



NEWPORT
FIDDLE & FOLK CLUB

Annual Report 2025



NEWPORT FIDDLE AND FOLK CLUB INC.

AOO52294Z

ABN 11 515 884 899



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A

Aim of the Report

This report reviews the activities of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club for 2025. This was our 22nd year of creating spaces for music making, storytelling and sharing poetry in Newport and in Hobsons Bay. We have created a range of activities and initiatives that continue to address the needs of our members, and this in turn serves and enriches our local and broader community.

The report will describe the club's activities for 2025 and assess how the aims of the club can best be met through our range of activities. The club aims to:

- Provide venues for those interested in locally produced music, dance, storytelling, craft, and other artistic pursuits
- Provide opportunities for musicians, storyteller, artists and others to get together, play and learn from each other
- Provide opportunities for non- musicians to join the club and participate in and enjoy the arts through listening, singing, and dancing.
- Provide opportunities that challenge our members to refine and develop their performance and presentation skills

Beyond the monthly gatherings of the NFFC, the club has a role to play in the development of young and older musicians, storytellers and artists through workshops and other planned gatherings.

The NFFC aims to develop links with sponsors of the arts to source funding for professional musicians who will be able to provide musical both leadership and inspiration for developing musicians.

This report will assess the extent to which the club is meeting these aims and identify goals that we can work towards in 2026 that will maintain the vitality of the club.

B

Introduction

The Annual Report continues to be a fundamental discipline of the club. There are reports going back to 2005 – just 12 months after the club was founded – and the process of review have served the club well. They have all challenged our leaders to restate (and sometimes reexamine) the aims of their groups and to review how they been achieved in the past 12 months. This is then followed by the vision for the future 12 months so the club, and members of each group, gains a sense of where we are going. A byproduct of the process is that we can see how the ethos of the club is brought to life each year.

As we enter our 23rd year of making music, telling stories, creating craft projects and building our community, I invite you to read the report, review the club's past 12 months and our achievements of the past 22 years. This is my last annual report. Our members will elect a new President of the club at our AGM and I offer our new president my very best wishes for the years ahead. I also hope that you will support the new President through your ideas, creativity and support in all the little tasks that have made this such a successful club over the past 22 years. The best organisations have many leaders – both formal and informal – and I invite you to sharing the load.

Groups

1. BEGINNER PLAYALONG

The Beginners Playalong Group aims to provide a safe and nurturing environment for complete novices, inexperienced musicians and any person who wishes to learn an instrument or try their hand at singing.

It is open to all age groups and all instruments. The group continued its strong participation rate with attendances often reaching 25 per session. In all, 11 Sessions were conducted throughout the year on the third Saturday of the month at the Newport Scout Hall and a couple of sessions at the Mechanics Hall.

There were several new attendees this year who brought different ideas and experience to the group. More experienced musicians also lent their hand in guiding the beginners along their musical journey.

Each session consisted of two parts this year.

Session One – A focus on two or three chord songs which were gone over slowly and designed to provide novices or inexperienced players with an opportunity to get better at playing or singing.

Session Two – More complex songs and speeds where attendees who had expressed an interest in a particular song had the opportunity to perform and sing that song.

This approach gave all participants a meaningful and valuable musical experience.

The leadership team ensured that each gathering was well organized making it a pleasant experience for everyone. Several items such as music stands were purchased for the club participants to use.

The types of instruments that we saw brought to the group including, guitars, ukuleles, double bass, harmonica, violin, viola, piano accordion, keyboards and a harp, to name a few.



Groups

There were regular vocalists for the year which included Kerrie, Marty, David, Joanne, Jeremy, Lachie to name a few. They got their chance to perform at the Folk Festival and Club Showcase and did a fantastic job.

This year, the groups focus was to introduce the beginner playalong people to other sections of the club. It was hoped that once they gained some basic musical skills or honed their existing skills, they may wish to look at other groups within the club to further enhance their musical journey.

To this end, we had guest appearances from the following club groups throughout the year:

- *Choir - Old Timeys - Drummers - Tues Blues - Story Tellers*

The Group practiced hard and performed at two major events throughout the year acquitting themselves extremely well and raising the profile the group and the club in general.

These events were:

- *Folk Festival - Club Showcase - Carols on the Green*

In total, 50 songs were covered during the year and some of these were performed at the concerts mentioned above. The group continues to act as a feeder group for the other sections of the folk club and it is pleasing to see people from the beginner playalong group advance to other sections of the club.

The group maintained its promotional campaign through regular community advertisements in local newspapers and through word of mouth both of which were quite successful in building up attendances.

The Newport Fiddle and Folk Committee provided invaluable support to the group. Michael Stewart was very active in attendance and support for the group. Thanks to the committee for their ongoing support.

Several members will also attend the Music Camp later on in 2026 which is also pleasing to note.

The group will take a short break in January 2026 but be back in February 2026.

A big thanks to the those who helped throughout the year: Shameema, Gavin, Michael, David, Jeremy, Gary, Kerrie, Marty, Jo, Jeremy, Maryanne, Emily and Lizzie to name a few.

We're looking forward to a bright and exciting Beginner Playalong season in 2026.

Danny Civitico

2. BUSH ORCHESTRA

The year of 2025 has been another very good year for Newport Bush Orchestra.

Our aim is to perform Australian dance tunes ,songs and stories in a professional, competent and entertaining way and to keep our rich Anglo Celtic based music flourishing . This year we have again “raised the bar” and are well on the way to achieving those aims. We’ve a way to go but are certainly getting there.

The addition of John on double bass and Jeremy on percussion/ drums has really filled out our sound and provides us with a solid beat.

Being an inclusive community-based group we provide an outlet for people with varying musical skills and motivation to join us fortnightly and enjoy playing music with other like-minded individuals. Our numerous live performances become the culmination and fruits of our efforts at rehearsals and a fun time performing to the public.

Highlights of our year’s performances commenced with shows at The Band Rotunda, Commonwealth Reserve , Williamstown, the National Folk Festival, Canberra at Easter where a number of us attended . We did stage a performance and led a number of sessions being joined by other musicians including veteran fiddle player and former member of The Wild Colonial Boys, Bob McGinnus .

Our recently printed tunes books were handy for music readers unfamiliar with the tunes .

Other performances included the Victorian Folk Music Club, Ringwood , Newport Folk Festival, the Club’s Showcase where we finished the day with a tight and lively set.

Some of us performed for NBO’s founder Greg O’Leary for his birthday at his care accommodation. Greg still takes a keen interest in our activities and is always willing to share his knowledge.

The highlight of our performances was at the new Westgate Tunnel opening where 51,000 people walked through prior to the vehicular opening. We were seen on Channel 7 and other stations as well as getting mentioned in The Age Newspaper.

It was a great day for all involved and all who played will remember it fondly.



A recent attendance at the Melbourne Scottish Fiddlers Club’s 30th birthday has inspired me to “lift the game” for Bush Orchestra. This will mean those attending will be expected to put some effort into learning the tunes and making a proper effort to play their instruments in tune and to an acceptable standard. We give assistance where possible. As we are overdue to do some recording this will be a prerequisite for members who wish to participate in this.

For those with basic skills the NFFC provides a “Beginners Jam” to cater for them.

In addition a recent initiative by Irene to arrange a Slow and Steady Celtic learning session will be an invaluable way for players to learn tunes and improve on their chosen instrument.

We hope to do much in 2026 other than recording. There is the Newport Lakes Bush Dance coming up, the National Folk Festival where a number of us will attend, the Bi- -Annual Music Camp (a NBO initiative), the NFFC Folk Festival, Newport Railway Workshops is expected, The Pirates Tavern, plus other surprises.....

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank some of our members who were of great assistance during 2025. Namely, Leon Conway who is of invaluable assistance, Barnaby Oliver who led the group with his musical expertise while I was away on the high seas, Irene Laing for her enthusiasm, Portuguese Tarts and muffins and worthwhile advice (and musicianship) plus Jane Jankovic for her enthusiastic participation.

I shall continue to crack the whip and raise the bar but make it an enjoyable and worthwhile musical adventure

Dave Isom

3. CELTIC SESSION

2025 has been another fantastic year for the Celtic Session. We have performed at two Club events, the Newport Folk Festival in July and the Club Showcase concert in November, and the Newport Craic (made up mostly of Session members) performed at the Overnewton Castle Scottish Music Festival in November. We have also organised two instrument workshops led by guest master musicians Oscar West (fiddle) and Rennie Pearson (Flute and tin whistle). We intend to organise further workshops in 2026.

We continue to attract a larger number of people (typically 15-20) at each session, both regulars and 'occasionals'. People come a long way to join in our sessions, from Geelong, Shepparton and the outer Melbourne suburbs of Melbourne. All are very welcome.

The aim of the Celtic session group is to come together to play traditional Celtic tunes and sing Celtic songs, learn new material, and enjoy each other's company. A wide variety of tunes is played, and at a range of tempos to give everyone the opportunity to join in no matter what their level of skill. Our session etiquette guide (posted on the Club webpage) emphasises inclusiveness, courtesy and mutual appreciation. Slower-paced tunes are played during the first half of each session, with moderately paced ones after supper. Tunes are usually arranged in sets of two or three, and we typically play each tune 3 times through.

We have developed a Tune Book, which is downloadable from our Club web page. It lists the tunes and sets of tunes in our current main (or 'core') repertoire, and also includes tunes and sets we have played in the past. The core repertoire is refreshed every year with new tune suggestions coming out of discussion within the group. We will work in the new year on getting recordings of our core sets available for download from the web page for those who want to practice them at home.

Finally, I wish to give a special thank you to Nic Johnson and Rick Sidgwick for regularly opening The Hub every month and doing the set-up and pack-up for our sessions. Thanks also to those session members who have helped (and continue to) in so many ways to run the session, introduce new tunes, feedback with ideas, and help with the set-up and pack-up.

Simon Leverton



4. COMMUNITY CHOIR

The choir had a successful year, with consistently high attendance numbers at rehearsals (average around 22) and plenty of performances to keep us busy.

As in previous years, events where we sang together with other choirs were a highlight. We had two opportunities this year; the Combined Choirs Concert at the Folk Festival, and the annual Western Suburbs Choir Jam, which the choirs now run for themselves after the event was started off by Community Music Victoria.

Our 2025 repertoire ranged from a traditional sea shanty (Haul on the Bowline) to Coldplay's 2000 hit Yellow and the classic What a Wonderful World, made famous by Louis Armstrong. We also revived some old favourites such as Cyndi Lauper's Time After Time and The Parting Glass, a beautiful Irish song of farewell.

We were very happy to be invited to sing at the 165th Anniversary celebration at the Williamstown Botanic Gardens. Despite a downpour of rain and strong winds during our performance, some of our devoted audience stayed to the end of the gig!

We finished the year with a review and planning session for the choir, and look forward to working on some new ideas in 2026.

Alan Davies



5. CRAFT

The Craft Group started in 2024, throughout 2025 attendance remained low with those who attend enjoying the sessions. A lot of chatter, supper and of course some lovely projects being worked on.

The aims of this group are to share skills, provide a social setting and explore ideas for decorating and supporting club events.

The Folk Festival provided an opportunity to try some handmade merchandise. All items sold extremely well and the group plans to expand on the range for the 2026 festival. We feel this is preferable to sourcing mass produced items which often require high minimum order quantities.

Monthly session dates have been booked for 2026 in the Mechanics Hall at the Newport Community Hub, an ideal venue for this group. I plan to reach out to people who may be interested in helping to make decorations or merchandise who can't attend the evening sessions. And to possibly hold a couple of daytime sessions as another option for interested people.

I'm grateful to NFFC for supporting this group and to the crafters who have come along throughout the year.

Sue Davies



6. DRUMMERS

Newport Drummers is a local community group brought together through West African rhythm structures, and founded on the concept of this music being celebrated, through group ensemble practice and performance, with our community.

We rehearse on Thursdays, in Mechanics Hall, in Newport, 7:30-9:00pm.

Newport Drummers enjoyed monthly performances at Cherry Lake Cultural Series until June of this year, the Newport Folk Festival, Australia Day, and various showcases.

Some of our best performances have been on the beaches of Altona, for impromptu public performances! These have been a wonderful conduit for community engagement.

Our group has a consistent core of members, enabling us this year to create more complex works than ever. Many thanks for the gift of an extra dun set (West African bass drums), as this allows us to represent the beauty of this music on a deeper level.

Our goals this coming year include a continuation of our practice and understanding of this music.

We plan to increase our presence in social media, and we are seeking funding for a studio recording of our work, as documentation of these structures is rare.

We are also seeking collaborations with choreographers in 2026; please contact me directly regarding expressions of interest.

Martin Case



7. OLD TIMEY SESSION

The Newport Old Timey Session was set up in 2019 to meet the interests of anyone interested in Old Timey and Bluegrass music and song. The group meets in the Newport Hub on the 3rd Monday of each month except for school holidays. A small fee of \$3.00 for club members and \$5.00 for non-members is charged to cover costs.

The group met 9 times in 2025. Given that this form of music is predominantly fiddle based, it was encouraging that this year we continued to build a core group of fiddle players. We now get about 4 to 6 fiddlers at each session as well as regular guitar, ukulele, banjo, mandolin and bass players.

This year I introduced recommended texts to assist fiddlers and banjo players better access authentic transcriptions of Old Timey music. These texts are: Old Time Fiddle Round Peak Style and Round Peak Style Clawhammer Banjo, both by Brad Leftwich. Both also provide mp3 audio samples of each tune and chord suggestions for the rhythm players. They are available for digital download from www.melbay.com. Additionally, a free tune book and links to useful tune search websites are available at the Old Timey page of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club website.

The Old Timey group hosted a successful session at the 2025 Newport Folk Festival and presented a set of songs and tunes at the end of year Club Showcase. We learnt the following tunes/songs: Breaking Up Christmas, Shortening Bread, Sugar in the Gourd, Sugar Hill, Black Eyed Susie, Old Jimmy Sutton, Susananna Gal, Ookpik Waltz.

In 2026 we will continue to expand the group's repertoire with the aim of:

- assisting players develop musical confidence
- providing players with the repertoire to join sessions at Old Time and Bluegrass festivals such as the Fiddlers Convention and Mountaingrass.

I thank all those who attended the 2025 sessions. As was the case last year, particular thanks must go to Val Williams for teaching a number of fiddle tunes and posting photos and news on Facebook. I would also like to thank Alan Davies and Dharma Reed for their assistance throughout the year.

Bruce Williams



8. OPEN STAGE

2025 was another successful year for Newport Open Stage (NOS).

We continued at the Newport Community Hub. Dharma Reed, her mum Peta and Alan Davies again helped with setup, refreshments and door duties – and MC'ing when I was absent. Attendance, as always, varied from month to month but it was usually 20-30 with a “full board” of acts. It was always a very enjoyable evening.

NOS continued to advance the Club's aims by providing a venue and encouragement for local performers (and some from further away). It remains a nurturing environment for those new to “treading the boards” and a knowledgeable and appreciative one for more seasoned performers.

I continue to be delighted by the enthusiasm and quality of the performances and the warmth of the audience.

In the coming year the team aims to keep on doing what we've been doing as it just works.

Greg Jenkins

9. THEME NIGHT

2025 was another rewarding year for the Live@Newport Theme Nights. The team (initially Andrea McGlashan, Dharma Picking, David Lord and I; David left the team mid-year) ran two theme nights at the Newport Bowls Club:

First, we got all arty and self-referential with Music Imitates Life Imitates Art on Saturday 24th May.

Then on Saturday 13th September we celebrated humble domestic implements with InDaHouse.

In both programs numerous acts showed great talent and creativity to full - and enthusiastic – houses. I continue to be amazed at the quality of these nights!

The “Theme Team” plans to run their usual two theme nights next year.

Greg Jenkins

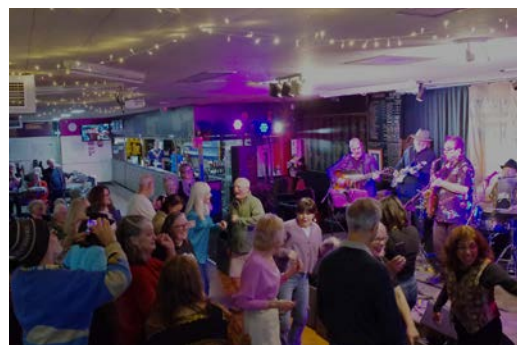
10. STORYTELLERS

Aims

The aim of the storytelling gatherings is create an open-hearted and inclusive space for people who want to learn to craft true tales, traditional stories, tall tales, yarns and stories for children. We also welcome people who just want to read and share and musicians wanting to practice their patter and we love a song with a story.

Public Profile and Communication

- A Facebook Page
- A google email group
- We have a general page on the NFFC website where you can find links to our activities and social media <https://www.nffc.org.au/storytellers>
- We conduct a survey at the end of every year to gather info from our story community about things we might do to improve our events and we look forward to implementing some new ideas.



Groups

Events during 2023

- ZOOM/Live hybrid monthly session (Feb – November – excluding April)
- World Storytelling Day: An Evening for adults was held in the Mechanics Hall and storytellers joined us nationally and international via Zoom. Theme: Deep Water
- Newport Folk Festival Stories by the Fire
- NFFC Showcase

Many Languages

Beyond our monthly gatherings and whole group participation, the NS has a strong multi-lingual cohort who are becoming increasingly popular: Hindi, Tamil, Tagalog and growing. They now have a listing on the Performers page on the NFFC website

Local Residential Care

The NS continued with the out-reach program to local residential care places offering music and stories under the NFFC banner for an honorarium of \$100 or voluntary. Between them, Adrian Newington, Emma Chandler, Gerry Nelson, Sarah Depasquale, Michael Stewart and Jackie Kerin visited Trugo, Westgate and Squires Place in 2025.

Plans and Dreams for 2026

- Monthly gatherings, 3rd Friday of the month Feb-Nov excluding April
- Friday March 20: World Storytelling Day: Light in the Dark
- Children's Storytelling event to celebrate World Storytelling Day – possibly at the Bush Dance (TBC)
- Evening with NFFC songwriters (TBC)
- Eol for Folk Festival – Stories by the Fire (TBC)
- Continue with our outreach to local residential care
- Expanding the awareness of multilingual storytelling.

Thank yous

- The NFFC committee who keep the club wheels greased and turning
- The Newport Community HUB

Jackie Kerin, Adrian Newington and Emma Chandler



11. NEWPORT STRINGS

Newport String's 1st performance in 2025 was on 29th March at 2.00pm. It was an unusual start to the year for us as it was in the Mechanics Hall and in the afternoon which came about because of the lateness of bookings and space availability. Nevertheless, we had a decent audience and were very happy to welcome some of our newer players again, Justin Casserly, Jenny Xuey, Lisa Banitasa and Will Wladkowski.

We expanded our number to 20 for the NFFC Festival performance with the addition of some friends as guest players, we have several friends each year now who look forward to the invitation to come and play. This year we attempted a far more complex program, including the full version of the Bach Brandenburg Concerto No3 and the Vivaldi Concerto for 4 Violins requiring 4 soloists, Michael Mee, Michael Patton, Ray Chan and Owen Bradfield. We have wanted to play the Brandenburg for a few years now but haven't had the numbers to play all 10 parts, so our recruitment drive the previous year certainly paid dividends for us in 2025.

We took a very different approach to the 3rd performance in September. After the disappointment of having to cancel the September performance in '24, we decided to do a 'Newport String Deconstructed' type program. The performance time and space were booked and people were asked to form themselves together into small chamber groups to present on the day. This type of string playing is very different to the chamber orchestra format, and for a number of members it was a new experience, one which certainly keeps you on your toes. Richard MacNeill took on the task of co-ordinating the program and there being no major hiccoughs or other problems, we have opted to try this format again in '26.

The 4th performance on 15th November, was our standard late morning library performance. We programmed the Brandenburg 3 again ... with all its 10 parts ... and for which we were joined by another new violin friend, Kathryn O'Brien. We finished off the performance with our annual favourite, the Corelli Christmas Concerto. It was a great day outside and we opened the floor to ceiling windows on the park side of the building to let the outside inside, it is a great way to invite passers-by come in, sit down, listen and enjoy the music.

Newport Strings participated in the NFFC Club Showcase afternoon for the second time in '25. The Showcase has been programmed as part of our 2026 program so in one way or another Newport Strings will be in attendance on the day ... it is a very friendly and casual way to finish off the year.

2026 dates are all programmed and locked in. The staff at the Hub have asked if we can use the Mechanic's Hall as our rehearsal space, but we do get to keep the park side room for our 3 performance dates. With our new members and our new concept for September, we are looking forward to a good 2026.

Warwick Dawson



12. TUES BLUES

Our numbers continued high during 2025, usually from 25 - 30. It's amazing how my threats of ritual violence don't seem to put anyone off!

We started the year voting on and rehearsing 1960s numbers for our show in August. We performed at the Festival with a combination of a few 1960s numbers, some from last year's 40s/50s show, and a few old favourites.

Rehearsals reached fever pitch as August approached, with costume-finding becoming a regular event, for which the Yarraville op shop were champions, giving me possible outfits to take to Tues Blues for viewings and fittings, and trusting me to pay or return.

Some of the boys, who are only ever seen in blue or grey, went all out psychedelic or hippy, and tell me I have now released their inner diva. I've offered counselling.

Since August we have been enthusiastically jamming and trialling 1970s songs for our next show, pausing only to perform at the club showcase. I am dreading the possibility that they will all decide to perform in lycra, but I won't think about that just yet!

We are completing our year by having our Christmas break-up tonight and then will commence next year with our annual Botanic Gardens picnic jam. Hurrah!

Gaelle Horsley



13. BUSH DANCE

The Bush Dance was cancelled due to bad weather. The Grant was returned to the Council. However, the Bush Orchestra found a way – and the band and a few brave dancers made their way to the Scout Hall for a session and some dancers. It was a small crew but all reported a top afternoon!

Sue Davies



14. CAROLS

The Club's 'Carols on the Green' was held on Saturday December 6. The event was funded by a council grant that was significantly larger than for the 2024 event. This meant that we had much greater power in the sound system – all people could hear – and we were able to have 2 sound engineers. This was a major improvement and led to a really successful event. The other change was that we employed jazz singer Sarah Maclaine to host the event. Sarah connected with the audience, linked each of the items and really brought out the spirit of the event.

The Ukulele Dolls provided music before the event and were followed by The Bobcats and our Community Choir. The Carols Orchestra accompanied the community singing of the carols. It was a great pleasure to have the Newport Lakes PS Band to present two items. There was over 40 young musicians and they added another dimension to the evening. Sarah Maclaine sang two Christmas songs and very generously welcomed many of the young children in the audience to sing along with her. The evening closed with 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas' and all of the performers were able to join in.

It was a lovely evening despite the cooler weather. While the main show ran for just 80 minutes the event, including the pre show entertainment was a full 2 hours – about the right length. One suggestion was to run the event slightly earlier so that the pack up would be able to be completed before it became dark.

Many thanks to Sue Davies and her team of Volunteers who ensured that the event was well organised and enabled everyone to enjoy this successful community event. We look forward to another Carols on the Green on Saturday December 5, 2026.

Michael Stewart



15. SHOWCASE

The 4th Club Showcase was held on Sunday November 23 at the Newport Bowls Club. This is the second year that all of the club's groups have contributed to the event. As a result it was a very good demonstration of what the club has built up over the last 22 years. Each of the groups had the confidence and skills to perform and entertain the audience. Importantly the event introduced many of our members to the full scope of our activities. Sue Davies and Michael Stewart coordinated the event and it was a pleasure to work with each of the group leaders to ensure that all groups had a suitable spot on the program to perform.

- *Tues Blues* - *Drummers* - *Celtic Session* - *Storytellers*

- *Beginner Playalong* - *Choir* - *Old Timey* - *Strings* - *Bush Orchestra*

Thanks to the leaders of these groups who organized their members to perform:

A special thanks to our MCs Dharma Reed and Garry Wood to their work to make each group so welcome and relaxed.

Finally thank you to the folk club whose support made this a free event. The afternoon tea and enjoyed by all and provided our members with the opportunity to socialize and meet with people from other groups. This socialization has always been at the heart of the club's success.

We look forward to another Showcase in 2026. Hopefully the two new groups of the club – Slow and Steady Session and the All Abilities Music Group – will add two new dimensions to the Showcase.

Michael Stewart



16. FOLK FESTIVAL

The Newport Festival was once again a resounding success. The seamless running of the event demonstrates how well it was planned. Organisation for the festival begins 12 months beforehand, with the application for a grant being submitted to the Hobsons Bay council. Once the grant is approved the venues are booked. The festival committee puts a draft budget to the NFFC committee, which if accepted, gives the go ahead to the festival committee to begin the process.

A database is prepared to accept applications for the festival. This is tested to ensure it is working. Applications open in the first week of December and close around Australia Day. The application process is advertised on the website, newsletter and through email. The festival committee members get a link to the application database and begin the process of reviewing the applications.

At the end of January, the Festival committee convenes to put together a draft program. This is generally a long meeting as performers are discussed, chosen and slotted in. Our Performer Liason then contacts the chosen performers and starts the long process of finalising the program and catering to the needs of performers.

The festival committee met at least every three weeks, to discuss the progress of the festival and discuss ways to improve the festival from the previous year. There are many council requirements to fulfil, as well as the need to liaise with venue, sound, advertising, marketing and hire people. The call for volunteers started more than a month before the festival and the volunteer coordinator created a roster, organizes training and trouble shoots on the day.

Performers and Program

We presented another vibrant program of over 50 performances and workshops. This drew on talent from the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club, community and invited 'friends' of the festival. The 'Come and Play' sessions continued as an open invitation for everyone join in, while new workshop strands expanded into fresh territory with a harmony workshop and a traditional Folk Circle. The Friday night showcase offered a lively introduction to the festival, setting the tone for a full Saturday schedule. Audiences enjoyed a mix of returning favourites and exciting new acts including Jordan Brodie and CJ Commerford & The Supertones. It was a really enjoyable program.

Volunteers

This year two dedicated managers looked after the festival volunteers. This was very efficient as it enabled tasks to be divided up and provided coverage of all venues over the two days of the festival. Volunteer numbers were slightly down from 2024, with 96 volunteers this year as compared to 100 – 105 last year.

The volunteer team drew on their personal contacts and people with community-based positions to help out. Several good stage managers and masters of ceremonies were unearthed in this process and all of which have expressed a desire to be involved next year.

The volunteer experience was well received. Feedback showed that there was a greater percentage of first time volunteers this year and they enjoyed the experience.

The success of the festival is the result of a lot of hard work by the Committee and the Volunteer, as well as the support of Hobsons Bay City Council. The team look forward to another successful festival in 2026.

Michael Stewart



Our organisation

1. OUR COMMITTEE

Many thanks to our committee of 2025 for all the time, work and creativity you have set aside to manage the club. This report demonstrates that the club has continued to bring our aims to life within our expanding community.

Thank you to:

Alan Davies: *Vice President*

Rick Sidgwick: *Secretary*

Neil Brydges: *Treasurer*

Ordinary Members

Adrian Newington

Danny Civitico

Deb Supriyono

Greg Jenkins

Jason Goroncy

Kerry Duke

Kerrie Jowett

At this 21st year, I would like to thank all of our past committee members who have been part of the committee over the journey. It has been my pleasure to have worked with you, and the past committee members, to create the club and enable our members to 'Come and Play – and Sing and Dance and Tell Stories and Create Craft'. Many people have benefitted from our collective efforts and I thank the committee for their dedication to the task of managing this large and diverse club.

This year it is my time to leave the committee and my long-standing role of President. The time is right, and this report illustrates that the club is in very good hands.

Michael Stewart
Club President



Our organisation

2. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Club finished the year in a sound financial position with available funds, after allowing for known liabilities of \$26,978. Apart from the cash balance the only significant assets of the Club – apart from its name and reputation – are its depreciating equipment assets.

Lying beneath the cash balance is the regular cash inflows and outflows which each amounted to more than \$80,000 in the year. We have grants to support our major events and our membership and income from our activities provides the club with sufficient funds to keep a positive cash flow.

Both the Festival Account and the Club Accounts have significant surpluses. These provide the club with the confidence to take some risks to explore new creative endeavours without the need to apply for grants and initiatives.

Some require up front expenditure before the receipts on the day. Our cash buffer allows the Club to manage those requirements. For example, the club was able to again underwrite the deposit for our camp without any stress to the committee.

With Australia moving to a cashless society, the Club now has Square readers at most activities to allow attendees the choice of paying with 'tap and go'. This will help our leaders to collect and record the payments and enable the club to monitor our financial activities within each group.

The financial position provides the club with a strong foundation on which to continue to grow and experiment with new ideas that will benefit our members and further the aims of the club.

Neil Brydges, Treasurer

The accounts below have been prepared by Club Treasurer: Neil Brydges

Receipts and expenditure	Balance sheet
Receipts (excluding Festival)	Assets
Grants \$13,100	Bank – main account..... \$12,941
Membership & activities \$27,349	Bank – festival account \$45,337 – 20k
Total Receipts \$40,449	Total bank balances \$58,278
Expenditure (excluding Festival)	Liabilities
Overheads (\$4,500)	Grant not utilised – Festival 2026 (\$25,000)
Membership & activities (\$35,958)	Grant not utilised – Bush Dance 2026 (\$6,300)
Total expenditure (\$40,458)	Net cash position..... \$26,978
Excess of receipts over expenditure..... (\$9)	Equipment (not valued)
Receipts (Festival)	
Grant 2025 \$22,000	
Sales \$22,524	
Total receipts \$44,524	
Expenditure (Festival)	
Expenses (\$39,341)	
Festival excess of receipts over expenditure \$5,183	
Total excess of receipts over expenditure \$5,174	

3. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Last year, NFFC implemented a new membership management system to utilize technology and streamline processes for committee members. In the past, different committee branches managed membership payments. Designated people collected payments, sent them to the Treasurer for documentation and updates, and then passed them on to the membership coordinator. Membership cards and envelopes were then handwritten and mailed, incurring costs exceeding one dollar per item.

To take advantage of technology and reduce the burden on our committee members, we have utilized the services of GiveNow, a company designed to help non-for-profit organisations organise membership. GiveNow is a company that has more than 20 years of community and fund-raising experience. It is the organisation that oversees the grants that we get from Hobsons Bay Council, so is a reputable organisation.

GiveNow charges a 3.5% fee to handle memberships, send annual renewal reminders and supply monthly membership reports to the committee. They maintain data locally at their North Melbourne office, issue reminder notices, and provide monthly reports to the club committee.

In November 2025, NFFC member names and email addresses were uploaded to GiveNow, as mentioned in the newsletter. Of the 240 members at that time, only about 40 activated their accounts, so most profiles remain incomplete, restricting the committee's access to accurate reports. Only the account holder is able to log in and make changes.

The payment process is now updated; new members become active immediately. Incomplete members will receive a renewal notice two weeks before July 1, 2026. Those who do not pay by that date will be removed.

Each membership is assigned a status that indicates current state. This status helps maintain accurate records. The possible membership statuses are:

- Incomplete: The member has not provided necessary details to GiveNow.
- Active: This membership is currently valid and operational.
- Reprocessing: Indicates an inactive membership for which GiveNow will attempt further payment processing; this status applies solely to automatic renewals.
- Lapsed: Represents an inactive membership that has surpassed its renewal date but remains eligible for manual renewal by the member.
- Expired: Denotes an inactive membership that has exceeded its renewal date and is no longer eligible for renewal.
- Failed: Refers to an inactive membership where attempts to process renewal payments were unsuccessful.
- Closed: Describes an inactive membership due to the organisation discontinuing that particular membership type.
- Cancelled: Pertains to an inactive membership that was manually terminated by the organisation.

The NFFC committee is establishing a procedure to integrate this system with event membership payments and encourage members to activate their accounts through newsletter notifications. The effectiveness of the transition will be evaluated once membership renewals commence and account activations are observed. The committee anticipates that NFFC members will welcome the upcoming changes.



Michael Stewart
Club President

4. OUR FUTURE

The Newport Fiddle and Folk Club has been a great adventure for all of us. The original idea was actually to create the Newport Folk Festival — a famous name, a cluster of wonderful buildings, and new energy emerging at the Substation. (In fact, the seed was planted in 1995 during a working bee there.) What followed was a long gestation period filled with experiments: monthly sessions, new groups, and musical gatherings — one of which even grew into the Essendon Symphony Orchestra. Finally, in August 2004, the time was right, and the club was born.

For the first year, the monthly session was the folk club. Then came a grant from Folk Life Victoria to start the Bush Orchestra. Around that time I met Greg O’Leary, my neighbour, and we spent many hours imagining what the club could become — Greg with his deep folk club experience, and me with none at all. Once the grant arrived, things began to flow. Nearly 20 people came to the first NBO session, and over time the orchestra became a force in our community: teaching people to play together, giving purpose to their learning, and performing at Bush Dances, community events, and Club Night (which I later learned is properly called a Folk Circle).

Then came the Festival, the Choir, and all the other groups whose reports appear in this document. We developed a “Federalist System” — Alan Davies’ term — where each group looks after itself while contributing to the ethos of the club. In 2026 we welcome not one but two new groups: the Slow and Steady Session and the All Abilities Music Group. Like all our initiatives, they will follow the familiar path of idea, committee approval, reality testing (“does anyone come?”), and emergence — where the final form may match the idea exactly or evolve into something new. Although I’ve been part of the conversations, these groups — like all the others — have arisen because members identified a need and stepped forward to make it happen.

My greatest enjoyment has been seeing others take the lead: forming groups, creating events and festivals, and watching friendships, musical partnerships, and all kinds of collaborations emerge from the club. It has been hard work at times, but always an honour to represent you and to work with the committees to manage the many resources — people, places, financial and digital — that have enabled us to “Come and Play.” For that, I offer a heartfelt thank you to all our members.

Before concluding, I must acknowledge a few people. My deep thanks to Alan and Sue Davies, whose tireless work over so many years has been remarkable. They continue to be an extraordinary asset to the club and the committee. I could fill many pages with the contributions they have made, large and small. I hold them in the highest esteem and trust that many of you share that sentiment.

I also want to thank my wife Helen for supporting me through these 22 years — and the seven years before that, when I first began creating musical groups. That takes us back to when our children were very young (my first gig was “The Daddios” with Steve Martin and Russell Barrett at the Home Road Kinder). Since then, I’ve been off at meetings, sessions, festival planning, writing newsletters and annual reports, or up at the Bowls Club “just having a quick chat with...”. Thank you, Helen — your love and support have made all of this possible. I’m delighted that you’ve found your own place and friendships within Newport Drummers.

I leave the club in good hands. We have a strong, skilled, and wise committee; we are in a positive financial position; and we continue to generate new ideas and groups. This creativity is the true sign of a club with a future. While I am stepping down from the committee and the Presidency, I will continue as Festival Director, help create Carols on the Green, and enjoy my role as a founding member of Newport Strings. I am stepping back, but not going away.

I am sure there will continue to be plenty of music, stories, and dance in the club. I look forward to everything that lies ahead.

Michael Stewart
Club President



NEWPORT
FIDDLE & FOLK CLUB

Club History and Timeline

- 2004 **First:** Monthly Meeting (Friday 27 August)
- 2005 **First:** Committee Formed
First: 'The Tank'
- 2006 **First:** Newport Lakes Bush Dance, Music on Mason, Newport Bush Orchestra
- 2007 **First:** 'Music at Breizoz'
- 2008 **First:** Newport Folk Festival
- 2009 **First:** Carols at The Substation, Workshop Series, Newport Community Choir, Newport Strings, NFFC Incorporated
- 2010 **First:** Open Stage, Incredibly Supportive Songwriting Group formed
- 2011 **First:** Celtic Session (Bowls Club), Newport Bush Orchestra plays at the National Folk Festival
- 2012 Breizoz transforms to 'Live@Newport'
- 2014 **10 Year Celebration of NFFC**
- 2015 **First:** Tues Blues
- 2016 **First:** Family Jam Session
10 Years: Newport Bush Orchestra
- 2018 **10 Years:** Newport Community Choir
Music on Mason – revived
- 2020 **First:** Newport Old Timey Session
COVID COMES - NFFC GOES ZOOM!
- Established Groups/Sessions:**
Beginner Jam, Newport Bush Orchestra, Celtic Session, Newport Community Choir, Newport Storytellers, Newport Strings, Tues Blues
- Regular Activities:**
Club Night, Theme Night, Newport Lakes Bush Dance, Newport Folk Festival (online 2020), Open Stage (No Carols at The Substation – COVID Break)
- 2021 Newport Drummers, Redesign of Website, Songwriting Program, Desktop Audio Workshop Project
- 2022 Newport Folk Festival
Greg O'Leary Retirement Dinner, Retired Club Night (original session)
First: Club Showcase
- 2023 **First:** Craft Group
- 2024 20 years of Storytelling and Music Making and Building our Community
First: 20th Anniversary Dinner
First: Cave Hill Music Camp
First: Carols on the Green
- 2025 New Membership System – Give Now
- Established Groups:**
Beginner Jam, Bush Orchestra, Celtic Session, Community Choir, Craft, Drummers, Old Timey Session, Open Stage, Storytellers, Strings, Tues Blues+
- Events:**
Newport Lakes Bush Dance, Folk Festival, Carols on the Green, Club Showcase, Theme Nights