



**NEWPORT**  
FIDDLE & FOLK CLUB

# Annual Report 2024



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 2024. This was our 21st 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 2024 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 2025 that will maintain the vitality of the club.

## B

### Introduction

The Annual Report has become a discipline of the club. There are reports going back to 2005 – just 12 months after the club was founded – and these have served the club well. They challenge the leaders of each of our groups to restate (and sometimes reexamine) their aims, to review how the aims have been achieved during the past 12 months, and then to imagine (and plan) how these aims will continue to be achieved in the year ahead.

Collating the report is now a very interesting process which reminds the committee of all that we have achieved, of all the leaders and volunteers who make things happen, and of the ways that the club has connected our members to each other, and connected the club to our community. As we enter our 22nd 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 20 years, and imagine how you will contribute to the continued health and creativity of the Club in the future.

I look forward to hearing these ideas, and working with the club to bring them to life in the future.

# Groups

As of 2024, the club now has 12 active groups and sessions. This section provides a report of each of these groups. Many thanks to the leaders of the groups for their contribution to the club and to this report.

## 1. BEGINNER PLAYALONG

The Beginner Playalong 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 has gone from strength to strength averaging 30 attendees per session. In all, 11 Sessions were conducted throughout the year on the third Saturday of the month at the Newport Scout Hall. There were over 500 attendees combined at these sessions.

It was pleasing to note that this year we had some younger participants brought along by their parents or relatives who engaged in slapping the tambourine as well as people stepping up to the microphone and enjoying the thrill and buzz of that moment. Several experienced musicians also lent their hand in guiding the beginners along their musical journey.

A dedicated leadership team was introduced this year as well utilizing music gear from the club on site saving time and effort in bringing equipment in each session and the general running of the night.

The types of instruments that we saw brought to the group including, guitars, ukuleles, double bass, harmonica, violin, viola, piano accordion, keyboards, and a bodhran to name a few. We even had this year a Lager Phone adding further color to the sound.

We also had a dedicated vocal group that included, Cheryl, Subra, Cassie, Kerrie, Marty, David to name a few. They all got their chance to perform at the Folk Festival and Club Showcase and did a fantastic job.

We had a couple of theme nights this year including an Elvis Doo Wop night and an 80s night which were a lot of fun with dress ups for each theme and prizes for the best presented.

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.



## Groups

These events were:

- Newport Folk Festival
- Newport Fiddle and Folk Club Showcase Evening

In total, 64 new songs were covered during the year and some of these were performed at the concerts mentioned above. The group acts as a feeder group for the other 9 music 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.

The group will take a short break in January 2025 but be back in February 2025.

A big thanks to the those who helped throughout the year: Shameema, Gavin, Michael, Cheryl, Colin, David, Jeremy, Gary, Serena, Emily and Lizzie to name a few.

Next year we are planning to introduce in the sessions a tutorial and basic music information and knowledge component to help the novices understand and feel the music. We will also have a few guest musicians from the other sections of the club to give our Beginner Playalong people a taste of the vast and varied musical opportunities the club provides.

We're looking forward to a bright and exciting Beginner Playalong season in 2025.

***Danny Civitico***

## 2. BUSH ORCHESTRA

2024 has been a great year for Newport Bush Orchestra and certainly the biggest during my time “at the helm”. More on that shortly....

The aim of the Bush Orchestra is to be a musically competent, tight group who can present an interesting, varied and entertaining program of Australian dance tunes, songs and odd story from the Anglo Celtic heritage from which we draw most of our material. We also aim to keep the flame of this genre alive as well as experience enjoyment playing live music with a large group of people.

Being an inclusive, community-based group, we welcome new players who can play their chosen instrument at least to a basic level but are willing to commit to improving their skills to a point where they feel competent enough to play at public performances. As with the other affiliated musical entities within the fold of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club we provide an important social outlet. The Bush Orchestra is an opportunity for involvement for a wide range of people to feel that they are valued, and part of something which is enjoyable, worthwhile. There is the also the satisfaction that comes from the contribution that the NBO make to our community whilst giving them a social outlet which they may not otherwise have.

This year we started with public performances at the Commonwealth Reserve Williamstown band rotunda, The Newport Railway Workshops open day then the annual Newport Lakes Family Bush Dance and that was just up until March. Later we had a fantastic weekend with our first music camp at Cave Hill Creek near Beaufort. This started as an idea to take the bush orchestra away for a music weekend at Walhalla but for practical reasons morphed into a big musical weekend at the well-established, fully catered for venue at Cave Hill Creek. We opened it to all folk club groups and members. It was a really great, successful weekend enjoyed by all so we now plan to have this event every two years in a beautiful environment.

Then there was the Newport Folk Festival, a party at the Pirates Tavern, Williamstown, a return to Barwon Heads for another bush dance thanks to Barwon Heads Fine Music Society and the local junior soccer club. Probably the highlight of our performance for the year was the Highland Celtic Festival Pirates Tavern, Seaworks, Williamstown where we were told that we outshone the headline act Saoirse who are very accomplished but with us having sixteen players on stage including drums , bass, lagerphone , several fiddles etc we may have been quite a hard act to follow.

2025 promises to be another year of development for bush orchestra. We are getting some exciting new sets of tunes together, working on three-piece harmony singing, tightening up our existing tunes and looking forward to unleashing our revised dance sets at Newport Lakes and more. A number of us will be attending the National Folk Festival, Canberra at Easter where we intend to make our presence felt!

NBO will be in the capable hands of Leon Conway while I am on and over the seas for part of the year. As new performance opportunities unfold we will be ready, willing and able.

Onwards and upwards!

**Dave Isom**



### 3. CELTIC SESSION

The Celtic session went from strength to strength in 2024. Following the renovations at The Hub we took up residence in the Mechanics' Institute Hall this year. It was an eerie but exciting experience returning to the venue where the Club started all those 20 years ago. The walls echoed with the many ghosts of sessions past!

As in previous years, our session attracts people from near and far, and with a range of instrument skills from basic to the very advanced. This year we tried something a bit different, devoting the first half of the evening to slower and moderately paced tunes, with the after-supper period given over to more up-tempo ones. This has helped to cater to the diverse range of instrument playing skills and abilities.

The aim of the Celtic session group is to come together to play traditional Celtic tunes and sing 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.

This year our performance highlights were a spot at the Newport Folk Festival in July, a set at the Pirates' Tavern during the Williamstown Highland Celtic Gathering in October. The group also played a bracket of tunes at the Club's showcase concert in November.

At our final session for 2024 we had a group discussion about how we might do things differently going forward. It was agreed that each year a 'core' repertoire of about a dozen items is selected which we practice regularly and perform at the mid-year festival and November Club showcase concert. Other tunes or sets (and songs) will also be played at our sessions as time permits. To support this a Tune Book has been put together (downloadable from the webpage). The book sets out the 'core' repertoire with sheet music and chords, and all the other tunes and sets of tunes we collect along the way. It will be a growing and evolving one-stop-shop of our material. We have also produced some demo recordings of the 'core' items, also downloadable from the webpage, for people to practice with at home.

My long-time co-facilitator Alison Dew finished up this role at the end of the year. We are all very grateful for everything she has done over the years in helping keep the sessions going so smoothly. A special thank you to Greg and Katrina Leibel for helping me put the Tune Book together, and Jean Leibel for playing along on the demo recordings. 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, arrive early to help with set up, and leave late after the pack up. It wouldn't work without y'all!

**Simon Leverton**



#### 4. COMMUNITY CHOIR

The choir continues to fulfill its aim of creating a welcoming space for singers of all levels of experience to join in. We welcomed 22 new singers in 2024, and about half of them have stayed on into 2025.

We enjoyed two collaborations with other choirs over the year; our combined choirs performance at the Newport Folk Festival, along with Willin Wimmin and With One Voice Hobsons Bay and Wyndham, and the Choirs Jam organised by Community Music Victoria, where we sang with five other choirs. It's always fun to meet up and listen to other choirs, and when several choirs combine to sing together in a really big group, it's always a wonderful experience!

We extended our skills this year by bringing in experienced singing teacher Zerafina Zara for a voice workshop, and we continue to use Zerafina's techniques to improve our singing.

There were plenty of new songs to learn over the year, including Which Side Are You On? (an old union song), Oh Watch The Stars (a beautiful song we learned from visiting American composer and choir leader Moira Smiley), and some songs in other languages - Belle Qui Tiens Ma Vie (a French madrigal from the 16th century) and Pigogo (a lively and joyous song from South Africa). Then for the Carols Night we branched out into even more languages, with the Latin carol Gaudete and a verse from the original German version of Silent Night.

The social side of the choir is also important. Our normal rehearsal is 90 minutes without a break, but we've started to give ourselves a tea-break on special occasions for a little extra social time, and we enjoyed it so much we're planning to expand this idea in 2025.

***Alan Davies***





## Groups

### 5. CRAFT

The Craft Group commenced regular monthly sessions in May. Attendance has been low, hopefully numbers will increase in the new year.

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

Each person brings along their own project to work on during the session. Adrian Newington kindly came along to a session to demonstrate how he makes his lovely paper fans.

Monthly dates have been booked for 2025 in the Mechanics Hall at the Newport Community Hub, an ideal venue for this group. I'm planning to co-ordinate some group projects to support club events such as the 2025 Newport Folk Festival. But this will require more hands, so the focus will be on attracting more members.

**Sue Davies**



## Groups

### 6. DRUMMERS

Newport Drummers' aim is to bring community together through drumming, particularly study of West African rhythm structures. We also align with other drum groups under

Martin Case's direction (Drum Healing Network), further bringing together community through drumming and performance.

Our most impactful event of the year was the performance at the Melbourne Convention Centre, for The Lions Club International Concert, "Bringing the World, Together, Down Under". The concert showcased 75 artists from 7 countries, raising over \$28,000 for art and community initiatives..

We perform regularly at the Cherry Lake Cultural Series, the 1st Sunday of every month, excepting January. Extra instruments purchased from grant proceeds now make our monthly community offering more interactive with the audience (especially the children!). These performances also assist with cognisance of the NFFC's activities and Newport Drummers membership.

Through grant funding, we were also able to costume our members through a community collaboration, and we have purchased a 2nd set of dun-duns (West Africa bass drums), allowing us to access the more poly-rhythmic aspects of the music. We have also been performing on the beach in Altona on an occasional basis (Dunes Beach, Altona - Google it ; >). This has also raised awareness of community drumming, NFFC's activities, and membership for Newport Drummers.

Our membership is the highest since Newport Drummers has been operating.

Having a dedicated Grant Research Officer, and a Social Media Officer, would be a benefit. Such additions would allow more member participation, assist in community continuance of our offering, and allow a template for consistent growth in both funding and community awareness.

To complete the goals that were not attained in 2024: creating banners for Newport Drummers, as this will help membership and cognisance of the NFFC during live performances. In addition we will be seeking funding to record Newport Drummers in the studio. The effects of preparing and actualisation of a studio recording on a community group are well documented, and we wish to actualised this initiative for the ensemble.

#### ***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. A free tune book and links to useful tune search websites are available from the Old-Timey page of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club website.

Old-timey music is a form of North American folk music, with roots in the folk music of many countries, including England, Scotland and Ireland, as well as the continent of Africa. This musical form developed along with various North American folk dances, such as square dance, buck dance and clogging. The genre also encompasses ballads and other types of folk songs. It is generally played on a combination of fiddle and plucked string instruments such as the guitar, banjo, mandolin, dulcimer, and acoustic bass.

Each meeting I introduce a tune and provide basic instruction on how to play it on fiddle, mandolin, guitar and banjo. After this, each attendee has the opportunity to call out a tune for the group to jam on or perform a song or tune of their choice. There is also a chance to get tips on playing old-timey fiddle, mandolin, guitar, and banjo.

Given that old-timey music is primarily driven by fiddles and banjos, it was heartening to see an increase in the number of both fiddle and banjo players in attendance this year. We now have four fiddle players and three banjo players and three mandolin players in regular attendance. We also have regular attendees on double bass which gets us really close to an authentic old-timey string band setup.

Overall, the group met 10 times in 2024. Additionally, We hosted a successful session at the 2024 Newport Folk Festival and presented a set of songs and tunes at the end of year Club Showcase. We learnt the following tunes/songs, which will form the basis of our growing and increasingly authentic old timey repertoire: Angelina Baker, Boatman, Cluck Old Hen, Cold Frosty Morning, Cripple Creek, Doney, My Own House, Old Joe Clark, Ookpik Waltz, Sugar Hill, Susananna Gal.

In 2025 we will continue to expand the group's repertoire. I will teach important bow strokes for the fiddlers, along with key accompaniment techniques that are commonly found in old-timey string bands. I thank all those who attended the 2024 sessions. As was the case last year, particular thanks must go to Val Williams who taught a number of fiddle tunes. I would also like to thank Alan Davies for his steadfast support of the group throughout the year. I look forward to a jolly old time in 2025!

***Bruce Williams***



## Groups

### 8. OPEN STAGE

2024 was another successful year for Newport Open Stage (NOS).

We continued with in-person performance at the Newport Community Hub. Dharma Picking and Alan Davies again helped with setup and refreshments – and MC'ing when I was absent. Attendance, as always, varied from month to month but 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 continue doing what we're doing, with Alan and Dharma taking on yet more responsibility (thanking you in anticipation).

**Greg Jenkins**

### 9. THEME NIGHT

2024 was another rewarding year for the Live@Newport Theme Nights. The team (Andrea McGlashan, Dharma Picking, David Lord and I) ran three theme nights at the Newport Bowls Club:

First, we got footloose and shook our tailfeathers at Song and Dance on Saturday 13th April.

Next, in honour of the Club's 20th birthday, we reprised our first-ever theme with BobFest Revisited – an evening of songs by Bob Dylan on Saturday 13 July.

Finally, we went with the weird, wild, wacky, and woebegone in Welcome to Weirdsville on Saturday 26 October.

In all three programs numerous acts showed great talent and creativity to full - and enthusiastic – houses. (The performers keep upping the ante in terms of the originality, musicality and theatricality of their contributions!)

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>



## Groups

- 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.

### Events during 2023

- ZOOM/Live hybrid monthly session (Feb – November – excluding April)
- World Storytelling Day: two sessions. An Evening for adults was held in the Mechanics Hall and storytellers joined us from Singapore, India, US and the UK. This was recorded and edited by Adrian Newington and is set to be added to our podcast
- Bush Dance: Also as part of the global WSD activities – stories for children in Newport Lakes Park.
- Evening with the Bush Orchestra
- Newport Folk Festival Stories by the Fire
- The NS crew ran the annual Australian Fairy Tale Society Conference (committee chaired by Em Chandler). We attracted attendees from around Australia and beyond. Thanks to the NFFC auspicing a Make It Happen Grant we were able to employ an Auslan interpreter, Boonwurrung educator/storyteller Jaeden Williams and we paid Adrian who managed the technology for the entire weekend.

Beyond our monthly gatherings and whole group participation, the NS has a strong multilingual cohort who are becoming increasingly popular: Hindi, Tamil, Tagalog and growing.

- Williamstown Literary Festival
- Footscray Languages in Community Festival
- The BIG Story Day Hobsons Bay Libraries (multilingual Story and Music event)

### Local Residential Care

The NS has been reaching out to local residential care places offering music and stories under the NFFC banner for an honorarium of \$100.

Adrian, Em and Jackie visited Trugo in 2024

For 2025 we already have bookings for Trugo and Westgate

### Plans and Dreams for 2024

- Monthly gatherings, 3rd Friday of the month Feb-Nov excluding April.
- Friday March 21: World Storytelling Day Deep Water.
- Children's Storytelling event to celebrate World Storytelling Day – possible at the Bush Dance (TBC)
- Evening with Bush Orchestra (TBC)
- Eol for Folk Festival – Stories by the Fire (TBC)
- Continue with our outreach to local residential care
- Expanding the multilingual storytelling – they already have a booking from Hobs Bay CC.

### Thank yous

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

**Jackie Kerin, Adrian Newington and Em Chandler**



### 11. NEWPORT STRINGS

Performance number one for Newport Strings in 2024 was on 23rd March at 11:30am. It was a usual start of the year concert with a series of favourites including one piece by Ricard MacNeill and one by Suanna Harvey, other pieces on the program were excerpts from The Holberg Suites and The St. Paul's Suite. For this concert we also pulled out the Strauss Pizzicato Polka which we haven't played since the days when we used to do monthly performances at The Substation Farmer's Market in competition with the coffee machines.

Our second performance was The Festival concert performance at the end of June. As always, quite a lot of planning, preparation and rehearsal goes into this annual performance which we all look forward to. We had several guest players join us increasing our numbers to 22 including Bridie Mee and Lucy Belfrage, both on oboe who joined us for the Vivaldi Double Oboe Concerto. Michael Taylor as our second Double Bass and Frances Lu on Continuo. The addition of these extra instruments provides a colour of sound that we don't usually get to enjoy, it all came together well and was well received.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our September performance as several key players were unavailable. This was very disappointing but the silver lining was that early in the process of trying to put a group together, and before we made the decision to cancel, we made contact with a number of players, from The Inner West Symphony Orchestra, including the orchestra leader, Michael Patton and violin Justin Casserly, who both joined us for the 4th performance. Michael and Justin are both excellent players and a wonderful addition to our line-up. We have also made contact with 2 more violins who weren't available in 2024 but we hope they will be joining us in 2025.

Reinvigorated after the disappointment of the cancelled performance and with our 2 excellent new players, we put together what I thought was one of our best Library Performances on November 16th. It was a perfect day outside and Michael finally managed to get both floor to ceiling windows open on the park side of the building. For the first time we played 'In The Round' to our audience who were both inside the room and outside in the park. To celebrate the day, we finished off the performance with the Corelli Christmas Concerto which is a long-time favourite of ours.

In 2025 and being conscious of players potentially being unavailable for the September performance, we are going to take a different approach. Instead of putting on our usual Newport Strings Library Performance we are going to invite players to put together small groups, duets, trios, quartets and such like and to prepare a 15–20-minute performance. The groups can be formed either with members of Newport Strings or with other friends from outside the group. Hopefully we will get 4-5 groups all prepared to present which should make up an enjoyable program. It's called PLAYERS OF NEWPORT STRINGS AND FRIENDS as a working title.

I am currently working on our 2025 program and will get the dates on the website once they are confirmed. With our new members and a new concept for September, we are looking forward to 2025 and what it might offer.

#### **Warwick Dawson**



## The Groups

### 12. TUES BLUES

Tues Blues has been going from strength to strength. We started 2024 with a core of 15 people, and at present are up to nearly 30, with a lot more women coming on board than previously, and more singers who don't play anything.

We spent the start of 2024 choosing then rehearsing for our 1940s and 50s wartime and post war show in June. We put this on in the Bowls club with a wartime set in full costume and room decor of war posters and themes. A quick costume and decor change at half time put everyone in the post war more colourful and relaxed mood. The team had a fabulous time (as I think did the audience) and left them hungry to get a show together for the next decades.

We used songs from the show for our festival set, then from August to Christmas we have been enthusiastically jamming endless 1960s songs for a 60s (only) show. I have approached the Bowls for dates and am awaiting a reply. Hurrah!

***Gaelle Horsley***



## Events

### 13. BUSH DANCE

#### Newport Lakes Bush Dance

Held 17th March 2024

#### At the Amphitheatre at Newport Lakes

The Newport Fiddle & Folk Club was delighted to once again welcome the many families who came along to join in an afternoon of music and dancing. For the first time the Newport Storytellers were there to add a new dimension to the event and proved to be popular with the kids.

This event relies on the skills and repertoire of the Newport Bush Orchestra to provide the dance music. Jennie Simpson once again did a terrific job of encouraging people to join in the fun of learning the various dances.

Thanks to our Sound Technician for the day – Bruce Osborne.

The program ran as follows:

3.00 – 3.05	Welcome and housekeeping announcements
3.05 – 3.10	Jackie to introduce storytellers
3.10 – 3.40	NBO and bush dances
3.40 – 4.10	Newport Drummers
4.10 – 4.40	NBO and bush dances
4.40 – 5.10	The Good Earth
5.10 – 5.40	NBO and bush dances

Thank you to everyone who participated and made the day a success.

A craft activity was provided for children – they were able to make dreamcatchers and got very creative with their designs.

Our thanks to Hobsons Bay City Council for their continued financial support for the Bush Dance.

And thanks to the team who volunteered their time;

MC – Alan Davies  
 Photographer - Michael Stewart  
 First Aid Officer – Sue Boyd  
 General Hands – Deb Supriyono / Dharma Picking / Sue Davies

#### ***Sue Davies***





#### 14. CAROLS

Presented by the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club and supported by a \$4,000.00 Hobsons Bay City Council 'Make it Happen Grant', Newport Carols on the Green 2024 occurred on the evening of Saturday 14 December 2024 in Paine Reserve. Newport Carols on the Green 2024 was curated by a team of three; Sue Davis, Deborah Supriyono and Aneta Graham. The intent was to provide an opportunity for the community, friends, and family to gather at Paine Reserve and to celebrate the festive season. Providing fun, family-friendly entertainment for everyone to sing along to their favourite Christmas Carols. Attendees were encouraged to enjoy a BYO picnic in the park or purchase food from their local vendors.

The program showcased local talent such as the Ukulele Dolls, The Inklings and Jen Hawley, with 80 children performing from the Newport Lakes Primary School. Underpinning and supporting all the performances was the Newport Choir led by Alan Stewart and the Newport Carols Orchestra led by Michael Stewart.

The Newport Carols on the Green was a resounding success, with strong community attendance and enthusiastic participation. The event brought together residents of all ages to celebrate the festive season in a welcoming and joyful atmosphere. The collaboration of local volunteers and performers contributed to an engaging evening, highlighting the spirit of community connection and holiday cheer. Feedback from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive.

For 2025 before consideration will be given to increased partnership or handover to the Hobson's Bay City Council or another body due to the extent of the involvement and production needs to host the carols.

**Aneta Graham**





## 15. FOLK FESTIVAL

This is a summary report of the 2024 Newport Folk Festival. 2024 was the 2nd time that we have run a shortened program (Friday night/ Saturday). The new format is sustainable (not too much demand on the committee and volunteers) and delivered a really enjoyable program judging by both formal and informal feedback from committee, volunteers and the punters.

Overall the report suggests that the festival was well planned and the organization and preparation lead to a very successful event. The Committee includes 6 people who worked very effectively together in the planning, staging and review processes of the event. They are:

Michael Stewart	<i>Artistic Director</i>
Sue Davies	<i>Operations Manager</i>
Aneta Graham	<i>Program Manager</i>
Danny Civitico	<i>Volunteers Manager</i>
Deb Supriyono	<i>Secretary</i>
Tristan Bunner	<i>OH &amp; S</i>

### 1. Performers

#### What we did

We curated a vibrant program of 50 performances and workshops drawing talent from the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club and non-members, continuing with the 'Come and Play' open invitation for the community to attend and actively join in. Our diverse lineup of workshops included singing and rhythm, sailor songs, sessions dedicated to Celtic and Old Timey music and a rare opportunity to learn to polka. The Friday night showcase provided the perfect taster for Saturday's comprehensive program, welcoming back festival favourites Great Aunt, and a filled to the brim Substation experiencing the delights of the talented and local Paisley & Plaid and Queensland's rich and vibrant Cigany Weaver.

#### How it worked

- A team of five programmed and managed the festival efficiently and effectively.
- The Friday night showcase and the Saturday program appeared to meet the festival brief providing ample time to deliver a variety of musical genres, a level of diversity, offering something for everyone and leaving people wanting more.
- There were no program cancellations.
- Communications to performers were effective in the lead up to the festival.

#### Learnings and Change for 2025 Festival

- We should continue to build on the success of the 2024 festival retaining our key attributes which are our people, knowing what works well, engaging with the community, supporting our local musicians, not overcommitting, keeping it simple, providing a safe space for everyone, and an efficient and committed committee.
- The application form can ask for more specific requirements from performers which we need to consider during the selection process, for example large choir groups can be encouraged to describe if they need specific staging or bands have an expectation of a backline. We may also like to state that any fee asked for is for the entirety of the festival although this can have pluses and minuses.
- Like 2024 there is an imperative to have a technical lead that ensures the success of the sound requirements and organises a backline; this was requested by some of our performers that used drums and needed a bass amp and would streamline the process.
- Like 2024 a marketing coordinator needs to be sourced as a priority as there are opportunities to increase our social media presence, increase word of mouth and streamline marketing processes.

**Aneta Graham**

## 2. Volunteers

### Introduction

My role on the Folk Festival Committee was to organise and coordinate the volunteer complement required to ensure that the two-day event ran smoothly and all logistical needs were met. The role also was to ensure that the volunteer experience was a good one particularly those who may have volunteered for the first time and provide support and guidance.

### Logistics

The volunteering recruitment began in late April 2024 where a number of volunteer roles were to be filled. These included

- Merchandise Sales
- Stage Manager
- Master of Ceremonies
- IT and Sound Tech Experts
- Performer Liaison
- First Aid
- General Volunteers

### Implementation

95 people expressed interest in becoming a volunteer at the five festival venues and were allocated tasks at the festival. Many of these were first time volunteers from a wide variety of ages and walks of life. The venues were:

- Newport Bowls Club Front and Back Rooms
- Newport Scout Hall
- Newport Community Hub
- Newport Substation

A total of 78 shifts covering the 20 hours that the festival was allocated with well in excess of 100 volunteer hours tallied at the event.

Friday one venue operated for four hours and on Saturday five venues operated for a period of up to 12 hours each. This is a conservative estimate as volunteers attended training sessions and role briefings on the days in question. My own hours would have amounted to in excess of 50 hours of organisational and cross-checking time as well.

### Comments

All in all the event ran very smoothly with nearly all volunteers attending and covering their shifts. I received feedback from several volunteers who stated the experience was quite positive and they were very happy with the level of support and service they received from me, the coordinator.

### *Danny Civitico*



### 3. General Impressions

The festival was a huge success. It was welcoming and “had a great vibe”, which, a number of people, actually said in general conversation. The whole event was so well organised. Aneta and Sue did such a fantastic job of the logistics and communications and you did a great job in your liaising. The three of you are a power team!! The program was fantastic with a great variety of acts.

I continue to love the whole community spirit, that the event generates. The number of people, so happy to donate their time and expertise to ensure the success of the event, is just fantastic. Before, during and after, all you could see were smiling people.

According to the demographics prepared by Alan, there was little difference in the average age of the audience, but anecdotally there did seem to be more younger people attending. The sample size of the survey was very small, so obviously not everybody filled in a survey.

Word of mouth remains the main way that people found out about the festival, although there was a small increase in the number of people, who discovered the festival, through Facebook. We really need to advertise on Instagram to capture a younger audience, but will need to find someone able to do that.

As for me, I thought it the best festival yet!

**Deb Supriyono**

### 4. Numbers and Control

#### Attendance

Wristbands sold:

400 x Adults

29 x Under 18's

Friday night only tickets:

29 x Adults

Friday night attendance:

160

Performers:

336

Volunteers:

89 (41 also performers)



### 5. OH & S

The festival conducted a thorough risk assessment of each of the venues and the areas that were included in the festival. Effective signage and other crowd management processes were put in place, including the significant Volunteer Orientation workshops. All equipment was Tested and Tagged by qualified technicians.

There were no incident reports filed throughout the festival, and the comments and feedback from punters was interesting but did not raise any OHS issues.

Tristan Bunner was the OHS committee members and he brought all of his industry experience to each of the discussions about safety issues. This is Tristan's 2nd festival and his input was invaluable to the committee in creating a safe festival.

Recommendation:

- OHS specific person on the committee
- Testing and Tagging Equipment implemented before the festival 2025
- Reappraise each of the venues prior to the 2025 festival

Overall the festival was successful. We look forward to another really enjoyable celebration of music and storytelling in our community at next year's festival.

**Michael Stewart**  
**Artistic Director**





## 16. 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION DINNER

The Folk Club celebrated our 20th Anniversary with a Dinner at the Newport Bowls Club on 24th of August. This was almost exactly 20 years to the date when we had our first session – what we now know to be a ‘folk circle’ – at the Newport Mechanics Hall. The first session was attended by about 6 people, and then over our first few years grew to almost 50 on some nights. Once our other sessions began the need for the club night diminished until it was retired in 2022.

80 people came to the dinner and enjoyed a wonderful night of celebration. The Ricolas and The Inklings both entertained us with their music, and Adrian Newington, Jackie Kerin and Michael Stewart gave speeches that reflected on what the club had achieved and what it meant for the many people who have created the club into what it is today.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of Life Membership to long-term members of the club who have been so important to our development and success. These included

- Founding Committee Members: Michael Stewart, Alison Dew, Rick Sidgwick,
- Long Serving Committee Members: Alan Davies, Sue Davies
- Long time Contributors to the Club: Dave Davies, and Greg O’Leary

Sue Davies was given a bunch of flowers for organising the event. Helen Stewart was also given a bunch of flowers from the club in thanks of her 20 years of support of the club in so many unseen ways. Thank you Sue and Helen!

Ted Smith spoke about his experience of the club and how important it has been to create this community that we now enjoy. He then proposed a rousing toast to the club which was heartily supported. The evening was rounded off with generous pieces of cake (a tradition dating back to 2005) and cups of tea.

Many thanks to Megan Slattery for emceeing the evening.

It was a wonderful night!

**Michael Stewart**



## 17. CLUB SHOWCASE

The Club Showcase has emerged as another annual event for the club. Our 3rd Showcase was held on the Sunday the 17th of November. This year was the first time that all of our groups were part of the afternoon’s event. The program began with Beginner Playalong, followed by the Choir, the Storytellers and the Old Timey Session. A break gave people time to chat and meet people from other groups. The Bowls Club was really humming as everyone was in performance mode and so a little bit wired up. After the break we had Drummers followed by Strings (strong contrast) and then the Celtic Session, the Bush Orchestra and finishing off with Tues Blues. The Craft Group was in evidence through the decorations that they had prepared in their session prior to the showcase.



Many thanks to Sue Davies and Deb Supriyono for their work in making the Showcase come to life and for the work decorating the Bowls Club to give the event such a special and distinctive NFFC feel. We look forward to the Showcase continuing as an Annual Celebration of what the club has achieved each year.

### 18. CAVE HILL CAMP

Late in 2023 Dave Isom suggested that it would be good for the club to organise a musical camp. Dave found a venue – Cave Hill in Beaufort – and Dave, Kerry Duke and Michael Stewart took the trip up to check out the site. It is a wonderful place in a bush setting and so it was decided that ‘this is the place for the camp!’

In February all members were notified of the event and eventually we received 44 bookings (after being nervous about whether we would achieve the minimum number of 28!).

The aim of the camp was:

Support the overall aims of the Newport Fiddle and Folk Club by

- Fostering connections between members and between our established groups
- Build skills and confidence in playing and performance
- Spread the joy of music
- Have fun

We used 3 rooms at the camp for workshops and naturally we were able to find willing sessions leaders from our members. The program began with a blackboard concert and then included Songwriting with Greg and Simon, Ukuleles Rule the World with Alison, Sailor Songs with Leon, Setup and Using the PA with Mike, Celtic Tunes with Simon, Beginner Playalong with Danny, Guitar Inversions with Adrian, Sing n Play with Noel, Australian Tunes with Dave and Gypsy Swing Tunes with Mike. Sunday’s program included Ballads with Dharma, My Favourite Song with Jackie, more Songwriting and PA work and Celtic Tunes with Simon. It was a busy couple of days (Friday night to Sunday lunch) and a good time was had by all.

It was decided that this could be a bi-annual event if there is someone to take over the work of organising (quite a bit of work as it turned out). So we shall see what happens in 2026. However it was surely a worthwhile exercise and everyone learnt something, and plenty of new relationships were formed to strengthen our club.

Well done to all those who came along for the ride!

**Michael Stewart**





# Our organisation

## 1. OUR COMMITTEE

Many thanks to our committee of 2024 for all the time, work and creativity you have set aside to manage the club and bring our aims to life within our expanding community. Thank you to:

- Alan Davies      *Vice President*
- Rick Sidgwick    *Secretary*
- Neil Brydges     *Treasurer*

### **Ordinary Members**

Alison Dew, Adrian Newington, Danny Civitico, Deb Supriyono, Greg Jenkins, Kerry Duke

At this 20th year, I would like to thank all of our past committee members who have been part of the committee over the journey. We know that it is quite a rare thing to attract and retain enthusiastic and committed people to run community organisations. The NFFC has been fortunate to have such people who not only join the committee but, in many cases, have been committed over a number of years to make our community a better place. A very big thank you to you all.

I look forward to working with the new committee in 2025. There are always plenty of basic issues to manage (our groups, our events, our memberships and our money!). In addition I look forward to the various new initiatives that the committee will propose, and the ideas that come from our groups and members that we will consider. The committee uses our aims as the key criteria. As long as the ideas support those aims, they will certainly be viewed very positively.

## 2. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Club finished the year in a sound financial position with available funds, after allowing for known liabilities of \$24,342 (\$20,096 in 2023). 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 amount to more than \$130,000 in a year. Like last year much of the available funds is earmarked for our commitments to run the festival, our regular activities, new initiatives, a buffer for a “rainy day”. Some of these require up front expenditure before the receipts on the day. Our cash buffer allows the Club to manage those requirements.

With Australia moving to a cashless society, the Club now has Square readers at most activities to allow attendees the option of paying with ‘tap and go’.

At the end of 2024, the Newport Fiddle & Folk Club had 281 members. This is 24 up from 257 in 2023 and is our equal highest year-end total after dipping in the COVID years.

**Neil Brydges, Treasurer**

## 3. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

There are 3 types of memberships – Individual, Family (counting as two members), and Organisation. The table shows the number of each type of membership with the number for 2023 in (brackets). Family and Organisation memberships were flat but there was strong growth in Individual memberships.

Type	Members
Individual	112 (86)
Family	166 (170)
Organisation	3 (1)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>281 (257)</b>



#### 4. OUR FUTURE

2024 has been a year to enjoy what we have achieved over the past 20 years. The original conception of the club came from a desire to create a Newport Folk Festival. We had the name (where Bob went electric), we had the 4 community buildings facing each other, and The Substation was emerging from its former life. However we needed a club to bring the festival to life, and the first session at the Mechanics Hall in August 2024 was the beginning. Each of the groups that has emerged from the club has simply been the response to a good idea (Why don't we have Bush Orchestra? Choir? Tues Blues? etc). In each case there was someone with the idea, the skills, the commitment and the enthusiasm to bring the idea to life. It has been amazing to watch this growth. I am always bemused when people who experience the club for the first time through the festival ask 'Where is a similar organisation in my area?'. The Newport Fiddle and Folk Club is unique and it continues to be of value to so many people. We all need to continue to manage and nurture it as it grows so that it can continue to provide more people with opportunities to connect while learning, participating or simply enjoying what we create. Feedback from our members may be a useful tool for us to introduce at the club.

Since the very first festival, the club has sought feedback from the punters to get their impressions of what they enjoyed and what they think could be improved. At a club level we have not developed an equivalent process. That said, each of our groups have instituted formal or informal feedback processes as a means of improving and planning for their future. The club has maintained the discipline of this Annual Report for 20 years and there are certainly benefits in collating all of this information into the one report. I suggest that it is now time for us add a feedback process at the level of the club. This process will keep us in touch with our members, provide us with new ideas, and open up the discussion for what people in the club have the enthusiasm to create.

The new committee will deliberate on this process over the next few months. Our current plan is to introduce an anonymous bi-annual survey of members at the end of Term 2 and Term 4. The committee will then collate the feedback and provide members with a moderated summary of the information we receive. This is not a new idea. Most effective organisations use some form of feedback as a means of keeping channels of communication open. As a now long-lived organisation it is worth experimenting with this process. While we will still use the informal channels to keep our ears to the ground, I think that this additional mechanism will be valuable (we will see!)

To complete this report I would simply like to thank all of you for being part of the folk club. Many years ago one of our founding members - Steve Martin – said of the people in the club 'We are very lucky to have found each other'. Wise words indeed. Being connected is at the heart of a good life, and the folk club nurtures that connection, which, for me, and I know for many others, has enriched our lives in many ways.

I look forward to continuing the journey with you.



**Michael Stewart**  
**Founder, President**



## 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
- Established Groups/Sessions:**  
Beginner Jam, Bush Orchestra, Celtic Session, Community Choir, Craft, Drummers, Old Timey Session, Open Stage, Storytellers, Strings, Tues Blues+
- Regular Activities:**  
Theme Nights, Newport Lakes Bush Dance, Newport Folk Festival, Club Showcase