



13 OCT, 2021

## Artistic freedom knows no age

The Lockyer and Somerset Independent, Gatton



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# Artistic freedom knows no age

**BY GRACE CRICHTON**

Tabeel residents proved artistic freedom knows no age during their unique dance performance, *If Only I Could...* on October 1.

The project paired residents with professional contemporary dancers to create a performance that was moving, poignant and at times humorous.

Director Angela Chaplin said the performance began its life three years ago as a series of dance workshops in several Lutheran Services Aged Care residences.

There was a phrase she heard crop up repeatedly during the workshops.

"When we started running workshops with the aged care residents, I kept saying 'would you like to dance?' and they would say 'If only I could,'" she said.

"Over and over again I heard 'If only I could' so that's what I decided to call the show."

The creative team found ways for the residents to dance again, seated or in a wheelchair, the residents became dancers.

Tabeel's own Rosie Mercer, Angus Polzin, Lorraine Paroz, Amy Chandler, Jenny McCue, Max Oyston and Daphne Grosskopf were the stars of the show.

Ms Chaplin said the seven residents were 'incredible.'

"It's their courage that I'm in such admiration of," she said.

"They're so courageous."

Rediscovering the joy of movement through dance was at the core of the project.

"Dancing makes all of us happy," Ms Chaplin said.

"Even if it's just in our lounge room and that doesn't go away just because you're older."

Working alongside the professional dancers, residents flourished with their renewed dance abilities.

"We saw their confidence building all the time, and we saw their physical ability building all the time," Ms Chaplin said.

"We saw people putting their hands in the air who couldn't when we first started working with them."

"So there's been a lot of additional benefits as well as the emotional benefits of dance."

Tabeel staff joined the dancers and residents on stage and Ms Chaplin said the piece celebrated the staff who 'work so hard.'

The story told through dance took a new direction during the workshop phase.

Starting out as a memory piece, Ms Chaplin realised this wasn't the right story to tell.

"We need to talk about them right here right now," she said.

"What they love, what they want to do, how they feel, all those things."

"So often, old people are only considered to be their memories, and not who they

are right now."

Instead, the dance celebrates their world as it is right now.

Lutheran Services Creative Programs Advisor Clare Apelt said the residents were excited to share this artistic work based on the lived experience.

"The themes of this performance have been inspired by the residents' experiences and the environment in which they live," Ms Apelt said.

"The dancers and residents have also formed real friendships and this performance reflects those special bonds."

The audience of friends and family were no doubt touched to see their loved one take part in this special performance.

The performance was supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, the Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Lutheran Services.



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Tabeel residents participated in dance workshops, culminating in a performance. Photo: contributed.

