

# Kylie Cleary

Principal Coach of Sovereign Calisthenic College, Ballarat  
Volunteer for RSSS & Ballarat Solo Competition



I have a long and proud association with Royal South Street, as a performer, Coach, and volunteer. I am the current Principal of Sovereign Calisthenic College.

In 1978, Sovereign Calisthenic College opened in Ballarat, and I attended my first class as an eager 5-year-old. I recall instantly falling in love with calisthenics, its diversity, and its inclusion. I attended the comps at any opportunity I could, always with my Mum and Nan. It did not matter if it was Calisthenics or Ballet – I was there every day. We would stay until stumps...which was often after midnight...and then head out to the old Kingswood and try and unfog all the windows with a rag before driving home. Swapping calisthenics badges quickly became an obsession, along with another couple of Sovereign teammates. We would scurry across the knees of audience members to show our latest “swap” and obtain another badge to trade. Then we would be off again. The middle aisle and the never-ending mystery of the dressing room tunnels, are also a very strong memory for me.

As I progressed into a teenager, I began to show interest in Coaching. I was 14 when I volunteered at my first class and haven’t stopped teaching to this day. I have taught across all age groups from 3-year-olds, right through to Masters. In 1996, I was selected to be Assistant Coach with the Victorian State Team Junior age division, which was a huge honour and also a great learning opportunity. Retiring from dancing in 2000, I then took over the role of Principal of the College. Then in 2007, I was named Victorian Coach of the Year, which I still to this day, remain very humbled and honoured by. Another great achievement that I am extremely proud of, was securing our own purpose built, brand new Studios in 2018.

I began volunteering with South Street and the Ballarat Solo Comp around 6 years ago. I generally perform writing for adjudicators or timing. Both roles are polar opposites of each other – one you really obtain an insight into the mind of an adjudicator (and don’t see any of the items usually), and the other you get to sit back and enjoy the performance. However, it is the sense of providing a service to others, that I really enjoy. I have met some incredible people through my association with Royal South Street. I always try and instil in my students, to treat people how you would like to be treated, and to give back. I know that there are a number of Sovereign families involved in volunteering at South Street, and they do it for similar reasons.

To pinpoint what makes South Street so magical... to me, as a performer, you can almost feel like you could reach out and touch the people in the balcony. The bright lights feel like you are performing into a void, but the warmth of the audience can be felt by you. As a Coach, the nervous anticipation as you take your team to the “Green Room” to “check out the stage” each year and how the rake seems to grow a little steeper and the wings a little shallower. And as a Volunteer, how the love, well-being and care for each performer is as it was, way back in 1978, when I first entered this magical space.