

## **National Gathering 2019 – Brisbane**

### **18 October to 20 October**

Margaret and I have just returned from a flying visit to Brisbane where we checked out some stunning venues for our 2019 National Gathering. We could not believe our luck that we were able to find all of these in fairly close proximity of each other right in the CBD of Brisbane.

We are especially excited about this Gathering because we have never had a Gathering in Brisbane. We have been to all the other State Capitals and Territory Cities but somehow this one has evaded us. We did have a National Gathering in Queensland but that was at the Sunshine Coast in 2008 and a very memorable one at that.

This will be our 18<sup>th</sup> National Gathering. Having had our first Gathering in 2001 we have had a National Gathering every year since then with the exception of 2004 and 2015 when we had State Gatherings and we had two National Gatherings in 2007. The following program sets out our plans. I think you will find them to be exciting but given the small range of venues available we will need to set the maximum number at 480. So it will have to be first in but hopefully that will enable us to have a good representation from each State and Territory. We want this to be an absolutely big fun time and a celebration of the Sing Australia journey so far. Our theming for the Saturday night function for instance will be called “The best of the best”. We will highlight our most successful themed nights and so people can choose whichever one they like and dress accordingly.

Here it is. Here’s the plan.

### **Friday 18 October**

We will start our 2019 Gathering with a big singing evening in the magnificent St Johns Cathedral. To add to the magic we will rehearse with our Gathering orchestra for our even bigger Sunday morning program. We are looking to increasing the size of the orchestra next year to include some wind instruments and percussion. As well we will have access to the wonderful grand piano in the Cathedral. We are hopeful that our very talented James Mustafa will once again be our Musical Director. The magnificent space in the Cathedral will perfectly suit our big singing occasion. The repertoire for the evening will include songs from all our books as well as songs from our new ‘Songbook One’, a book that will largely be musicals and some opera. This will all sound glorious in the stunning acoustics of this majestic Cathedral with its vaulted ceiling – the only one of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. The Cathedral also possesses a four manual pipe organ, the largest cathedral organ in Australia. It hosts many recitalists from across the world. We will be hoping that we can sing some of our big sacred type songs with it. The Cathedral has a fascinating past. The first stage of construction was started in 1906. The second stage commenced in 1965 and the third stage in 1989 and was completed in 2009. The Cathedral was designed by John Pearson but he died before construction began and John’s son Frank was entrusted to carry out his fathers design. The third stage of the design was overseen by Peter Dare, Master Mason of Exeter Cathedral in England.

We will all feel very proud to be singing in there I am sure. Sing Australia has sung in many of the great Cathedrals of the world during our overseas visits including our recent tour to Italy and Spain. It has always been a privilege to do so and this experience will add to that story hugely.

We are also excited about being able to conclude the evening with a most enjoyable supper - what the caterers call a 'Grazing Barrel'. This will include a selection of premium farmhouse and international cheeses, dried figs, muscatels, grapes and quince paste, oat crackers, water crackers and roasted nuts plus an antipasto board of a selection of cured meats and marinated vegetables with assorted breads and crackers - plus wines, beers, soft drinks, sparkling mineral water and orange juice. In other words it will offer something for everyone and be the perfect way to end an absolutely splendid evening and kick off the Gathering in a memorable way with lots of singing and fun.

### **Saturday morning - 19 October**

We are going to do something very 'Brissy'. We are going to sing at the 'Wheel of Brisbane' as well as having a ride on the wheel. We realise not everyone will want to go on it and should not feel any obligation. We will make this cost optional on the registration form. However, we believe most will want to go on it. That being the case it will take a couple of shifts to get through the numbers. There are 33 cabins with 8 people to a cabin. Our plan is that while the first group is on the wheel the other group will be singing nearby. When the first group is finished with the 'Wheel' they can swap places with those on the ground and continue the singing. While on the Wheel you will be able to take in a 360 degree panoramic view of Brisbane and have a commentary on what you are seeing. This should be a fun thing to do. We always say we sing anywhere and everywhere. This will be yet another one of those experiences. The 'Wheel' is in the precinct of the famous EXPO 88 where I was engaged to present a two-hour concert to represent Canberra on the EXPO 88 Concert Stage in 1988. This was one of the earlier events produced by Sing Australia.

When we are all done with the 'Wheel' we will move to another idyllic area nearby where we can sing a little more while also having our Gathering Photo with Brisbane CBD in the background. After that the rest of the day is free for you to explore the delights of Brisbane.

### **Saturday Night - 19 October**

So far in the weekend we would all be thinking this can't get any better. Well, it will. You should see the room we are having for our evening function. But then wait for it our theme is "The best of the best". We are inviting participants to choose their costume from what we regard as our very best Gatherings - the 60's (Adelaide 2006); the roaring 20s (Melbourne 2010); Arabian (Sunshine Coast 2008); Phantom of the Opera (Sydney 2011); Nautical (Hobart- 2005); Masks (Perth -2009); Movies (Alice Springs -2012); Carnivale (Canberra - 2013). Of course if others liked some of our other themes go for it. All our National Gatherings have been fun.

We will kick the evening off in the Foyer of the Hilton Hotel with some pre-dinner canapes and a complimentary drink. We might even have some surprise entertainment up our sleeves.

We will then enter the glorious function room – Our table decs. will represent the best of the best.

### **Sunday morning – 20 October**

After a big night of ‘kicking up our heels’ we now present our usual highlight for the National Gathering. We will gather once again in the beautiful function room of the Hilton. We will start the morning program with morning tea.

We will then sing for two and half hours.

To add to the richness of our singing the small orchestra that we rehearsed with on the Friday night in the Cathedral will accompany us. By the National Gathering we will have in our repertoire the big songs we loved like ‘Love Changes Everything’, ‘Anthem’ and ‘The Slaves Chorus’. But there will be many more new ones. I just know it will be inspirational. We will also be presenting awards, not only to individuals who have made massive contributions to Sing Australia but to groups who have made exceptional contributions to their community. We will be announcing Sing Australia Ambassadors for Sing Australia Day. These will be well known music identities/celebrities in Australia.

This morning program will finish at 12 noon and that will be followed by a light lunch.

### **The Post Gathering Tour**

The tour will start from the Town Hall. The itinerary is as follows:-

**Sunday after the Gathering.** Lunch in Brisbane

2pm Brisbane to the Sunshine Coast – Overnight - Sing with Sunshine Coast

**Monday 21 October**

Sunshine Coast to Kingaroy – overnight in Kingaroy – Sing with Kingaroy

**Tuesday 22 October**

Kingaroy to Toowoomba - overnight in Toowoomba – Sing with Toowoomba

**Wednesday 23 October**

Toowoomba to Texas - Overnight in Texas - Sing with Texas

**Thursday 24 October**

Texas to Gold Coast – overnight in Broadbeach – Sing with new group

**Friday 25 October**

Gold Coast

**Saturday 26 October**

Gold Coast to Brisbane - overnight in Brisbane

Last night dinner with Carina