

## **National Director Annual Report – 2022.**

And we thought it would be better year this year. Hmm!!

Our ongoing difficult/challenging times points up even more poignantly that we need to always remind ourselves of the good things of humanity. There are many of course. We know that our friendships and our singing bring us resilience and hope. It brings us connection and support. It feeds our soul with positivity and beauty. It provides us with comfort and joy. Without these blessings we could easily feel a sense of despair and probably at times we all experience such things. The beauty of Sing Australia is that we can constantly help lift each other up and be a source of reassurance.

This leads me to recount all the great things that have occurred in Sing Australia this year. Lots of great things.

**Gigs.** There have been close to 600 gigs approved so far this year. 138 for December alone. Probably conservatively we have sung to around 30,000+ people. This isn't too bad at all coming out of an extended lockdown period. So many groups have done amazing gigs that have not only been great for their community but wonderfully inspirational for the members and the overall network and in the words of a famous advertisement 'there is more'! Just imagine the thousands of people who have been uplifted through these performances. Take a bow everyone!

**Membership/Groups:** The membership has remained steady at around 2,300. We have had 237 new members this year. As sad as it is we have lost some groups but we are enormously grateful for their participation over the years and for the enduring friendships that flowed from them and continue of course. Still - we have 79 groups and I am not complaining. It is still a big network. We shall press on and we will regrow. A warm welcome to the new members.

**Celebrations:** We have had lots of very significant celebrations. There have been 29 birthday celebrations of groups over 20 years old. There have been 34 celebrations of group birthdays between 10 and 20 years old. That's 63 groups over 10 years old. Given our difficult times I reckon we all have to agree that's a mighty good achievement. I do not know of any singing network in Australia that can boast this sort of achievement. Once again take a bow Sing Australia!

**Trips:** We have undertaken 2 very successful overseas trips - our 4<sup>th</sup> tour to New Zealand and our 8<sup>th</sup> tour to Norfolk Island. They were great fun with lots of singing. We had to wait for them due to COVID restrictions but it was worth it!

**New form of communication with Head Office:** We set up a means of reliable communication between Head Office and members utilising a special Leader Page on our website. Since then there have been 25 weekly Bulletins. These are all less than a page long and they keep the connection going between Head Office and the Leaders and Members. We have a little way to go for this system of communication to be 100% universally accepted but we are getting there - hopefully! I'll be interested in feedback on this.

**Facebook:** This has continued to be our main means of promoting new events and tours as well as reporting on the activities within the network. We tend to post videos on our Facebook 'Members Only' page for copyright reasons. Of course all items posted are still there even the sessions run by Gian through

2020 and 2021. This means of communication while very effective is still unfortunately only adopted by a small percentage of the network but please we don't want to go back to emails and post!

**Merchandise:** We have continued to supply merchandise.

**Weekly practices:** Obviously these have been restored significantly - certainly enough to allow preparation for gigs and to start rebuilding confidence in community singing.

**The method of membership payment:** While met with some hesitancy and negativity at first this form of payment has really settled down and as a result has permitted Sing Australia to progress in a more systematic and efficient way. In fact it meant our survival over the past 3 years. Thank you everyone for your cooperation.

**Our exciting future:**

**Tours around the States**

Next year I hope to be running short tours around each of the States. You will have seen the suggested dates for these. We will however, plan them as we go along. Those dates might change due to prevailing circumstances in each State.

**Norfolk Island**

We are also planning to once again tour to Norfolk Island for Anzac Day in 2023. This itinerary is now on the website. We have become an important part of the Norfolk Island Anzac commemorations. We do need to firm this up pretty quickly.

**Tour to Italy**

We will also tour to Italy immediately following the National Gathering which will be held in Canberra on 6, 7 and 8 October. The details of the Italy Tour are on the website and there are still places available.

**National Gathering**

The planning for the National Gathering is underway. It is hoped that we will have our major event in Parliament House and that we will have a great and special performance in the National Floriade Festival.

**New Songbook**

Given the feedback to date it seems as though there is an overall appetite to produce a new songbook but it will be along the same format as Songs around the Piano Books 1 to 3 but it will comprise completely new songs most of which have come as suggestions from the network.

**Slight fee increase**

To undertake all of the above we do have to slightly rebuild Head Office capacity next year bearing in mind that for all of this year it has only been me working between 5 and 7 days a week with Mardi working one day. Margaret has been working fulltime but voluntarily. We have of course, like all businesses, had to bear increased costs. I am proposing an increase of 50 cents a week. The weekly fee is currently \$1.60 a week or \$6.40 a month. It will be \$2.10 a week or \$8.40 a month. This will give us the capacity to move forward in a more viable way. We will plan to introduce this in February when most groups will be back in full swing.

So lots happening next year.

**Thank you.**

A big thanks and congratulations! It has been a mighty effort from everyone. Thanks for your support, your kindness and encouragement, your inspiration and resilience. Special thanks always to all the Leaders for being incredibly outstanding. We are a great organisation because of your efforts.

Lets believe however that we can still grow and be even greater than we have been and are. Lets continue to reach out to accomplish our challenging goal. There are a lot of people in Australia who need positive connection. Let's be optimistic. It's the only way to be!! Lets try and get some youngies in Sing Australia – 40/50/60 year olds.

**Vale**

As we approach the festive season our thoughts go out to the groups who have lost much-loved members this year and to the members who have lost loved ones. It always seems to be a tough time of the year to manage grief and loss. Our heartfelt sympathy is with all the relatives and friends. We are certainly mindful of the privilege it was in knowing those who once sang with us. The memory of them endures as does the memory of our loved ones of course.

**Merry Christmas**

The Christmas story is one of hope. It also restores our faith and offers comfort and joy. In saying that I do appreciate and respect that we all have our own perspective on Christmas but my hope for everyone is that it will present a time for rest and reflection, a time of peace and reassurance and a time for knowing that you are never alone. Not when you have a Sing Australia friend just a phone call away.

Margaret and Mardi join me in wishing you a Merry Christmas. We hope you will be blessed with good health and happiness as you move into a bright new year.

Colin

Colin Slater OAM CF  
Founder and National Director.