

Orange Male Voice Choir

POLICY

RESUMING IN-PERSON REHEARSALS_ Version 2.0.

14 JULY 2020

This policy sets out the rationale and actions to be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at Choir rehearsals.

Background

OMVC suspended rehearsals in March 2020 to reduce the risk of coronavirus infecting members and other people associated with members. This coincided with the Orange Regional Conservatorium's asking the Choir not to rehearse there and was followed by State rules that prohibited assemblies, such as rehearsals. ORC has recently invited OMVC to return to rehearsal from mid-July.

Currently NSW is still advising against group singing and gatherings of people over the age of 70. Groups of 20 people are allowed to gather outdoors with social distancing and more can gather in churches, community halls, restaurants, etc. where 4 square metres of space is available for each person and a *Covid-19 Safety Plan* is operational.

NSW Health is warning that we are still in a dangerous phase of the control program. Complacency and the relaxation of restrictions could still lead to further outbreaks in NSW. Outbreaks of community transmission in June-July in Victoria and NSW demonstrate how an apparently low prevalence of coronavirus can quickly get out of control when health guidance and regulations aren't followed.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment comprises two main elements: *probability* and *consequence*. The incidence and prevalence of known COVID-19 cases in NSW is currently very low, however the current community transmission in Sydney and confirmations of cases from Victoria on the NSW South Coast and in the Riverina, Blue Mountains and the ACT are sobering. Fast transport links from Melbourne to the Central West had been operating unimpeded until early July, including direct flights to Orange (*Fly Corporate*), the XPT via Cootamundra and road traffic through nearby towns on the Newell Highway.

The members of OMVC are predominantly aged 70 or more and are therefore at high risk of serious, and possibly fatal, disease if infected with coronavirus. Some also have underlying health issues that would affect the severity of infection. Therefore, the consequences of infection for most members is very high, as it could be for our families and broader community.

Serious coronavirus outbreaks in choirs were reported in the early stages of the pandemic overseas and there is evidence that singing produces large aerosol plumes that persist and fill a space (<https://www.drheathernelson.com/singingandcovid19>). Concern about aerosols in transmission,

especially indoors, has increased in July. Face masks are now recommended where social distancing is not possible or effective.

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OMVC recognizes several benefits of returning to in-person rehearsals, including

- to mood and mental health through singing together,
- the ability to prepare for performances, and
- the opportunity to transition to a new Music Director during the second half of the year.

Aims

We also recognize the gains in coronavirus control have been costly and hard-won and aim to,

- a) Provide a safe environment for members to enjoy these benefits.
- b) Prevent the transmission of coronavirus among members and to the broader community.
- c) Prevent contamination of premises at which rehearsals are held.
- d) Encourage individual members to assess their own risk of being infected in protecting themselves.
- e) Comply fully with NSW laws and health guidelines.

Individual responsibility

On current evidence, if infection is introduced to an indoor group singing activity, spread and consequent illness are almost inevitable. So every effort must be made to minimize the risk of infection being introduced to a rehearsal.

Every individual member of the Choir has a duty of care, not only to other members and their families, but to the venue and the broader community of Orange and District.

All members are encouraged to have the *CovidSafe* app running on their phones and are further expected to:

- comply with all NSW Health directives and advice if he has tested positive or had contact with a person who has tested positive,
- comply with general recommendations for social distancing and hygiene,
- be up to date with their influenza vaccination, and
- isolate and contact their doctor or the *National Coronavirus Health Information Line* (1800 020 080) to arrange testing if they develop any of the signs of COVID-19.

Symptoms include **fever, cough, sore/scratchy throat and shortness of breath.**

Other reported symptoms include **loss of smell, loss of taste, runny nose, muscle pain, joint pain, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting and loss of appetite.**

Tentative Plan

Virtual rehearsals using Zoom have been very helpful in realising some of the benefits of singing together. The Management Committee agreed on 7 July that it is now timely to take a month's recess with a view to cautiously resuming in-person rehearsals when we can.

The tentative plan is to resume in-person rehearsals in two stages:

1. Individual Sections (ie Basses, Baritones, Tenors) of up to 10 choristers in mid-August.
2. Full choir rehearsals at the beginning of October.

This will be conditional on:

- NSW Health's regulations, including permitting group singing indoors and no longer discouraging gatherings of people over 70 y.o.
- There having been no active cases of COVID-19 in the Orange, Blayney and Cabonne LGAs for 14 days.
- OMVC having developed a *Covid-19 Safety Plan* for rehearsals, including the following:
 - a) Rehearsals for each section will be held at 14-day intervals initially.
 - b) Rehearsals will run for no longer than 60 minutes and singing will be *piano/pianissimo*.
 - c) The venue will be well ventilated with fresh air so as to disperse aerosols quickly.
 - d) To reduce the risk to family members, rehearsals will not be held in private homes.
 - e) The venue will have sufficient clear space to allow 4 square metres per participant.
 - f) Seating will be staggered and arranged so that participants can maintain at least 1.5m separation from one another, and preferably more.
 - g) A member will only attend if he has not visited or had personal contact in the previous 14 days with people from overseas, Victoria or from any LGA classified as "hot spot" or an *area for increased testing and surveillance* (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/stats-nsw.aspx>).
 - h) A member will only attend if he is well and has not had any symptoms of systemic or respiratory illness during the previous 14 days.
 - i) Each member will declare his or her health on arrival and also undertake to immediately advise the Secretary if he becomes sick or tests positive in the four weeks following a rehearsal.
 - j) Members will arrive and leave quickly in an orderly spaced manner.
 - k) Members will wear well-fitting face masks designed to reduce the production of aerosols.
 - l) Members will use the hand sanitizer and tissues available on arrival and departure.
 - m) High touch-points such as door handles, keyboards, chair backs and arms, etc, will be wiped with sanitizer before and after the rehearsal.
 - n) Members will bring and handle only their own music sheets, pencils, cups, etc.
 - o) Members will minimize use of other common rooms, such as a kitchen and toilets.
 - p) In-person rehearsals will be suspended if the Management Committee agrees that the risk is unacceptable.

The Management Committee will update members about developments and will review this policy depending on the changing coronavirus situation in Australia, NSW rules and health guidelines and the Choir's experience.

END

14 July 2020