

To: Leaders and Members

Special Leaders Bulletin No 16. (2 July 2020)

Hi everyone

We hope you are in good health and good spirits.

I promised that I would assess our situation at the end of June regarding the possibility of ending our time of recess. I have done that earnestly and with the benefit of every bit of information I can find on the website, through various reports and in consultation with the medical profession.

The upshot, sadly, is that I cannot see a clear pathway for Sing Australia returning to group singing for the foreseeable future. I am so sorry to have to say that but we must be real. As much as some places look so totally over Covid 19, the virus still poses a very serious threat to the Australian community and it requires us to remain both patient and vigilant.

These are the stand out points as to why we can't return to group singing:- (All these points are based on the information that is readily available to you on the internet.)

1. The Coronavirus is still in our Australian community – worst of course in Melbourne but occasional breakouts elsewhere and not looking like disappearing any time soon. No where is regarded as being completely safe. Precautionary measures are still being taken in areas that have been totally free of cases for many weeks. The uncertainty issue has not changed since we first went into recess.
2. Changing circumstances that will add to uncertainties- the increasing pressure to open State borders that will have people moving more freely from State to State; the number of people refusing to be tested for Coronavirus; the greater relaxation of movement in the community; the disregard for social distancing.
3. Group singing is viewed by our top scientists and by eminent scientists overseas as one of the high risk activities for transmitting the Coronavirus (Covid 19)
4. An older demographic (65 +) which is largely our membership is in the greatest risk of severe complications from Covid 19 illness and death. “Eighty percent of deaths associated with the coronavirus in the United States were in adults aged 65 and older, according to an analysis released by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).”
5. The management of venues for presenting a choir practice is extremely onerous and almost impossible to manage. The social distancing issue alone is impractical in some places – entrances and exits are difficult to manage. Application of hand sanitiser will be difficult to supervise. The problem of not fully knowing the health disposition of people attending who may be asymptomatic and then those who can sneeze or cough at

any time and so on. Some of our venues will not take the full membership.

6. The Public Liability Insurance for our group singing and for Sing Australia social occasions has been suspended until we return to practices.
7. There is still no vaccine against Coronavirus.

These are all very persuasive reasons why it would not be worth the risk to start back to group singing. I believe some community groups have started back in different places but seriously that is their decision. That is not a compelling reason for us to do likewise. They are most certainly younger groups but I would have thought that while younger people may not be as worried about contracting Covid 19 themselves they present enormous risks to the older people with whom they associate.

Sorry everyone. I feel for you. I feel for us. I know you love your singing and so do we and I know you are missing your friends and family and so are we. It's a tough time in that regard but we are lucky in Australia. The Covid 19 pandemic has been extremely well managed in this country. We have certainly all been in this together and up to now we have as a nation cooperated incredibly well. Lets hope we can continue to do that. I want Sing Australia, that is our most valued members, to come out of this unscathed.

From a Sing Australia perspective, as I said at the outset of our recess, I am incredibly proud of all the Leaders and the members in how everyone responded so quickly and so respectfully to the needs of isolation. Strangely enough - it has to be one of our proudest achievements. Without question the tough breaks invariably bring the best out of us. We now have to show the grit of perseverance. On that score we are enormously grateful for your continued membership and I don't say that lightly - without this support we could simply not exist. While we can serve you very effectively via Facebook we do know that some are not getting the benefit of that and that is why we are trying a utube platform - more of this further down. We can now catch up with friends, albeit in small numbers. However, we must still maintain social distancing and not be tempted to sing.

Isn't it great that we have had our social media to call on? Our special Facebook group has been so good. It has in fact been something to look forward to each week. Gian has done an outstanding job in getting right on top of our repertoire. Our songs are largely foreign to her preferred genre of music before taking on the job to lead the singalong sessions. However, in the loneliness of her and Chris's studio at their home she makes us all feel she is with us and us with her. She is so positive and helpful. I think we have all learned a lot from her singing and her warm ups and advice. We have probably also learned a lot from her relaxed and gracious style as well.

Given the circumstances in Melbourne right now it may not be possible for Gian to have Nathan along in the studio. Hopefully Chris can join her but that will depend on a baby sitter. The studio is not in the house. So our virtual National Gathering will not be as expansive with the accompaniment that we had hoped

but we have a lot of lovely surprises in store for the Gathering. We have decided to pack our program into 2 nights rather than 3. Thus 10 and 11 June. This will be less onerous on Gian and probably also for you. We have lovely surprises for both nights. By the way we are thinking of our members in Melbourne. It's sad for you that the virus has spiked in various areas of the city. We hope of course that no serious cases flow from that and that you all remain safe but it will no doubt hold up the interstate travel. We can't wait to get back and visit the family and friends.

Coming back to my earlier reference we are in the process of producing our own Sing Australia YouTube platform for showing the Tuesday night sing-alongs and other things that we post on the Facebook group page. (This should hopefully be available from this coming Tuesday 7 July, so if you wish to join please wait until Monday to follow the instructions below on how to join). This will make it possible for more of our members to feel more connected and included. If you are already on the Facebook page then there is no need to join the YouTube channel as well as it will be the same content as Facebook, this is more for those who do not wish to have a Facebook account for whatever reason. We are sorry it has taken this long to get onto this but these things do take time. It should be fun to catch up on things. This is how you can join that:

Email info@singaustralia.com.au and request to be invited to the YouTube channel. We will instruct you from there.

We do wish you all the very best. Stay safe and take good care. Reach out to those you know and stay in touch. Don't feel alone. We are with you and are just a phone call away. Keep singing every single day and have a go at recording yourself.

Lots of love from all of us at Head Office

Colin

Colin Slater OAM CF
Founder and National Director.