



NATIONAL BOYS CHOIR
— OF AUSTRALIA —

Handbook

2013 edition

Published by
The National Boys Choir of Australia Inc.
Unit 3
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Dear Parent,

Welcome to the Performing Choir of The National Boys Choir of Australia Incorporated. Your son has progressed in an organisation that not only promotes music, but one that will help him develop personal skills, confidence and self-discipline.

Involvement with the Choir will create many opportunities that are not readily available to other boys in the community and your son stands to benefit substantially from his participation.

Naturally for a boy to be successful in the Performing Choir, he will require a commitment of support from his parents. As with most parents who have had boys in the Choir, you will find that your commitment is more than compensated for by the benefits and opportunities flowing to your son.

In extending to you a very sincere welcome to the Performing Choir, we hope that our association will be mutually beneficial and will hold for you many lasting and satisfying memories long after your son's involvement with the Choir. We hope that this handbook will be a useful guide in enabling you to quickly gain an understanding of the Choir's principles and guidelines.



Rex Wenn
Chairman
Management Committee
NATIONAL BOYS CHOIR OF AUSTRALIA INC.

National Boys Choir of Australia Inc.

VISION STATEMENT

To be recognized as one of the finest boys' choirs in the world.

MISSION STATEMENT

To foster and encourage a musical community committed to providing choristers with:

An excellent choral music education

An opportunity to develop a love of singing

The opportunity for music and performance to contribute to their overall development, including self discipline, self confidence and interpersonal skills

Leadership opportunities

The guiding principles in focusing on our mission are:

Respect for each individual chorister

The value of music as a contributor to the all round education of the young

A commitment to best practice in choral education

National Boys Choir of Australia Inc.

The National Boys Choir of Australia is a not for profit incorporated association. The Committee of Management is comprised as follows:

President	Rex Wenn
Artistic Directors	Peter Casey Philip Carmody
Finance Director	Colin Seedy
Fundraising	Judy Hooper
Board Members	Jan Eldred Linda Latimer Stephen Mansour

All operations of the Choir are the responsibility of this Committee, and all activities conducted in the name of National Boys Choir of Australia Inc. come under its guidance.

STAFF

Administrative

Peter Casey ARTISTIC ADMINISTRATOR 9872 4480
All enquiries of an administrative and artistic nature.
peter.casey@nationalboyschoir.com.au

Jan Eldred OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR 9872 4480
All enquiries of an administrative nature
jan.eldred@nationalboyschoir.com.au

Colin Seedy FINANCE DIRECTOR 9800 3239
All enquiries of a financial nature
colinseedy@optusnet.com.au

Wendy DiLuzio WARDROBE 0419 671 225
9751 1643
All clothing requirements – wardrobe and stagewear

Artistic Staff

Peter Casey ARTISTIC DIRECTOR 9872 4480
Performing Choir music queries
Performing rosters and availability

Philip Carmody ARTISTIC DIRECTOR 9872 4480

Robyn Cochrane SENIOR ACCOMPANIST 9872 4480
Absences from rehearsal & performances

Franca Locandro TUTOR - PERFORMING CHOIR 9872 4480

Alexandra Boemo CO-ORDINATOR 9872 4480
 - Elementary Choristers
 - Junior Choristers
 (Training Choirs)
 All music, rehearsal and performance matters concerning the Elementary and Junior Choristers

Ruth Tenace ACCOMPANIST – TRAINING CHOIRS

Peter Finnigan TUTOR – TRAINING CHOIRS

Office/Rehearsal Venue 3/9 Pilgrim Court, Ringwood 3134 9872 4480
 Facsimile: 9874 0264
 Email: office@nationalboyschoir.com.au
www.nationalboyschoir.com.au

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 9am – 3pm
 Wednesday 10.30am – 6.30pm
 Friday 1.30pm – 7.30pm

An answering machine will operate outside these hours

Staff

NBCA has a policy of selecting qualified and highly competent staff. Many are trained teachers and have developed the special skills required for handling large groups of children. This policy has served the Choir well over many years and is reflected in the tone and discipline exhibited by the choristers.

The behaviour of the choristers and the manner in which they conduct themselves are the subject of continuing favourable comment, and the Choir has a strong sense of pride in maintaining these standards.

All Staff hold a current 'Working with Children' card.

All Staff hold a nationally recognised Level 2 First Aid Certificate and undertake annual refresher courses.

Artistic Staff

Performing Choir

Peter Casey Artistic Director, Conductor
 Philip Carmody Artistic Director, Conductor
 Robyn Cochrane Accompanist
 Franca Locandro Tutor

Junior & Elementary
 (Training) Choirs

Alexandra Boemo Conductor
 Ruth Tenace Accompanist
 Peter Finnigan Tutor

The National Boys Choir of Australia

The National Boys Choir of Australia is a special and unique organization.

Founded in 1964, it is conducted by a skilled, professional group dedicated to developing and maintaining a world-class youth choir. The boys, aged from seven to fifteen are drawn from all over Melbourne. They commence their training with twelve months as elementary choristers, followed by a further twelve months as junior choristers. These two years introduce the boys to the basic tenets of choral work and prepare them for graduation into the Performing Choir.

It requires no small degree of commitment and self-discipline to attend weekly or twice-weekly rehearsals and regular music workshop weekends, sometimes at the expense of other activities. However, the boys enthusiastically present ever more challenging repertoires with music ranging from early motets and madrigals through to the Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods to musical comedy, art songs and folk songs from many lands and contemporary works.

It is indeed a credit to both the music staff and the boys that the Choir consistently performs with such enjoyment and polish, always attaining a high degree of excellence.

Aims of the National Boys Choir of Australia

1. To cultivate a fine choral singing standard in order to promote Australia and Australian music making.
2. To develop in choristers good essential vocal production, based on the traditional European bel canto style.
3. To develop self-discipline and poise in choristers through attaining excellence in voice production and presentation.

Behavioural Policy

For any organisation the size of NBCA to function professionally and efficiently, it requires a good tone of co-operation and respect for each other among its members.

NBCA has a behavioural policy which encourages these attributes among its members. This should not be interpreted as something harsh or demeaning. On the contrary, the choristers are encouraged to respect each other while acknowledging the fact that each of them is different in some way and that we all have different strengths and weaknesses. The policy of the Choir is also aimed at developing self-control and self-discipline within each chorister by making him responsible for his actions. We believe that each chorister should have the opportunity to learn without interference from others and that time spent in the Choir should serve as a memorable experience of personal satisfaction and achievement with the passing years.

Attendance

The music sung by the choristers can be quite complex. It is important for choristers to attend all scheduled rehearsals, and music workshop weekends. Absences should be rare and only where very special circumstances exist. If your son has a reason to be absent, a written notice of apology is to be directed to Ms Cochrane so that reasons for absences may be recorded; alternatively you may ring or email the office.

Attendance records are perused when choristers are selected for specific functions and engagements.

Punctuality

Punctuality is a most important aspect of self-discipline and it is essential boys are punctual for rehearsals and at performances. Arrival and departure times for performances are communicated to parents through the weekly newsletters.

Absenteeism

If your son is selected for a performance and is unexpectedly unavailable, you must contact the Artistic Administrator, Mr Peter Casey, so a suitable replacement can be found. This is to ensure a balance of voice parts.

Leave of Absence

Any chorister who is intending to be absent from Choir for an extended period should apply for leave of absence. Whilst this would normally be granted, the duration of such leave may affect a chorister's selection for certain performances.

As a general guide, choristers who take extended leave of a full term or more due to family temporary relocation/sabbatical etc will be expected to pay 50% of tuition fees during their absence. Choristers taking part term leave, including for short term illness, will be expected to pay fees in full.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals take place every Friday night during school terms at 3/9 Pilgrim Court, Ringwood, Victoria. The scheduled starting time is 7.00pm. Arrival time for rehearsal is 6.50pm. The rehearsal will conclude at 9.30pm.

Monday sectional rehearsals commence at 5.00pm and conclude at 7.00pm. A schedule for Monday rehearsals is distributed at the beginning of each term.

Parents are requested to adhere to the following:

1. Rehearsal rooms are closed to all but choristers and staff.
2. Punctuality is essential.
3. Pre-rehearsal preparation by the Artistic Staff is a most important element of the efficient running of any rehearsal. Accordingly, interviews/discussions involving Artistic Staff at those times are discouraged. An Administrative Staff member is in attendance to handle enquiries or take messages for Artistic Staff. As a general rule, Artistic Staff are available for discussion at the conclusion of rehearsals.

There is an area set aside where parents can wait during rehearsals. Parents are encouraged to use this area and to get to know each other. Tea and coffee facilities are available.

Contacting the Choir

Parents needing to contact the Choir can do so by phoning the Choir's office on 9872 4480 during office hours – refer page 8. Alternatively, you may communicate with staff in writing via your son's plastic pocket – refer Distribution of Notices.

During the year, meetings of parents are called by the Choir's Management to communicate practical developments or future planning (eg. tours).

Communication

The main form of communication with parents is by newsletter (Weekly Circular) every Friday night, available as an email, hard copy or accessed via the Choir Community on the NBCA website. Newsletters are dated and numbered.

We urge parents to regularly access and check circulars to avoid missing any important information.

Please file them away carefully for future reference.

Distribution of Notices (Weekly Circulars)

A plastic pocket labelled with your son's name and choir number is included in the music folder. Communications should be forwarded through this plastic pocket.

Please note: The plastic pocket is to be kept in the music folder. Parent replies, letters, cheques etc. may be forwarded to rehearsal in this same plastic pocket. All monies, cheques etc should be in a sealed envelope with the chorister's name clearly written on the outside.

Choristers place plastic pockets in their numbered pigeon hole prior to the commencement of Friday rehearsal and Staff will clear the pockets.

Alternatively letters, cheques, fees etc may be handed in at the office – if the office is unattended, they may be 'posted' in the letter box beneath the office window. This is a locked box and will be cleared when the office is next attended.

Fees

The NBCA is a not for profit organization.

Fee invoices are sent out in the first week of term, and payment is due within 14 days. Prompt payment is appreciated.

If paying by Corporate/Company cheque, please ensure the Chorister's name is notated on the back of the cheque.

We accept Mastercard & Visa payments. Choir fees are payable in advance and are charged at the commencement of each term; fees are not refundable.

Fee income alone does not maintain the Choir as a self-sufficient organisation so consequently the Choir needs to supplement its income from other sources (eg. levies, performances) in order to meet staffing costs, building maintenance, expenditure on music library and wardrobe, and administrative overheads.

In circumstances where parents feel a genuine inability to pay fees without strain or where a deferment of payment beyond the due date will avoid embarrassment, those parents should not be reluctant to approach the Treasurer who will treat such matters with the utmost confidentiality in considering an alternative payment schedule.

Fundraising

The income from fundraising events makes an important contribution in offsetting some of the Choir's operating costs; these activities also provide the opportunity for the Choir Community to meet and socialise.

A plan of fundraising events is established at the beginning of each year and this is overseen by the Choir's Fundraising Co-ordinator. Parents are invited to join or assist the committee set up to organise each activity.

Refundable Deposits

When leaving the Choir, the following must be returned before deposits (Stagewear, Streetwear & Music) can be refunded.

- Robe
- Black Trousers
- Robe (long) and Uniform (short) bags
- NBCA Blazer
- NBCA Woollen Jumper
- Taupe Trousers
- White Shirts - long and short sleeved
- NBCA Tie

and all NBCA Music, including photocopies

All clothing must be returned clean and good condition – refer to section on Wardrobe for full details

Health and Emergency Contacts (HEC) details

Parents are asked to complete a **Health and Emergency Contacts** (HEC) form at the beginning of each year. The care and wellbeing of all boys is of primary importance and informing staff of any special medical conditions (ie allergies, respiratory issues etc) is essential.

While this information is sought annually, it is important that parents update this progressively as necessary, so that the Choir is always in the position of ensuring the well-being of choristers when undertaking any choir activities.

Music Workshop Weekends

The Choir conducts Music Workshop Weekends at the Choir premises for the choristers to perfect their repertoire before major concerts and tours. These are fairly intensive but the results are well worth the effort. Parents are notified well in advance of the dates of these weekends.

Performance Selection

Once choristers enter the Performing Choir they are eligible for selection for all performances. However, the whole Choir is not always required and selection of choristers has to be made.

In general, Artistic Directors choose choristers on the basis of obtaining a balance between singing parts

and the criteria listed for tour selection. The part balance is most important for the sound of the Choir.

Choristers are notified by newsletter when they are selected for a performance.

Our intake to the Choir is based on quality not quantity. Choristers who pass their initial training years and enter the Performing Choir are all given the opportunity to perform.

Tour Selection

In planning tours interstate or overseas, parents are asked via the newsletter about the availability of their son to tour. A selection of choristers is made using the following criteria:

1. Quality of the voice at the time of selection audition.
2. Knowledge of the program demonstrated by the chorister.
3. Good attitude and behaviour in evidence at rehearsals, performances, and weekend workshops.
4. Maturity of the chorister (i.e. the ability to be independent enough to cope with the tour). This is not gauged by the chronological age of the chorister - some nine year olds are more mature, capable and reliable than some eleven or twelve year olds.
5. Obtaining a balance of voice parts.

Because selection takes place some months prior to the commencement of the tour, the Management of NBCA reserves the right to review the selection of any chorister chosen to tour if it believes that the chorister fails to meet any of the criteria prior to the tour commencing.

Non-choir Performances

It is our policy to encourage choristers in a variety of musical experiences. Performances by choristers outside choir are often a source of rewarding

experience for both choristers and the Choir collectively. Conversely, poor performance or bad behaviour from a chorister involved with such a performance will reflect on him and the Choir's reputation.

For this reason, we expect choristers to discuss any invitation to take part in such performances. The upholding of our reputation as an organization and our confidence in a chorister's ability to both perform and behave well are factors considered.

Choristers should also discuss with one of the Artistic Directors any request to perform in optional school activities such as a musical. It is our policy to support all school activities. Where these activities are not compulsory and may impinge on a chorister's involvement with the Choir, some discussion should be sought. The main concern of the Choir is to ensure choristers don't take on too many commitments and restrict the possibility of their participation in a choir activity.

Retiring or Departing the Choir

Boys generally remain as Performing Choristers until their voice begins to change. Awards for extensive service are presented to choristers who meet one of the following criteria:

1. The chorister is leaving due to voice change
or
2. The chorister is completing Year 8 at school and has decided to leave after discussion with Mr Casey and Mr Carmody. (Boys in this category are generally very close to the voice change.)

Parents

Parents are encouraged to take an active interest in the progress of their son through the Choir. It is important for parents to have a good understanding of the aims and ideals of the Choir and its method of operation. The Management of the Choir is always mindful of costs and every effort is taken to ensure that expenses are responsibly managed.

Parents are therefore asked, in addition to paying the fees required, to support the Choir in every way possible. It is anticipated that parents will promote the sale of tickets to the two major concerts (mid-year and Christmas) as this enables Management to minimise fees and charges paid by parents. After so many weeks of striving for perfection during rehearsals, a large audience provides a sense of achievement and incentive for the choristers.

Parental Involvement

Parent support is strongly encouraged and parents are asked to register their names and occupations to enable Management to best utilise our combined talents in the better interests of the Choir.

Areas of Parental involvement include:

- Building/Maintenance and Improvements
- Chorister Supervision*
- Fund Raising
- Hospitality
- Medical/Nursing Assistance*
- Music Library
- Transport of Concert Equipment
- Wardrobe Assistance*

*Volunteer Parents will require a current Working With Children Card.

Grooming

The visual presentation of the Choir should complement the musical proficiency of the Choir. Engagements on television in particular are as dependent on our image as our sound. For this reason we point out some simple policies regarding grooming:

Hair - extremes of style are unacceptable. Any hairstyle which draws unnecessary attention to a particular chorister would detract from the collective image we are endeavouring to project.

Jewellery - In keeping with our collective image, choristers are not permitted to wear jewellery of any kind whenever street uniform or stage wear is worn.

WARDROBE

For professional reasons the Choir has specific uniforms for rehearsals, touring, official functions and performances.

Choir uniform or parts of it should only be worn when attending choir functions. The Choir uniform identifies the Choir, not the individual chorister, therefore it is not to be worn as every day wear. It is expected that choristers' behaviour will be exemplary while in uniform.

When travelling with the Choir, choristers are to wear choir uniform as stipulated by notice. Please ensure your son is in the correct designated dress for each occasion.

All articles of clothing must be clearly named. On no account must hired clothing be permanently marked. No iron-on tape is to be used. Sew-on name tags only please.

What to Wear When

Clothing requirements for each performance and associated rehearsals are stipulated in choir notices, usually in the week prior to the engagement.

WARDROBE Rehearsals

Rugby Top and Polo Shirt

Each chorister will purchase a choir polo shirt and blue rugby top. They are to be worn to rehearsal and music workshops unless specifically instructed otherwise.

Choristers are to wear their polo shirt with neat casual trousers/shorts to all rehearsals, and their rugby top as the weather dictates.

WARDROBE

Stagewear

- Robe

Robe and Accessories

Robes are choir property and while you have the use of these robes they must be cared for appropriately.

Robes are never to be washed - remove the fur collar which is attached with Velcro and dry clean only.

Robes are to be pressed and checked in advance of each function to ensure that all buttons are securely fastened and robe and sleeve hems are secure. Failure to do so may result in your son being asked to sit out of a performance - an uncared for robe detracts from the professionalism of the total performance.

Fitting Instructions

Robe length must be checked regularly. Check without chorister wearing shoes or belt, hands by side and looking straight ahead.

Choristers of slight build: robe must actually touch the floor all around.

Choristers of stockier build: robe must not only touch the floor all round but must overlap by 1.25cm to 1.8cm.

If length of robe has been inspected by wardrobe staff at rehearsal or special robe check, please ensure any necessary alterations to the hem are completed.

Robe Bag – longer version of the Uniform (Stagewear) bag

Every chorister is issued with a robe bag to protect his robe. Robes must always be brought to a performance (or to rehearsal for refitting, etc.) inside the robe bag. Please wash the robe bag periodically.

Pocket in robe bag must contain:

White low neck T-shirt: plain style cotton with a 'V' neck. If necessary cut 'V' neck into T-shirt, if this is not done the shirt will show above the robe collar. Wash after each performance.

White socks: medium length cotton socks. Wash after every performance.

White Jiffies: plain styling, plain white. Clean when necessary with White Lily, Jiff or similar. (to be purchased from Choir)

Comb or Hair Brush.

Please note: White T-shirt must be worn at all times underneath the robe. This is not for warmth but for hygiene, and helps extend the life of the robes.

**White robe belts and sashes, are retained by the Choir and are given out before each performance and collected afterwards.*

WARDROBE
Stagewear

- Black & Whites

Black Performance Trousers: are issued to each chorister and are to be hemmed to just touch the instep so that the front crease is perfectly straight.

**White Performance Shirts: these are distributed in the week prior to a performance for pressing and collected following each performance for laundering.*

**Cummerbunds and bow ties are retained by the Choir and are given out before each performance and collected afterwards.*

Uniform Bag (sometimes referred to as Stagewear bag) – shorter version of Robe Bag

Every chorister is issued with a uniform bag to protect his NBCA wardrobe items. Stagewear must always be carried to a performance (or rehearsal, for refitting, etc.) inside the uniform bag. Please wash this bag periodically.

When stagewear has been checked or refitted, check to see whether alterations are required.

Spare Clothing

A limited number of spare T-shirts, socks and jiffies are available for loan at concerts should any boy forget an item. Clothing so loaned should be taken home after the performance and washed and returned to the next rehearsal (or performance if sooner).

WARDROBE Streetwear

Full Uniform Consists of:

- NBCA blazer,
- NBCA jumper,
- taupe trousers
- white long or short sleeve shirt,
- NBCA tie,
- Black belt*
- black socks* and black shoes*

*items to be provided by chorister.

Short or long sleeve shirts will be nominated in 'What to Wear' when full event details are listed in the circular.

All clothing should be well named with sew on labels.

Full uniform must be worn to all official NBCA functions.

WARDROBE Hiring (Levy) and Deposit System

All stagewear/streetwear remains the property of the National Boys Choir of Australia.

Stagewear/streetwear levies must be paid before stagewear/ streetwear will be issued.

Stagewear/ streetwear is not to be worn under any circumstances for anything other than NBCA concerts or other official engagements.

When leaving the Choir, choristers must return all stagewear/ streetwear promptly.

Stagewear/ streetwear charges are divided into:

Deposits – refundable. When all stagewear/ streetwear is returned in good condition.

Annual Hiring Fee (Levy) - non-refundable. Covers wear and tear and replacement of stagewear/ streetwear due to normal, careful use. It does not cover loss or neglect.

WARDROBE Care of NBCA Clothing

Robe

Press before each performance. Dry clean as required and before exchange.

Black Trousers

Press before each performance. To be dry cleaned as required

White Performance Shirt

Press before each performance. To be collected by wardrobe staff following each performance for laundering.

Robe (long) and Uniform (short) Bags

Wash periodically.

Taupe Trousers

Hem to just touch the instep so that the front crease is perfectly straight. Wash or dry clean as required.

White Streetwear Shirts

Wash separately from other laundry after each use and dry out of direct sunlight.

NBCA Tie

Dry clean as required and before exchange.

NBCA Blazer

Dry Clean Only

NBCA Jumper

Dry Clean Only

WARDROBE

Uniform & Stagewear Exchange

All uniform clothing should fit the chorister comfortably at all times.

For hired clothing there is no cost involved in the exchange from one size to another.

Please ensure that all clothing is returned in good condition for exchange, otherwise dry cleaning costs will be deducted from the refundable deposit.

All clothing for return or exchange must be placed in a tied plastic bag, with the name of the chorister inside the bag and a list of items returned.

WARDROBE

Clothing

- Hired from Choir

Stagewear

Robe
Robe (long) Bag
Black Performance
Trousers
White Performance
Shirt
Stagewear (short)
Bag

Streetwear

NBCA Blazer
NBCA Jumper
Taupe Trousers
NBCA Tie
White long sleeve shirt
White short sleeve shirt

WARDROBE

Clothing

- Purchased/Provided
by chorister

Purchased from Choir

NBCA Polo Top
NBCA Rugby Top
White Jiffies

Provided by Choristers

Black Belt
Black Socks
Black Shoes
White low neck T-Shirt
White Socks