

Case study

Dance for seniors— Gail Hewton

A study tour through the United Kingdom led Gail Hewton to expand and develop her career as a leader, teacher and trainer in the area of dance for seniors.

What

Dance practitioner Gail Hewton, Director of Queensland's RIPE Dance, travelled to the United Kingdom to study dance for seniors programs and their application in various contexts and settings.

Gail, who established RIPE Dance in 2012, aims to spread the joy and benefit of dance for older people. Gail attended a number of conferences, festivals and workshops including:

- *Between You and Me: working with dance one on one in health care settings*
- *10th International People Dancing Summer School: Developing Your Somatic Practice*
- *Improving Your Teaching Skills for Community Dance Practice*
- *Introduction to Dance with Older People*
- *Dance and Dementia.*

Gail also met with over 20 dance colleagues and observed over 25 classes and sessions including: 4 Dance to Health falls prevention classes, 4 Dance for Parkinson's classes in various locations and a Sadler's Wells' Ballet for Over 55s Beginners class.



Gail Hewton (r) with UK colleague Geraldine Hurl (l) who led the *Improving your Teaching Skills in Community Dance* workshop at the *10th International People Dancing Summer School*

When and where

June to July 2018, United Kingdom

Arts Queensland investment

\$8594 – Individuals Fund

Arts Queensland supports individual artists and cultural workers to participate in transformational professional and career development opportunities.

Outcomes

- Gail gained greater insight into the professional development and training approaches to dance for seniors being practiced in the UK. She was also able to benchmark her practice against that of international practitioners.
- Meetings with practitioners who work in hospital settings and attending their workshops increased Gail's knowledge and confidence to apply her skills and expand her practice in these settings.
- Gail established numerous new contacts with key organisations and practitioners. Meetings with Dance 4 Wellbeing founder, Jessica Conneely, from Newcastle, New South Wales led to discussions regarding how they can work together in Australia.
- An unanticipated outcome during the study tour was the international premiere of Gail's film *In a Different Space* at the 10th International People Dancing Summer School in Leicester UK. The film showcases senior dancers and was screened three times during the Summer school with a Question and Answer session following one of the screenings. The film received an overwhelming positive response from viewers.



Gail participating in a Dance to Health class at the Royal Birmingham Ballet



Men! Dancing! Class from Liverpool, group devising for an upcoming community performance

Learnings and reflections

Australia is very capable of developing programs and training for dance for older people – we have experienced and very high calibre practitioners to lead this development. What we need is to collaborate in this development rather than work in isolated silos where often work can be duplicated and/or lack a richness and depth of having the contribution of a number of perspectives and a range of skills, knowledge and experiences pooled.

A common issue in the UK to one I see in Australia is that younger practitioners need professional development/training in more fully understanding an older person's body, the ageing process and changes that occur and the implications of both these and health issues have on dance that is safe physically, cognitively and emotionally. Gail Hewton

What next?

Gail has been invited to present talks and activities regarding dance for seniors and the outcomes of her study tour by a number local, national and international organisations, festivals and art spaces.

Find out more

Email: ripedance@gmail.com

Website: <https://ripedance.com.au/>