

Special Recess Bulletin No. 2 – 27 March 2020

(this will be posted on the Website as well)

Hi to all Leaders and members,

We do hope you are all managing OK. We do send you our heartfelt concerns for any difficulties you may be experiencing. It's a hard call on everyone and its all happening quickly but some will be worse off than others of course. You all need to know that you are all very highly valued and much loved members of Sing Australia.

The beautiful thing about our organisation and the one main thing that underpins our success is the very powerful influence of friendship and inclusiveness. We come from so many backgrounds and walks of life. We represent a wide demographic and we are located all around Australia.

Whether we live in a big city or in a regional centre or rural town, whether we live in a very small community or we live in a more isolated community we are all bound together in the friendship of our wonderful network.

All our groups are equally important and so in this time of crisis it is just so important that we feel that connection more than ever. Some of our groups are in areas that have endured and are still enduring the ravages of drought. Some of our groups are in communities that have been through horrific and fearful times of fire and flood and massive dust storms and so on. So now, on top of all that, comes a need to be isolated from each other. So cruel and hard. We feel very deeply for them all.

We must all now isolate ourselves in our homes.

All these circumstances and more place us all in almost unprecedented times.

We made some tough calls very early in terms of Sing Australia's response to the Coronavirus and I am glad we did. However, without any doubt the actions we needed to take would not have happened as efficiently had you not been absolutely marvellous and understanding in your response. You personified all the great things

about us as a people but you showed such amazing love and respect for our organisation. Thank you so much.

I would like to offer a very special acknowledgement to all our amazing Leaders. The quick response from all of them to our difficult requests and the support and understanding that was shown has been exceptional and of the highest order.

No one running an organisation could wish for a better bunch of such wonderful people. Thank you all so much. We are incredibly proud.

Sing Australia, while being something we normally enjoy on a weekly basis with our singing nights and with our great gigs in the community, now enters a time where I suspect it will play its most important role. This is the time when we can, in fact, be at our absolute best.

I suggest that this important time now is about staying connected with each other. I have asked all the Leaders and all groups to make sure that they have the contacts of all their members and I am pleased that they have done that very quickly.

What we are currently doing in Head Office is exploring various ways of engaging in music. My daughter, Gian, as many of you will know, is an amazing musician, composer and teacher, she along with Mardi, is developing an interactive program on Facebook that provides an opportunity to have a long singing session perhaps once or twice a week. It sounds like fun and we will keep you posted on that. We want to get this up and running next week. Lets hope we can but if not it will be the week after. We need for members who are not on Facebook to know that it will be very easy and non-committal to go onto this. You just need to call on someone who is on it to help you.

I know that many groups have implemented all sorts of fun things – the Camberwell group nominate several songs for people to sing at a certain time in the week. Hans Kooij, Conductor and accompanist in Hobart has invited people to let him know their favourite song and he plays the accompaniment and sends it back to them. Lovely idea. I know that Glenelg does something similar. These kinds of connections are great.

As our contribution to this we would like to suggest that we all google up 'Youtube - Dolly Parton & Kenny Rogers (Lyrics on Screen)

– Islands in the Stream –or you could use your Songbook One for the words. This can be our tribute to the great Kenny Rogers. I know some of you have done that or are going to do that but here is a chance to do this nationally. Absolutely go for it. Imagine you are on the stage. Sing out loud. Play it over and over. It's good fun.

However, my dear friends I would ask that while the ideas being practiced now are great please do not go into **overdrive** on ideas just at the moment. It is early days.

What I think is absolutely essential is to bed down our recess arrangements and just make sure we are all very clear that we can no longer have any forms of gatherings of any size. The main aspect that has driven me in all this is the word '**uncertainty**'. We just do not know fully how this virus travels from one person to another. We just do not know for some time whether we have it ourselves. Then there is the word '**certainty**'. We know that the virus has no cure just yet. We know that it affects older people more severely. We know that if we adopt good hygiene habits we assist ourselves enormously. The good old 'soap and water' is back – big time. Lots of it.

One other thing please could I ask that you do not come up with a new name of your temporary cyber singing group. As a part of our solidarity we should maintain a strong tie and identity with the name of our individual groups. Sing Australia is strong.

At the end of this period of isolation when the virus has taken its course I am hoping and praying that we will all be safe. It will be at that time when Sing Australia will move to its next biggest special time and that will be to reconnect with the community. We will bring the great joy we are known for and it will needed more than ever. By then, we too, will be so yearning to get back to singing.

Finally, could I make a special plea that you maintain your membership through this period. It is by no means a very large monthly contribution but in maintaining that you will enable us to uphold the infrastructure of the organisation. We must continue to coordinate the communication with all groups. We must still assist people with joining Direct Debit. This is actually proceeding quite well now given the early preconceptions and concerns. It is in fact a simple and safe system and it easier for many people to join. It would

be good to attract new members in this time so that they can link in with the support activities we are planning.

We must if we can keep the office going. We need to be able to respond to issues and so on. If we lose that we may find it hard to recover. For our part we have had to tighten our belt considerably. The four main streams of our income are the subscription fees, the merchandise, the Gatherings and the tours. Three of those are now gone.

Dear members we will have to brace ourselves for some very difficult and distressing times, there is no question about that, so now is the time to build our resilience by shoring up our connections and communication lines.

If we stay in solidarity on this we will feel supported and loved. That is vital.

On behalf of all of us here we send you our love and best wishes – stay safe. Please be in touch if you feel anxious at any time. Sing a few songs every day. Be in touch with each other. If you need some connections let me know. My number has been listed in the last bulletin. You may ring me at any time if you become anxious. We just have to be like a family and help each other through this. I have no doubt at all that we will be well and truly up for that.

Bye for now. Lots of love and God bless

I'll be back next week.

Colin

Colin Slater OAM CF
Founder and National Director