

How a belly dancer is helping women facing domestic violence and abuse

GREG ELLIS

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Belly dancers raise funds to help women: Julie Ransom, Kylie Morrison and Tracy Goodger.
Picture: Greg Ellis.

Shellharbour belly dancer Kylie Morrison is inviting the community to come with her and enter a world of pure imagination at an annual show of belly dance and fusion hosted by Astarte Mind & Body Studio.

Bellicious at Dapto Leagues Club on May 21 is going to be like an imaginary journey through galaxies and forests where fairies and mermaids frolic in a fantasy where anything can happen and probably will.



Scenes from a recent Business In Heels networking event at Central Hotel Shellharbour.

Pictures: Greg Ellis

The event is held for two reasons. To raise money for Supported Accommodation and Homelessness Services Shoalhaven and Illawarra (SAHSSI) and to experience a variety night of belly dance.

Ms Morrison is the founder of Astarte Mind & Body Studio and has been belly dancing for 20 years.



Kylie Morrison speaking at a Business In Heels networking event at Central Hotel in Shellharbour.
Picture: Greg Ellis.

She started her holistic health and fitness business eight years ago.

Her interest originally began when she was wanting to find a form of dancing that suited her body.

She fell in love with belly dancing after doing just one class.

“I was already drawn to the music,” she said.

“When I found the class the movements just resonated with me. It is something I fell in love with. It is the connection with music and movements that I like. And being able to really sync into your body. Belly dancing is so fluid in motion and it helps

you reconnect with yourself. I wanted to share this gift with other women. I started Astarte as a home based business in 2008.”

It steadily grew and late last year Astarte moved to a bigger premises in Durgadin Drive in the business park near the Oak Flats Interchange.

Belly dancing is Ms Morrison’s passion and her students travel from as far away as Nowra.

“We teach different forms of belly dance,” she said.

“We teach traditional, theatrical and tribal style belly dance. It is quite a diverse art. Which is why I still keep learning myself. I have tended to go towards the more contemporary style of belly dance which has incorporated a lot of modern fusion techniques and contemporary dance techniques. So my specialty is theatrical. And I get asked to teach workshops around Australia.”

Astarte performs at many charity and community events.

“We also host a lot of our own events so I can give my students the experience of performance. It still is a young school and we are growing. We have recently had an influx of new students. We do one of the forms that really does cater for entertaining.”

Astarte gets its name from the Goddess of the Crescent Moon and most of its students range in age from 20 to 70.

Ticket sales for Bellicious close on May 14 at Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/bellicious-vi-fantasy-tickets-21323651616?aff=eac2> (<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/bellicious-vi-fantasy-tickets-21323651616?aff=eac2>) and more information can be found on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/astartestudio/?fref=ts> (<https://www.facebook.com/astartestudio/?fref=ts>) or at the Astarte website at www.astartestudio.com (<http://www.astartestudio.com>).

“We originally established it as an event for our studio where we could do more of our experimental and theatrical work,” Ms Morrison said.

Bellicious has steadily grown over the years after starting at the Aviator Lounge.

It is now so large it has had to move into the main auditorium at Dapto Leagues Club.

“It has become a major fundraising event,” Ms Morrison said.

“We started planning our performances in May 2015. We do a whole years worth of work to get the performances ready because we have so many different classes and so many different troupes.”

Guest artists from other belly dance studios will also perform and there will be live music.

Ms Morrison described it as a variety night with more than 45 performers..

“It is a full theatrical experience and you get dinner at the same time,” she said.

“Working with a lot of women I wanted to do something that was specifically focused towards helping and assisting women who are in situations that are not ideal and situations of domestic violence or abuse.”