



MEDIA RELEASE

Riverwood choir brings music to the community

A shared love of singing and community spirit has brought together a group of Riverwood residents to form the Riverwood Community Choir through a community-driven initiative facilitated by property development and investment company, PAYCE.

PAYCE supports many of the local community and cultural events held throughout the year at various localities, including Washington Park Open Day, Carols in the Wetlands, Harmony Day and Music in the Rose Garden.

These events offer an opportunity for local groups and individuals to display their talents and entertain to a wide audience. It was at one of these events in late 2015 that some local residents thought it would be a good idea to form a choral group, so they could perform together on such occasions.

Initially, a core group of five residents kicked around some ideas on how to make it happen and when the company responsible for the Washington Park project, PAYCE, willingly offered its support, the seed was sown for a Riverwood Community Choir to become a reality.

PAYCE Managing Director, Brian Boyd said it had been a pleasure for PAYCE to be involved with the local Riverwood community for the past five years through its Washington Park project and its support of many local community and charity events.

"PAYCE is also a strong supporter and Foundation Partner of the Sydney Street Choir, so we were thrilled to arrange the services of its choirmaster, James Paul, to help establish the Riverwood Community Choir and for James to be their mentor," he said.

"Since the early planning stages of Washington Park, we have been impressed by the community spirit shown by local residents and their enthusiasm to get behind any initiative that benefits the community.

"PAYCE believes for a community to be strong, it needs to be connected, integrated and inclusive, a place where people have opportunities to participate in social activities of community life.

"Community singing has great benefits for all involved and offers a strong sense of belonging and connectedness, bringing people together across all ages, culture and abilities.

"It can also foster inter-cultural acceptance and understanding in an area that proudly boasts over 150 countries and cultures represented among its residents.

"The choir had its debut performance at the 2015 Carols in the Wetlands where they received rousing applause. Their next performance in public was in front of 2,000 people at last year's Lights of Christmas presented by PAYCE light and sound show at St Mary's Cathedral in the city.

"I had the pleasure of being in the audience at that Christmas event and the performance by the choir was exceptional for a group that had only been together a short while," Brian Boyd said.

James Paul said it was a pleasure to have the opportunity to work with such an enthusiastic group of people who obviously enjoy singing.

"A lot of people don't get the chance to have their voices heard, so this was a way to let them express themselves in a positive, supportive way," he said.

The Riverwood choir has grown to around 25 members and meet each week in the Lincoln community room at Washington Park for rehearsals and to plan their future appearances.

Many choir members say music and singing has been part of their life for as long as they can remember.



Janeen Home is an original member of the choir and is sometimes called upon as a soloist. She clearly remembers giving her first solo performance as a four-year-old on a Showboat dinner cruise on Sydney Harbour.

“I still enjoy performing today and the choir has been an excellent way of bringing our local residents together to celebrate the joy of singing,” she said.

Choir member, Bill Manivilovski came from Macedonia in 1968 and has lived in Riverwood for 17 years.

“I enjoy the company of my fellow residents and especially making new friends, so the choir is one more way to have some fun and share experiences,” he said.

Mr Manivilovski also plays the bass guitar and is a great fan of the rock and roll era, naming Elvis Presley and Tom Jones among his favourite performers.

Pam Lewis is another resident who enjoys sharing her love of music and singing with her friendly neighbours.

“The choir is a wonderful way to bring people together and give pleasure to others,” she said.

The choir now has around a dozen songs in its diverse repertoire and is adding new material regularly. Some of the members have suggested songs that reflect the diversity of cultures represented in the group. The Fijian traditional song of farewell, *Isa Lei*, for example, is a song held dear to the hearts of all Fijians around the world and has proved popular with all audiences when performed by the choir.

Other songs in the choir’s repertoire include the Beatles’ tune, *Let it Be*, *When the Saints Go Marching In*, *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*, *What a Wonderful World* and *Billy Don’t be a Hero*.

Brian Boyd said the choir was keen to build up its membership and anyone interested in joining was most welcome to come along to one of the weekly rehearsals and join in.

“It doesn’t matter what your background or ability is, the choir would like to see anyone who enjoys singing in a group and most of all having lots of fun.

“There is no auditioning and the only pre-requisite is to love music and singing. As a bonus you get to meet with some of your friendly neighbours and join in the social events,” Brian Boyd said.

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