



# voices of birralee

Dear Birralee friends

I am sure that many of you will have heard already but it is with great sadness that we at Birralee notify you of the loss of someone who was very much a part of our Birralee family – Harley Mead. Harley passed away last Thursday and since this time we have been struggling to come to terms with his departure. Harley was a wonderful supporter of and contributor to our Birralee world. He worked with us as a composer, conductor, musical collaborator and concert compère among many other roles. With his composer hat on (one of his many usually brightly coloured items of clothing) he wrote several pieces for us at Birralee and almost all of our choristers have had the opportunity to perform at least one of his pieces. Some have even been fortunate to give the world premiere performances of those pieces. As a conductor, many of our young people had the joy of working with him either at Birralee or through their school choral ensembles. This usually meant having to do some crazy warm-ups that were high energy and just when choristers thought they could start to relax in rehearsal Harley would again be challenging them to keep up with him. Harley was also a part of many of our special projects at Birralee – most notably our Q150 Songbridge tour when he and Paul Jarman collaborated with our artistic team to create new works for each of the towns we visited as part of that tour. This collaboration led to the creation of 9 new choral works celebrating Queensland's history and beauty.

To say it has been a pleasure to work with Harley is an understatement – his infectious enthusiasm for music making, his ability to inspire young choristers to take risks and express themselves through their singing, and his ability to embrace and encourage all will be sadly missed. In particular Julie and I will miss his encouragement of us and his regular pre and post concert texts sending either best wishes (chookas was his most common encouragement) or congratulations.

Next week we will both formally and informally farewell Harley and more information will be made available to you as this comes to hand. In the meantime there is an opportunity for you to share your appreciation and admiration for Harley through contributing to the Harley Mead Appreciation Society page on facebook. We are also inviting choristers to offer brief comments about the impact Harley had on them that may be included in a tribute to be presented at Harley's funeral. You may also have photos of Harley in action that could be used in this tribute. If you would like to do this then please forward your comments or hi-res photos by email to [paul@birralee.org](mailto:paul@birralee.org).

Let me finish this note with words penned by Harley in his beautiful children's song *When our Voices Join Together*:

When our voices join together, we can heal the world of sorrow.

Deep in our heart is the joy of a new day, filled with the richness and power of song.

Vale and rest in peace Harley.