

2026 Presidents Report

The VFMC is a club run by enthusiastic volunteers putting in much work behind the scenes, not for personal gain, but to further the goals of the club, by organising, for example, a dance festival, or by being willing to serve tea and coffee at the concert, or sit at the door and collect money, or be involved in the committee or one of the subcommittees.

Somebody must keep the accounts, manage the membership database, write and distribute the newsletter, open and lock up the hall, liaise with performers, set up lights and sound, set out chairs, and manage the library. The reward? To be there when good music is made, good dances are danced, good friends are made.

Past committee

I'd like to thank the members of the 25/26 committee for all your work in ensuring our club remains a great club.

Special thanks to **Don** for his role as treasurer. It's a big job that requires constant work to keep on top of. Don has also been our publicity coordinator and sessions coordinator, again roles that requires constant attention.

Thanks to **Michael** as club secretary for keeping on top of the meeting agendas and minutes, club correspondence and other matters that all take time and need to be done in a timely fashion.

Trev for taking on the role of Vice President, and for managing the membership database and newsletter distribution, as well as his role as the Billabong Band Co-ordinator.

Maggie for ensuring the Newsletter is produced and published each month.

Colin for keeping us on our toes with his excellent attention to detail, and for working with Michael on securing a better insurance deal for the club.

Bill and **Maree** for their tireless input to both the committee and organisation of events.

And **Brian**, who came on board for the first time this year. He is, however, no stranger to folk music, or committees it seems.

New and special events for the Club

We've had a few new and special events this year. The first was our **Concertina Workshop**. This was a new event for the club held in response to World Concertina Day. The club event was organised and run by Don. By all accounts it was a good day of playing and talking all things concertina. There was considerable interest shown in this event, and it has the potential to become a regular event on our calendar.

Also, a new program for the club, borne out of a desire for a dance event to replace the diminishing dance program at the NFF is the **Port Phillip Dance Festival**. The VFMC pulled together busy program of events over the Easter weekend. Featured were our own Billabong Band performing for the Tea Dance and Family Dance, as well as bands from other clubs to

provide a Contra workshop and dance event, a Scottish workshop and dance event, and an Irish Ceilidh and English dance, all with live music. In addition, a Welsh dance was run with taped music. Thanks to Bill, Jane and Stephen Bullock, and the others who put in a big effort to grow this event from its humble beginnings last year to a significant event this year.

A fantastic one-off this year was the **Martin Wyndham-Read House Concert**. A great event by all accounts (unfortunately I was away), with much thanks to Bette and Dom for hosting, and to the Concerts committee for managing many of the details and the bookings. This event was part of a Martin's farewell visit to Australia.

Sadly, we did not get sufficiently organised to pull together a full program for our regular **Wattle Day** event and decided not to go ahead with a diminished event. It will be back again this coming Wattle Day though, better than ever.

The usual Club programmes

As usual, the **Concerts** Committee has pulled together a great program of main and support acts, and of course the spot acts are always popular.

This year we farewell Maree as the coordinator as she has decided to step down from the leadership role after many years' service.

Over the past few years, the club has been providing microphones to performers to boost the sound levels, particularly for spoken word. The decision was not taken lightly, as the venue has traditionally been acoustic only. The change was made in response to an increasingly large number of attendees with hearing impairment. We recognise that this is a change in direction, and that it has disappointed a few of our members, but feel that it is the right decision for the current demographic.

I attended my first of the biannual **Woolshed Ball** last month. It was great, but I recognise that there have been challenges of late keeping the balls going strong. They are finding their feet now after several changes of venue. It has been a challenge to find a venue that is affordable, central, suitable and available for sufficiently long hours to host the Woolshed Balls in their traditional form.

I was again reminded of the work that goes in to putting on such an event, but all involved were doing their jobs with smiles on their faces and with a great sense of camaraderie.

I had the great pleasure at that event to be able to present Jane and Stephen Bullock with life membership certificates. As you all know, they have been mainstays of the club for decades, and this was a fitting and well deserved award. Special thanks to Bill for being a driving force behind these events.

The **sessions** have had good attendance with numbers in the high teens to low twenties, allowing everyone to get a good go plus a bit of time for a chat. There has been some great material showcased; dance tunes, traditional and less traditional songs, original works and recitations.

Don worked hard again to come up with some interesting 5th Tuesday session themes, including a practice night with the PA in preparation for spot acts!

The **dances** have also been generally well attended. Lots of regulars and plenty of newcomers. We've got a good solid lineup of live bands to provide the music, and quality callers.

Trev has done a great job as **Billabong Band** coordinator, managing the bookings and venues for the band's performances, and coordinating rehearsals and the like. The band continues to perform for events and dances within and outside of the club.

We have recently had the opportunity to have a few members interviewed by Murray Smith on his **Radio Eastern** programme "Australian Made". Maree was interviewed about the club's concerts, and Maggie was interviewed about her CD launch. They did a great job and are a credit to the club. Murray is genuinely interested in the club and its activities, and we hope that we will have a semi-regular spot on the station's programmes.

You will see from the **financial report** that the club operated at a small loss this year, but the committee can assure you that the club is in a good financial position, with a healthy bank account, strong membership, and a well-established programme of events.

The club **newsletter** continues to provide information and entertainment to members. Thanks again to Maggie for pulling this together each month. Thanks also to Kass who has joined in to provide regular concert reviews. You may not be aware, but the newsletter is produced on the Microsoft program "Publisher", a product that is soon to be discontinuing. The club is investigating Canva as a more modern alternative.

In conclusion, it's been a busy year, as they all tend to be, but our club has continued to thrive and is well placed to embrace a new year, better than ever. I'm sure I have missed the names of many folk who have made important contributions, but your contributions are welcome and essential to making our club a great place to be. Thank you all.

Peter Kernebone

2026 Club President