

WILLIAMSTOWN FILM SOCIETY

www.williamstown-film-society.org

Last Wednesday of the month, 7:30pm at the Council Chamber,
Williamstown Town Hall, Ferguson Street, Williamstown, 3016



AGM

29th October 2025

President's Report

We gather on the land of Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation and acknowledge them as the Traditional Custodians of these lands and waterways, paying our respects to Elders past and present. We share stories from many lands and cultures, just as the Bunurong met and shared their own stories.

Just prior to our September screening I was informed of the death of John McIntyre, a long-time member of the WFS with his wife Marilyn. John had been diagnosed with dementia a few years ago and continued attending screenings until late 2024. I remember a screening of 'Latcho Drom' which engaged John's attention due to its emphasis on gypsy music and images of the Romani people as they journeyed from India to Spain. Our sincere condolences to Marilyn, their family and friends.

It is very sad when ill health prevents members from maintaining their attendance at our screenings. Some we are aware of, others we are not. Marilyn Mitchell is one such member. A regular attendee for many years as one of the '3 Amigos' – Gabby, Rose and Maz. We miss the old Maz.

Sometimes it is a case of mobility keeping members away and this is certainly something more able members could assist with by picking members up and dropping them home afterwards. These circumstances merely underline the importance of our group to the community. Film Society screening nights are nights that are looked forward to and for some are a highlight of the month.

With all this in mind we have had another enjoyable year of watching films.

Part of this enjoyment has no doubt sprung from increased member involvement with screenings: the supper roster, setting up for screenings, clearing supper at the end of the night, rearranging furniture and stacking chairs. The simple invitation for assistance, to those who are able, has meant that many members are now familiar with what needs to be done setting up and taking down our screen, setting up the speaker, covering the windows in the doors, bringing down the blinds. The bonus is that shared tasks often lead to conversations and help acquaintanceships become friendships.

Allan Park and Valda Volkov have stepped up on occasions to fill Dimi's shoes in her absence. Allan has also doubled for our Secretary Maria Kouppas. But Allan cannot do it all on his own. It would be terrific if others could shadow some of the other essential roles in the film society. It would allow office holders to have time away or more importantly provide backup should something more serious arise. This the informal beginnings of succession planning and it needs to be considered.

The former Council Chamber in the Williamstown Town Hall is our venue for screening our program of films. It is well liked by members. It is comfortable, heated and cooled and easily accessible when the lift is working. When it is not, some of our members are denied access to something they very much look forward to.

Apart from issues with daylight leaking in through the windows at the height of summer, conditions for watching films are quite good. The height of the screen for reading subtitles can be an issue and we plan to source a different kind of screen in the new year. This is an ideal task for a couple of members to take on and see through. If interested please speak with a committee member.

A big thank you to HBCC venue staff who have assisted us on screening nights. They are obliging and only too keen to help when they can and have been happy to go the extra yard. It has been appreciated by the committee and members of the WFS.

In 2023 HBCC informed us of the Small Community Grants scheme, which we applied for and received (\$500) in early 2024. We applied and received the same grant in 2025, and plan to do the same again for 2026. We thank the Council for this financial assistance and acknowledge the same on our website's program of films (the most visited part of our website).

As many of you know our former venue, the Mechanics Institute in Electra Street remains empty. Its future is to be decided. The WFS has approached the Williamstown Historical Society (WHS) and offered to add its voice to theirs in an effort to obtain some clarity around the MI and save such an historical part of Williamstown. The WHS is actively engaging with council on this issue.

Attendances have dipped a bit this year. We finished 2024 well with 44 in October (Ego: The Michael Gudinski Story) and 39 in November (The Ladykillers).

In 2025 so far, our peak has been 42 for Bran Nue Day in January. This year we are averaging 32 members per screening. The dip can be explained in part by illness. A number of our members have had injuries and illnesses which have kept them away as they recover. The age of our membership contributes to this as well.

On a lighter note, holidays and family, sometimes both, also keep people away, as they should. Our members do have other interests in their lives.

Regardless of the nature of the films we show and the size of our audience we seem to be selecting films that engage our members. Starbox scores have been consistently high with all scores being 4.0 (out of 5) or above. Our peak this year was 4.5 in February for **Chaplin**. It is impossible to please everyone but we do pretty well, especially when we intentionally curate a program of diversity. The committee should take a bow for their programming (I have said this before if it sounds familiar, in fact the last two sentences are copy and paste from my report in 2024).

Supper and lucky door prizes continue to add fun to our screenings. Door prizes are not a recent inclusion on screening nights. Mention was made of prizes in a number of President's reports written by Dorothy Page. It is nice to carry on a tradition.

The Supper roster coordinated by Ann Link is looked forward to. A cuppa, a 'biccie' and a chat about the film so far, is the cornerstone of our film society. Long may it continue, especially when members think outside the rectangle ie. middle eastern treats for our recent Iranian film. Thanks to Annie for her time and effort.

Thank you also to the office staff of local state member Melissa Horn, MP, for their support with our printing. Our annual program calendars, monthly flyers distributed to all Hobsons Bay Libraries, monthly newsletter and the AGM document you are reading this very moment all came from the Member for Williamstown's local office in Douglas Parade. Our requests are promptly and efficiently responded to, making life easier and with one less cost to our not-for profit community group.

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Between 80 and 90 people visit our website each month. The weekly visits range from 12 to the mid-twenties, usually peaking in the week of our screenings. The website, administered by SITE123, is exceedingly easy to use. It takes just moments to renew the homepage each week or add an item of

interest to a listing in the annual program. The hardest part is often the decision of which image to go with – the online choice is enormous.

It is impossible to separate the website from my Wednesday update email (now in its fifth year and I've hardly missed a week). I'm proud of that record and I really enjoy it because I regularly get back more than I give. People respond to the things I share by sharing films and TV shows that they have watched and enjoyed.

This year we reviewed our constitution (rules) and last month held a special general meeting which unanimously voted to adopt the most recent version of the rules of association for incorporated groups. A sub-committee of Jack Neill, Allan Park and Michael Slee took on the task of reviewing the relevant documentation. A resolution was framed at a committee meeting prior to being presented at the special general meeting on 24th September, 2025. Thank you to Jack, Allan and Michael in particular. These rules are available to read on the WFS website.

Due to the very formal nature of the rules, the WFS committee has set itself the task to produce a 'Guide to the Running of the WFS' (working title only). This will be a plainly written booklet which outlines the procedures involved with screenings, programming, meetings, membership, reporting and obligations. Straight forward job descriptions for President, Secretary and Treasurer will be an essential part as well. It is envisaged that this will take approximately 12 months, as it will be produced as we move through a screening year.

The guide will be available to read on the website and a hard copy or two will be printed so that we have one close at hand should the need arise.

The program of films for 2026 will be selected by a slightly different group this year. It is usually a committee task (a very enjoyable one at that) but this year we put out a general invitation to members to join a 'selection panel'. The main reason is to provide an opportunity for members to become more involved in the day-to-day running of the society. Being a one-off task, it may be more appealing than committing to a whole year on the committee.

Whilst discussing 2026, we have volunteered to host an information day organised by the Federation of Victorian Film Societies. The FVFS arrange a number of these days each year and invite film societies from across the state to host them. Over the years I have attended information days in Maldon, Nunawading, Monash University and many more. It is always great fun to see what other societies do and how they do it. These information days are great opportunities to network and often include workshop activities which target areas of intense interest e.g. programming, screening rights, equipment, etc. The WFS will be hosting the FVFS Information Day on Saturday 14th March 2026. If you would like to be involved in some way, please speak with one of the committee members.

In conclusion, it is important to thank those individuals and organisations which enable the WFS to provide an engaging and pleasant night out each month, watching a film with friends.

Thank you to The Hobson's Bay City Council, Marcus Cassidy-Anderson, Garth Sheridan and Nyle Gibbons from the Venues Department and the technicians on Wednesday nights in particular. They were mentioned collectively at the beginning of this report but here I have been more specific.

Thank you to the FVFS (Federation of Victorian Film Societies) for their advice and support in the day-to-day running of a film society. I regularly check their online resources particularly when sourcing screening rights. Therese, Maria, Dimi, Allan and myself attended the FVFS information day at Monash University earlier this year. It was an enjoyable day and each of us came away thinking a little differently about what we can do at Williamstown. Thank you to the FVFS for providing these opportunities.

The Committee of the WFS have worked hard this year. Ross Dufty, Pat Duncan, Andrew Rozwadowski, Marilyn McIntyre, Jack Neill (projectionist), Maria Kouppas (secretary) and Dimi Simeonidis (treasurer) and Allan Park (assistant treasurer).

We thank Peter Steinle for his year on the committee. Peter is stepping down as he is unable to devote the time needed on a regular basis. However, Peter has already put his hand up for the film selection panel. He has made the choice to help where he can and when he can, and we thank you for that Peter.

Finally, our members. You are our audience. When I switch off the lights and find my seat in the front row, I relax. I relax even more at the first instance of audience reaction. Your responses tell me far more than the Starbox scores. Chuckles, gasps, the sniffles and wiping of tears. They are the soundtrack to my Wednesday nights at film society and the good thing is that your reactions invariably match up with mine – but not always. That's also what I like about movies, they are capable of eliciting a group response as well as one unique to an individual.

So, if you keep turning up, so will we and we'll keep challenging you, ever so gently.

Michael Slee

President

Williamstown Film society

8th October 2025