

# Ku-Ring-Gai Male Choir

## President's Report for 2015

Ladies and Gentlemen

It has been a great privilege for me to be the President of the Ku-ring-gai Male Choir during the past year. This is indeed an old organisation with a very proud tradition and I am pleased to now present to you my report for 2015.

In commencing, I would have to say that my musical skills are limited at best, and I rely very heavily on my ear, but for me, 2015 has again been a successful year for the choir. It has had its challenges at times, but I believe the quality of the music that the choir is now producing has again demonstrated the strong commitment of everybody to strive for continual performance improvement. I won't attempt to judge whether we have achieved our Conductor Dr. Paul Whiting's stated objectives at the end of last year of '...growing in our ability to produce depth of tone' and '...improve our ability to sing rhythmically', but hopefully we have made progress down both of those paths.

In terms of actual performances, a very important early year commitment for the choir on ANZAC Day, 2015, was our participation at the Dawn Service at Hornsby, marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gallipoli Landings in World War One. It was an honour for the choir to join in this community service and to subsequently also sing at a breakfast held at Hornsby RSL Club. Through this year, A Medley of Songs From the First World War arranged by Alwyn Humphries has again been regularly included in our concert programs and it continues to be very popular with our audiences.

Apart from that, concerts have been performed at six retirement villages which represents a further drop of two concerts from the previous year – Huon Park and Wirreanda.

At Buckland Retirement Village at Springwood, we received a very special welcome this year together with an anniversary cake to mark the 20<sup>th</sup>

consecutive year that the choir has performed there. Our thanks indeed to all our friends at Buckland.

During 2015, donations kindly given by the retirement villages are again being wholly donated to the charities: The Braille Music Camp for blind children at Mittagong and Streetwork.

On 22 August 2015, the Choir joined with the Orange Male Voice Choir in a charity concert at All Saints Anglican Church, Canowindra in aid of the Virginia Cullane Cancer Foundation. We also joined in a church service at Orange on the Sunday followed by a most convivial lunch. The number of our members who attended at Orange was unfortunately very low but those who did attend performed commendably and much to the appreciation of the audience. We look forward to welcoming the Orange Male Voice Choir back to Sydney when next that can be scheduled.

Our annual Concert at Hornsby RSL Club in September was again very successful with Anita Kyle as our sole associate artist. Naomi Giselle, our other associate artist, unfortunately had to withdraw just prior to the concert because of a health issue. The enthusiastic audience was not as large as the record breaking previous year, but the financial outcome for the concert was still a good one, with the raffle providing excellent support. Our thanks again to our major raffle prize donors Sherna Kotwal and Kit Ferry, to the ladies who helped out at the door on the day and, of course, also to the Hornsby RSL Club.

Our concert program for the year concluded two weeks ago at the Roseville Music Club. It was very successful and greatly appreciated by the audience.

From an overall perspective though, the number of concert engagements that the choir has had this year is clearly less than we would prefer and particularly for the Retirement Villages. The committee is undertaking a review of this including a selected call program with the objective of hopefully achieving some turnaround. Also we would like to ask members to carefully consider their availability to attend concerts and other engagements as there have been times when our numbers have been down, impacting certain parts of the choir and even its overall balance.

The choir's membership continues to stand at around 50 members and that is considered to be about right and provided we can maintain a workable balance across all four parts. However, I should emphasise that that in no way diminishes our objective to continue to attract a steady inflow of new members.

In August, our Secretary, Chris Phang, resigned from the choir for personal reasons and to work on plans that he had for next year. Our thanks to Chris for being a part of the choir and for all the work that he did during his time as Secretary. We wish him well for the future.

In total this year, we have had five members retire or resign but offsetting that has been the induction of five new members which is most pleasing.

Darrell Tuft, a longstanding member who retired at the start of the year, sadly passed away after battling illness and the choir sang at a Thanksgiving Service for him at St. Philip's, Church Hill on 2<sup>nd</sup> September. We also sadly lost Ted Moore, the father of our members Tim and Chris. Ted was a former longstanding member and past President of the choir, and we sang at his funeral on 14 August.

A notable achievement for the choir in 2015 was the production of a new CD entitled 'Ku-Ring-Gai Male Choir Live in Concert.' Our Conductor and Music Director, Dr. Paul Whiting, and Chris Phang virtually single-handedly designed and guided that project through to completion and we are most thankful to them for all of the work they did on it.

The Ku-Ring-Gai Male Choir is an integral part of Sydney's North Shore community and for that we owe a great deal of thanks to our Conductor, Dr. Paul Whiting. Paul works tirelessly for the choir and to drive for continual performance improvement. The work that he does in selecting our music repertoire, which I think is great at the moment, is a significant factor in the enjoyment that the choir and its audiences derive from the music that we sing. Furthermore, Paul's presentations at concerts are excellent, and we also thank him for that.

To Grace Edwards-Barnetson, our thanks to you too for all of your hard work. We are most fortunate to have an accomplished musician of Grace's ability to

be our accompanist. She also, of course, is the accompanist for our associate artists when they sing with the choir and I know that both Anita Kyle and Naomi Giselle very much appreciate the work that Grace does with them. Thank you Grace.

To our associate artists, our special thanks to Anita for her wonderful performances in virtually all of our concerts in the latter months of the year when Naomi has unfortunately been indisposed. And to Naomi, our very best wishes to you for a return to 'full singing health' next year!

At a number of our concerts during the year, members of the choir again performed as soloists and we thank Ken Davis, Chris Moore, Tony Biviano, Karsten Pedersen and Liam Donnelly, together with Richard Deane-Butcher (Trumpet), John Gibson (Anvilist) and, of course, Dr. Paul Whiting (Organ).

And finally a special thank you to all the other members of the executive committee:

Assistant Conductors – Chris Moore and Bob Cameron for readily assisting Paul when called upon.

Secretary – Ian Stapley (also Asst. Treasurer) who stepped back into the role after the resignation of our Secretary a few months back.

Treasurer – Kim Rennick for all his good work in ably managing the choir's finances and for providing updated reports when required.

Vice President – Ken Taylor for his counsel and assistance throughout the year.

Immediate Past President – Ed Ironside for looking after CD sales at concerts and other gatherings.

Concert Co-Ordinator – John Middleton for his work in this role and for taking care of our associate artists. John has a lot of experience to offer and we greatly appreciate all of his efforts.

Marshall – Ken Davis for looking after choir placements and the preparedness of concert venues at which the choir is to perform. Ken also undertook a key role this year in laying out a pathway for the Hornsby RSL Concert Planning Group.

Web Master – John Penn for all his work in ensuring the optimal functioning of our website and other media channels plus the preparation of artwork for concert programs and promotional posters.

Publicity Officer – Philip Rennie for his work in writing up content for our website and looking after press releases when required. Phil is currently also drafting a 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet for the choir to mark that milestone next year. We very much appreciate Phil's continued efforts in this role.

Librarian – Bruce Elliott (assisted by David Magnusson) for looking after the choir's library of music.

Recruitment Officer – Ross Smith for his efforts in recruiting new members. The steady flow of new members into the choir this year has been very pleasing.

Bruce Sharpham for his work as Social Secretary. Bruce has largely been the organiser of tonight's function and we especially thank him for that. He is also the choir's Delegate to MCAA.

Other choir members who have performed essential operating roles during the year are Bill Flynn who looks after the opening and closing of St. Swithun's Hall and the movement and set up of the music stand as required and the great work Tom Dixen does in creating and recording practice media files and CD's for each of the four parts of the choir. Ken Hocking also has recently been assisting in the important role of arranging concert engagements for the choir next year and we thank all of these members for the work that they do.

In mid-November, Joe and Rasa Blansjaar kindly invited the choir back to their home at Medlow Bath for a very nice barbeque. The weather was a little damp on the day but that did not detract at all from what was a most enjoyable occasion, and the Blue Mountain's environment was as beautiful as ever! Our sincere thanks to Joe and Rasa.

Planning by MCAA for a massed choirs event in October 2017 at Wollongong is underway and Paul and Bruce Sharpham have been involved in initial meetings for that. Details will be advised in the months ahead but it will undoubtedly be an exciting event.

Last year, we initiated the practice of presenting service awards to members who have faithfully served the choir for 20 years or more and just to let you know, this year, there have been no further members passing that milestone.

In closing, and looking forward to next year, 2016 will clearly be a special year for the Ku-Ring-Gai Male Choir as it will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding back in 1946. Of course our objective will be to continue to strive for high quality singing and with an active concert program through the year, and as a part of that, I would like to suggest that we possibly consider the staging of a special 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert as one of the highlights for the year.

Ladies and gentleman that concludes my report for 2015. Enjoy your time with us tonight and on behalf of myself and all the executive committee, may I wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and we look forward to seeing you all again in the new year.

John Salamonsen  
President