

Soprano Tania de Jong lends voice to Dimension5 start-up hub

THE AUSTRALIAN

APRIL 28, 2016 12:00AM

[Glenda Korporaal](#)



Creative Australia's Tania de Jong and Dimension Data's Rodd Cunico. Picture: Stuart McEvoy

Opera singer Tania de Jong has turned her love of creativity into a successful business which includes her annual Creative Innovation conference.

Now she is teaming up with IT company Dimension Data to set up Melbourne's newest start-up hub, Dimension5, which plans to bring together social entrepreneurs, creative people and not-for-profit ventures as well as conventional small businesses.

"Dimension5 is all about going into the fifth dimension," says Ms de Jong, the founder of Creative Australia, a company aimed at helping individuals and businesses develop creative thinking and leadership. She will be singing at its launch tonight.

"A lot of co-working spaces focus on entrepreneurs wanting to develop apps or new technologies," she said.

"We will be focused on cross-sectional collaboration between social enterprises, not-for-profits and start-ups."

"But we also want to bring in small teams from big business and government.

“It will be a very different model from traditional co-working hubs where start-ups pitch their business ideas. There will be pitch nights but we also want to bring in some creativity, innovation and agile thinking and connect up people with very different backgrounds.”

A soprano who has sung with the Victorian State Opera, Ms de Jong will launch the space in South Melbourne tonight, singing with members of community choir With One Voice.

The event will also be attended by the Victorian Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, Philip Dalidakis, the federal member for Melbourne, Greens MP Adam Bandt, and the head of LaunchVic, Dr Pradeep Phillip.

Ms de Jong says her goal is to use the space to “create an environment where people can have more strategic collaboration to solve tricky problems”.

“We know that business as usual is not working. We need to get people thinking differently and try to help make transformation happen by making more use of the right side of our brain.”

The idea for Dimension5 follows a meeting between de Jong and Dimension Data Australia chief executive Rodd Cunico a few years ago when Cunico spoke at a conference in Melbourne.

They kept in touch and when Ms de Jong’s expanding creativity-linked businesses needed new premises, Mr Cunico offered some of Dimension Data’s space in South Melbourne.

But the idea grew to turn it into a larger co-working space which was to bring together business and social enterprises including some charities.

“We are not looking to create a *Shark Tank*-type environment where people have to pitch a great idea before they are allowed in,” Mr Cunico said.

“We want to make sure that we can have a hub which can support some social endeavours and social ventures as well as tech start-ups.”

He said executives from Dimension Data would also be using their business skills to help mentor some not-for-profits and social enterprises.

“Australia is rapidly shifting away from its reliance on resources and manufacturing,” he said.

“It will be innovation and ideas and not digging things out of the ground which will be the basis of our country moving forward.”