



# **Victorian Folk Music Club Inc.**

PO Box 215 Ringwood East 3135, Victoria, Australia

Reg No. A2511Y ABN 28 668 156 704

## **Session Survey: Aug ~ Sept 2017**



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## Timeline

Action	Date	Owner	Comments
Session sub committee formed	Mid 2016	Don Fraser	
Trial instigated	Feb 2017	SSC	
Trial ended	Aug 2017	SSC	
Survey conducted	Aug/Sept 2017	SSC	
Results considered by sub-committee	3 Oct 2017	TV	
Results sent to committee	25 Oct 2017	TV	Motion passed & accepted that Tuesday sessions follow the new format. Notice to be lodged in Nov '17 newsletter.
Results available for members	31 Oct 2017	TV/DG	



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## **Preamble:**

Before starting on the actual report we, the Session Sub Committee, would like to thank all those who have replied. In particular we would like to thank those members who took the time to reply even though they felt that it didn't apply to their own particular circumstances be it for reasons of health, distance or just not their interest. Your replies show the committee that you are interested in the club.

A lot of the folk clubs in the eastern suburbs are performance based venues; there are not many who offer what the VFMC can offer. Concerts, sessions where beginners can rub shoulders with experienced musicians, regular family dances, learning venues, on-line resources and publications. Again, thank you for your replies.

## **Purpose:**

Since the last survey was taken in 2014 the dynamics of the Tuesday session nights have continued to evolve. These changes have been the source of some discontent amongst a number of the regular attendees. Unfortunately the old saying "*you can please some of the people some of the time but not all the people all the time*" was never more evident than in this situation. Some compromise was required.

As a result of this discontent a sub committee was formed to look at how the Tuesday sessions are run & what can be done to change them.

This survey is an attempt to see if the changes that have been instigated since February have gone in some way to satisfying our membership.

## **Scope and Introductory Notes:**

The session sub committee was set up with the brief to only look at the format of the Tuesday session nights. Its brief did not cover the content of the items sung/recited/played nor was it concerned with the Tuesday concert night (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month). The concert nights are organized by a separate sub committee & content is already stipulated in the clubs constitution.

The survey was posted/emailed or personally handed to all club members in an attempt to reach everybody. Likewise where a family membership was involved multiple responses were requested.

26 responses have been received. Not everybody chose to answer every question.



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## ***Executive Summary:***

The two major questions for the sub committee were:

- a) Are you happy with the general running of the Tuesday session (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>) nights?
- b) Are you happy with the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month?

And the results were (broadly categorised):

- a) 67% yes, 33% No
- b) 77% Yes, 23% Not really & 0% No



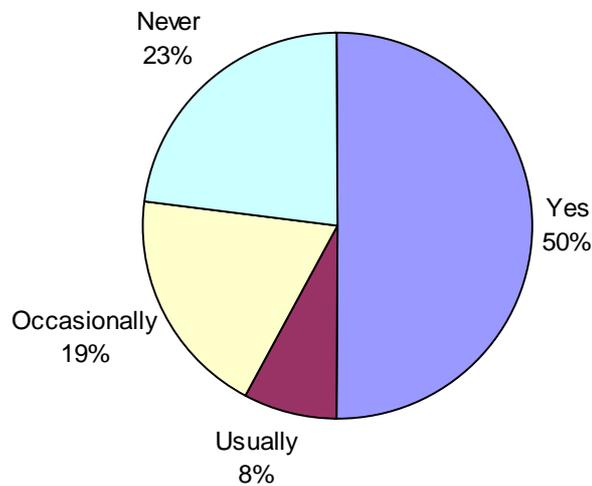
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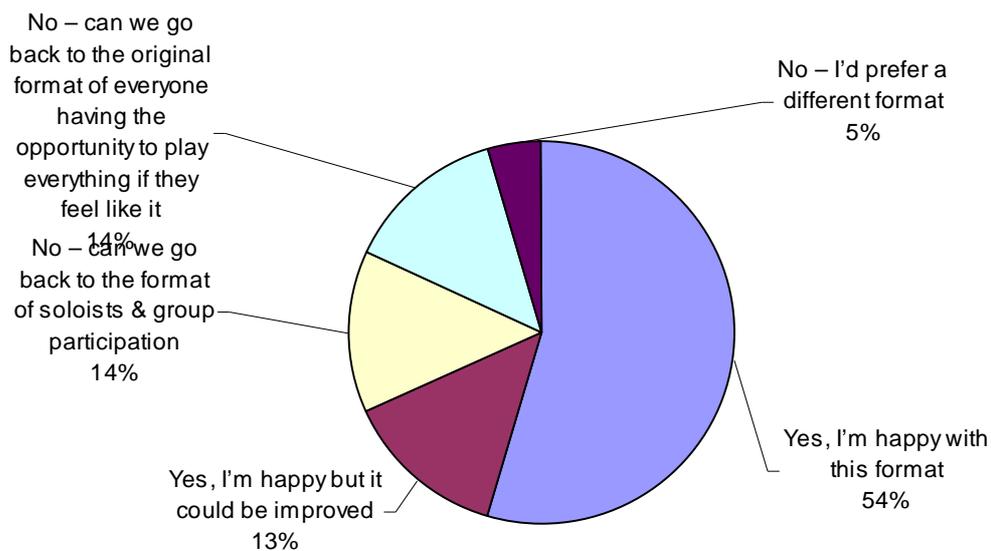
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## Survey Results – graphical summary

### 2. I generally attend all Tuesday sessions (total responses: - 26)



### 3. The Current monthly Tuesday (total responses: - 22)



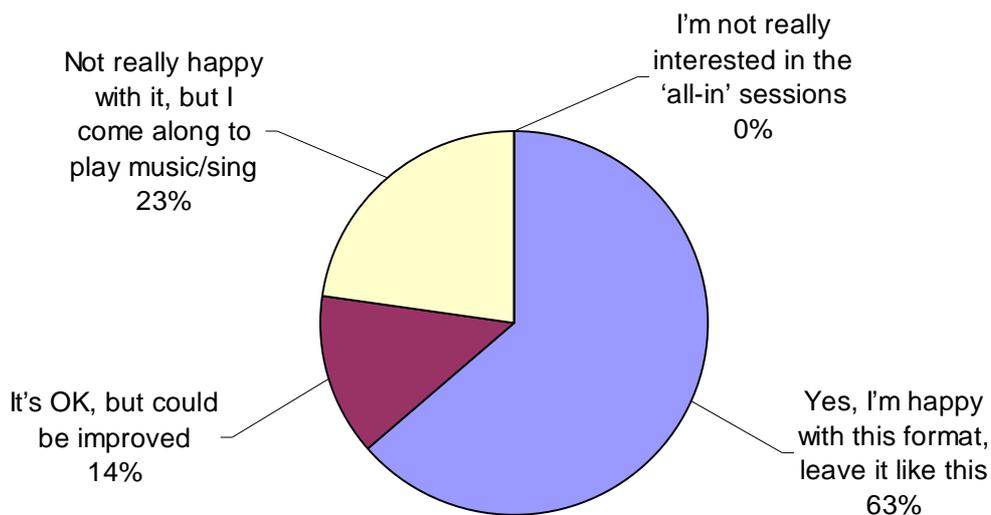


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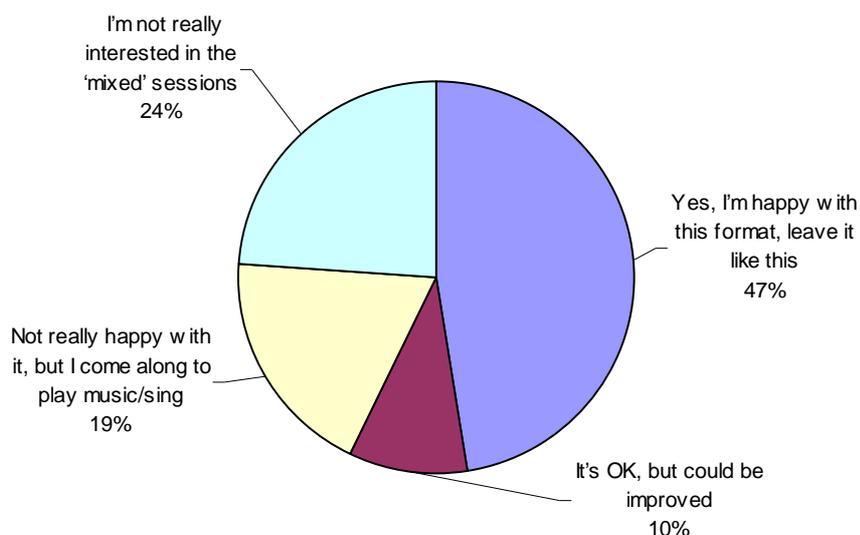
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## 4. Regarding the 4th Tuesday only, the “all in” session night (total responses: - 22)



## 5. Regarding the 1st & 3rd mixed Tuesdays only (total responses: - 21)



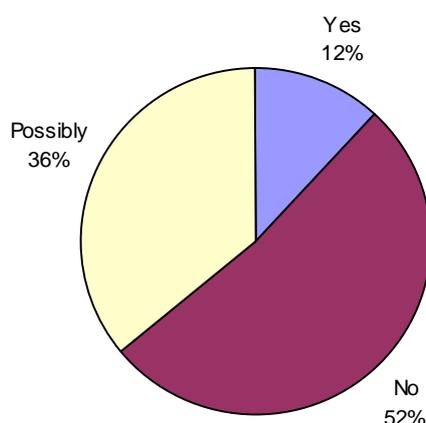


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**I would be interested in facilitating a Tuesday session  
(total responses: - 25)**



## **Comments:**

My original intention was to summarize the comments but this could lead to accusations of bias so I'm presenting each comment verbatim:

### **Q2 I Generally attend all Tuesday Sessions (excluding Concert Nights)**

- *Almost never. My interests in VFMC activities are all with dancing rather than folk music. I have only missed one Woolshed Ball in nearly 30 years and I do not miss many of the monthly dances at Ringwood. Thank-you so much for the work that you do here.*
- *I think that after supper things are a bit of a shambles & many leave.*
- *I play with Harry every Tuesday night but only stay when its an all playing night*
- *Only attend a couple each month as it clashes with English dancing*
- *I always enjoy them.*
- *When I attend I generally attend Tuesday night sessions but I am not what could be classified as really regular attender, particularly this year.*
- *I attend sessions whenever I can. I usually get to 2 nights out of 3.*



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## Q3 The current monthly Tuesday format

- *Could the spot acts come back and possible using the stage more for this*
- *Or the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday could be improved with the inclusion of some poetry to break up the monotony – we only have 3 poets in the club*
- *I think that we need to have a compromise to keep most people happy and eager to come to the club.*
- *We should be open to the needs that are expressed by this survey*
- *Overall I like it – but see comments for question 4*
- *Much better now that there is at least one Tuesday for session playing*
- *Yes I'm happy with this format, leave it like this*
- *The all-in night seems to favour melody players & music hand outs don't always include chords.*
- *Although I'm happy with the current format, if there were more playing I may come more often.*
- *The nights I attend all seem to work well so happy with it.*
- *I prefer 1 concert night and 3 mixed nights*
- *I appreciate having a music only night. But I also appreciate other types of performance on other nights*

## Q4 The 4th Tuesday only

- *I have heard that poets or reciters cannot participate under the current format. Perhaps allow poetry items to be included – up to a limit – say three.*
- *There are too many obscure tunes presented eg reels, strathspeys etc which are unfamiliar to a large section of the group.*
- *I accept it because it seems overall to now meet the majority, but I worry about the minority especially the POETS (Jim & Stephen) they are marginalized on this night.*
- *If “all in” is strictly applied and the facilitator facilitates and doesn't dictate.*
- *This is hurting people who don't feel welcome on the 4<sup>th</sup> week*
- *Yes I'm happy with this format, leave it like this*
- *I attend sessions to get the experience of playing with others & being exposed to all types of music so I'm happy.*
- *Seems to work well so I am happy.*
- *Its ok but I just like “mixed” nights best*
- *It could be possibly improved by having some tunes advised in advance for us beginners. Sight reading some of the tunes can be very difficult.*

## Q5 The 1st & 3rd Tuesday only

- *I guess some people prefer to perform solo and others – me – are happy to have others join in. Might be good to clarify the guidelines for the mixed nights.*
- *I am quite happy with this and before ????? at ??? these two Tuesdays will remain like this.*



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- *Continued tweaking required*
- *Lately hot spots seemed to have crumbled – I expect because it used to be on the 4<sup>th</sup> (or last?) Tuesday but now moved to 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday everyone forgets it = a shame!*
- *As per reply to 3. “all in” (should be strictly applied) not happy with the same people soloing to a reluctant (captive?) audience every week. Perhaps one only mixed per month with an extra “all in”*
- *I don't go to the mixed sessions*
- *Yes I'm happy with this format, leave it like this*
- *Some of the folk music is a bit dated & often sad or political. Maybe we need to look beyond Joy Durst etc..*
- *I'm only interested in the all-in sessions.*
- *I tend to spend most of the night proof-reading the newsletter.*
- *If it aint broke.....*

## **I would be interested in facilitating a Tuesday session**

- *Possibly, In another year, when I have got to know more people. As a newish member and inexperienced player I have found the club friendly and welcoming. I gather there has been some controversy around how the sessions should be run. To me, the club looks to be well run – and I have experience in several other settings, to compare. Well done to all who play a part in running the club.*
- *I don't have a lot of time on Tuesday nights these days, however when I get more time I would be interested.*
- *I would be happy with whatever the Sessions Sub-Committee decide.*
- *In the future with a bit more experience.*

## **Further comments:**

- *These surveys should be conducted on a more regular basis e.g. twice a year.*

## **Conclusion**

Thank-you to all those people who took the time to respond to the survey, all the comments have been noted and are shown here.

The overwhelming response has been positive and it is obvious from the comments that although there is room for improvement the majority of people who attend are generally enjoying themselves and consider them to be well run.



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No one replied that they disliked the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday session to such an extent that they stay away although a number did say that they didn't like them but still attend. This begs the question, Are there people amongst our members who feel so disenfranchised that they haven't responded to the survey or is the sub committee doing a relatively good job and going some way to satisfying the relevant members?



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## **Addendum**

Although the following letter was outside the scope of what the committee set out to achieve I felt that it was important enough to include in this report.

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Dear Don Fraser,

Your attached questionnaire raises questions to my mind that are not mentioned in it. As I've entreated you so often I want the Club to establish a musicianly ensemble where the players actually listen to each other and try to make a nice sound together. Unfortunately attitudes are incredibly strong and it seems impossible. The present format is what you've personally achieved to get disparate players to actually meet and play together and you are to be congratulated on your achievement. Alas in the main 8 pm meeting it falls short of fulfilling our Constitutional injunction to foster Australian folk music.

Fortunately your support of my 6:30 session goes a long way towards fulfilling the Constitutional injunction and I've begun, last Club night, to explain its objectives more fully during the announcements break. Nonetheless I accept that the present 8 pm clientele doesn't really want what I offer and, against my better judgment I'm going along with things as they are in the main session at 8 pm.

Fortunately at 6:30 pm, in working our way down the Settlers List, <http://www.vfmc.org.au/FiresideFiddlers/IndexSettlers.html>, already we've played one of two Australian composed tunes that seem to bear repetition in a session, namely,

*Here followed a list of tunes*

Also in addition to these there are many Australian composed tunes that are already of good quality and are awaiting to be played. They include

*Here followed a list of tunes*

In conclusion, may I especially draw the Subcommittee's attention to my offer to join it. Whilst I don't pretend to have all the answers I suggest that if I could meet regularly with folk of a similar mind then ideas might emerge that will assist the objectives of our Constitution.

In particular I'd be looking at the possibility of starting a children's group at say 4 pm on a Tuesday afternoon to extend the range of our Tuesday playing session opportunities.

Harry Gardner, 30 August 2017