



MEDIA RELEASE

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Community choirs' spirited performances at Lights of Christmas presented by PAYCE

In what has become a much-anticipated tradition, a number of popular community choirs made guest appearances last night at the city's iconic festive event, Lights of Christmas presented by PAYCE, held on the St Mary's Cathedral forecourt.

Spreading the joy of Christmas this year was the acclaimed Sydney Street Choir, who were joined by the Riverwood Community Choir and the Stairwell to Heaven Acapella Choir from the inner city suburb of Annandale.

Both the Sydney Street Choir and the Riverwood Community Choir are strongly supported year round by Lights of Christmas event presenter, PAYCE.

The combined choir, numbering nearly 50 members, was warmly welcomed by the large audience and the choir members put their heart and soul into each and every number, highlighted by a number of vocal and instrumental solos from individual members.

The Sydney Street Choir has been performing and entertaining since 2001 and is the longest running choir in the country for people dealing with homelessness and social or economic disadvantage. Riverwood Community Choir was formed just two years ago around residents from in and around Washington Park in Riverwood North and since then has featured prominently in local community events. The Stairwell to Heaven Choir was formed in 1998 when parents at the Annandale North Public School were re-introduced to the joys of singing.

This year, the combined choir's varied repertoire at Lights of Christmas presented by PAYCE included Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Santa Claus is Coming to Town, Silent Night, Try a Little Kindness, This Little Light of Mine and Let it Be and was a fitting warm-up to the spectacular light show that followed.

The choir was led by Choir Director, James Paul, well known for his work with youth and disadvantaged groups around Sydney.

The Lights of Christmas presented by PAYCE is part of the city's annual festive celebrations and has enthralled crowds over the past fortnight with its unique moving images projected onto the Cathedral's sandstone façade.

Last year, over 350,000 people attended the iconic event that has become one of the city's 'must-see' shows in the lead up to Christmas. Last night saw one of the biggest audiences this year, with the forecourt and surrounds filled to full capacity with the happy faces of families and friends.

The theme of the light and sound show this year is Joy to the World and features the timeless Christmas tale of the Nutcracker Suite along with a glorious selection of Madonna and Child images as painted by some of the great Masters.

As darkness descended and the choir bid everyone farewell and a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, the façade of the Cathedral was bathed in colour as the show got underway, much to the delight of the young ones who were mesmerised by the images.

Lights of Christmas presented by PAYCE continues up to and including Christmas Day with a choral performance on the steps of the cathedral at 7.30pm, then followed by the light and sound show from 8.30pm till midnight.

PAYCE Managing Director, Brian Boyd said this year's presentation by the artists and the content of the light show was outstanding.

"This week's performance in particular by the Sydney Street Choir and our friends from Riverwood and Annandale was a wonderful opportunity to share their wonderful zest and pure joy of singing with thousands of Sydneysiders and visitors," he said.

"PAYCE is very proud to be associated with this annual event and we thank everyone involved with the organisation and presentation for their fantastic efforts which have been so appreciated and enjoyed in the lead up to Christmas."

PAYCE Director, Dominic Sullivan said it was wonderful to see so many families enjoying the performances and coming together to share the choirs' community spirit and love of singing at this special time of year.

About the Choir

As a result of its success and growing popularity over more than a decade, the Sydney Street Choir became a registered not-for-profit-organisation in 2015, which in turn led to the creation of the SSC Foundation to provide administrative, legal, governance and financial support to the choir. The SSC Foundation consists of a small volunteer board drawn from professional and business ranks who manage the choir's program and administrative needs.

PAYCE is a strong financial and corporate supporter of the choir and its Foundation and has been instrumental in helping to develop and implement a number of initiatives, including a business plan and a refreshed website.

Lights of Christmas presented by PAYCE is hosted by the Archdiocese of Sydney and its education partner, the Australian Catholic University and supported by the Catholic Cemeteries and Crematoria.

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