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

28th October 2026

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.

Once again, I commence this report acknowledging the passing of a long-time member of the Williamstown Film Society (WFS). John Link will be greatly missed. He's been missed already. For me screenings are not quite the same without having to defend a program selection. John enjoyed the discussion and more often than not also enjoyed and appreciated the movie. John looked forward to our screenings because they were films he would not have seen otherwise. A few WFS members made it to the memorial service. A packed and glowing tribute to a much-loved man. Far from the phone box crowd he was expecting.

Sadly, another local identity, Raimonda Crogman, also passed away earlier this year. Raimonda had only just started coming along to our screenings, arriving late and making an entrance, as was her want. She'd attended two screenings only before she died.

Our thoughts are with the friends and families of both John and Raimonda.

As the WFS membership ages ill health and reduced mobility can prevent members from attending screenings 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. A conversation is all it takes to start the ball rolling. I would like as many of our members as possible to join us on the last Wednesday of the month.

2026 has been another enjoyable year of watching films together in The Chamber of the Williamstown Town Hall.

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.

New members also add to the enjoyment. Fresh faces, different points of view and more hands-on deck. Thank you for finding us and we hope you stay.

Jack Neill is stepping down from the WFS Committee but do not panic he is happy to stay on as our beloved projectionist, for the time being. Jack is a Life Member of the WFS and it is fitting to thank him for his dedication to WFS for nearly 30 years, in particular for the very 'Jack' way he goes about things.

This leaves a vacancy on the committee which some members may wish to think about. It also raises the larger question of succession planning.

The official roles on the WFS Committee are occupied by people who are not getting any younger. Treasurer, currently carried out by Dimi Simionidis with assistance from Allan Park; Maria Kouppas is the current secretary; and Michael Slee is the WFS President. All would love some assistance.

Jane & Ross Dufty meet and greet everyone as they arrive at the town hall on the last Wednesday of each month. A quick chat with familiar faces or clear directions for those new to our screenings gets each of our film evenings off to a great start. Thank you.

If you are interested in joining the committee and/or working with/assisting with any of these helpers please get in touch. Assistance allows office holders to have time away or more importantly provide backup should something more serious arise.

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. Thankfully this occurred only once in 2026.

We planned to source a different kind of screen in the early part of 2026. This did not happen. It will be a priority for 2027 as those who have helped erect our screen (or watched) will know that it is not an easy task.

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.

The Small Community Grants scheme ($500) was made available to WFS for 2026 and was extremely useful in covering some of our annual running costs. This is the third time we have received this financial support and we will apply once again for 2027. 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).

By way of background, The Federation of Victoria Film Societies (FVFS) offers assistance of many kinds to film societies eg. guidelines and advice for setting up of a film society from scratch; an extensive list of film distributors and their contact details; and the development of a non-theatrical screening rights agreement which is essential for keeping film hire costs within reach of not-for-profit films societies.

On March 14th this year, the WFS hosted the FVFS AGM and Information Day in The Chamber of the Williamstown Town Hall. Film Society Representatives from all over Victoria and Metro Melbourne came and saw (and just loved!) our venue. Like many of these occasions networking with other societies is a major benefit of the FVFS Information Days. Formal snapshots allow the different FSs to share what they do and how they do it, with a bit of Q&A. We also made a short presentation covering the history of cinemas in Hobsons Bay and a brief outline of Hobsons Bay as a location for film and TV. An article covering similar ground was included in an issue of ReelNews in the middle of 2026. We were complimented by the executive of the FVFS on a well organised event and the traditional post event dinner in Nelson Place at The Eminence was also a big hit. Thank you to Dimi, Allan, Jack, Peter, Ross & Jane and Therese for their help with organisation and running of things on the day.

Our 2026 Program of movies. Average Attendance (up to and including September) = 37 which is a slight increase on the previous two years. We finished 2025 well with 38 in October (*On A Clear Day*) and 44 in November (*The Long, Long Trailer* with Lucy & Desi on their honeymoon).

In 2026 so far, our peak has been 49 for *Jojo Rabbit* in April. 44 people attended our screening of *Signorinella: Little Miss* which also featured a Q&A with Angelo Pricolo one of the films creatives. A big thankyou to new member Tony Whittaker who helped us to secure Angelo to come along – Tony is a friend and also hosted the Q&A for us. Angelo signed copies of the movie tie in book which he had for sale. Oh, and the documentary was fantastic and scored a Starbox of 5 (our only perfect score for 2026).

Our 2026 program was the first produced by a selection panel of member volunteers and not the committee as it has been in the past. They have done a marvellous job creating a terrific program with some ground breaking (for us) inclusions ie. the *Oscar Nominated Live Action Short Films*. A diverse selection of quality films that surprised us and made us think.

The panel should be thanked and they are gearing up for a second go in just over a week.

Lucky door prizes continue to add a touch of fun to our screenings. They will continue.

The Supper roster coordinated by Ann Link fills up very rapidly. Members are keen to be involved. 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. 60s party fare at *Don's Party*. Thanks to Annie for her time and effort.

Dress up screenings. Our year began with a tidal wave of excitement as we dressed up for *The Poseidon Adventure*. Some were subtle (sailing club shirts, Captains Caps), others went 'full method' a God-fearing preacher (complete with costume change at intermission) and more than a few on their New Year's Eve finery. Great fun. Well done.

Thank you 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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Weekly visits to our website have more than quadrupled, regularly sitting in the 50-60 range. 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.

The 'Guide to the Running of the WFS' (working title only) is about 60% done. The aim is 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 was hoped to have it completed this year but perhaps 2027 is more realistic.

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 and Nyle Gibbons from the Venues Department and the technicians on Wednesday nights in particular.

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 .

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

Peter Steinle stepped down from the committee last year but agreed to speak about the WFS at the FVFS Information Day in March. He is also a member of the Film Selection Panel and chips in at screenings when he is able to attend. Thank you for that Peter.

The final and biggest thank you goes to our members. The audience. Especially those who have only recently discovered us and like what we do and how we do it. I love watching movies on my own. As a teenager a saw many a film in the final week of their run and when I fluked a session where I was the only one in the cinema, I thought I'd hit the jackpot. But WFS offers me a different sort of jackpot. When the lights go out in The Chamber I am treated to two things. The first is a second viewing of the film and all movies benefit from more than one watch. The second treat is the reaction of WFS members to a film we have programmed. Individual and collective laughs, intakes of breath, sobs and nose blows. Your reactions add so much to my 'second watch'. So, thank you all.

So, keep turning up, because if you do, we will.

Michael Slee

President
Williamstown Film society
16th October 2026