

Remote voices as one for city show

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Chloe Martin-Cox was four when she first took part in the Girls from Oz arts outreach program for kids in far-flung regions of Australia. Eight years later, she is preparing to sing alongside 600 children from the Australian Girls Choir at Melbourne's Hamer Hall.

"I like learning new songs and new dances, and how we can express our feelings," she said.

Sunday's concert will be the first time girls from the three towns involved in the decade-old Girls from Oz program — Halls Creek and Carnarvon in Western Australia, and Lockhart River in Queensland — have been brought together to sing.

The program is an offshoot of the Australian Girls Choir, one of the nation's acclaimed youth arts organisations, and was inspired in part by a conversation with Dame

Quentin Bryce when she was governor of Queensland.

Dame Quentin was raised in Ilfracombe, near Longreach, and said her mother ensured she had the opportunity to visit art galleries and go to plays in the city. "I feel so strongly about education for children from the bush," she said.

Girls from Oz relies mostly on donations for its programs and has annual turnover of less than \$200,000. It is a not-for-profit "sister organisation" of the Australian Girls Choir and of the Australian School of Performing Arts in Melbourne.

Chief executive Nicole Muir said Girls from Oz provided regular performing arts activities for girls and young women who lacked opportunities because of where they lived. The program currently reaches about 500 girls.

At Sunday's concert, they will sing in front of 2000 people, a prospect Chloe said was "scary and exciting".



AARON FRANCIS

Lakisha Taylor, Chloe Martin-Cox and Davika Accoom in Melbourne yesterday ahead of Sunday's concert