

THE NEW ITALY MUSEUM INCORPORATED

2025 Annual General Meeting

New Italy Hall
2pm, Sunday 2nd November 2025

Minutes

Meeting commenced: 1435hrs

1. **Welcome:** Chair: Peter Blackwood, welcomed all members to the meeting. Peter noted the attendance of 34 members and declared a quorum had been achieved.

2. **Attendance and Apologies:**

Attendees names collected by attendance sheet.

Apologies: Glenn & Terrie Costello, Americo Melchior, Tina Sheehy, Robert Mustow, Ellen Barnes, John Stewart, Armando Gardiman, Brian & Gianetta Lane, Stewart and Sue Sommerlad, John & Nella Devoy, Warren Blue, Michele Speck and Kevin Poole.

Statement to Members: At the commencement of the meeting, Peter Blackwood read out a statement, then thanked the dedicated members who continue to volunteer countless hours of their time for the benefit of the association.

3. **Minutes of the 2024 AGM held on 23 March 2025:** moved they be accepted Leonie Lane and seconded by Juie de Nardi. All in favour.

4. **Business Arising from the Previous AGM:** Jenny Sherwin pointed out that the previous minutes stated that there was a 10% discount from the shops on site but due to financial pressures that has now dropped to 5% discount. Hire of the Hall remains at 10%

5. **Presentation of Reports:**

Auditor's Report – Bruno Ivan (as required to be submitted to members under s.44 of the Associations Incorporation Act 2009)

Bruno Ivan stated that the organisation has been quite successful this financial year.

During the year there was an overall increase in income from operations of the organisation from \$368,000 in 2024 to \$372,000 in 2025. NIMI had also been successful in getting grants to the value of \$118,000 for improvements to the site.

Casa Vecchia, a volunteer run shop produced a revenue of \$106,000 for the year. Being a shop run by volunteers, all proceeds once expenses are deducted comes back to the organisation and during the year that figure increased by a small margin. It is a valuable contributor to the organisation.

Casa Serena, a rental property, produced a reasonable return.

NIMI, compared to previous years, from a financial point of view, is as strong as it can be given its volunteer base. He commended that the committee has done a very good job maintaining the heritage of the site and financial responsibility ensuring that the place is maintained to the best of their abilities. Bruno reminded us that even though we have hundreds of people coming through the site each day we are not a commercial precinct but a not-for-profit organisation focusing on maintaining the heritage of the Italians who settled in this area. The focus has never been on making money.

Auditors report moved to be accepted by Jamie Herring. Seconded by Jenny Sherwin. All in favour.

President report – Gail Williams

Residence above Gift Shop: We completed extensive renovations to the residence during the last financial year. Renovations were completed in May and the property is now happily

tenanted.

Proposed Service Centre Update: In July last year, we had a meeting with property developer Diaa Shaker and his advisor. Diaa had significantly scaled down the project, cutting local job opportunities, and said our sewerage treatment wouldn't happen for several years. We told him we're not happy to proceed. Now, 15 months later, Diaa still hasn't submitted a (DA). Our solicitor confirmed that eventually their claim on the site will lapse and become null and void.

Visual Screening added to the Parkland: We've completed planting the visual screen along the fenceline to block views of the back car park, as required by the Heritage Council.

A Visit by her Excellency the Governor of NSW, the Hon. Margaret Beasley: Her Excellency the Governor attended an afternoon tea party in our Community Hall in October last year. She particularly wanted to meet volunteers who were affected by the 2022 catastrophic flood. Such a lovely, dynamic woman!

Wedding Bower: A wedding bower has been erected by Neville Battistuzzi in the Park of Peace. Flanking each side is a token fence crafted from the original post and rail fence that once graced this site back in the late 1880's.

Tesla Super Charging Station: was completed on the 30th of June ready to start with the new financial year! We're now receiving a monthly licence fee which will contribute substantially to our financial viability.

Café Lease: Café's lease was reviewed.

The new rental agreement:

- NIMI will receive a significant increase in rent
- Rob has secured a five-year lease extension following the current term.
- A coffee shop will be allowed in the future.

Cleaning Contractor: we were able to hire a local cleaner who has proven to be both effective and economical. He is also cleaning the museum fortnightly, much to the Museum's Team's delight.

These recent developments are a welcome boost as we continue to preserve this heritage site.

Events Team: NIMI now has an Event Team, dedicated to managing bookings for the Hall and grounds, and organising on-site events to raise funds for NIMI. It's early days still. All members will enjoy a 10% discount on booking fees.

Tai Chi & Martial Arts Classes continue: Shail has been conducting classes here for over a year now and numbers of attendee's are growing slowly.

Museum & Café Roof Update: Termite Trouble Delays Renovation: plans are now on hold due to the discovery of termites in one of the posts supporting the roof. Further investigations are underway to assess the condition of other posts. Treatment has been applied

Toilet Upgrade: our toilets and septic system now run on solar power drawing from the grid only when needed – mostly in the wee small hours in the morning! This means they stay operational even during power outages! The toilet upgrade is on hold at present.

Septic System Update: we're now shovel-ready—just waiting on the right grant to fund it.

Water Storage Project: In October last year, with the aid of a small grant, we added two new water tanks. First we decommissioned the large in-ground tank and filled in the space. Then, we grouped and levelled the tanks to improve water flow between them. We plan to automate water transfers soon to reduce the workload on volunteers and ensure consistent water levels.

Our dam remains a backup for toilet use, in times of drought. Our total water storage capacity is now 300 cubic metres of rainwater.

Farewell to the Old Water Tank: With the completion of the new water storage project, the aged steel cylindrical tank was dismantled and removed.

Pavilion: Despite challenges of delayed payment of grant funding, we've remained committed to preserving the Pavilion and enhancing this important community space.

Where would we be without our volunteers – we couldn't function without them! I want to thank the committee members for their help, patience and tolerance throughout the past year.

Also, to our other wonderful volunteers, who do an amazing job within the museum, the gift shop, the gardens and grounds I wish to thank them for their loyalty and dedication to this historic site.

We are all growing old together. Let's hope some younger ones come along to take over our roles and carry our museum well into the future.

Lastly, I'd like to thank all of you for being members and supporting us by being here today. President's report moved to be accepted by Evelyn Reid. Seconded by Kerryanne Hayes. All in favour.

Pavilion and Museum's report – Leonie Lane

The Italian Pavilion building renovation is well underway; rainfall had delayed works. A big thank you to builder, Ned Hayes and his offsider Corey. The front of the tower has been closed to the weather from the east, a new entry facing south has been installed, 2 new awnings shelter the 2 entries while extra drainage has been implemented to stop water seepage on the Swan Bay-New Italy Road side of the tower. New displays are being designed and added as we go. A big thank you to local families who have recently contributed stories, photos and objects: Simeoni, Gava, Coiacetto, Polese, Colautti, Ghidinelli, Volpato, Gardiman, Pagotto, Pasin, Wheeler/Gasparini and Melino.

I would like to pay heartfelt tributes to 3 generous people, recently deceased and greatly missed. They each assisted and strengthened the Pavilion project over the past 13 years. They are Barry Filicietti, Loretta Gardiman and Dino Coiacetto.

Museum Working Group report – Leonie Lane

- Our small volunteer cohort includes Leone Stibbard, Cynthia McKeough, Nancy Gava, Lisa Farrington, Lester Cooke and Leonie Lane. This year we have concentrated on the internal Pavilion displays.
- We were able to make use of our recently revised Collection Policy, to go through the process of properly deaccessioning an item - the Rosolen pedal organ. We have followed protocol, worked with the family and can now sell it to a potential buyer or dispose of it appropriately.
- Local primary schools are interested in participating in excursions to the site with curriculum-related interests in migration stories and settler history.
- We were recently made aware that our 1850 Tome musket on display in the Museum needed to be registered with NSW Police. All forms have been submitted, and we are waiting for site visit.
- John Davies research into the travelling C19th photographer, Joseph Check, continues.

AMAGA FNC Chapter meeting: New Italy Museum is an active member of the Australian Museums and Galleries Association - Far North Coast Chapter and takes part in meetings held twice a year.

Outside signage: With assistance from volunteer Kevin Poole, we have revised site signage. New signage has been installed at the front and back car parks to assist wayfinding & donating. More signage has been ordered for the Toilet Upgrade project & promotion of the New Italy Hall hire, road directional signage and Pavilion.

The New Italy Hall office & collections room: Seeking some dedicated volunteers to assist finishing the office and collections room set up, following the revised collection policy. Pavilion & Museum report moved to be accepted by Ros Derrett. Seconded by Jamie Herring. All in favour.

Casa Vecchia report – Gail Williams

Gail read out the shop report noting that the shop has been operating for 15 years now.

Festival Highlights: The gift shop represented Historic New Italy at both the Winter Wonderland Festival in Woodburn, an event spotlighting local businesses and the LisAmore! Festival, Lismore.

Turmoil Tragedy to Triumph book: is finally back in stock. Sadly, its author, Anne Gabrielle Thompson, passed away shortly after its release in August this year at the age of 96.

Lack of Volunteers: Like many not-for-profits, the gift shop faces a shortage of volunteers. We keep the shop open on the busiest days. Other days we are closed. I feel very lucky to have Fran Muggleton, Karen Blue, Vanessa Dibley, Vicki Sheaffe, Ros Derrett and Kirsten Miller as part of the Casa Vecchia team.

Despite these challenges, the shop had a solid year. We earned \$106,908 in revenue, resulting in a \$24,776 surplus, plus \$15,000 transferred to NIMI throughout the year bringing our total annual contribution to NIMI of \$39,776. Stock value at the end of June was \$40,786.

The future of the gift shop: has been a constant consideration for quite some time, and sadly, there's no simple solution. Every idea we explore brings its own set of challenges, especially given our not-for-profit status. For now, we'll continue moving forward with hope—and with fingers crossed that our next wonderful volunteer to join our team is just around the corner. Casa Vecchia report moved to be accepted by Leonie Lane. Seconded by Barry Sommerlad. All in favour.

Casa Serena – John Barnes

John explained that New Italy Museum Inc. has been managing this 11 unit accommodation complex in High St, Lismore for the past 25 years. NIMI owns approx.16%. The remainder is owned by Housing NSW. At the time there was a need to accommodate single elderly Italians who did not have family support. The then President, Florian Valpato went into partnership with Housing NSW and it was built. NIMI manages the site via Lifestyle Real Estate in Keen St., Lismore. Rents are moderate compared to other similar sites. It has become very obvious that the overall structural condition of the buildings is deteriorating rapidly. The overall condition of the site is now below standard. After establishing meaningful dialogue with Housing NSW no decision or actions has been taken. It is becoming obvious that Housing NSW has a bigger vision for the site's future. Here a comparison is made with the stylish & land efficient compact units being constructed by Housing NSW in East Lismore and Alstonville. Since it is not the role of NIMI to be involved in public housing, NIMI would welcome the opportunity to shed itself of this distracting responsibility. No doubt the opportunity will eventually arise.

Casa Serena report moved to be accepted by Barry Somerlad. Seconded by Judy McCormack. All in favour.

Membership report – Lester Cooke

There are currently 119 financial members (Lifetime and Annual) This year there were 29 lapsed members and 19 unsubscribed. 200 people are registered to receive The Giornale Membership report moved to be accepted by Jamie Herring Seconded by Paulene Blackwood.

6. Election of Officer Bearers and Members of the Committee of Management:

The new NIMI committee for 2026 consists of-

Position	Nominee	Nominated by	Seconded by
President	Gail Williams	Leonie Lane	John Barnes
Vice-President	Leonie Lane	Lester Cooke	Gail Williams
Vice-President	John Barnes	Jamie Herring	Gail Williams
Treasurer	Kevin Poole	Leonie Lane	John Barnes
Secretary	Vanessa Dibley	Gail Williams	Leonie Lane
Member	Ros Derrett	Leonie Lane	Gail Williams
Member	Anna Lagerstedt	Leonie Lane	Gail Williams
Member	Jim Lagerstedt	Gail Williams	Leonie Lane
Member	Kerryanne Hayes	John Barnes	Leonie Lane
Member	Brian Pezzutti	John Barnes	Ellen Barnes
Honorary Member	Michele (Mike)Grigoletti	Leonie Lane	Gail Williams

7. Date for 2026 AGM: 8th November 2026

8. Addition: Barry Sommerlad informed us of “Festa Italia” which was held in Brisbane on the 7 September at the ECCA showground. It was the first Festa in 7 years. They had several small marquees set up for community groups where the groups could promote their organisation. Could New Italy make application for a spot next year? Peter thanked Barry for the information. Peter and wife Paulene offered to be our representatives on the ground as they live close by.

Meeting ended: 1600hrs