Strategic Plan

2026 – 2029

ROYAL SOUTH STREET SOCIETY

Honouring a legacy of artistry,
Celebrating all who perform today and all who will shine tomorrow...

Victoria's largest youth performing arts pathway and vital contributor to the regional creative workforce.

Stages for All

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands in which we work and conduct our events. The Royal South Street Society acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are our first storytellers and performing artists through word, music, dance and cultural practices. We continue to pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

NFP Success
We thank Sally Basser and NFP Success for their assistance and contribution to this strategic plan.

Introduction

STAGES FOR ALL

For over 135 years, the Royal South Street Society has stood as a proud custodian of Australia's longest-running and most inclusive performing arts eisteddfod. Today, we are Victoria's largest youth performing arts pathway and a critical contributor to the regional creative workforce pipeline.

Since 1891, generations of performers, volunteers, educators and supporters have shaped a legacy built on creativity, community and opportunity. As guardians of this remarkable history, we honour those who have come before us while embracing our responsibility to provide structured pathways that support participation, skill development and progression for young people, artists and creative practitioners across Victoria.

This Strategic Plan sets our direction for the years ahead. It strengthens our commitment to artistic excellence, cultural stewardship and lifelong participation in the performing arts, while affirming our role in developing future talent and sustaining a vibrant, skilled creative workforce. With clarity of purpose and a bold vision for the future, we will continue to enrich lives, elevate performers at every stage of their journey, and ensure the Royal South Street Society remains a vital, contemporary and future-focused leader in Australian arts and education.

Why RSSS Matters Now: Our Social & Economic Role

The Royal South Street Society (RSSS) delivers Victoria's largest youth performing arts pathway, building skills, confidence, wellbeing and lifelong creative engagement through structured performance, expert adjudication and professional development.

Based in regional Victoria, RSSS ensures access to high-quality arts experiences beyond metropolitan centres—engaging thousands of young people, families, educators and volunteers each year. Our work strengthens regional creative ecosystems, supports transferable workforce skills, and removes barriers to participation related to geography, income and background.

With a 135-year legacy and a future-focused strategy, RSSS is more than an event organiser. We are a cultural steward and talent incubator—sustaining Victoria's performing arts sector, maintaining vital volunteer-led cultural infrastructure, and contributing to the state's creative workforce pipeline.

Why Funding Matters

Volunteer-led cultural organisations face rising costs, workforce fatigue and increasing barriers to participation. Without sustained investment, regional access declines, fees rise, and pathways for young people narrow.
Support for RSSS protects access, preserves creative pathways, and safeguards a form of community-led infrastructure that cannot easily be replaced once lost.

Snapshot Impact (2025)

- Over 29,000 pairs of feet across our stages
- $2M+ in visitor accommodation spend
- 18,750+ visitors from outside Ballarat
- 50+ contractors and 100+ local suppliers supported
- Majority under 18, across inclusive disciplines and pathways
- Targeted scholarships, fee relief and accessibility supports

Investment Helps Us To:

- Deliver youth development programs and events
- Expand equitable access initiatives
- Strengthen volunteer and digital systems
- Grow Victoria's future creative workforce

Plan Summary

Vision:
Enriching lives through a lifelong connection to the performing arts.

Mission:
To conduct Australia's premier Eisteddfod, promoting and encouraging participation, enjoyment and enrichment through the performing arts: whilst nurturing Victoria's largest youth performing arts pathway and regional creative workforce pipeline.

Values:

Respect
Honouring the history, contributions, and individuality of every performer and community member.

Unity
Bringing together diverse talents and voices in a vibrant, inclusive creative community.

Artistry
Celebrating the craft, creativity, dedication, and skill that bring performance to life.

Versatility
Embracing change, exploring new ideas, and excelling across diverse artistic and collaborative opportunities.

Financial Stability

Diversify income and manage resources to ensure long-term stability and continuity of youth pathways.

Strategies:

- Strengthen systems, data and impact reporting and introduce break-even analysis by discipline to understand where income and costs sit and guide sustainable planning.
- Implement the Fundraising and Philanthropy Plan and develop a Bequest and Endowment Strategy to support long-term sustainability
- Identify and pursue new funding opportunities, including government grants and philanthropic foundations, specifically focus on multi-year funding.
- Strengthen and expand relationships with local businesses and the City of Ballarat to create mutual benefit opportunities.
- Grow relationships with government, schools, community groups and arts partners to broaden support and maintain workforce sustainability

Success Indicators:

- **Financially Sustainable Programs:** Events and programs are financially viable, supporting the development of all performing arts disciplines and ensuring the long-term sustainability of RSSS resources.
- **Secured and Diversified Funding**: Funding from grants, philanthropy, government, and community partnerships underpins the delivery of events, awards, scholarships, and other key initiatives.
- **Recognised Impact Value:** RSSS is acknowledged as a vital contributor to the region's cultural, educational, and economic life, attracting investment, participation, and partnerships that support growth and impact.

Operational Excellence

Support people and systems to deliver efficient, high-quality events and services.

Strategies:

- Develop a volunteer strategy that supports long-serving volunteers and brings in newer volunteers of different ages and backgrounds.
- Support team member wellbeing and recognition, with scope to grow paid roles as resources allow.
- Establish a succession approach for key team member and volunteer leadership roles.
- Maximise the functionality of our operating systems to improve efficiency, workflow, reporting and use of data.
- Streamline event operations and processes across venues and disciplines.
- Use regular, structured post-event reviews to inform continuous improvement.

Success Indicators:

- **Engaged and Sustainable Volunteer Community:** A diverse and committed volunteer base, including long-serving and new members, actively supports events and organisational initiatives each year.
- **Supported and Motivated Team:** Staff, Board, and committee members are recognised, supported, and empowered to grow, contributing to a positive, high-performing, and resilient organisation.
- **Efficient and Continuously Improving Operations:** Modern systems and processes enable streamlined workflows, event delivery, and data-informed decision-making, with structured post-event reviews driving ongoing improvement.

Governance & Board Effectiveness

Ensure skilled, transparent and future-focused governance.

Strategies:

- Keep our governance framework current through regular review, clear roles and responsibilities, and timely policy updates.
- Support effective board succession by defining future skills and experience needs and planning for continuity and renewal.
- Provide induction and ongoing development with opportunities for directors to engage with key disciplines and sector bodies.
- Maintain clarity in board and management roles, and refine board agendas, papers and reporting to keep decision-making strategic and well-informed.

Success Indicators:

- **Strategic and Future-Focused Board:** The Board operates effectively, with clear roles, succession planning, and the skills needed to guide the organisation's long-term sustainability and impact.
- **Efficient Support Systems:** Operational and technological systems enable the Board to execute strategic objectives efficiently and with a forward-looking perspective.
- **Informed and Recognised Governance:** Board decisions are evidence-based, strategically aligned, and reinforce RSSS's reputation as a valued contributor to the region's cultural, educational, and economic life.

Program Renewal & Participation

Refresh programs and broaden participation to reflect contemporary practice.

Strategies:

- Keep the program artistically vibrant by honouring our heritage while introducing performance offerings that meet the evolving interests and expectations of participants and audiences.
- Explore new models and offerings beyond on-stage competitions, using RSSS expertise and IP to support participation and generate new income.
- Expand inclusive participation by building on programs such as All Abilities and identifying accessible formats that welcome a broader range of performers.
- Use data, participant insights and post-event reviews to inform program adjustments and identify areas for renewal or growth.

Success Indicators:

- **Trusted and Engaging Programs:** Schools, families, and arts partners actively engage with RSSS programs, recognising the value, growth, and development opportunities they provide.
- **Sector Leadership in Innovation and Inclusivity:** RSSS is recognised as a leader in promoting creative, innovative, and inclusive performing arts experiences within the eisteddfod sector.
- **Relevant and Valued Offerings**: RSSS programs and disciplines remain responsive to participant interests and community expectations, demonstrating ongoing artistic vibrancy and meaningful cultural impact.

Spotlight Pillar 5

Our strategic focus

Partnerships & Collaboration

Build strong connections with schools, communities and arts partners.

Strategies:

- Position RSSS as a critical pathway and partner in performing arts education by working closely with schools and teachers on offerings that support learning and pathways.
- Build relationships with arts educators and industry to expand workshops, scholarships and other opportunities.
- Collaborate with the City of Ballarat, businesses, organisations and foundations on sponsorship, in-kind support and shared initiatives that enhance programs and events.
- Take a lead role with the Victorian eisteddfod network to progress joint advocacy, school engagement and sector-wide development.
- Build an engaged alumni community to support partnerships, advocacy and philanthropy.

Success Indicators:

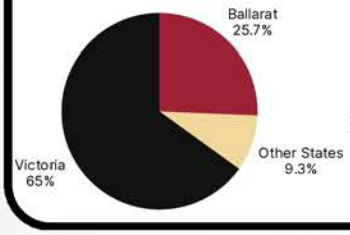
- **Recognised Arts Education Partner:** RSSS is acknowledged as a trusted and influential pathway and partner in national performing arts education, collaborating effectively with schools, teachers, and the broader arts sector.
- **Active Alumni Engagement:** RSSS alumni are actively involved in programs, partnerships, advocacy, and philanthropy, contributing to the Society's ongoing impact and growth.
- **Valued Community and Sector Contributor:** RSSS is seen as a key contributor to the cultural, economic, and educational life of the region and state, attracting investment, sponsorship, and participation that support sustainable programs and events.

Beyond Numbers... What changes because RSSS Exists. Our Impact.

A key driver of youth pathways, tourism, economy community and arts culture

Area	What We Do	What Changes	Why It Matters
Youth Pathways	Structured performance, quality stages + professional feedback	Increased confidence, discipline, aspiration	Development & workforce readiness
Regional Access	Regional location, inclusive formats	Reduced geographic disadvantage, stages for all	Equity. Majority participants under 18 years
Volunteer Leadership	Intergenerational volunteering	Skills transfer, civic leadership	Social capital
Education	Adjudication, workshops, programs	Higher teaching quality, learning and assessment opportunities	System-level support & uplift
Culture & Economy	Reason to come to Ballarat	Tourism spend, events	Economic Impact

FROM ALL OVER AUSTRALIA



75% of our participants travelled to Ballarat to attend the Eisteddfod!

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

25,000+

Performers, supporters and audience in 2025

VOLUNTEER HOURS

10,000+

Volunteers collectively provided over 10,000 hours annually or over $469,600 equivalent (*Centre for Volunteering rate*)

PERFORMERS ON STAGE

11,000+

The number of performers our stages from all over Australia throughout the 2025 season of events

THE REASON FOR VISITING BALLARAT

86%

ROYAL SOUTH STREET SOCIETY
BALLARAT EISTEDDFOD

86% of our participants indicated the main reason they came to Ballarat was for the Eisteddfod

NUMBER OF ALUMNI

1 - 1.5 MILLION

Estimated number of past performers (alumni) on our stages over the past 135 years

Our Flagship Programs 2026 - 2029

Our work over 2026–2029 is organised around two flagship program pillars: Creative Futures and Community Foundations. Together, they position the Royal South Street Society as both a leading youth performing arts pathway and essential community cultural infrastructure. Each flagship pillar contains targeted programs that deliver participation, quality, access, leadership and long-term sustainability.

PROGRAM	Purpose / What is it	What does it look like	Who it serves. Why it matters	What Success Looks Like
Creative Futures **Youth pathways, learning, quality and creative workforce development**				
Creative Futures Pathway *Aligned Pillars: Program Renewal & Participation; Partnerships & Collaboration; Financial Stability*	**Develops skills, confidence and career pathways through performance.** A structured, developmental pathway that supports young people from first participation through to advanced performance, tertiary study and creative careers. It integrates competitions, workshops, mentorship, feedback, scholarships and industry exposure.	• Age- and stage-based progression across disciplines • Mentoring by professional artists and alumni • Career talks, backstage learning, and pathway mapping • Scholarships and masterclasses • Links with tertiary providers and industry	Young people, emerging artists Builds workforce readiness and lifelong creative participation	Increased retention, progression, and post-school creative pathways
Adjudicator Excellence & Educator Development *Aligned Pillars: Program Renewal & Participation; Partnerships & Collaboration; Operational Excellence*	**Strengthens quality of feedback, teaching and assessment** A professional learning and quality-assurance framework that lifts the standard, consistency and educational value of adjudication and teaching.	• Adjudicator training and calibration sessions • Feedback best-practice frameworks • Professional development for teachers • Observation, shadowing and peer review • Digital feedback tools and learning resources	Teachers, adjudicators, students Lifts sector-wide standards and learning outcomes	Higher teaching quality, consistent adjudication, educator engagement
Community Foundations **Volunteer leadership, access, equity and organisational sustainability**				
Volunteer Leadership & Skills Program *Aligned Pillars: Operational Excellence; Governance & Board Effectiveness; Financial Stability*	**Builds sustainable, intergenerational volunteer leadership** A formalised, intergenerational volunteer development and succession system that recognises volunteering as leadership, skills development and civic contribution—not just labour.	• Induction, training and micro-credentialing • Leadership roles and mentoring for new volunteers • Clear role pathways (event → committee → governance) • Recognition and wellbeing initiatives • Skills-based volunteering	Volunteers, community leaders Protects vital cultural infrastructure and civic capacity	Strong volunteer pipeline, reduced burnout, clear succession
Regional Access & Equity Program *Aligned Pillars: Program Renewal & Participation; Financial Stability; Partnerships & Collaboration*	**Removes barriers to participation** A targeted inclusion and access initiative that removes financial, geographic, physical and cultural barriers to participation.	• Travel subsidies and accommodation support • Fee relief, scholarships and school partnerships • All Abilities and accessible formats • Outreach programs in regional schools • Culturally safe and inclusive practices	Regional, low-income, diverse and all abilities participants Ensures fair access regardless of geography or circumstance	Increased regional participation, diversity, and retention

History & Governance

Our commitment to this plan

The Royal South Street Society (RSSS) is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001 and is governed by its Constitution. Board members are appointed each year as outlined in that Constitution. To support effective leadership, the Board maintains a skills matrix that helps ensure a balanced mix of capabilities, perspectives and stakeholder representation.

RSSS is powered by a small professional team and an exceptional community of volunteers who have supported the eisteddfod since its earliest days. Our directors and advisors contribute their expertise in an honorary capacity, and the Society gratefully acknowledges the support it receives from state and local government. The organisation is sustained through the generosity of sponsors and donors as well as revenue from participant entries, ticketing and advertising across our communication platforms.

As a founding member of the Association of Eisteddfod Societies of Australia, RSSS continues to work closely with fellow Victorian and national eisteddfods. Together, we advocate for meaningful performance, training and development opportunities for artists of all ages.

This Strategic Plan will be enacted through annual operating plans, financial planning processes, and an ongoing commitment to strong and contemporary governance. Honouring a legacy of artistry, Celebrating every performer yet to shine...

Below is a list of the Board and individuals formally associated with the Society.

Directors (2025)
Lindsay Eaton (Chair)
Danielle Coltman (Deputy Chair)
Barbara Stead (Secretary)
Virginia Wise
Adam Miller
Narelle Carr
Nichola Sleight
Andrea Brown
Judy-Ann Quilliam (Executive Officer)

Life Members
Dr Anthony Cole
Barbara Dunlop
Sandra Fishwick
Ron Harrington OAM
Dawn Harrington
Lloyd Harvey
Lorraine Harvey
Robert Matthews
Brian McInnes
Peter Zala

Patron in Chief
Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC

Honorary Patrons
Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, ONZ, DBE, AC
Lady Primrose Potter, AC

Contact us

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ROYAL SOUTH STREET SOCIETY
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