

To Leaders and Members

Special Recess Bulletin No 9 - 18 May 2020

Hi everyone

We hope you have had a great week. We are definitely able to move around the community a lot more now and of course that increases our options for some very nice walks and a bit of retail therapy! Lovely. I must say though I have been staggered by how quickly people relax the social distancing especially in shops. It's as though there is no further risk with Covid 19 and that clearly is not the case. It is still present and possibly even threatening a second wave. Heaven forbid but that will be all up to us I guess in how we proceed in the coming weeks.

Last night's singing session with Gian was wonderful. It is developing into a very significant cultural experience and something very special for us all. It has so many lovely aspects to it. Apart from the songs that we have come to love there is the buzz in the rush to comment and to have friendly exchanges -to express support and demonstrate so much empathy for each other. It is inspirational. One would never have imagined how intimate and how mesmerising it has all become.

I don't know about you but I feel I am in the same room as Gian and all of you at these sessions. It has to be the most comforting and encouraging thing we can possibly do at the moment. I have become quite addicted to it. The sessions go so quickly. Just in the choice of songs it was quite an emotional time last night. I find it so good to have those times of reflection and feelings but to experience those strong emotions and know that you have the company of others is so reassuring and uplifting.

Some updates

Group Recess

As much as I would love to provide some indication when we can resume our normal practices I simply cannot at present. For a start there is no indication from authorities at this stage as to when we can meet as a singing group. The decisions about how many people can now gather is quite different to how many people can gather to sing.

There are now some well-documented overseas cases of choirs going back to practices too early and running into serious problems with outbreaks of the Coronavirus. This has had fatal consequences in one case and without being alarmist we need to really take heed of that.

While there will always be divided opinions about everything according to the information I have received there is clear evidence that group singing is far more infectious in terms of passing on the virus than is speaking. An article worth a

read is headed – **The Risks – Know them – Avoid them** . Here is the link <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them> .

An extract from the article says - ***Singing**, to a greater degree than talking, aerosolizes respiratory droplets extraordinarily well. Deep-breathing while singing facilitated those respiratory droplets getting deep into the lungs. Two and half hours of exposure ensured that people were exposed to enough virus over a long enough period of time for infection to take place*

There are other examples to Google up if you are interested. Like all things there is another point of view but the incidences where problems have occurred is enough for us to at least be ever cautious. Put it this way I am not prepared to test either scenarios. We don't have to and we won't.

To put it frankly as much as we might think we do not spray out just a smidgeon of saliva when we sing you would be surprised. It only has to be miniscule and it usually is. I think given these case studies we may need to brace ourselves for a protracted return to normal. However, rest assured, as I have said previously, I am maintaining a close watch on developments.

While I too would be over the moon about having all the groups return to group singing and weekly practices I shall remain ever cautious. I am sure you expect me to. So please don't even entertain getting back together not even in smaller groups. When the Government decrees that people can gather in groups of 10 it has not said that you can gather to sing. That's the rub.

I know full well of course that there are some areas in Australia that are free of the virus, which is good of course, but seriously there is no certainty that that will remain the case. Once people start to travel it only needs one person with the virus to enter in that environment and it can spread very quickly. As I have said previously I can see the rationale in people needing to get back to work but I cannot see the rationale in taking a risk for a non-essential activity.

In the meantime stay safe – we will continue to offer connection and support through our special Facebook page. We are developing more ideas on that. Try to get more of your members signed onto it.

Facebook - Sing Australia Members Only Group -

Gian is thoroughly enjoying the singing session on Tuesday nights and I have to say, leaving aside any personal bias, her instruction and leadership has been of a very high order. Her musical knowledge and her inclusive and warm relaxed presentational style has won a lot of hearts so obvious in your responses on Tuesday night. Of course, permit me to say, I am massively proud of her and I am just so delighted that she is sharing her abilities with us in this way. She also has great back up from her partner, Chris Hale. He too is a very highly respected and celebrated musician. We haven't seen him yet because his role on Tuesday night is to look after their two very sweet little children. Thanks Chris. We shall look forward to when we see and hear you.

You may have noticed I have posted a number of singing lessons that might be helpful. They don't cover all aspects but some of the tips that I have learned over a long time might be useful. Put it this way they have helped me to keep my voice in pretty good shape.

We are working on some other ideas for this group page and will introduce them to you shortly. We now have 1489 members on this Group Facebook page and it increases each day. Please encourage other members to join this. Help them if necessary. It is amazing.

Direct Debit

This is progressing well. We now have in excess of 1700 signed up to this form of payment. Please, do not write to us to offer another form of payment or worse still send us a cheque. It will be returned. We have explained the rationale behind the introduction of the Direct Debit. There are no other options. Please understand we are not doing this to be difficult. We are doing this to survive.

National Gathering

We are still receiving the odd enquiry about the non-refundable \$100 deposit for the National Gathering. Please, please we have explained this as well. The deposit was used to secure the venues for our Gathering. They too were non refundable deposits but we have been able to have the bookings postponed which means the deposits for those venues will remain on hold. We just have to work out another time for the Gathering and that is not easy at present because there is no certainty about anything in the future. However, as soon as the opportunity comes we will take it.

A portion of the \$100 deposit also enabled us to do the early stages of planning for the Gathering as well. An enormous amount of work goes into the planning of these events and usually most of that work happens in the early stages so that we know where we are going with it. These big events don't just materialise! So a portion of those funds were used on administrative and event management expenses. However, we will be able to resurrect some of that early work as I have said and the postponement of venues will help as well. So those of you who paid the \$100 deposit be assured your funds have been used for the purpose in which it was given. Let's hope we can have the Gathering at some stage either mid year or a bit later.

Tours

I don't have to tell you much about this. You can read about this in the newspapers. Overseas travel is off the agenda for an indefinite period. Postponement of the Spain trip has been negotiated, as has the Norfolk Island tour. We have no details of dates at this stage for Spain but the Norfolk Island tour is planned around the Anzac Day period. Cross your fingers.

Warmest wishes from all of us at Head Office – Margaret, Mardi, Gian , Di and me. Stay safe. See you on Facebook.

Colin Slater OAM CF – Founder and National Director