

Dance Convenor's Report – 2025 AGM

Overview

This has been my second year as Dance Convenor. In my 2024 report, I noted that interest in dancing seemed to have picked up post-COVID. At the end of 2023 and into the first half of 2024, dancers returned in good numbers and our dance events were well-patronised and financially self-supporting. However, the numbers have dropped off early in 2025 and one of our main tasks for the rest of the year is to revisit our publicity activities.

We held the inaugural Port Phillip Dance Festival in April, and we also held a new 'Autumn Dance' in May in place of the usual May Woolshed Ball. The dance festival was a modest success, whilst the Autumn Dance was a social success but failed to cover costs. One of the tasks for the rest of 2025 is to find a less expensive hall for the planned October Woolshed Ball.

Sub-Committee

We still have an informal sub-committee comprising Bill Buttler (Convenor), Jane Bullock and Robin Simpson. Jane has been overseas since April, and a couple of other Committee members (Michael Hassett and Peter Kernebone) have stepped in to help with our events. We would still like to have at least one more permanent member, preferably also on the main VFMC Committee. They don't need to be dancers, there are plenty of things to do such as setting up halls and manning the door ticket sales.

Ringwood Family Dance

Last year, we made the decision to discontinue the previous Kids' Dance, but at the same time we decided to start (and finish) the Ringwood Family Dance a half-hour earlier to make it more family-friendly. Both changes commenced at the start of 2024.

After the good numbers of dancers at our 2025 events, it has been a bit surprising to see numbers drop off again. The following table summarise the attendance since last July:

Numbers of dancers

Month	Band	Members	Non-members	Children	Total
Jul-24	Delia's Friends	21	24		45
Aug-24	Colonial Dancers'	18	52	2	72
Sep-24	Brumbies	10	49		59
Oct-24	Borderline Kaylee	15	74	1	90
Nov-24	Jolly Jumbucks	16	30		46
Dec-24	Billabong Band	13	33	4	50
Feb-25	Borderline Kaylee	15	17	3	35
Mar-25	Scratch Band *	16	40	2	58
Apr-25	Delia's Friends	14	19	1	34
May-25	Comhaltas	13	25	2	40
Jun-25	Jolly Jumbucks	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA

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* Blackberry Jam were scheduled, but due to a misunderstanding did not show up. A last-minute Scratch Band of Steve, Bill and Maree played acoustically with Robin and Jane calling and we still managed a very enjoyable night of dancing.

Attendance is somewhat seasonal, and we expect a drop off over the winter months. It also varies with the band, some bands bringing their own followers from other clubs.

Financial results

The following table summarises the financial results of the Ringwood dances over the last financial year:

Month	Band	Door *	Expenses	Band	Net	Overheads	'Profit'	% of door
Jul-24	Delia's Friends	498	4	315	179	70	109	22%
Aug-24	Colonial Dancers'	804		550	254	70	184	23%
Sep-24	Brumbies	628		460	168	70	98	16%
Oct-24	Borderline Kaylee	1,038		726	312	70	242	23%
Nov-24	Jolly Jumbucks	520	5	334	181	70	111	21%
Dec-24	Billabong Band	525	21	340	164	70	94	18%
Feb-25	Borderline Kaylee	354		250	104	70	34	10%
Mar-25	Scratch Band *	640		428	213	70	143	22%
Apr-25	Delia's Friends	368	16	250	102	70	32	9%
May-25	Comhaltas	430		270	160	70	90	21%
Jun-25	Jolly Jumbucks	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA

* Includes cash, pre-booked and EFTPOS

'Overheads' includes allowance for hall rent, liability insurance and APRA copyright licensing fees.

The table shows a comfortable profit margin right through the financial year, despite a slight drop off in the first half of 2025.

Note that we have been charging \$70 as an allowance for Overheads despite hall hire increasing to \$100 and other expenses rising slightly. We will start charging \$111 for Overheads from the June dance, as resolved at the May Committee meeting. The Committee also resolved to lift the band minimum fee to \$300, to be in line with the Concert performer's fee and to compensate for the increase in Overheads (which affects the band's share of the net door).

As noted in last year's report, our admission fee is low. We need to make a small fee increase to help us cover costs and reward bands better. We will review this when Jane and Steve return from overseas and with sufficient time to give notice to our regular dance attendees.

National Folk Festival / Port Phillip Dance Festival

We applied for a dance spot at the 2025 National Folk Festival but were not successful – which is understandable given that we were accepted last year. None of the other Melbourne dance groups were accepted, and partly as a result, we held the inaugural Port Phillip Dance Festival on Saturday

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19th of April 2025. The event was initiated by Steve Bullock, with the aim of providing some folk-dance opportunities for those who were not going to the National Folk Festival.

The event comprised dance workshops running from 10am to 4.15pm with a lunch break from 12:45 to 1:30pm, followed by an evening dance from 7:30 to 11:00pm. The workshops were structured around 6 different genres (English, Welsh, Colonial, Scottish, Irish and Colonial), each conducted by a caller specialising in the genre. We simultaneously ran music workshops in the back room at the Senior Citizens' Hall, conducted by the Band that played for the evening dance.

We had a reasonably good attendance of dancers (32) which was sufficient for two complete sets for most dances. Only 2 musicians attended, along with the Band (5 musicians).

Feedback from the dancers was very positive. We covered our costs financially, with a small surplus going back to the Club. All in all, it was a great outcome for a new event.

Woolshed Ball

In the past, the VFMC has held two Woolshed Balls each year, one in May and one in October. Due to dwindling numbers, the October Ball was not held in the last few years leading up to the COVID19 pandemic, and then both Balls were suspended during lockdown.

In May 2024, the Woolshed Ball made a return at the Box Hill Community Arts Centre. The rent for Box Hill was around double that of our previous hall (Kilsyth), but we hoped that ease of access and the general increased interest in dancing would help us get a good attendance and cover the hall cost. As it turned out, we had 57 dancers attending, and we were able to cover costs (including the Billabong band) with a modest return of \$250 for the Club.

In place of the May 2025 Ball, we held an 'Autumn Dance' at the same venue (Box Hill). It was a 'dance' rather than a 'ball' because Box Hill doesn't allow music past 10:30pm. This year we had a greatly reduced turnout (29 dancers). Our costs were higher, as the rent had increased and we booked Blackberry Jam rather than the Billabong Band (Blackberry Jam kindly agreed to a reduced fee to help us financially). As a result, we made a loss of approximately \$600. Factors that might have influenced attendance included reduced dance time due to the early closing time, other dance events around the same period and reduced publicity as a result of Jane being overseas.

We have already planned for an October Ball this year (11th October). We have started the process of finding a cheaper hall that still meets our criteria, including being closer to central eastern suburbs and allowing us to run an event with music up to at least 11:30pm. We will update the incoming Committee at the first meeting after the AGM. Note that I have documented the planning and management processes for the Woolshed Balls and this document is now on the 'Club Rules' section of our website.

General

As noted last year, managing receipts has become a bit more complex now that we have cash transactions, EFTPOS and pre-booked tickets via Humanitix. We revised the 'Event Calculation Form' used to summarise the door takings at the Ringwood Dance and calculate the band's share of the net

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door. This has helped somewhat, but the management of door sales still requires diligence, and the Treasurer's job has become more complex due to the need to track several sources of income.

Publicity dropped off a little early in 2025. I stopped updating some of the council websites and newsletters, and we saw a reduction in numbers of new attendees at the Ringwood dances. Whether the reduction in numbers is a direct result of the lack of council advertising is not 100% clear, but I am resuming some of these publicity activities to test the theory. I also used local FM to publicise both the Autumn Dance (thanks Colin McLaren for setting this up) and another club-related event (the Highland Games). We should pursue regular spots on local FM together with our own printed flyers, Facebook page and the Club website.

Bill Buttler, June 2025