



Annual Report

High Street Bells Choir Inc.

1 January – 31 December 2020

President's Report

The year 2020 began smoothly but soon the Choir faced a series of challenges related to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns and restrictions.

Early in the year, we were looking forward to celebrating our tenth anniversary in May when the first lockdown due to Covid-19 began in mid-March. Everything changed. We were able to meet briefly at our long-term rehearsal space in the Northcote Uniting Church ('Chalice') one last time before cancelling the last session of Term 1. Unfortunately that session included our Annual General Meeting, which was postponed.



How we began 2020.

Our volunteers soon showed the way by gathering online in a Zoom session and inviting some of our singers to join them. By the second week of Term 2, the Choir was officially online, with most singers making the transition. Within

weeks we achieved a regular attendance of over 30 singers, carers, family members and volunteers at our Zoom sessions on a Monday morning.

Since then we have kept to our usual schedule of meeting once a week during state school terms. Some carers and family members have joined our online sessions, obviously enjoying them, and several new singers have joined the Choir while we've been online. Our AGM was held online on 1 June .

Everyone has been challenged to develop new skills. While some singers require assistance to sign in and participate (for example, to appropriately use the 'mute' button or 'chat' feature), others have become adept at utilising these without assistance. The Committee has assisted some singers to get online by purchasing inexpensive tablets which we lend to them. Sally Green, our Administration Officer, has patiently assisted singers to get online, often spending hours on Monday mornings helping them access the Zoom session.

Before lockdown, our two music directors, Sarah Mandie and Chris Falk, had developed a very effective 'job sharing' model whereby they alternated weeks leading the Choir. This alternation continued online throughout Term 2, but unfortunately Chris was not able to continue with the Choir in Terms 3 and 4. The challenge of replacing Chris was substantial, but we were very lucky to find three extraordinary musicians – Jenny Taylor (who originally co-founded the choir), Kavisha Mazella, and Bill Verhagen, who shared the vacant sessions.

Sadly, at the end of the year, Sarah told us she would be leaving because she had been offered a full time teaching position. Her farewell letter is printed on page 4 of this report. Fortunately for us, Chris Falk is able to resume leading the Choir in 2021, sharing alternating sessions with guest leaders.

Our music leaders have been extraordinary in meeting the challenges presented by this new online situation, especially dealing with the limitations imposed by Zoom technology, which prevent people from singing together. The basic solution is to ask participants to mute themselves while the leader plays guitar and sings; each individual thus sings along with the leader only, and the leader cannot hear anyone.

Our musicians realised that new techniques were required to give people both a chance to participate individually and to feel part of a group. One technique has been, at the beginning of each session, to have each participant 'sing your name' and then have the rest of the choir repeat the notes while all are unmuted.

Sarah and Chris ingeniously overcame some of Zoom's limitations, for example through 'call and response' songs.. Sarah and our volunteer pianist Jan Briggs pre-recorded the music for a number of songs; Sarah could play these recordings to accompany her singing over Zoom, allowing Choir members to also sing along to the piano accompaniment they were used to from in-person sessions. Sarah also recorded harmonies for some songs so that singers could sing along with the harmony of their choice.

Our volunteers stuck with us and became even more mutually supportive; some of them formed a ukulele group that regularly met online with our pianist in a separate session. One volunteer, Jenny Penfold, makes a huge contribution by compiling PowerPoint presentations of lyrics for the songs each week, and another, Judy Rassaby, manages the screen sharing of these lyrics during our sessions.

Christi Butterfield, Lynne Bonney and Catherine McCullagh have participated in almost every online session – inspiring, engaging with and supporting our singers. Being online was more difficult for other volunteers, but Yanni Hall and Gwlad McLachlan were able to join us occasionally, while Norma Jones opted to wait until we returned to in-person singing. It was very special to have virtual 'visitors' when people did join in occasionally.

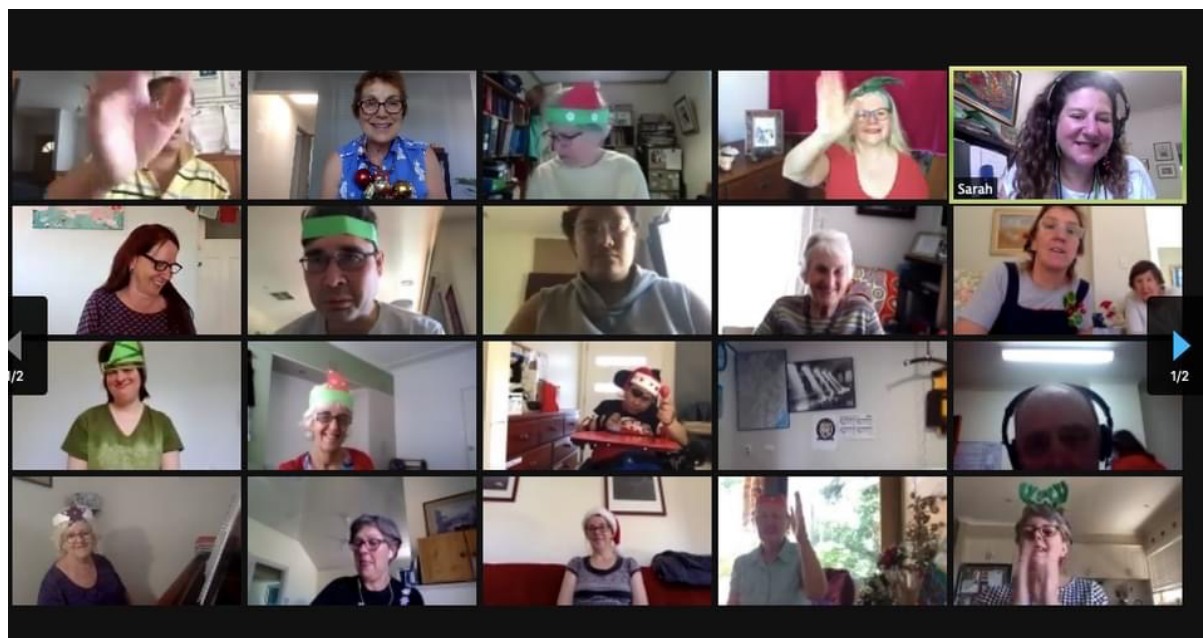
Volunteer Robyn James had already developed and maintained our Facebook page, and this became even more important during 2020. She often posts enjoyable music clips and generally projects a sense of fun and engagement for both volunteers and singers.

Our incredible 'greeters and traffic managers', Tom Taylor and Graeme Clare decided to 'sit out' the online segment of 2020, but we look forward to their return when we are able to sing together again in person.

We were not able to perform publicly during 2020, but we did commission videographer Sam Rassaby to create an inspiring short video, 'Still Singing', about our adaptation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHn5BDHT4NA>).

The Committee has continued to meet regularly online to conduct the business of the Choir. Thanks to Jan Clare, Ethel Fredericks, David Joy, Tom Russell and Scott MacFie for their participation in this important activity. Thanks to Sally Green for all the varied admin support she has provided to us. Most especially I thank our amazing Office Bearers: Katherine Wositzky (Vice President), Nettie Harper (Treasurer) and Judy Rassaby (Secretary) whose expertise, enthusiasm and stamina powers so much of what we do.

For our end of year online celebration, under the guidance of Volunteer Coordinator Jan Clare, volunteers created decorative 'hats' and 'wavers' that were sent by post to each singer, along with an individually addressed Christmas card. At our last session of the year on 14 December, singers and volunteers gathered together virtually to celebrate the completion of another successful year.



How we ended 2020. (Note the festive hats made by volunteers and sent to singers.)

I am very proud of our choir and the way we have all handled 2020. Together we have met a series of challenges and turned what could have been disadvantages into strengths. We have deepened our sense of being a caring community, and I believe much of what we have done presents a useful model that other groups could well emulate.

Julie Contole

Thanks to all the people and organisations who have supported us financially during 2020. In particular we acknowledge the support of the Department of Health and Human Services through a generous 'Self-Help Grant' over two years. We also appreciate the continuing support from the City of Darebin, the Clifton Hill/North Fitzroy Community Bank Branch of the Bendigo Bank, the Inner North Foundation and Fareshare. Finally thank you to our private donors for your contributions.

Music Director's Comments

To all members of the High Street Bells,

It is with sadness that I must announce I will not be leading the choir in 2021.

I wish I was still available to lead the choir on Monday mornings but I have been offered full time secondary teaching work for 2021 and I have accepted a one-year contract.

Since my first sessions as a fill in leader almost 5 years ago, and taking over from Jenny Taylor at the end of 2017, I have been so lucky to be a part of a most supportive and compassionate community.

I have grown so much as a choir leader and as a person and I thank every singer, every volunteer, every support worker, every music leader and every benefactor for their generous spirit and the desire to share the love of music.

We have created a unique community; we have opened our voices and opened our hearts in song. We have performed and shared our uplifting gift with our audiences. We have banged our drums, blown our kazoos, busted a dance move or two and shared many a fruit platter!

I am so grateful to you all and I wish you many more years of joyful singing!

I am very pleased that the choir committee have agreed to have me back as a special guest leader whenever possible. Just as we have enjoyed the many gifts shared with us from past leaders like Jenny Taylor and Chris Falk. I will definitely be back.

.... We'll meet again
Don't know where
Don't know when
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day...

Love Sarah

Finance Report January to December 2020

During the 12-month period to 31 December 2020 there were cash receipts of \$16,561 and payments of \$16,449. Operating costs were higher than 2019 (see note 3) whilst fees paid to the Musical Director and the Administration Officer remained relatively stable. Due to the pandemic restrictions, there was a significant drop in rent paid.

The committee decided not to pursue fees for 2020 due to the uncertainties caused by the pandemic. The choir was very fortunate to receive a substantial grant from DHHS of \$10,000 without which we would have been in significant financial trouble.

The bank balance at the end of December was \$13,726, which is less than one year's operating costs. Sustainable funding remains a significant challenge for the Choir. The committee has investigated several other potential funding options but without any success.

A motion will be put at the AGM to write off the stock of CDs as they are very old and no longer represent the work of members of the choir.



Lyn Harper

HIGH STREET BELLS CHOIR INC SPECIAL PURPOSE STATEMENT for 12 months 1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020

CASH RECIEPTS	<i>Notes</i>	2020	2019
Grants	1	12,664	8,200
Fees		670	3,225
Fundraising		300	2,011
Donations	2	2,927	1,265
TOTAL RECIEPTS		16,561	14,702
CASH PAYMENTS			
Musical Directors fees		7,600	9,000
Administration Salary		5,040	5,955
Operational Costs	3	3,809	3,353
TOTAL PAYMENTS		16,449	18,308
NET CASH		112	(3,606)

Movement of cash

	Notes	
Bank balance 1 January 2020		13,614.58
Net cash movement		112.20
Bank Balance 31 December 2020	4	13,726.78

Notes:

- 1 Grants Bendigo Bank \$2,664; DHHS Victoria \$10,000
- 2 Donations There were several donations from individuals who are friends of the Choir and \$500 from the Fitzroy Rotary Club and \$100 from a Fitzroy Rotary Club member
- 3 Operational costs Operational costs included two computer tablets which were purchased for participants who could not attend the zoom sessions otherwise. Also included was \$1,000 paid for the production of audio-visual material.
- 4 Donations not yet transferred The bank balance does not include \$132.79 Donations via PayPal not transferred to bank account as at 31 December 2020

Assets held as at 31 December 2020

Item	Purchase price	Purchase date
Computer tablets for loan to participants	158.00	28/8/20
Computer tablets for loan to participants	125.00	14/7/20
Percussion instruments	462.60	2/9/18
Headset	456.50	4/7/18
Computer	1,582.08	1/06/15
Computer	2,449.00	30/10/15
Projector	449.00	30/10/15
Printer	270.00	Pre June 2013
Sound System	299.00	Pre June 2013

Stock held at 31 December 2020

Stock of t-shirts	110.16	23/6/13
Stock of CDs	1,063.14	15/11/13