

1 June 2020

**A good news update for
St James' Organ Replacement and Restoration Appeal Donors**

Dear friends

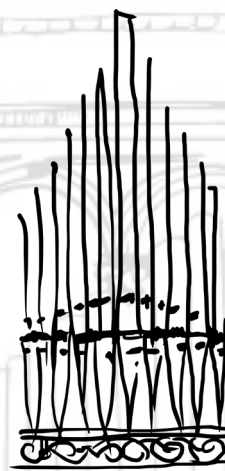
When I last wrote to you in mid-April I undertook to keep you informed about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the St James' Organ Replacement and Restoration Appeal. In amongst the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, I warned then that there might be delays to the organ installation schedule. It is a relief now to be able to bring you some good news: unless other unforeseen circumstances arise, the pandemic close-down will have no adverse consequences for the St James' project.

As you'll remember, our US-based organ builder, Dobson Pipe Organ Builders Ltd, had suspended operations in early April to comply with public health advice. John Panning, the CEO, has reported that after a closure of just three weeks, his team is back at work. Some staff members are still working from home. Some projects have been slightly disrupted. However, unless there is any serious worsening of the COVID-19 situation in the United States, he has advised that our project has not been delayed. We are still on track to have our new instrument installed in St James' in mid 2022.

Throughout the lockdown, Mr Panning has continued to be in regular contact with the St James' team in Sydney to discuss a range of musical, technical and design issues that need to be settled prior to the actual construction process, which is scheduled to commence next year in the Dobson plant.

In addition, a significant amount of local groundwork has been undertaken. The Heritage Architect retained to assist in obtaining all required planning and heritage approvals for the works has now completed complex and lengthy documentation to submit to relevant authorities. A considerable amount of informal consultation has been undertaken as part of this process. Expert acoustic consultants have been retained and have advised on acoustic work required in the church building, such as the need to include special acoustic materials in the ceiling, as the organ is installed. This exercise required high level technical and musical input. Our Organ Consultant Peter Jewkes and Organist Alistair Nelson have worked hard in this respect. It will be of little use to have a fine new instrument if the building is not 'tuned' to receive it!

As work continues on the project, so too the payment schedule required under the contract between the Parish and Dobson. With a distribution from the St James' Music Foundation a third payment instalment of USD 123,250 for works to date was made in early April. These funds of course came from the donations that you have generously given to the Organ Appeal.



**ST JAMES'
ORGAN
APPEAL**

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As I mentioned in my April note, the St James' Music Foundation had prudently placed the bulk of Appeal donations as cash in a US Dollar account in early 2019, well before the COVID-19 pandemic and when the exchange rate was above 70 Australian cents to the US Dollar. This has meant that the most recent slide of the Australian dollar against the value of the American dollar has not changed the overall value of the USD amount in the account.

There are funds to meet the payment schedule for the remainder of this year, but we will continue to rely on your generosity as the project gathers pace in 2021 and beyond. The Appeal Committee will be looking to arrange further fundraising and information events when it is clear to do so. In the meantime, please actively consider continuing your financial support of the Appeal. The end of the financial year is now upon us, so it is a good opportunity to make a donation and obtain a tax deduction at the same time. If you have made a donation pledge may I remind you that an instalment payment is due.

We appreciate that this may be a time of financial stress for many. If you would like to discuss your giving or adjust your level or rate of instalment please contact Marilyn Smith, Treasurer, The St James' Music Foundation at stjamesfdnorganappeal@gmail.com or on 0407 263 783. Any support, however small, would be appreciated. As the project continues, so too does the need to pay for the work!

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly thrown up its fair share of challenges. It has been good news for our nation as a whole that we have been able to avoid high rates of infection here. And, it is equally good news that the pandemic is now unlikely to impede the progress towards the installation of the new organ which will endow St James' with the capacity to expand its world class music programme for the Parish and the people of Sydney. We have seen what St James' can produce in the way of incredible music in the services that have been livestreamed during the lockdown. Imagine what is to come!

Thank you for being with us on this journey. Your support is needed now more than ever.



Robert Marriott

Chair, St James' Organ Replacement & Restoration Appeal Committee

