

# NEWPORT BUSH ORCHESTRA CHARTER

JULY 2010

The NBO is a Not For Profit group auspiced by the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club. Members join the group by paying fees each term. These fees, and other income generated by the group, go towards the cost of running the group (including the cost of instructors).

## AIMS OF THE NEWPORT BUSH ORCHESTRA

- To learn collected Australian Fiddle tunes by ear.
- To perform these tunes by ear at appropriate functions.
- To create an enjoyable, friendly and inclusive atmosphere conducive to building confidence in aural playing.

## KEY VALUES

- Enjoyment in Playing
- Acceptance of All Abilities
- Stimulation through Learning
- Sharing the Repertoire through Performance
- Appreciation of the Role of Dance Music in Australia's Cultural History

## OUR LOGO

The Lyrebird is a distinctively Australian bird that has the skill of being able to mimic the songs of other birds and animals. The NBO aims to develop this skill in its learning of new tunes by ear.



## THE DANCES AND PERFORMANCES

The Newport Bush Orchestra plays for a number of dances each year, including the Annual Newport Lakes Bush Dance. The dances are played in true bush spirit where the names of the sets are roughly sketched out, and the leader calls out the name of the next tune just in time for everybody to join in with the changes (a very informal style of organisation).

For general NBO performances, the organisation and presentation of the group is the same as the dances – that is in the Bush Spirit of calling out tunes as they are needed to be played.

There are smaller groups that have emerged from the Bush Orchestra and they on occasion play for paid dances under the auspices of the NFFC.

## THE BOOK

While the NBO plays all tunes by ear, these tunes have been collected in a book so that they can be passed on with appropriate relevant background information to each tune. The book was originally produced with a CD of home recordings of the tunes performed by Greg and Helen Cahun. This book and the companion mp3's will be available online at the nffc website ([www.nffc.org.au](http://www.nffc.org.au)).

## NEWPORT BUSH ORCHESTRA – MONDAY SESSION

The Monday night session is run as a social, tune learning get together, where tunes are learned by ear. The group leader, Greg O'Leary, selects the material.

The current format is:

6.45 to 7.30 - Greg O'Leary teaches an established tune to anybody who wants to do it.

7.30 to 8.20 - Greg teaches a new tune. Bruce Williams works with rhythm section.

8.20 to 8.50 - Tea/chat break

8.50 to 9.30 - Revision of new material and requests.

The National Folk Festival (Easter 2011) has a focus on Victoria and Victorian Music. Therefore the tunes that will be taught and rehearsed for the next 9 months (July 2010 – March 2011) will be drawn from the State of Victoria. The tunes will then be recorded in preparation for the Festival.

The NBO will then present these tunes as a performance to the National Folk Festival in 2011 and have CD's of the music available to sell at the festival. We will make a CD of these tunes to sell and promote the NFFC as a club. The Newport Fiddle and Folk Club will underwrite the production of the CD and so any sales will be returned to the Folk Club.

## BUSH ORCHESTRA MANAGEMENT

The Newport Bush Orchestra is managed by the Folk Club. The Committee receive regular reports on the activities of the NBO, and weekly reports of the NBO sessions are posted on the Folk Club website. The Committee welcomes any feedback about the group from members of the NBO. The Committee surveys the Newport Bush Orchestra twice a year in order to identify any issues, suggestions or potential new initiatives for the group.

The Newport Bush Orchestra has developed into the 'Flagship' of the Folk Club. The success and ongoing development of the group has been marvellous to watch, and even better for those who have joined the group and had the opportunity to play in this unique, and distinctly Australian, bush orchestra.

# HISTORY OF THE NEWPORT BUSH ORCHESTRA

The Newport Fiddle and Folk Club was started on 24 August, 2004 by a local folk band (The Newport Convention) to provide a venue for people who were interested in playing music together. The format of the folk club was to meet on the 4th Friday of each month. After a few quiet sessions (with not many people or instruments) the club started to attract a group of locals who wanted to play, and had a range of musical skills (from very basic to professional level). 2005 was the year that the club started to consolidate and the monthly sessions began to attract an average of about 25 people who would play music and sing from 7.30 – 11pm. This was pretty strong evidence that the club was satisfying a need in the community to provide a focus for music making. The group became formalised with a committee to manage the club, a website to record and publicise the activities of the club ([nffc.org.au](http://nffc.org.au)) and the following charter to establish the aims and goals of the folk club:

## *AIMS OF THE NEWPORT FIDDLE AND FOLK CLUB*

*The Newport Fiddle and Folk Club aims to:*

- *Provide a venue for those interested in locally produced music*
- *Provide opportunities for amateur musicians to get together, play and learn from each other with an emphasis on, but not restricted to, folk music,*
- *Provide opportunities for non-musicians to come enjoy and participate in music through listening, singing, and dancing.*

*Beyond the monthly gatherings of the NFFC, the Club has a role to play in the development of young and older musicians through workshops and other planned musical activities. 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.*

One of the early members of the folk club was Greg O’Leary. Greg is a professional fiddler who has played with many folk bands over his long career, and has a great deal of experience of folk clubs and the ways in which they can develop. He had worked with a group of musicians from the Ringwood Folk Club to develop a ‘Bush Orchestra’ and he taught them a repertoire of traditional Australian dance tunes. Greg invited the group to come over to Newport to play and the club was impressed by the group and also by the historical dimension of their repertoire. Greg suggested that a similar group could be started in Newport, and that we would be eligible to apply for a grant (from **Folklife Victoria**) to underwrite the initial costs of the group. The folk club duly applied for funding and we received a grant of \$2000 to start up the Newport Bush Orchestra. .

Greg O’Leary was engaged at the start of 2006 to lead the Newport Bush Orchestra. The folk club advertised for interested musicians, and made it clear that people of all musical abilities were welcome to join. Members were asked to pay a term fee so that the group could survive beyond the initial funding provided by **Folklife Victoria**. The first session for the NBO was on April 5<sup>th</sup> 2006. It was very pleasant surprise for the folk club that 12 people joined the group and so the NBO was off and running. One aim of the group was that it would be able to perform the tunes that they learned in public and so, after only 3 sessions, the NBO had its first performance at the Folk Club’s monthly session. It was a great success!

In its initial incarnation, the group's aim was to bring to life the dance tunes that were played in Australia from the period 1880 – 1910. This was a period where an Australian folk music culture was emerging, and most of these tunes have been lost to the public. It was the intention of the group, through its leader Greg O'Leary, to bring these tunes back to life in a form that was in a 'bush' style, that is, where a group of musicians, of all skill levels and with whatever instruments they play, learn the tunes by ear, so that they are able to perform without the need for sheet music or music stands. This style provides a freedom where the group can perform wherever they are required to play.

These two initial aims continue to drive the group: learning traditional Australian dance tunes from the colonial period, and learning the music by ear. A third aim has also emerged: That playing in the Newport Bush Orchestra should be an enjoyable experience. This joy of playing together, more than the other two aims, is the reason why the group has continued to grow, and why, on most Mondays in Newport, there will be almost 20 players having a great time playing the tunes. Interestingly, it is the other two aims (playing traditional music and learning the tunes by ear) that has led to the Newport Bush Orchestra being invited to play at local gigs (which have an historical theme), and also being invited to folk festivals in Victoria.

The NBO has been lead by Greg O'Leary from the very beginning. He is an authority on traditional Australian tunes and his wealth of knowledge provides the foundation for selecting the tunes. He has also worked with Steve Martin on the development of a Newport Bush Orchestra Tune Book. This includes the current repertoire of the Bush Orchestra with notes about the origin of each of the tunes. The book is freely available on the website for download ([nffc.org.au](http://nffc.org.au)).

In 2009, the group had grown to about 15 players and it was clear that there was a need to provide Greg with assistance in the development of the group and their skill level. Bruce Williams is a talented Guitar and Mandolin player who had been a member of the Bush Orchestra for a number of terms. Bruce was asked to take on the role of developing the rhythm section of the group. He accepted this job and continues to work with Greg in developing the group.

