

Life times



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Weekly focus on events and people in our community

Dance talent emerges

State Dance Festival - Sept 10 to 14.

RYAN Pearson performs at the State Dance Festival this week as part of the NSW Public Schools Aboriginal Dance Company.

The 15-year-old Chatham High School student has been dancing for as long as he can remember and is hopeful of making a career in the dance industry.

Although not formally trained, his pure raw natural talent caught the eye of dance company selectors when he participated in workshops at Grafton led by dancers from Bangarra Dance Company.

The year 10 student was one of only 23 young people from across the State to be selected for the group.

The State Dance Festival, which this year has the theme Point of Departure, will showcase the work of 1500 talented dancers from kindergarten to Year 12 from across NSW over five days.

Ryan, along with other participants, will take part in workshops in various dance styles by leading dance teachers.

This exciting experience comes off the back of the two-day Vibe Alive in Bendigo where Ryan and the troupe attended five workshops and their performances

placed them first in three categories and second in two of them.

Overall they came first.

Joining the Bangarra Dance Theatre, Australia's leading indigenous dance company, is certainly an aspiration of Ryan's, and he's keen to continue chasing his dream.

He, along with his 17-year-old sister Natalie, intend on auditioning for NAIS-DA (National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association), an Aboriginal dance college on the Central Coast, from which Bangarra Dance Theatre was born.

If successful he would relocate to take up the opportunity.

The past few months, since being selected for the Aboriginal Dance Company, have been a definite learning curve.

Ryan said everyone in his family dances, and he's always practised at home with his sister, but the majority of his experience was what he learnt from television, video clips and movies.

But there is one dancing talent in his family he says he wants to be like.

His grandmother on his father's side, Mary Miller, was the first indigenous

dancer to join The West Australian State Ballet in 1960.

And he's in the best place to start following in her footsteps.

Ryan's commitments to the dance troupe see him travelling to Sydney to learn new steps, rehearse with his fellow dancers and work on his dance style and technique.

"It's really fun and you really learn a lot," he said.

Prior to these lessons Ryan said his main focus was on hip-hop dancing - but that's starting to change.

"Now I've got into it, it's about contemporary and cultural. It's been a really good experience to get into that."

He said the troupe is a mix of skill levels, with some coming from a dance training background and others, like Ryan, who have natural talent.

"They want to work us to the best of our ability," he said of the teachers.

Also coming up for Ryan is participation in the annual Schools Spectacular in November where the troupe will not only perform a number, but have to teach 300 others the routine to perform with them.



Ryan Pearson is off to the State Dance Festival.