

National Director Annual Report - 2016

What a year it has been!

Weekly practices

Lots of weekly practices across Australia. It is great to ponder on the collective goodness of 130 Sing Australia groups meeting each week to sing for a couple of hours. Conservatively, that's around 2500 voices singing every week. Given the joy our weekly practices provide that's a lot of happy people going home after practice each week feeling pretty good.

Weekly practices rate very highly in terms of what members most enjoy about Sing Australia. To that end we are enormously grateful to the Group Leaders, Conductors and Accompanists and all the helpers that make those nights so special. Thank you one and all.

Performances

There have been around 1600 performances throughout the network this year. The gigs are a tremendous contribution to the community at large. You know from all the feedback that you receive that it is so worthwhile. The fun that we produce certainly inspires people to at least come along to a practice to find out more and maybe join – invariably to be involved in singing for the very first time.

Congratulations to all involved. We know it is not every members wish to perform and that is fine but those who do participate get a lot from it.

Attendance at Regional Gatherings

We had 15 Regional Gatherings this year. They were all outstanding and most enjoyable. Some 870 members participated in Regional Gatherings over the year. The fact that the Regional Gatherings are 2 hours in duration (lots of singing in that time) plus an afternoon tea and they are held within reasonable driving range for most groups is a big plus. Thanks to all those in the host towns who helped facilitate those wonderful events.

Tours – Australia

Anne Alp and Pauline Luz from the Bayside group joined me on a short tour that coincided with a Regional Gathering in Walgett. We flew from Melbourne to Dubbo and journeyed to Walgett via Bourke where we payed homage to the great Fred Hollows by visiting and singing at his graveside. We had a fun time in Walgett where our Regional Gathering coincided with the 'Bulldust to Bitumen' Festival. Members of Tamworth, Gunnedah and Dubbo joined us for that. On our return trip we had a very pleasant catch up with some of the Dubbo members at the Dubbo Zoo before flying back to Melbourne.

Tours overseas

Norfolk Island (not yet a part of NSW at that stage)

We started the year with a fabulous tour to Norfolk Island where 60 tour participants sang for the Anzac Day services. This was an inspirational experience. Given that we had been on a previous tour to Norfolk Island just a few months earlier we were able to consolidate our friendship with that community. We had a lot of singing opportunities. It is likely that will build an ongoing involvement with Norfolk Island. We return in April 2017.

Italy

This was our 8th Sing Australia tour to Italy. We had a slightly different itinerary than previous tours and it worked out beautifully. We focussed more on the northern areas taking in Cinque Terre and the Lakes areas. Of course the tour still took in the Village of Asolo, the place etched in our organisations history as the very beginning of the Sing Australia concept. Next tour, 2018 we plan to present a concert in the historic theatre of Asolo where I participated in Opera Master Classes with the great maestro, Tito Gobbi in 1983. There will be information about this early in the new year.

Southern India

We have just returned from our tour of Southern India. It was a fascinating tour. Much different to our previous tour to Rajasthan but equally enjoyable. We had a fabulous guide and coach driver. (very important!!) The hotels were excellent and on the whole we all stayed pretty well. A big highlight of the trip was visiting a Children's

School for the Deaf in Chennai. We were very touched by the experience. A number of tour participants went onto Rajasthan at the completion of our Sing Australia tour and from all reports this went very well. They were blessed to have our previous guide, Nagendra.

National Gathering

This is our premium network event and while we experienced the worst Melbourne could serve up in terms of the weather we also experienced the best Melbourne could offer in terms of a function venue, food and entertainment. It all came together extremely well. Both evening functions were loads of fun, great singing and dancing, fine dining and all round terrific. The conductors and accompanists around the network and or MCs for all events were outstanding. Our Conductors course run by Willem Van der Vis was excellent. Our merchandise sale went well. The Sunday morning event was as usual very special, The singing in every respect was a stand out. Very emotional and robust. The accompaniment from the Grand piano, the String Ensemble and the musical leadership by James Mustafa was very special. We believe this to be our best Gathering. It was our 15th. Next year we will have the event in Hobart.

Membership

We had 598 new members over the year. Obviously a number of people also left. We currently have 4,255 members. The largest group is Glenelg.

Benefits

Through our surveys, questionnaire and correspondence from members there is mounting evidence to show that the Sing Australia concept of inclusivity has profound outcomes for many many people. With no pressures on how well you sing has meant people have been able to come along each week and enjoy friendship and fun. It has been able to address loneliness, grief, depression and stress. It has been a welcome outlet and activity for those who lead busy lives. Just the physical act of singing alone has provided considerable health benefits in terms of better breathing and the uplifting affects. However, we can never underestimate the massive benefits that flow from friendship and the feeling of security and support that brings. It

is the hallmark of Sing Australia to show that warmth and welcoming approach.

Repertoire

We introduced a further songbook called Songs around the Piano Book 4. This book will provide the opportunity for lots of hearty singing and it will be a great resource for reaching out to others who might like to get involved in singing. Next year we will publish a further songbook on musicals and classics. This will introduce some very beautiful new songs and it will revive some popular songs from our past repertoire. Once this book is released we should have enough music in our repertoire to keep us going for some time to come.

Vale

A number of our members and past members passed away through the year and our thoughts are with partners and families at this special time of the year.

Next years highlights:

Many Regional Gatherings

Lots of performances

The National Gathering in Hobart followed by a tour of Tassie.

Confirmed tours to Norfolk Island. Proposed tours to China and Canada yet to be confirmed.

New Songbook.

Our usual weekly practices.

Margaret, Mardi and Di join me in wishing you all a very Happy and Safe Christmas and New Year.

Colin Slater OAM
National Director

