



The It's No Drama ensemble recently got together to begin workshopping an original stage show to be performed in Leongatha in March.

Creativity unleashed through all-abilities drama project

A COMMUNITY project giving people with disabilities the opportunity to unleash their creativity on stage has expanded its scope this year, offering the opportunity to develop skills in multimedia production.

The Leongatha-based 'It's No Drama' project, established in 2015, invites young people with disabilities living in South Gippsland to participate in all aspects of staging a live theatre production, from script writing to singing, dancing and acting in front of an audience.

Led by project founder Emily Ardley, the It's No Drama ensemble in 2017 staged an original, largely improvised production titled 'Unreserved', featuring elements of drama, music and dance.

This year, the ensemble of about 25 people from Leongatha, Mirboo North and Warragul, plans to create a more structured, story-driven show, incorporating multimedia elements including videography and animation.

How it all comes together will be decided at a series of workshops, funded by the South Gippsland Shire Council and Regional Arts Victoria, over the next eight weeks, leading up to performance dates in Leongatha in March.

Artistic directors Samara Cunningham and Jenneke Kijlstra-Shone will coordinate the drama elements, while Mick Green of Inverloch-based company Drift Media will oversee the multimedia stream, which will include the production of a short film related to the stage show.

South Gippsland Shire Council's Access and Inclusion officer Alisha Gilliland has been involved with It's No Drama from the very beginning, and said it was fantastic to see the project grow and provide even more opportunities for skill development.

"It's all gelling really nicely and people are really enjoying it," Alisha said.

"The vision will evolve over the next eight weeks but it's definitely going to be something very colourful and eclectic.

"And because many of the previous participants have come back, there are skills and ideas we can build on to create something more 'formed' and planned."

Emily said her motivation for starting up the project was simply to share her love of drama with others in the community who might not otherwise get the opportunity to participate, due to a lack of all-abilities theatre groups in small country towns like Leongatha.

She was pleased the project had continued to attract good numbers of participants in the lead up to productions, and hoped to eventually be able to run all abilities drama workshops in Leongatha on a more regular basis.

"It's all about having fun and highlighting everyone's abilities," Emily said.

"For a lot of people in the first production, it was the first time they ever got to experience drama and it's great to see that so many people are still keen to be involved."