

News Release

October 14, 2009

A singing success: Tania de Jong AM is BrainLink's Woman of Achievement

An inspirational singing entrepreneur who has united disadvantaged communities using the power of song has won the 12th annual BrainLink Women of Achievement Award, announced in Melbourne today.

Tania de Jong AM beat three outstanding finalists to become an ambassador for BrainLink, a not-for-profit community organisation focusing on the impact of acquired brain disorders.

Among her many achievements, Ms de Jong established Creativity Australia (www.creativityaustralia.org.au), a not-for-profit organisation that runs a choir program aimed at migrants living in public housing, which creates networking and employment opportunities while fostering wellbeing and creativity, leadership and communication. Ten years ago she founded The Song Room, which has assisted more than 200,000 disadvantaged young people to develop a passion for lifelong learning through music and creative programs.

"Over the past 12 years we have seen hundreds of dynamic women nominated for this award, all of whom have proven their ability to make a difference," said the CEO of BrainLink, Sharon Strugnell.

To qualify as finalists, women must be multi-dimensional, display creativity and innovation, commitment and achievement, fulfill a mentoring role and contribute to the community. They must also be from Victoria.

This year's finalists were Melissa Noonan, Bev Brock and Mary Galea.

"It was extremely difficult to choose between the four extraordinary finalists this year – their achievements were inspirational – but Tania de Jong ticks all the boxes. She has proven herself to be innovative, she has changed many people's lives for the better and she will make an excellent ambassador for BrainLink," Ms Strugnell said.

Previous winners include social welfare thought leader, Sarah Davies, from Melbourne Community Foundation, stem cell researcher Dr Orly Lacham-Kaplan, the founder of the Butterfly Foundation Claire Vickery, neurosurgeon Dr Elizabeth Lewis and disability ambassador Milly Parker.

More than 73,000 Victorians suffer from acquired brain disorders, caused by conditions including head and brain trauma, drug overdose, stroke, aneurysm and progressive neurological diseases, such as MS. Of those aged under 65, the vast majority have an acquired brain injury caused by accident or injury.

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