



Folk Federation of NSW

championing folk music and the folk arts

ABOUT FolkFedNSW

The Folk Federation of NSW Inc. (FolkFedNSW) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation and a peak body in NSW actively championing folk music and the folk arts. It is also a registered charity. FolkFedNSW's financial year runs from May 1 – April 30 of the following year, while its operational year is from November 1 – October 31 of the following year.

FolkFedNSW supports and represents all aspects of the NSW folk sector including, but not limited to, musicians, venues, folk organisations and community groups and, folk arts enthusiasts of all ages and interests. FolkFedNSW also provides advocacy on behalf of the folk sector.

FolkFedNSW is overseen by a volunteer committee made up of up to 12 members at any time and elected by its membership. It is a "hands-on", skills-based committee where each member of the team contributes to furthering the organisation's purpose.

President's Report Oct 2024-Sept 2025

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout our state of NSW and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. I pay respect to them and their cultures and to Elders past and present.

I especially respect the role that music and songlines play in the continuation of First Nation's culture.

In reflecting on the 2024-25 operational year the key word that comes to mind is connection. How the Folk Federation of NSW can connect with and support the many and varied folk organisations throughout our State is a big part of our role, especially if the Folk Federation is to be recognised as the go to organisation for folk music and the folk arts in NSW. Building greater engagement with our folk community has been at the forefront of our agenda and, as a starting point, a key focus over the past year has been in growing Folk Fed's interactive website. We view this as an important vehicle for establishing networks and communication channels across our NSW folk communities. In the coming year however, while the website remains the flagship service we offer to our members there are still many challenges ahead, especially if Folk Federation is to implement further recommendations from the two Folk Organisers' Meetings that were held back in March and July of 2024. If you're not familiar with these, you can go to Cornstalk on the website and search *Folk Organisers' Meeting* to find out more. I expect for the coming year, resource sharing and mentoring opportunities to support folk organisations as well as the establishment of a data base highlighting the value of folk music within the contemporary music sector will be high on the list.

In line with its role of connecting with and supporting our NSW folk communities Folk Federation of NSW has, in this past year, reviewed and updated its Strategic Plan to reflect a more state-based focus as well as its role as an umbrella organisation for NSW folk. The updated Strategic Plan can be found at the bottom of the *About Page* on the website and it's a living document so feedback and ideas are always welcome via our *Contact Us* portal. With regard to the Strategic Plan update I'd especially like to thank Chris Wheeler and Cathy Rytmeister for their valuable input.

With a view to being more State based this year we welcomed Di Clifford onto the committee. Di hails from Dubbo and has had a long association with the folk scene having been involved not only in folk activities in her local area but as a volunteer at folk festivals around the state. Di joins our other regional representative Kirsten Hulse who is a folk organiser in Braidwood and has served on the committee since the 2021-22 year. Kisten currently manages our Facebook page and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank her for her continued work in that area.

While it is always a pleasure to welcome new committee members unfortunately there also comes a time to farewell others. Chris Wheeler and Craig Sinclair are both stepping down and both will leave big shoes to fill. Chris has been a stalwart of the folk scene for many years and was also a past president of the Folk Federation. She is passionate about and engaged in the folk movement and stepped back onto the committee in the aftermath of Covid and, at a time when the Folk Sector was trying to rebuild and the Folk Federation was starting to question its relevance as an organisation. Chris's work on policy documents, the Strategic Plan and its Review and her enthusiasm for projects to further the aims of the Federation have made significant contributions to our revised agenda. I personally, shall miss her wise council and the expertise and thoughtful contributions she brought to our committee. I wish her well with her choirs, her music and life in general.

Craig Sinclair joined our committee after moving to Sydney from Western Australia. Between him and Kirsten Hulse who joined in the same year the average age of the committee lowered considerably. Right from the outset Craig put up his hand to coordinate the Young Folk Artist Awards Program which, at the time, was just going into its 3rd year. During the four years that Craig has been at the helm this program has cemented itself as the most significant project currently being undertaken by the Folk Federation. This success can be directly attributed to Craig's commitment to the YFA Program, particularly his continued engagement with the Awardees throughout the year of their award. Craig has done a magnificent job and he will be missed. He is stepping down from the committee due to increased work commitments however, we look forward seeing him performing around the folk clubs and festivals and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Of course, the Young Folk Artists' Program is still at the centre of our mission. With Craig standing down Folk Federation has been very fortunate to have Laura and Susie Bishop, with support from Alex (Bishop), stand in for 2025 and we thank them for filling the breach. This year Folk Federation formalised a partnership with Bundanoon Folk Festival to hold our Awards Concert in November, something that Craig initiated for last year's awards. In view of this later time frame this year's awardees have just been finalised however names are embargoed until all the applicants have been contacted. Pleasingly there were four applicants in each category. A big thank you to the selection panel, Laura and Susie Bishop, Russell Neil and Adam Greenwood for their work and support of this program. A formal announcement is expected on Tuesday 7 October. One name that I can announce is Sam Fletcher who has accepted the Youth Folk Ambassador role for 2025-26 and a formal announcement regarding this will happen in the coming week.

The partnership with Bundanoon Folk Festival is an important one and is in line with our goal to engage in practical ways with our stakeholders. Currently the other partnership Folk Federation has is with Blue Mountain Sound. This partnership has been ongoing for the past four years and supports our Young Folk Artist Program. I would like to convey Folk Federation's sincere thanks to Andy Busuttil, owner and principal engineer, for this most generous and highly valued contribution.

At this point in time Folk Federation has no major events planned though the committee is looking into possible initiatives which will have a more state-based focus. Folk Federation did

hold its annual End of Year Folk Wrap in early December last year. This took a slightly different format from previous years and included an optional meal. There was also a change of venue to allow better mobility access. This function is a way for our committee, FolkFed members and folk enthusiasts to come together and, thanks must go to Glenys Eddy, Cathy Rytmeister and Bridget Wardlaw for their work in organising this event. Another opportunity for Sydney based folkies to come together is a new monthly singing session organised by Glenys Eddy and Bridget Wardlaw.

Membership is still Folk Federation's main source of income and, while I will leave the financial details to Dallas I will say that, while membership is just ticking over it still hasn't reached pre-Covid numbers. In fact, membership revenue is down from the previous year. One of our biggest challenges in the coming year will be to find new and practical ways to engage with NSW folk communities in order to attract new membership. While the interactive website certainly provides value to members FolkFed needs to consider looking beyond material incentives with more of a focus on fostering a strong community around our organisation that people want to be a part of.

If I were to sum up the past year for Folk Federation I would say on one level it has been a steady, business as usual year continuing with our key activities, these being the Young Folk Artist Awards Program and the development of the website. On another level however, it has been a year of transition as we reflect on our relevance as an organisation and explore opportunities to support and connect in more meaningful ways with our NSW folk communities. This is a work in progress.

To conclude I would like to pass on a huge vote of thanks to Dallas Baxter who continues to manage our finances and is always at the end of the phone with the right answers when I need to chat about the various issues that crop up from time to time such as membership payments or insurances. I'd like to thank Terry Clinton for managing our email accounts, the google drive and also, for the assistance he gives to Dallas when it's time to submit the ACNC report. This year I've taken some time out to deal with medical issues and I'd like to especially thank Cathy Rytmeister for standing in as President during this time. Thanks must also go to Wayne Richmond who continues to manage the weekly FolkMail bulletin, a wonderful service that connects with a wider folk community beyond our membership. And finally, to our members, I've said this before and will say it again, thank you for being Folk Fed!

Pam Merrigan
President, FolkFedNSW