

CRESFEST 2022

CRESWICK'S FESTIVAL OF MUSIC & DANCE

PROJECT REPORT



Contact Details

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Our Goals

To create a festival of folk and roots music, including dance, themed concerts, plays and the spoken word to bring joyful encounters to the small regional town of Creswick, situated halfway between Ballarat and Daylesford.

The festival was truly AMAZING! The town felt alive and so, so cheery.

It certainly helped the many local businesses of Creswick financially.. I know the business that I run had through the roof sales.

It has really showcased Creswick and its people.. All the feedback we received regarding Cresfest was that people were so impressed with the whole experience and the friendliness of the people here...

Our Values

● Traditional Owners

CresFest acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we live, learn and work, the Dja Dja Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elders and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.



Emma Donovan rocks the Opening Night Gala, Creswick Town Hall

Having Emma front and centre for the opening night gala made its own statement – well done CresFest bringing two brilliant and strong First Nations women to the town.

Audience member

- **Environmental**

CresFest takes seriously its impact on the environment. Performers, volunteers and festival participants were encouraged to bring their own water bottles and to use the appropriate recycling containers.

- **COVID Safe**

CresFest is a project of Creswick Neighbourhood Centre Inc, supported by Hepburn Shire, and by the Victorian and Federal Governments. CresFest adhered strictly to all mandatory requirements established by the three tiers of government.

- **Inclusive**

CresFest aimed to include as many people from the local area as were interested and for that reason community programs were created to engage people of all ages in the musical program. These included: Shire Showcase for local acts, Creswick Chorus – a new adult choir; Creswick Kids Choir – a new choir for children from all primary schools in town; YouThrive youth program – featuring musicians under 25; IGA Busking competition – featuring anyone who expressed interest with generous prizes awarded; Creswick Street band - an offshoot of the Creswick Brass Band; Creswick Swingalong Ukestra.



Being a part of the choir was so much fun! It was all the things I really enjoy. Singing, dancing and being with friends. I even made new friends from other schools. I loved performing; it was so much fun. Thank you,
Kailee, Creswick Primary School

It was wonderful to see students gradually getting involved in Stella Savy's choir. I was lucky enough to be there for the first practice, and within a few minutes she had them in the palm of her hand - the joy on their faces was lovely to see. Over there many weeks of practise I looked forward to hearing their voices and being inspired by the beat!
Jane Neville, Art Teacher Creswick Primary School



I totally enjoyed the whole Ukestra experience, I learnt so much, became publicly braver and re-set my mind back to normal after the big Covid lockdowns! – Ian K. Ukestra member

I have been meaning all week to send you and your fabulous group of doers just how brilliant has been CresFest! We've just had a CMVic Program Group meeting, and the feedback was simply superlative. Perhaps one of the unique aspects of the festival has been the wonderful community engagement you all managed to embed in so many ways, especially the local musicians and groups, including the various kids' activities. Please pass on our congratulations to everyone involved. Simply fabulous!

Oli Hinton, Executive Officer, Community Music Victoria

- **Affordable**

A unique ticketing model was developed with three levels of engagement: free, 'armband' program – maximum weekend price \$120; special events- armband and extra ticket needed. Street activities abounded and were all free to attend. In addition, the market stage, the family bush dance and the final parade and Bollywood extravaganza were all completely free.

- **Appreciating where we live**

Creswick is a former gold-mining town that in its heyday had a population of over 25,000. Now the population is nearly 4,000 and is growing as, since COVID-19, people are choosing to move out of metropolitan areas. This growth in the community has seen a diversity in thoughts, ideas, people; people wanting to participate in community activities and engagement. CresFest did all of this, bringing disparate communities together, with a sense of purpose and a common goal. There is a genuine sense of optimism within Creswick following the inaugural CresFest. People are proud of what has been achieved and pleased

CresFest 22 Report to Supporters

with their input into something that was a risk. We celebrated the town through our programming at venues across town and through creation of our unique map and merchandise with local artist Loris Button.



Many of our Visitor Information Centre volunteers were involved in the event, be it as event volunteers, providing accommodation or just being there to enjoy. A very busy weekend at the Information Centre allowed us to speak with many visitors. Thanks to the thorough briefing we had received from the event organisers, we were able to pass on correct and detailed information.

We spoke to visitors who were not only enjoying the festival, which brought the town to life with music in every street, but also the town itself, not least the cafes. Many told us that they wanted to come back to Creswick at another time to explore the walks, the lakes and other attractions. As well as attracting visitors to the town, we see new interactions in the community with the creation of an active adult community choir, a children's choir and a ukulele group.

Evelyn Wilson and Eva Mitchell, Creswick Visitor Information Centre

Stakeholders

- **Community Partners**

Creswick Folk & Acoustic Music Club, Creswick Lions Club, Creswick RSL, Havilah Masonic Lodge, St Andrews Uniting Church Creswick, Creswick Primary School, YouThrive Victoria, Creswick Theatre Company, Community Music Victoria, Creswick Neighbourhood Centre (presenting partner)

- **Funding Partners**

Regional Arts Victoria, Australian Government through Festivals Australia and the RISE Fund, Hepburn Shire Council, Besen Family Foundation, Victorian Scottish Cultural Heritage Foundation; Wilkie and Bell Families.

- **Local Business partners**

RACV Goldfields Resort, Besen Family Foundation, Creswick IGA, Biggin & Scott, The American Hotel Creswick, Farmer's Arms Hotel, Leaver's Hotel, Community Bank Creswick & District Bendigo Bank, State Plus Conveyancing; Log Cabin camp.

- **Media Partners**

ABC Ballarat, The Local, Main FM, 3PBS, 3RRR



Partnering with Cresfest 2022 gave ABC Ballarat a unique opportunity to share with our audience the excitement of returning to events as Victoria emerged from COVID restrictions. At the same time, it allowed us to support the birth of a new, grassroots festival, and connect in meaningful ways with the community through our live outside broadcast and exclusive audience competition. Prue Bentley, Station Manager, ABC Ballarat

Team CresFest

● Committee

Judy Turner and Neil Adam (representing Mungo Park Music) Jenni Sewell (representing Creswick Theatre Company and Creswick Neighbourhood Centre) Mark Myers and Carolyn Garvey (representing Creswick Folk and Acoustic Music Club) with community representatives: Linda Carpenter, Pam Harris and Heather Ingram, Tony Miller, Shona McReadie, Sue Scott, Rachel Turner.

● Contractors

Production management: Mischa Herman/Bruce Packard; Digital marketing manager: Kindred Strategy; Media/PR management: Logan and Penney; Operations management: Jesse Lubitz/Ruth Wise; Artist management: Sarah Wade

● Venue providers:

Town Hall concerts – Hepburn Shire ; Courthouse shows – Creswick Theatre Company; Church workshops and concerts - St Andrews Uniting; Pub sessions, workshops, VIPs – The American Hotel; Concerts and jams – Leaver’s Hotel; Busking stage – IGA Creswick & Rosie the Caravan Stage (Ballan); Concerts – Farmer’s Arms Hotel; Youth stage - YouThrive Victoria; Skate Park displays – Hepburn Shire; Market concert hall – Creswick Neighbourhood Centre; Market outdoor stage – Asking for Trouble (Clunes); The Hub - Creswick & Smeaton RSL; Green Rooms – Creswick Seniors, Havilah Masonic Lodge



*Steve Sellars, IGA Director and sponsor announces results:
Busking Competition, Rosie the Caravan Stage – Saturday 2 April*

- **Artists**

Just under 400 people performed at CresFest. Of these roughly:

34% were local to Hepburn and neighbouring Shires

28% came from other areas of regional Victoria

36% were from Melbourne

2% were from interstate

0% were from overseas

Artists played concerts, ran workshops, did display and inclusive dancing, performed in the street, at the market, outside the IGA. They busked, they competed, they showcased. They played from 10 in the morning until midnight. They formed the mighty final parade and took part in the Bollywood 'extravaganza'. Community musicians made up roughly 70% of the total number of performers, ranging from Creswick groups (brass band, choir, street band, kids' choir, ukulele orchestra) to groups from further afield (Kyneton Street Band, Inverloch (Invy) Horn Jam, Melbourne Morris, Folk Group Bulgari and more).



Thanks so much for having Freya and I play at Cresfest. Our gigs at Farmers Arms and at Youthrive were super enjoyable and we both had such a great time. I wanted to also say that as a family of four (plus nanna) attending Cresfest, it was such a beautiful and well-run event. The vibe along the Main Street and in the venues was amazing and the range of music and activities felt just right. The volunteers were incredible and congrats on staging such an awesome event.

Tom McGowan, performer

● Volunteers

98 people were accepted as volunteers for Cresfest. About 80% came from Hepburn Shire, and more than half had never attended a festival or been a volunteer at a major event before. They worked a total of about 800 hours in the set-up, take-down phases and over the Cresfest weekend. They managed ticketing and sales, they acted as Stage Managers and MCs at concerts, as well as checking tickets and armbands at the entry to venues. They set up stages and helped run PAs and lighting systems at venues. They moved chairs from one place to another and returned them. They checked the COVID status of attendees and ran the Festival Bar in the Town Hall. They welcomed artists and helped them get to concerts, as well as having them stay in their homes. They prepared food for community music groups and distributed their armbands. They operated Information Tables where the public could find out about Creswick and the festival. 80 showed up for the training program in their venues the weekend before, where we ran through the various responsibilities.



I have great memories of a wonderful weekend with an amazing array of people. The training gave us the information to understand our and patrons' rights and responsibilities. It brought a diverse group of people together for the love of music with tasks from greeting people as they arrived for a performance, to giving directions to other venues in the street. I met street buskers and the talented Eric Boale. It was a privilege to

The Volunteer Experience

In the Volunteer Feedback, 90% felt well looked after, and 97% said they would like to volunteer again next year. About 20 said they could imagine taking on bigger roles in the festival and its planning next time.

Why did they volunteer and what did they get out of it?

- *To give the town of Creswick a boost, particularly following covid and the floods*
- *I'm new to Creswick. I loved getting involved with community activities, and wanted to make new friends, which was achieved*
- *Because I think the festival is such a great idea for the town, and as a long-time Creswick resident I wanted to both contribute and share the experience.*
- *A friend convinced me that it would be a good thing to be part of - and she was absolutely correct!*
- *Support local community. To be involved in something fun and creative. I am really thrilled I had this opportunity.*
- *Creswick has become important to me as I have retired here, and I am very happy to give what I can to this lovely town and support it with any future ventures.*
- *I love music and want to see Creswick flourish. I met some great people, who I know I'll stay in touch with.*
- *I enjoyed it all! From initial contact to ongoing information in the lead up to the festival. Also, during the festival, we were well looked after. Never heard one grumpy word from a volunteer!! Well done!*
- *It was the most fantastic experience. As a volunteer I was kept well informed of progress of the event. I was appreciated! I felt part of the community. I enjoyed myself. The training of volunteers, induction etc was great. ambassadors for the*

Thumbs up from out of town

Congratulations to the Creswick community for hosting a first-class festival of international standard. Everyone involved should be proud of this event and what it achieved in the music community. As Gippslanders it also ticked all the boxes for us as a tourism success, and it was great to see the locals getting involved. We visited Malmsbury, Melville Caves, Dunolly, St. Arnaud, Stuart Mill, Talbot, Blue Pyrenees, Avoca, Maryborough, Clunes, and then three nights in Creswick.

To our delight on the Sunday afternoon, Gary the electrician and Jennifer who live in the main street welcomed us into their home for a chat. Totally random. As strangers we were walking past when they insisted we come in to meet Stella the kelpie. Such a spontaneous gesture which we loved, along with their generous refreshments.

Barry and Caroline, audience

- **Audience**

Weekend passes issued/sold





Adult	277
Concession/youth	291
Child	n/a- free
Musicians and volunteer comps	564
TOTAL	1132

Special events tickets sold

Adult	474
Concession/youth	435
Child	n/a- free
Musicians and volunteer comps	312
TOTAL	1221

Free events – attendance estimate

Family Bush Dance	90
YouThrive & Skating	500
Busking @ IGA	500
Market (Saturday)	600
Parade & Bollywood (Sunday)	1300
TOTAL	2990

Great  festival vibe atmosphere, the town was alive with great
music  and was such a pleasure to be part of it all x Many
thanks  to Judy, Neal, Chantel at Odessa at Leaver's Hotel & all the
vollies for having us x You did an amazing job putting it all together. 

CresFest - personal reflection

The inaugural CresFest ran from Friday 1 April to Sunday 3 April 2022. The planning had started many months before. As the day approached, the build-up was palpable. So many “what ifs”, such as

- Would the increase in numbers of people with COVID-19 mean that CresFest would have to be cancelled?
- Were there enough volunteers to cover shifts?
- Were venues COVID safe?
- What would happen if performers became sick?

But it worked! There were no lockdowns and yes, performers and volunteers rang in sick – but we delivered.

From the launch of CresFest in December 2021 to the opening night gala performance with Emma Donovan and the Putbacks, work never stopped.

Committee members met on a regular basis to plan, to designate tasks, to check and double check that performers, venues and volunteers had been booked.

And then CresFest was live! Creswick was jumping! Volunteers were clearly identifiable in their red t-shirts. Volunteers greeted, directed, assisted, checked where they were needed and smiled! Performers engaged with their audience, were vibrant, joyful, professional and smiled! The café owners, hotel owners and other retail outlets were busy, and everyone was smiling! The Salvation Army Op Shop volunteers couldn't help but smile as they had their best weekend ever. And visitors, many new to Creswick, were over-joyed at the quality of performers, the variety of music and the arts, and the friendliness of volunteers.

Challenges

Impact of COVID-19

The pandemic came with a speed and ferocity that shocked the world. It has not disappeared, but the community is learning to manage and live with it. With cautious optimism Judy Turner, convenor of CresFest had a choice: to pull the pin or proceed, knowing that at any moment CresFest might have to be cancelled. CresFest was one of the few new festivals in Victoria that progressed and ultimately succeeded. To ensure that CresFest met all mandatory COVID-19 regulations a COVID-19 marshal was appointed to oversee the logistics of checking proof of vaccinations or medical exemptions. CresFest was guided by Music Victoria and the Department of Health and its guidelines for organising public events in Victoria.

The lead up to CresFest was often disrupted at a moment's notice when a lockdown was announced. Volunteer training programs were frequently postponed, as were pre-CresFest performances. COVID-19 had engendered a sense of disquiet, anxiety and dejection amongst the CresFest community including volunteers and the Creswick community. Would the festival take place? Had all the hard work been for nothing? However, members of the CresFest committee were outstanding as they raised spirits with a sense of humour and that “never say die” disposition. The “show must go on”, it did, and it triumphed!

Natural catastrophes

If COVID-19 wasn't bad enough, on 5 January 2022 Creswick was hit by a supercell storm, with flash flooding and hail that didn't melt away but blocked drains and down pipes causing millions of dollars' worth of damage in the township. No one seemed to escape, and the effects are still being experienced as people wait for insurance claims to cover the cost of damage.

RACV shutdown

One of the worst affected businesses was RACV, a major sponsor to CresFest. Damage was so severe the golf course and resort remained closed for repairs and only re-opened in the middle of June. The closure of RACV had a devastating impact on CresFest as it was to be a major accommodation resource for performers. The call went out to the community and volunteers in the hope that people would be able to billet performers for the duration of the festival. Again, it was heartening to see how many people came forward to offer their homes. Every performer who needed overnight or weekend accommodation was accommodated. In addition, RACV management partnered with Creswick Bus and Coach to provide a shuttle service for CresFest patrons between Ballarat and Creswick.

The doubters

In all communities there will be an individual or a group of people who don't like change, don't like others to succeed and question the validity of an action, a plan or an idea. As it was in Creswick! However, the success of CresFest has certainly turned round those sceptics! Their shops will be opening, they will involve themselves in CresFest and will be telling their friends that CresFest is here to stay.

The weather

The gods looked kindly on CresFest for the first week of April! The Saturday was cool, though not wet and the travellers from Melbourne and further afield made a beeline to the Salvation Army Op Shop where they had their best weekend ever, selling out of coats and jumpers! Sunday, the day of the parade, the sun shone, and the community came out in force to celebrate the conclusion of a very successful, inaugural CresFest.

Ticketing

Overall, the ticketing system worked, however it is clear that it needs to be simplified and that is something that is already being investigated. **Fiona Watson – journalist/volunteer/singer**



Successes

- **Creswick on the map**

Creswick is now literally on the map, thanks to the collaboration between Loris Button, print maker and Jo Marchese graphic designer. A CresFest program/information map was designed by Loris, whose lino cuts detail all the historical buildings where performances took place, as well as other notable buildings in the streetscape. Jo then transformed the art piece into a workable map. The images developed by Loris were used as postcards and on other marketing products. The branding for future CresFests has certainly been established.

Because of CresFest, Creswick will no longer be a town that people drive through on their way to somewhere else. There are many reasons to stop and discover Creswick's remarkable history, its excellent cafes, pubs, accommodation and golf course. But perhaps, importantly, there is an amazing community who came together, despite pandemics and floods, and delivered the most amazing arts festival. That is something to be admired.

- **Impact on businesses**



Fiddlers at the American, photo Adam Purcell

*CresFest led the way to an economic and social recovery of Creswick and the surrounding district. The folk musicians and their followers had a profound effect on the festival and demonstrated how people can get on enjoying each other's company in a respectful and harmonious way. Saturday was an exhilarating and extremely busy day with so many people playing, listening, eating and drinking - musicians played long into the night in our courtyard. CresFest certainly has the capacity of becoming an annual event leading to an ongoing economic recovery. **Brendan Smith, Owner/publican The American Hotel***

- **The stars of the next generation**

From primary school children to teenagers and young adults there were rehearsals, auditions and performances to appeal to them all. Students from Creswick's three primary schools formed Creswick Kids Choir under the musical directing of Stella Savy – and they won the hearts of audiences as they sang with confidence and joy delighting in the fact that for many it was their first time performing.

Busking competitions were held outside IGA on the village green and were a great success, with suggestions that buskers could be featured throughout the main street of Creswick.

Youthrive is a charity helping Victorian rural and regional communities thrive with strong input from skilled, resilient and motivated young people. It was therefore appropriate that The Old Post Office, YouThrive's Creswick office was the venue for the open mic stage, presenting new talent from around Victoria.



Freya and Tom McGowan from Ballarat, performing as part of the YouThrive stage, Saturday 2 April – photo Adam Purcell

● The Parade

The culmination of CresFest was the most amazing and colourful grassroots parade. It had everything you could wish for from a country town's parade: brass bands, children's choirs, international dance groups, families marching with children, babies in pushers, people lining the streets cheering and laughing, dogs barking, a cacophony of sound, delight, joy, all led by a colourful master of ceremonies playing his sax, who had encouraged everyone to dress flamboyantly, and they did not disappoint. The sun shone and those who had worked so hard were giving thanks that the inaugural CresFest had succeeded in all its aims. Like the piper the crowds lining the street followed the parade up to the Neighbourhood Centre.



Brian Strating from Inverloch masterminding the CresFest parade

● The fusion of professional and amateur musicians

There was a wonderful sense of camaraderie amongst all the performers. There was no delineation between professionals and non-professionals, as there wasn't between paid staff and volunteer staff. Everyone came together for CresFest. Professional musicians mentored younger ones, just starting out on a musical journey. There was excitement, anticipation as at last live music, dance and theatre could be enjoyed once more.

What a triumph!!! Thanks to you all so much for coming along last Sunday and looking colourful and lively and for performing so brilliantly in the parade and Bollywood flash mob finale! There is always an element of surprise and the unexpected in community events of this scale and happily in the case of the CresFest finale there were nothing but happy accidents. A highlight for us was the Morris/New Orleans fusion dance at the beginning of the parade! Thanks to your willingness, flexibility and trust we pulled off an event that not only exceeded our expectations but those of the festival organisers and most of the crowds standing on the sidelines. Brian Strating & Lyndal Chambers, parade managers

● Accommodation and hospitality venues

While RACV Goldfields Resort was closed following the catastrophic storm in January, accommodation was full throughout Creswick. The majority of visitors stayed in Creswick or Ballarat, then in the smaller neighbouring towns of Dean, Smeaton, Kingston, Eganstown, Slaty Creek, Smokeytown and Newlyn. The cafes, pubs and restaurants that were open in Creswick reported record business for the weekend.

We had an amazing weekend. Although the weather wasn't bad, it was cool and visitors from out of town came and bought coats and jumpers. We sold out of stock. We were grinning from ear to ear. The best weekend ever. Christine & Denise Salvation Army Op Shop

● Media

ABC Ballarat's sponsorship delivered broad, excellent coverage to promote CresFest with interviews and promotional spots in the weeks leading up to CresFest. The live outside broadcast on the Saturday of the festival with interviews from key members of Creswick and district community provided firsthand glimpses of CresFest. Prue Bentley and Gavin McGrath both were extremely supportive of the aims CresFest.

The Local's sponsorship provided two month's coverage of different aspects of CresFest in the lead up to its opening in April. CresFest provided copy and photos.

The Ballarat Times was generous in its coverage with a number of articles and photos in the lead up to CresFest.



www.tlnews.com.au

CresFest: A new style festival in an old style town

NEWLYN resident, fundraiser and musician Judy Turner was coming to the end of a contract with Sovereign Hill, when an epiphany occurred – what better thing to do in retirement than to start a new festival, right here in beautiful Creswick?

Having played at most folk festivals across Australia and New Zealand, Judy felt that bringing the music home would be something she could do for the town, for the wide community of musicians she is part of and, frankly, for herself. Turner said her husband and musical partner, songwriter Neil Adam, quickly came on board. "Retirement per se didn't appeal to us and we had been in the district for 10 years and had often observed that Creswick seemed to be waiting for something," Judy said.

Judy described the wait for the new supermarket (now the fabulous IGA), the wait for something to happen at Pascoe's (HG & Sons), and the wait for the British Hotel to take on a new identity (still to come). "People are amazingly patient but we realised that in a decade of living here we had only been to the lovely old town hall once, to see an Anzac Day concert. We were impatient to see it open and filled with music and dancing again."

And it struck her that Creswick could also be a town waiting for a festival.

She looked around at all the wonderful old buildings, each one treasured in its own way by a club or society or community group, and each one underused. "We had never seen the town thronging with people and as musicians we thought, what better way to bring in a crowd than to program a whole weekend of music."

Having run concerts out of their house for four years, Judy and Neil were aware of the great interest locally in live music.

Having identified local groups interested in collaborating (Creswick Theatre Company and Creswick Folk Club) and secured the support of Creswick Neighbourhood Centre, Judy and the committee agreed upon the name CresFest, the dates, April 1-3 2022 and they were away.

The committee hopes a hybrid ticketing model will bring the crowds from out of town and encourage locals to take volunteer roles.

And the aim is to fill every venue including the town hall, the courthouse, Leavers Hotel, The American, the Masonic Lodge and the Neighbourhood Centre.

Headline acts include Emma Donovan, Eric Bogle and Fools and there are plenty of ways for locals to get involved too with a busking competition, talent quest and showcase. There's also a children's choir and a roving Creswick Brass Band.

Link: www.cresfest.com.au/get-involved

Above, Creswick Kids Choir leader Stella Savy of Ballarat

Words & image: Contributed

- **Joy in the time of Covid**

CresFest brought much joy to the people of Creswick and surrounding districts. Friendships have been forged, talent has been discovered, skills invigorated and not forgotten. The community came together to support the committee in its aim to develop a festival that celebrated both professional and non-professional artists and importantly to acknowledge a town that was built on gold, had been under appreciated in recent years, but has the potential to once more be an even greater community.



The inaugural CresFest brought optimism and enjoyment to Creswick after so many months of COVID lockdown. With over 3,000 visitors, 350 performers and 100 volunteers the atmosphere was fantastic. The Shire was proud to be a sponsor of CresFest and sincere thanks to Judy Turner and her committee for creating what we hope will be an ongoing celebration of music, diversity and community engagement.

Cr Tim Drylie, Mayor of Hepburn Shire



Sadie and Ambrose from Boronia enjoying the kids' activities at CresFest22