, more than 400 voices will sing together in a celebratory concert to mark this 10-year milestone.

With One Big Voice will be held at the Melbourne Town Hall and feature soprano and Creativity Australia founder Tania de Jong, Alan Fletcher (Neighbours) and Lydia Griffiths (Les Misérables – West End). The repertoire will include popular songs such as You're the Voice, Hallelujah, Imagine and Can You Feel the Love Tonight.

Providing opportunities for social interaction, sharing meals and helping grant people's wishes, With One Voice has brought positive changes to the lives of many.

Ms de Jong says the program currently supports 21 choirs across Australia and with up to \$10,000 seed funding, it aims to support



Soprano and Creativity Australia founder Tania de Jong with choir members of With One Voice. Picture: GRAHAM DENHOLM

up to 40 choirs by 2020. She says the choirs empower all participants to find and share their voice, adding there is greater awareness today of the social inclusion and community wellbeing aspects of their programs. "People love the Wish List and the concept of helping others as well as singing together," Ms de Jong said. The choirs draw members that range from chief executives of small businesses to people with depression and disabilities, jobseekers,

seniors and asylum seekers. "The choirs unite hundreds of people aged 9 to 90, from all faiths and all walks of life. As a result, we are seeing more diverse wishes," Ms de Jong said. The wishes include help to set up email accounts or resumes, finding a job, finding accommodation and learning English. More than 3000 wishes have been granted since the Wish List program started in 2013. With the rise in social media, Ms de Jong points out that we talk more to boxes and

screens than we do with one another. "It is no wonder that loneliness and social isolation are considered the global epidemic of our era. Our innovative model is groundbreaking as it brings the fortunate and the marginalised together as one community to reduce inequality and create a sense of 'we'."
 With One Big Voice, December 2. Tickets \$15 to \$25. Visit events.humanitix.com.au/wobv to book. Details: creativityaustralia.org.au

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