

Patron's Address 2025

Good evening everybody. I hope you're having a wonderful evening at the Royal Canberra Golf Club, and enjoying a beautiful, beautiful, dinner. I'm really sorry I'm unable to be present this evening. As many of you may know, I'm the Musical Director of the Blamey Street Big Band, and it just so happens that we're at the Albert Hall this evening performing for the Swing Cats. They're a swing dance group and they have their club annual ball tonight. We've played at it for many years and it's never crossed with the dinner before, but, unfortunately, it just has this year. It really is a shame to miss the annual Rugby Choir dinner, it's an occasion which my wife Lynne and I sincerely enjoy.

Firstly, may I congratulate all choir members on their achievements in 2025. I feel it must be a year of a record number of engagements. No doubt highlighted by the Adelaide trip, the Sydney Opera House concert and the opportunity to sing in concert with the Brindabella Orchestra. On your behalf may I thank the Committee, headed up by president Scott, for their dedication and devotion throughout a very busy administrative and musical year. Thanks also to Shilong and the musical staff for their unstinting resolve to continually improve musically and to seek out appropriate venues for the choir to display its choral wares.

Congratulations on the success of the recent recruitment drive. I had the pleasure to meet four of the five new members last Saturday at Parliament House. I hope they really enjoy the fellowship of the choir, as well as revel in the joy of music-making.

My personal thanks to Robert Macaulay for facilitating the voting for the Patron's Award. It's now my pleasure to read the words prepared for me by Robert.

Patron's Award 2025

David Lewis OAM, the Choir's first Patron, inaugurated the Patron's Award in 2005 and ceased being Patron in 2009. Sadly, after an outstanding lifetime commitment to Rugby Union in the ACT and elsewhere, David passed away in September this year at the age of 80 years. The Award is to enable Australian Rugby Choir members to recognise and acknowledge outstanding service to the Choir.

Until tonight one member had won the Award twice and one year two members shared the Award. This year there have been two changes in the impressive line-up of winners. A second Choir member has now won the Award twice and, in so doing, has set a new record as far as voting goes by achieving the highest number of votes by any nominee in the 19 years the Award has been presented, not counting the two COVID years.

By now many of you will have recognised the winner of the 2025 Patron's Award as COLIN KEITH. You'll understand why he has received so many nominations when I list his 2025 contributions, which have simply been prodigious.

Following Garry Chinn's movement to Queensland at the end of 2023 the position of Vice President of the Choir was vacant, and when Colin joined the Management Committee in 2025, he offered his services as Vice President to reduce the substantial executive and administrative burdens placed on the President, and to stand in Scott's place when he has not been available.

Colin has extensive knowledge and varied skills in the information and electronics fields based on his past experience in the IT industry, and he has introduced many significant initiatives that have

been most beneficial to the Choir's operation. This is particularly evident with the range of learning tools produced for weekly rehearsals and to assist with professional performances. Along with several other members, Colin has continued his overview of the sound and amplification equipment, thereby immensely enhancing the Choir's performances, including outdoor gigs. On rehearsal nights and gigs Colin is always there ahead of time to set-up, pack up, and store the equipment.

Colin also has a significant input to the preparation of the Choir's on-line musical learning tools, such as Sibelius, and voluntarily runs training for new and existing Choir members in his own time. He also makes his home available to conduct sessions regarding online skills and extra Baritone practices.

Colin also manages the ARC website and has updated and refreshed the site, and most significantly, he prepares, edits and distributes that most important weekly "Warble" which keeps so many connected with the Choir's activities, and now he's added detail of other local musical events.

There are many other contributions made by Colin because he is one of those who throws himself into assisting members and whatever unfolds. One example is reviewing Australian Rugby Choir Rules, Guidelines, Policies and Organisational Structures documents, and other examples are acting as a point of contact for events such as the Bungendore Anzac Day 2025 performance, the Goulburn Lilac Festival, the joint session with Lions supporters, the National Multicultural Festival 2026 and his excellent efforts in preparing suitable aids to promote the recent "Come and Try" recruiting activity.

May I add my personal thanks and congratulations to Colin. On a couple of occasions, when I have conducted the choir, Colin has ensured that a folder with all music scores, in program order, is available for me along any notes about the music itself and background regarding the engagement. It is wonderful service, and always delivered with a happy smile and keen willingness. I'm delighted that Colin's fellow choristers have so overwhelmingly wanted to recognise his service in 2025.

Colin Keith, I indicated earlier that the extent and depth of your contributions to the Choir in 2025 are such that they needed to be spelt out rather than summarised. Your fellow Choristers have clearly recognised this by their heavy voting and it gives me great pleasure that the Patron's Award for 2025 is presented to you.