

## President's Report 2023

I start this report with a big thank you to the committee and sub committees of the VFMC, not just for this year, but for all the years I have been on the committee and the years before that. Your committees, and those who assist in running the club in so many other ways are vital to our continuation and success.

Our club is involved in a wide range of activities, preserving and promoting our folk heritage. We run dances, concerts, music and singing sessions, opportunities for poets and story tellers. We run workshops and special events. Our Billabong Band encourages and supports our performers, both experienced and emerging, at events as diverse as entertainment at care homes to major events at the National Folk Festival. We publish books and music recordings, we make our resources available and accessible around the world through our web site, We engage with our community from the youngest to the most elderly. Folklore collection was one of the two main activities that led to the formation of the VFMC, and this too continues in a small way as opportunities arise. All of this we do as volunteers and without government funding or assistance.

As we move out of the pandemic, it is pleasing to see attendance at our concerts and music sessions returning to levels close to pre-pandemic. Dance attendances are improving more slowly, perhaps because of ongoing anxiety about physical contact, but the trend is improving. A key enabler of our Covid response was the available funding – the funds raised by past committees and then carefully maintained. From time to time there are suggestions that we should “do something” with this money. As our activities pick up in attendance, and our financial results return to positive levels, we should ensure first that our reserves grow back towards past levels. When future projects require funding, those future committees will be grateful for our prudence.

Over the last couple of years, the work of the committee has extended beyond our folk related core activities.

The Covid pandemic required a lot of work and creative thinking, and still impacts on our workload.

More recently, the need to set up child safety policy and procedures added more workload to our committee and remains to be fully implemented by all of our volunteers.

At recent AGMs, we have had a series of motions submitted and passed. None of these motions contributed to our core aims and objectives, but all increased the workload on our hard working committees. I implore all our members to think twice before imposing additional work to our volunteers and to consult the committee with any concerns about the operation of our club.

After some very serious thought, I have taken the difficult decision to withdraw from the committee. It is a very good thing to have regular changes of personnel in the key roles of management of our club, and I think that I've been president for far too long. Over the years, I have tried to lead the club along a fine line between preserving and promoting the traditional parts of our folk heritage, and embracing the future – both artistically and technologically. I wish my successor well as he or she takes on the role.

I do not intend to leave the club, so I look forward to continuing to meet the members who have become my friends over the years. I will continue to attend many club events, but not feel guilty if I don't attend. My thanks go to everyone who put their faith in me and supported me as president of the VFMC.