

THE NEW ITALY MUSEUM INCORPORATED
2024 Annual General Meeting

New Italy Hall, Historic New Italy
2pm, Sunday 23 March 2025

MINUTES

1. Welcome Chair: Dr Ros Derrett OAM

2. Attendance and Apologies

Attendees names collected by attendance sheet. 19 in attendance

Apologies: Paulene and Peter Blackwood, Ev Read, Lester Cooke, Ross Fraser, Val and Kel Walker, Joan Bortolin, Pat and Bev Schonberg, Ellen Barnes, Susan Creasey, Sue Abbey

3. Minutes of the 2023 AGM held on 5 November 2023 accepted by Michele Bertoli, seconded by Gail Williams

4. Business Arising from the Previous AGM There was no business arising from the previous AGM.

5. Presentation of Reports:

- **Auditor's Report** (as required to be submitted to members under s.26(6) of the Associations Incorporation Act 1984) Auditor Bruno Ivan wasn't present. In lieu, John Barnes presented the auditor's report for the fiscal year ended 30 June 2024. The total income from operations for the year amounted to \$368,000 rounded up to the nearest thousand, an increase of 7% compared to the previous year. The organisation also received grants to renovate the hall that amounted to \$448,000. Our expenditures including projects, costs, administration expenses and operational costs were \$736,000: with the following breakdown. Project cost renovations for the hall, \$458,000. Admin. expenses \$123,000 and operational costs \$154,000. We secured significant grants from local government bodies and private foundations which totalled \$448,000. Additionally, we received \$68,000 in donations from individual supporters and corporate sponsors. Fundraising events and rental returns. Our fundraising events were limited, generating only \$2,000. Most of the organisation's financial support comes from rental income generated from the new Italy site and the sale of retail items through our volunteer run facility known as Casa Vecchia. The promotion of the Italian contribution to the area remains core to our mission and activities. Membership fees contributed only \$54 to our annual income. New Italy has maintained a healthy financial position throughout the year. Our income has increased, and we have managed our expenditure effectively. We implemented effective cost management strategies to minimise unnecessary expenses and ensure that funds were utilised efficiently. This includes regular financial reviews, budgeting and cost - cutting measures where possible.
Investment. To enhance our financial stability, we have invested a portion of our funds in low-risk financial investments. These investments generated a modest return of \$2,500 to our budget income. Looking ahead, we plan to diversify our income streams by exploring new fundraising opportunities, applying for additional grants and

increasing our membership base. We also aim to expand our community projects and services, which will require careful financial planning and resource allocation. New Italy has maintained a healthy financial position throughout the year. Our income has increased, and we have managed our expenditure effectively. We maintain commitment to transparency, accountability and prudent financial management. I extend my gratitude to the many donors, members and supporters for this continued generosity and support.

Moved John Barnes. Seconded Leonie Lane

a. President's report - Gail Williams:

- **Membership:** we're now offering members 10% discount in the café, Casa Vecchia gift shop and MyBelle Pantry to entice locals to become members and volunteers.
 - Our team of **volunteers** is dwindling and aging. We need to hire contractors to do work that we cannot do.
 - To increase revenue, newer **TAPnGOs** have been installed with success. QR codes have been added to advertising to encourage donations off-site. More signage, especially in the car park, saw increased donations. Sadly some campers avoid paying.
 - The annual **toilet cleaning costs** was \$40,040 before GST and included travel expense from Lismore. Efforts have been made to hire a local.
 - **The hall** could be our income raiser, with the addition of a new kitchen and further beautified grounds. This site would be perfect for garden weddings with the reception held in the hall. An arbor under a racehorse tree in the Park of Peace is to be built out of remnants of our heritage fence that was at the front of the site.
 - **A Tesla charging station** is to be installed in our back car park. New Italy site is the easiest site to access from the highway ensuring increased foot traffic to our site while their cars are being charged.
 - **The NIMI committee** saw two of our elected members fail to take up the position. Then two more pulled back due to family commitments. The remaining members of the committee were kept busy. The treasurer's role was vacant, so a bookkeeper was employed to keep the books in order. However, she would not do the payments, so I became the treasurer, paying all the bills and ensuring the bookkeeper filed things accordingly. Ross Fraser, the NIMI secretary, (who lives in Melbourne) won't be reapplying due to family commitments. He will be missed.
 - **The hall repair and refurbishment** have been completed. We have yet to build the front awning, line the ceiling, add signage and surface the floor. The storeroom and archive room are excellent and functional, as is the NIMI office multipurpose room created behind the stage. Paul Juergens, a piano tuner from Casino, donated a refurbished Beale piano for the hall, replacing the damaged one. The hall kitchen has a new fridge. We have a quote to refit the hall kitchen as a commercial kitchen to enable us to hire or use for functions. This refurbishment has been paused until we can allocate funds and energy to this project.
- NIMI will miss **Paulene and Peter Blackwood** greatly as they start their new life in Brisbane. Their dedication and contributions to the site have been enormous. Paulene's creative input into the Casa Vecchia Gift Shop merchandise while Peter was an extraordinary secretary and treasurer for 13 years, assisting with grounds maintenance, coordinating Anzac Day and Remembrance Day services and more.

- **Classes in Qigong** by Mary started February 2024 with Shail taking over in November.
- The **proposed service centre**: the company New Italy Holdings have exercised the option and paid a deposit on the lease, holding their claim into the future. They have not shown any progress to submit a DA and our solicitor states in time their claim will be null and void because they have to actually prove that they are working on it.
- **The residence**: our tenants moved at the end of June. Kitchen and bathroom renovations were needed, with Peter Robinson contracted. This space is a great asset to NIMI and will continue to be managed by Elders Real Estate (Lifestyle).
- **New projects down the track**: Our septic system and toilet block upgrade are on the agenda. A new roof over the museum and cafe is needed.
- A big thank you to our wonderful **volunteers** and **members** for their dedication. Moved by Gail Williams. Seconded by Michele Bertoli.

b. Museum Working Group - Leonie Lane

Our small group includes Leone Stibbard, Cynthia McKeough, Nancy Gava, Lisa Farrington, Lester Cooke, Christine Hajjar, and me. We manage a variety of tasks across the Museum and the Pavilion.

The Hall is the site's hub and holds the museum collection. We were fortunate to receive \$497,000 from Create NSW through the community local infrastructure recovery package after 2022 storm damage. That has been spent and acquitted. Builder, Jim Barnes, did an excellent job. The addition of the office and the collections room is an incredible bonus. We have done a partial setup putting into practice valuable input from the conservator Christine Ianna, who was part of the hall upgrade grant. A M&GNSW grant enabled Museums advisor Deanna Vieth to revise our collection policy - acquitted

From Lester Cooke: HNI archives and genealogy pages were added to remotely. We've changed databases several times to arrive at CA, Collection Access.

The genealogy records are published on the website - newitaly.org.au/TNG.

Information is received by email and from site visitors via the gift shop. Records are kept for 47 families of the early settlers of New Italy, as listed on the New Italy pioneers monument, and 16 families of survivors of the ill-fated Marquis de Rays expedition who landed in Sydney in 1881, but did not settle in New Italy. Survivors of this expedition are listed on the Italian Immigrants Inquiry Board. The original 63 family names have grown to 3,406 family names, where spouses of female descendants are included. In total, as of 17 March 2025, there are 11,244 people recorded under 3,406 family names.

The New Italy website holds a lot of information related to the museum and the museum working group, the archives and the genealogy just being two. A big thank you to **Ross Fraser**, who continues to add material to the website, making it more user-friendly and up to date. Growing the virtual museum, he has refined the information on the website.

The Italian Pavilion building renovation is underway. We were successful in a Creative Capital grant application for the pavilion building renovation - \$250,000. Funds are being delivered. We are fortunate to have **Ned Hayes Building and Maintenance Propriety Limited** engaged to renovate the pavilion. The renovation is approximately 50% complete. New displays are being prepared as we go.

We maintain an active representation at the **Australian Museum and Galleries Association Far North Coast chapter** meetings.

TapN Go machines have been enhanced by QR codes, cash boxes and on-line donations at various locations on site.

Moved by Leonie Lane. Seconded by Jamie Herring.

c. Casa Vecchia - Gail Williams

Many reasons for the downturn in revenue:

- **Opening hours have been restricted:** A lack in volunteers from July 2023 meant Casa Vecchia Gift Shop was only open 10 to 12 days a month. Visitors were spending but we were unable to take full advantage. As new volunteers came on board and were trained, our open days increased to 25-30 days/month. At the end of the 2024 financial year, there were 9 volunteers covering 7 days a week. Currently we are down to 6 volunteers, and the shop is closed two days each week.
- The **post COVID financial squeeze** has meant spending has been guarded.
- **Paulene Blackwood** retired from making her popular jewelry for us and moved to Brisbane.
- **NIMI President duties** meant there was little time for ordering and sourcing new merchandise, a task previously shared with Pauline.
- **Time spent training enthusiastic shop volunteers** to source, purchase, price and enter new stock onto the database.

In 2024, **white ants** were found in the gift shop. Baits were installed but this variety of termites is hard to kill. As from June 2024, they have gone to ground. Northern Rivers Pest Control suggests in ground baits for future protection, especially after earthworks are completed around the site.

After the success of the 2023 **Historic New Italy calendar**, we decided to produce 2024 version. It did not sell well so we will shelve this idea until later.

In June 2024, we held **a successful stall at LisAmore!** with a selection of Casa Vecchia merchandise. We plan to do so again in 2025.

At the beginning of 2024, our stock of the history book, '**Turmoil, Tragedy, Triumph**' by **Anne Gabrielle Thompson** (An important book telling the origins of New Italy settlement) was dwindling. We don't have copyright of the book. I approached Anne Gabrielle to see if we could reprint it. She took the opportunity to write another chapter on how the expeditioners travelled to the Northern Rivers. So the printing of the book has been delayed. On 10/9/24, we sold our last copy. Anne- Gabrielle's family will reprint and sell through Amazon. We will buy it wholesale through her daughter to stock the shop.

Resignations: **Susan Creasy**, who has been with us for 11 years and **Jenny Ensor**, who's been with us for seven. I thank them on behalf of NIMI for their dedication to the shop. **Volunteers are scarce** and we are lucky to have the following working in the gift shop: Fran Muggleton, Karen Blue, Vanessa Dibley, Vicki Sheath, Ros Derrett, Kirsten Miller and Gail Williams.

Moved by Gail Williams, seconded by Jamie Herring

d. Casa Serena - John Barnes

Our major concern is **Land and Housing Corporation's (LAHC)** lack of attendance to major maintenance and to the future of the site. While NIMI manages Casa Serena, we have a minor 15 % share. The major share is owned by LAHC. The deed of joint ownership says they are responsible for major maintenance. They haven't done so. White ants are evident with areas roped off. It is unsafe to walk around a common room with a kitchen, toilet and shower, staircase, a big barbecue balcony on the top floor and on the bottom floor there is just the laundry and some under shelter clotheslines. Various accommodation areas need maintenance. It is a good site on a corner at the lower end of High Street, Lismore, out of flood zone. It could be a great redevelopment site if the housing department would take the initiative to build something to help alleviate the housing shortage in the district. To do so they would have to buy us out. And that's what we want to happen. We've been in constant contact with LAHC for some several years. They acknowledge our persistence and our efforts, but no progress has been made.

The history of the site goes back to Florian Volpato's days. He was a leading light of the establishment of New Italy, and a major personality in the Italian community. He died in 2000. Casa Serena, the House of Serenity, was originally built to accommodate elderly Italian widows who had no family in the area. That source of occupancy has changed and now it's open to the general public.

Moved by John, seconded by John Devoy

e. Membership – Ross Fraser

- 82 Lifetime members
- 26 annual members plus 6 member applications prior to the commencement of the AGM

All the reports were accepted: moved Ros Derrett, seconded Julie de Nardi

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

New NIMI committee 2025

Office-bearers

President: Gail Williams

2 Vice-Presidents: John Barnes, Leonie Lane

Secretary: Jennifer Sherwin

Treasurer: Shailendra Maharaj

Committee members

Jamie Herring

Vanessa Dibley

Michele Speck (Bertoli)

Susan Abby

A reminder by Leonie Lane about Anniversary Day - Sunday 6 April. Re booting 'Il Giornale' coming soon.

A very big thank you to Ros Derrett for chairing today's meeting.

Date for 2025 AGM - Sunday 2 November