

## **Charity concerts raise close to \$20k for Victorians at risk of insecure housing**

Two choral concerts in Victoria that honoured the lives of people who have died on the streets have raised nearly \$20,000 for members of the homeless community.

The inaugural ACU BIG SING for a BIG CAUSE attracted more than 650 people at concerts in Melbourne and Ballarat, and 600 livestream views from a global audience, raising funds for ACU students experiencing financial hardships and a Ballarat-based crisis accommodation for homeless men. Free tickets were offered to organisations that support Victoria’s homeless community and to people who are experiencing homelessness.

The concerts were performed by a massed, international choir of more than 150 singers, including Indigenous singer-songwriter Jess Hitchcock, accompanied by a community orchestra and marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of acclaimed oratorio *Street Requiem*. Inspired by the traditional Catholic Mass of the Dead, *Street Requiem* is a contemporary musical tribute to people who have died on the streets.

Conductor and Australian Catholic University senior lecturer Dr Kathleen McGuire dedicated the concerts to people who lost their lives in the decade since she, Andy Payne and Jonathan Welch composed *Street Requiem*.

“We would like to dedicate this performance today to people whom we have lost in the past decade since we wrote the work, people who were on the street who perhaps we don’t know, people who are in our lives that we do know, and people who performed this work that we’ve since lost,” Dr McGuire said during the Melbourne concert.

“It’s tragic that (*Street Requiem*) is still relevant today.”

During the concerts, the massed choir also premiered a new work composed by Dr McGuire and Payne titled *Libera Me*, which incorporates rap and Gregorian chant.

“It is a piece of contrasts. We encourage the audience to consider the innermost thoughts of somebody homeless, outside a Cathedral, juxtaposed with a chant in the distance, coming from inside the Cathedral,” Dr McGuire said.

Dr McGuire said the ACU BIG SING for a BIG CAUSE was a reminder that communities who work together to combat homelessness can make a difference.

“One of the things we’ve found about this work is it’s a way for people to feel like they can actually make a difference, whether they are in the audience or performing,” Dr McGuire said.

“On a much smaller scale, I encourage you to look to people who are on the street and say hello. Being seen and being visible is one of the most important things. We all deserve dignity in life and in death.”

*Photos: Credit ‘Charles Wale Photography’*

**Dr Kathleen McGuire is available for interview.**

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