

## **Monaro Folk Society - Bush Dance Group Annual Report 2016/17**

The Bush Dance Group has had another mostly successful year, with mixed results compared to last year for both attendances and financials.

Attendances at Monday Bush Dance Workshops have continued to attract strong numbers, maintaining last year's average of 29 dancers, with numbers ranging from a low of 16 to a high of 44 during the year. The "open stage" for musicians and callers is attracting an increased average of 12 musicians (up from 9), plus 2 callers (unchanged).

The CIT courses held in conjunction with the Monday Workshops have been quite successful in attracting new dancers, although few of these have joined the Society or continued to come to Workshops and Saturday dances after their course.

The biggest issue, though, is that Saturday dances have seen a continuing decline in attendances, averaging 22 (down from 26), with numbers ranging from a dismal low of 7 to a disappointing high of 42 at the Christmas Dance. For the five dances held this calendar year (ie Feb to June 2017) attendance has averaged just 15. A further concern is that during the entire year only 35 non-members came to the Saturday dances – 17 of these at the Christmas dance (at which there were only 25 members). Clearly, we are not attracting many dancers from outside the society and when they do come the low numbers at the dances seem to be dissuading them from coming again.

The change to earlier starting and finishing times for 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday dances, together with a reduction in entrance fees, has not seen attendance pick up – in fact quite the opposite has occurred.

It is worth noting that End of Month dances are also suffering from falling attendances. The upshot is that the viability of Saturday evening dances is at risk.

During December 2016 and January 2017 another season of Dancing In The Park was held. Numbers were again down for this, and there were very few new dancers through the season.

Starting in July 2017 a new initiative, Kids Dances held at All Saints every second month with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday dances, commenced. It is hoped that exposing children to dance will eventually lead to more young dancers coming to bush dances. Attendance at the first two of these was excellent with around 70 kids and carers at the first and about 45 at the second – certainly a reason to continue them.

Financially the BDG has done well, making a profit of \$1433 plus \$200 CIT income, but this is down substantially on last year. This is mostly due to the decreased income from Saturday dances, particularly the Christmas Dance at the Woolshed which ran at a substantial loss and may need to be discontinued, at least at this venue. The Bush Capital Band contributed a further \$98 profit from non-MFS events.

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