



AUSTRALIA EESTI SELTSIDE LIIT
COUNCIL OF ESTONIAN SOCIETIES IN AUSTRALIA Inc.
ABN 34 579 619 788

AESL ANNUAL BOOKLET

2025

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Section 1 Annual General Meeting 2025

Agenda

Annual General Meeting 2025

Sunday 18 January 2025

10:00 a.m. (AEST)

Face-to-Face meeting

At Sydney Estonian House

141 Campbell St, Surry Hills, Sydney

And on- line Zoom = <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89450288112>

1. Opening of Meeting

1.1. Acknowledgement of Country

Mindful of the consequences of past invasions and occupations of Estonia by foreign forces: we begin this meeting by acknowledging the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional owners & custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

1.2. One Minute's Silence for those who departed during the year

1.3. Greeting from His Excellency, Mr Jaan Reinhold, Ambassador from Estonia to Australia

Please accept my sincere apologies for not being able to attend your meeting in person or online.

Nevertheless, I wish to convey my warmest greetings and my gratitude to AESL for your work. Having observed your activities throughout my first year in office, I am convinced that AESL's leadership role in coordinating the work of the various Estonian communities in Australia is essential. No local society leader can undertake this role alone, as it would contradict the principles of separation of powers and transparency in decision-making. It is therefore desirable that the current structure of AESL—should it continue—remains inclusive and transparent, ensuring equal representation of all major Estonian communities and organisations across Australia's states and territories.

One of the key priorities of the Embassy is to support the Estonian diaspora in Australia. We do not do this directly through financial aid projects; instead, various structural support programmes and funds have been established for this purpose, offering Estonian organisations abroad, including those in Australia, opportunities to apply for funding. I am pleased that multicultural Australia, at both federal and state levels, also provides funding opportunities to support community activities—and I am glad our organisations have already made use of these resources. I encourage you to continue doing so, and the Embassy remains ready to support such applications, for example by providing letters of endorsement.

During my visits to the states and territories, I always try to meet local Estonian community representatives, and in meetings with state governments I highlight the contribution of our communities and encourage local authorities to support initiatives by Estonian local communities. For example, during my official visit to Darwin in mid-November and my earlier visit to Queensland, I had very constructive discussions in this regard with state authorities. I also encourage AESL members to identify individuals of Estonian heritage within state governments or parliaments,

establish good relations with them, and invite them to engage with local diaspora activities.

Honorary consuls serve as an essential extension of the Embassy. Australia and New Zealand are very well covered by our honorary consular network, with seven consuls in Australia and one in Auckland. An appointment of new honorary consul is planned for Victoria, hopefully in 2026. In addition to their consular duties, honorary consuls are increasingly expected to support economic diplomacy and the strengthening of Estonia–Australia economic relations. Expectations also extend to supporting diaspora activities. Therefore, I ask all local organisations to maintain strong and active relationships with respective honorary consuls, to jointly seek opportunities to support diaspora initiatives, and to keep them informed and engaged.

Among the Embassy’s 2025 priorities was the strengthening of Estonia–Australia relations, particularly through bilateral visits, high-level contacts between our governments and parliaments, and organising business delegations. I consider this year extremely successful.

Politically, a delegation of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Estonian Parliament (Riigikogu) visited Australia and New Zealand—a visit marked by a dense and productive programme. In addition to bilateral issues, global topics were discussed, and Estonia and Australia demonstrated close alignment on matters such as support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia’s brutal aggression.

In November, Estonia’s Minister of Education and Research, Kristina Kallas, visited Australia and New Zealand, focusing on cooperation in artificial intelligence and new technologies in education, as well as reforms in general and vocational education. Estonia has been a leader in these areas, and Australia has shown strong interest in adopting several innovations.

On the economic diplomacy side, two major delegations visited Australia this year: in October, the Space Estonia delegation visited Sydney; and in November, the Estonian Geological Survey delegation—accompanied by researchers and officials—visited Western Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland.

To strengthen the sense of connection between Estonian communities in Australia and the historic homeland, I have made it my practice to arrange meetings between visiting Estonian dignitaries and the local diaspora, as well as business leaders via EACCI. The meetings held with the diaspora in Sydney and Melbourne during the Riigikogu delegation and Minister Kallas’s visits were very successful, generating lively discussion and providing an updated overview of developments in Estonia. While participation could have been higher, such meetings require significant coordination and justification within already tight official visit programmes. If local communities feel these meetings are not sufficiently attractive or necessary, we may consider holding them in a smaller format in the future.

Supporting AESL is a priority for the Embassy, and therefore I would like to share some of my personal reflections and experiences from our cooperation over the past year.

The HEIA media project has launched successfully and fulfils its mission as an online media outlet serving Estonians across Australia, helping prevent the fragmentation of the information space. We continue to support local publications, which uphold longstanding traditions. The new portal allows for more timely communication, including consular announcements from the Embassy. I am honoured to contribute regular Column by Ambassador 3-4 times per year, and I hope readers find them engaging. I welcome any suggestions regarding their content or frequency, and I hope AESL continues supporting HEIA.

The Estonian Archives in Sydney are unique not only within the history of Estonian communities in Australia but likely within the broader Estica heritage space. I have taken all official Estonian delegations to visit the Archives, and I thank the archival team for their kind support. Without exception, visitors have greatly valued the experience and identified it as a highlight of their visit. The Archives form an essential part of the identity of the Sydney Estonian House as a community centre. It is remarkable how volunteers maintain such a high archival standard despite limited space. In the long term, larger facilities are clearly needed, which should be considered in future restructuring of Estonian House. I hope AESL continues supporting the Archives as the custodian of Estonian memory and identity in Australia.

Estonian language teachers across Australia perform invaluable work, often beyond what is visible. Operating on a voluntary basis, their contributions were rightfully recognised with letters of appreciation from the Minister of Education. The Embassy will continue supporting them by helping source educational materials from Estonia. Supporting teachers gathering and related activities could also be an AESL priority.

Estonian children's camps, including the long-established Sõrve camp and the more recent camp organised by the Melbourne community, are crucial pillars of Estonian identity in Australia. Sõrve's decades-long intergenerational legacy is extraordinary. The Melbourne initiative, though smaller in scale, is highly Estonian in character and deserves recognition and continuation. As generational ties to Estonia evolve, it is increasingly important for these camps to go beyond sports and recreation and to maintain a strong focus on Estonian language, culture, and traditions. I warmly welcome the introduction of a language and culture leader position at Sõrve and hope AESL continues prioritising support for the camp.

As you know, **Melbourne Estonian House** has found new owners, and in 6 months the Estonian Society will vacate the premises and hopefully secure new, suitable

facilities. Given the historical significance of the building, I hope its cultural treasures will find a place in the new premises or be displayed elsewhere. Items that cannot be accommodated might be stored or even transferred to the Estonian National Museum. While the Embassy does not have authority to decide or manage this process, we are ready to assist in seeking funding from Estonia if needed. I believe this should also be among AESL's priorities for 2026.

Continuing the celebration of Estonian Days is an important tradition that must be upheld. I sincerely thank the Adelaide Estonian Society and especially Mr Martin Kurvits for organising the 2024 event. We welcome the Sydney Estonian Society's decision to host the next Cultural Days in April 2027. Ensuring their success should also guide AESL's 2026 planning.

Once again, I thank AESL and all its active members for your dedicated work. The strength of our communities lies in the strength of your unity.

In 2025, I nominated the Wollondilly Centre and Museum, Hilja Toomi, and Martin Kurvits for the Citizen Diplomacy Award by Minister of Foreign Affairs for their outstanding contributions to Estonian life and heritage in Australia. I am pleased that all nominees received this recognition. I wish to conclude by congratulating them once more and by extending my best wishes to AESL—and through you, to all Estonian communities across Australia.

Respectfully,

Jaan Reinhold
Ambassador

2. Roll Call

2.1. Attendees – In person and via Zoom

AESL Member	Name	N Members	N Votes	attending	Mandate received
Adelaide Estonian Society Inc	Martin Kurvits	106	4	In Person	Y
Brisbane Estonian Society Inc	Iti Connor	115	4	Zoom	Y
Gold Coast Estonian Society Inc	Elina Peedosen	15	1	Zoom	Y
Melbourne Estonian Society	Michael Payne	197	5	In Person	Y
Melbourne Estonian Society	Ingrid Provan			In Person	y
Estonian Society of Sydney	Ave Nukki	159	3	In Person	y
	Martin Kukk		2	In Person	
Estonian Association of Tasmania		-	-	-	-
Estonian-Australian Association of the Northern Territory (EAANT)		-	-	-	-
Wollongong Estonian Society (WES)		20	-	apology	
Estonian Cultural Association of Western Australia	Anu Laaanesaar	127	4	Zoom	N *
Sydney Eesti Seltsi Kunsti-, Käsitöö Ja Etnograafia Ring	Marissa Pikkat	22	2	In Person	Y
(Handicraft group)	Maie Simson			Zoom	
	Ingrid Renno			Zoom	
	Maie Pikkat			Zoom	
Estonian Cultural Foundation In Australia Ltd	Elen Ellervee	61	3	In Person	Y
Sydney Estonian Parents' and Friends' Association – Sörve Söbrad	Sulev Kalamäe	129	4	In Person	Y
Virmalised Sydney Estonian Folk Dancers	Elen Ellervee	33	2	In Person	Y

AESL President	Juho Looveer (JL)	-	0	In Person	--
AESL Board – Vice-President	Sirje Jõgi-Rivers (SJ-R)	-	0	In Person	--
AESL Board - Treasurer	Ingrid Provan (IP)	-	0	In Person	--
AESL Secretary		-	0		
AESL Minutes Secretary	Esmée Okamoto (EO)	-	0	In Person	--
AESL Archives	Dr Terry Kass	-	0	Zoom	--
	Maie Barrow		0		
AESL Languages Co-Ordinator	Iti Connor (IC)	-	0	Zoom	--
AESL Independent Board Member	Juho Looveer	-	0	In Person	--
Australian Estonian Media Project		-	0		--
Victoria representative to AESL Board	Ingrid Provan		0	In Person	
Queensland representative to AESL Board	Iti Connor		0	In Person	
West Australia representative to AESL Board	Anu Laaanesaar		0	In Person	
NSW representative to AESL Board	Marissa Pikkat	-	0	In Person	--
		Total:	34		

2.2. Apologies

2.3. Mandates and Proxies – as per table in 2.1

2.4. Voting Entitlements – as per table in 2.1

3. Approval of Minutes of the 2024 AGM

held on 31 December 2024, in Adelaide = see section 2, pages 56 - 70

3.1. Issues arising

3.2. Motion to adopt these minutes

4. AESL 2025 REPORTS

4.1. AESL Personnel 2025

4.1.1. Board Members

Executive

- Chairperson – Dr Juho Looveer
- Vice-Chairperson – Sirje Jõgi-Rivers
- Treasurer – Ingrid Provan
- Minutes Secretary – Esmée Okamoto
- Assistant Secretary – Iti Connor

State representatives:

- QLD: Iti Connor
- NSW: Marissa Pikkat - Communications and Social Media Coordinator
- VIC: Ingrid Provan
- SA: Martin Kurvits
- WA: Anu Läänesaar
- NT: nil
- TAS: nil

Independents:

- VIC Sirje Jõgi Rivers
- NSW Dr Juho Looveer
- NSW Esmée Okamoto
- NSW Ave Nukki

4.1.2. Associates, Other Officers

Archivist	Dr Terry Kass
Estonian Language Coordinator	Iti Connor
Public Officer	Maie Simson
XXX <i>Eesti Päevad</i> Organising Committee	Ave Nukki
AESL Communications and Social Media	Marissa Pikkat
AESL Cultural Organiser	Ave Nukki

4.1.3. AESL Representation

Estonian World Council (ÜEKN)	Dr Juho Looveer
Estonian Global Cooperation Commission (ÜEK)	Dr Juho Looveer
Estonian Global Cooperation Commission - Working Party Re Mass Communication	Kristi Barrow
Australian Baltic Council, Australia	Dr Juho Looveer

4.2. AESL CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2025

I welcome you all to this meeting and thank you for your attendance.

We welcome EstWest (Estonian Cultural Association of Western Australia) and the Gold Coast Estonian Societies as members of AESL now.

While the Tasmanian Society has dissolved, Wollongong is still active, and it looks like Northern Territory may resume its activities.

AESL is now over 70 years old. Its purpose and operations have changed over time, though we only worked on a new structure and constitution 4-5 years ago. That was the first major change in several decades.

In the first decades, there was a dedicated purpose of supporting Estonians around the world, fighting against the soviet system, and for the Independence and freedom of Estonia. However, since Estonia regained its independence in 1991, there has been confusion about the purpose of AESL. In fact, recently I read thru the AESL booklets from about ten years ago, and the same question was posed to the meetings then.

This is not new, nor an isolated case. Estonian (and other ethnic) groups in other countries ask the same questions. And estonian organisations in various countries wonder about the point of UEKN (the Estonian World Council) these days. Other ethnic groups have faced the same dilemmas.

At the AGM held in Adelaide on 31 December 2024, I asked the meeting – **what is the purpose of AESL?**

The meeting looked up the Constitution, and agreed that the ten points listed were succinct and clear, and sufficient.

This follows from the people who were involved in the lengthy discussions that took place four years ago when we developed the new Constitution.

However, it appears that many newer members are not aware of all this.

Yesterday (Saturday 17 January 2026) we held a community consultation and engagement forum.

There will hopefully have been a few take-aways from that meeting, which I will cover during the AGM.

From my 2024 report . . .

We have been considering the future of our Estonian diaspora for some time.

After a discussion at the AESL Board level in early 2023, the state delegates were to organise similar discussions within their states, and include the different organisations they represent. We hope this discussion is ongoing.

I wonder how many states have actually held such discussions ??

I wrote a document at the end of 2025, outlining the history and many aspects and considerations for AESL. Some AESL Board members have contributed to a separate document.

AESL was not established to do the same work as the local societies, and nor should it.

AESL is a central umbrella organisation.

In a Federation (e.g. Australia, Canada, etc), the states usually look after local issues, and the Federal level focusses more on the bigger picture issues, and international affairs.

So AESL should be monitoring and assisting with the teaching of the language – (Big Thank You to Iti Connor for the work she has been doing in recent years.)

Handicraft, music, singing, dancing are all local activities. AESL helps to maintain these thru the Eesti Päevad festivals.

We attend all meetings of the Estonian World Council (UEKN), maintaining links to what is planned at international levels, and supporting and promulgating various documents. We also contribute to the Global Estonian programs.

There are other things that we could be doing, but **we do not have enough people with enough time available** for those tasks. That is a reality, for AESL, as well as for many of our members.

We limped thru most of the past year with no Secretary. This has not been good, but is a product of the way we construct the AESL Board.

One suggestion was that the AESL should be the meeting place for the heads of the various Seltsid around Australia. However, over the past four years, we have seen few of the Selts Presidents involved with AESL issues. And when we ran monthly chat sessions for states to catch up with what was happening in each, not many joined these discussion, nor showed much interest in what each other was doing. Much of this is probably as they have been so focused on their local issues and events.

Big Thanks to Ave Nukki for initiating some cultural tours (e.g. Piip ja Tuut), and connecting with several other cities for local performances.

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED DURING 2025

We ended 2024 with the **XXIXth Eesti Päevad Festival**.

The next Festival is scheduled for April 2027 in Sydney.

Unfortunately, there has been little information forthcoming re this. We did draft an Agreement to be signed by the Project Manager and AESL, but despite numerous reminders, this has not progressed.

ARCHIVES

Meanwhile – the ARCHIVES continue their successful work.

All delegations and parliamentary visitors from Estonia come to visit our Archives – the

Estonian Archives in Australia. They have heard so much about this, and they often spend a few hours looking at various works, and discussing the contents with the people working there.

LANGUAGE TEACHERS COLLEGIUM

Iti Connor has been working hard at developing the **teaching of the Estonian language across Australia**. She organised a three-day intensive workshop for language teachers from all states – see pp 23 for report. Another camp is planned to occur soon.

CAMPS in several states

Sörve has been established for some 70 years as a weeklong residential camp for estonian youth and families. In recent years we have seen several other camps starting up. Melbourne Selts ran their first camp last year, and saw amazing growth in numbers this year. Gold Coast conducted a camp, and had a long waiting list. While these were not specifically AESL organised activities, it is heartening to see that our culturally based activities are growing again.

Monitoring the situation in Europe, especially Ukraine, and supporting actions from UEKN and other countries. We have joined in discussions with the Ukrainian community in several states; We have endorsed letters from UEKN (for example) and forwarded those to the Australian government. When the Estonian parliamentary delegation visited in October, we met with them and the key people from the Ukrainian community, and discussed the approaches to the Australian government.

Martin Kurvits (Adelaide) has had several meetings with their local Ukrainians, and has commenced a list of issues that would need to be considered if Putin does ever attack the Baltic states (e.g. housing; visas; food and clothing; visas; education; etc)

Participation in World Level Estonianism

We continue to attend all meetings of the **Estonian World Council (UEKN)**, maintaining links to what is planned at international levels, and supporting and promulgating various documents.

Most of these monthly meetings are in the middle of the night, and are held completely in Estonian language. This makes it difficult to find suitable people who could represent our interests, but our presence and participation has been noted.

The most recent meeting went from 2 a.m. till after 5 a.m., and was about the Constitution and what to change. A lot of talking, some good discussion, though I fear much of this will be forgotten by the next time the constitution is considered. In the end, there was only one vote, where Canada and Sweden combined their 12 votes to override the other 22 votes. This shows how difficult it can be to effect real change, unless you have the support of those two countries.

In recent years, I have been a member of the Constitution Review Committee of UEKN, which looked at updating various sections. However much work remains in this!

I have been a member of the Investments Committee, looking at the UEKN investments

and how they are performing. A major concern I have highlighted is that the annual expenditures are much higher than income. However, being incorporated in Maryland USA, 5% of assets must be paid to some charitable organisation each year, or a higher tax paid. This is problematic, and will not be solved soon.

I also led the Committee to review funding and funding applications. We updated the forms and what information is necessary when applying for funding, especially when transferring monies across international borders. Applications are now considered twice each year, rather than coming in whenever someone decides to apply. This way we can consider all applications at the same times, and weigh their merits in line with funds available.

The **Global Estonian program** is now being implemented according to plans developed over recent years. A key person in organising the regular Zoom forums is our own Johanna Rivers from Melbourne. These forums are also during our night times, but are usually available afterwards for download. They are working hard to try to create an international Estonian community.

OTHER NEWS

Apart from AESL work, we have welcomed **His Excellency Jaan Reinhold** as the new **Ambassador from Estonia to Australia**. He has been a breath of fresh air, and has been building bridges with all Estonian groups across Australia.

We have also seen the launch of **HEIA – “Hello Estonians In Australia”**. This now replaces the former eesti.org.au website, and provides a daily emailed newsletter, highlighting various Estonian activities and news.

While this was not an AESL initiative, we supported the initial; funding application to Estonia, which helped kick-start the project. It is a vital function for our diaspora.

However, with the passing of Lembit Marder, we saw the demise of the estonia.org.au website, and much information was lost.

This includes many AESL files, and we will need to re-build a shared site for storing AESL files. Luckily we should be able to recover much from various members of the AESL Board.

It is great to see how many **Mudilasring groups** are now operating. However these are small groups, run mainly by the parents involved. How can we link these groups to their local communities?

What can we offer these children as they grow older and transition to school?

So, we have various challenges to rebuild AESL into an organisation that can do what it is supposed to.

We also need to note the support for estonian cultural activities by ECFA -the **Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia Ltd**. They are now providing financial support for many groups and must be lauded for this.

AWARDS

AESL acknowledges that we survive through the efforts of the people who give their time voluntarily to promote our culture.

In February 2025, AESL awarded its annual Aukirjad to **Bernadette Pilli** Victoria for her outstanding a long-term service in leading and working with the Melbourne Estonian Society.

AESL also acknowledged two people who have demonstrated a commitment to the Estonian culture in Australia.

Maie Pikkat	Sydney	long-term involvement with the Handicraft group
Ella Scott	Sydney	a young person who has shown a lot of commitment to the Sõrve camp, and now is leader of the Virmalised folk-dancers.

The **Estonian Foreign Ministry celebrates Citizen's Day on 26 November** because on this day in 1918, the Estonian Provincial Assembly issued its first regulation on Estonian citizenship. The aim of the Citizen's Day is to raise awareness about the status of a citizen and increase civic pride.

The Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognises individuals and civic associations around the world on this day for their exceptional voluntary contributions to preserving the Estonian language, culture, and identity, as well as for promoting Estonia's global reputation. Among the recipients honoured this year, there were Estonian Australians, highlighting the distinctive impact of their work.

- **Hilja Toom (Victoria)**: For leading the Kodu Kaja women's choir.
- **Martin Kurvits (SA)**: For organizing the Estonian Festival (Eesti Päevad).
- **Wollondilly Heritage Centre & Museum (NSW)**: For preserving Estonian heritage.

Estonia's Folk Culture Awards:

- **Madis Alvre**: Honored for translating Estonian symbols into wood.
- **Anu Läänesaar**: Recognized for keeping baking traditions alive.
- **Andres Truus**: Received the Folk Art Award for design work for the Australian Estonian community.
- **Others recognized**: Ella Scott, Elina Peeduson, Iti Connor, Elen Ellervee (language/culture bearers).

While there are many great and positive things happening in the estonian diaspora, we need to look to the future, and look to improve what we can.

Some of the issues we face are:

COMMUNICATION – HEIA now exists and circulates general news; that is great. But we still see little communication between AESL and its members – depending on each state. The reality is that most people are highly involved with the more urgent doings at local level, and few people spend time thinking about the bigger picture.

RECORD KEEPING

From when AESL moved to Melbourne in 2018, the AESL records were stored on a server maintained by then Chair of AESL, Lembit Marder (estonia.org.au). Unfortunately, with his demise early 2025, the server was closed and no records are available. This is a risk of maintaining records on a server that is isolated.

FINANCES

Of course, no organisation can do much without sufficient resources.

The funds that AESL currently has have been built up over decades. We have no simple way to rebuild these if they are all used up. They can not be spent in just one year, unless there is something vitally crucial.

Donations drives are not to be tried every year.

We need to develop further funding avenues for AESL, if it is to achieve more.

We also need people involved in the AESL Board who are looking at positive ideas for improvement.

SUGGESTED WORK PLAN FOR 2026

There are several key things to be done.

- Ensuring the progress of Eesti Päevad XXX festival
- Clarifying the work of AESL re Language Teaching and the Archives
- Establishing a new central depository for records
- Organising the new Board to using the aesl@eesti.org account for “official” messages
- Maintaining international links, especially with respect to the situation in Europe.
- And other suggestions that are feasible

Elagu Vaba Eesti

Dr Juho Looveer

November 2025

See Section 4 pages 123 - 161 for AESL speeches and publications

4.2.1. The Estonian World Council = ÜEKN

The Estonian World Council unites central organizations of Estonians around the world

The World Estonian Central Council (ÜEKN), a representative organization of Estonian communities abroad established in 1954, continued its work in 2024–2025 according to its main goals. ÜEKN unites and represents Estonians outside Estonia, upholding national continuity, the Estonian language and culture, and common memory. The protection of Estonian interests is the guiding principle of all activities.

The work of the Central Council is centred on promoting cooperation between Estonian central organizations operating abroad. ÜEKN supports the initiatives of member organizations, contributes to the vitality of communities, and invites those Estonian associations operating abroad that share the same values and goals to join the network.

ÜEKN brings together Estonian central organizations from 13 countries: America, Australia, England, Canada, Lithuania, Latvia, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Finland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, and Russia. In 2024, the Estonian Organizations Network in Finland (EOVS) was admitted as a member. The Norwegian-Estonian Association submitted an application for membership on 03.06.2024 and was admitted as an observer by the decision of the plenary session on 13.04.2025. It is hoped that the Norwegian-Estonian Association will become a full member on 10.-11.04.2026 at the plenary session in Tallinn. Russia's membership status has been suspended. Since 2019, the Global Estonian Youth Network has also participated in the work of the ÜEKN as an observer.

Celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Great Escape

The largest event was the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Great Escape. With the support of a global donation campaign, a memorial monument “Touch” created by Estonian sculptor Elo Liiv was completed, which was opened on 21.09.2024 in Pärnu. The project was led by Kristi Vuht Allpere, who fled to America via Sweden, and whose dedicated work received several awards. The memorial was presented to the city of Pärnu.

A documentary film “Touch” was also completed, which can be viewed on the ERR platform Jupiter <https://jupiter.err.ee/1609789577/puudutus>. The motif of the memorial is two hands symbolizing the moment of departure — the bond, longing and fate of those who leave and those who stay.

The Great Escape 1944 Committee, headed by Iivi Zajedova (Czech Republic), organized commemorative events in Tallinn and Pärnu. The essay competition “I don’t want to go, but I can’t stay” aimed at high school students continued to gain popularity, the best authors of which received a trip to the Estonian Youth Folk University in Sweden in the summer of 2024 as a prize, and all participants were invited to a reception at the Riigikogu.

Foreign Policy, Preservation of Common Memory and Global Cooperation

The Foreign Policy Committee organized a security policy conference “Security and Defence in the Baltic Sea Region” on 14.05.2024 at the Estonian Embassy in Helsinki. The event was remotely led by Reet Marten Sehr (Canada) and Sirle Sööt (Sweden) and on-site by EOVS in cooperation with the

Estonian Embassy. Special thanks go to Ambassador Sven Sakkov, who chaired the first panel on NATO's role in the security of the Baltic Sea region, and to Marcus Kolga for chairing the second panel on Citizens' Readiness and Disinformation. The conference can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/LS3vbfFhQsl>.

The most important events of 2025 were the national congress "Global Estonianness and Common Memory" (July 2) and Network Day (July 1) in Tallinn, which were held as part of the 13th World Estonian Days ESTO. The national congress was organized by the Foreign Policy Committee under the leadership of Maia Linaski (USA). The organization of the Network Day was led by Reet Marten Sehr in close cooperation with the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The discussions contributed to the preparation of the Global Estonian Agenda 2026 - 2029. The National Congress can be followed on the ÜEKN website <https://uekn.ee/uekn-rahvuskongress-uleilmne-eestlus-ja-uhismalu/> and the Network Day on the ESTO website <https://estofestival.com/uleilmsete-eestlaste-vorgustike-paev-vaata-otseulekannet/>

In addition to organizing events, the ÜEKN contributed to many cultural, educational and community projects through grants, including the preparations for ESTO 2025. Investment monitoring continued, the procedure for handling grant applications was updated, and work was done to update the ÜEKN Rules of Procedure. It is hoped that the updated basic documents will be adopted at the next plenary session on 10-11.04.2026 in Tallinn.

Looking to the future

The Estonian Central Council is open to new members and cooperation proposals that would strengthen the network of central Estonian organizations and the connection with the Estonian state. The focus continues to be on the security of the Baltic Sea region and citizen diplomacy in protecting Estonian interests in the world.

Sirle Sööt

Chairperson

World Estonian Central Council

4.2.2. Global Estonian - Report 2025

(English version) Prepared for AESL by Johanna Rivers, 11.12.2025.

Introduction & Context

One in five Estonians lives outside Estonia—nearly 200,000 people, forming a community larger than many countries. GlobalEstonian.com supports this network by bringing together news, learning opportunities, events, and practical guidance. Interest in Estonia remains high: almost 80% of Estonians abroad follow Estonian news monthly, and more than 6000 people return each year. The portal reaches almost 4000 monthly users, with thousands more through social media. It is managed by the Integration Foundation in cooperation with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Culture, and Education.

GlobalEstonian.com Development

In 2025, GlobalEstonian.com continued to evolve, adding new sections such as an [FAQ](#) and a page introducing the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs' internship programme](#), as well as expanding the country directory with a new page for [Switzerland](#).

Technical improvements also focused on usability and clarity, including simplified [events submissions](#), [event search](#), and updates to the [Estonian language directory](#) in collaboration with Eesti Keele Instituut.

The [Expert Answers \(Ekspert Vastab!\)](#) section continued to grow, with experts responding to community questions on topics from children's literature to inheritance matters, published either in the section or added to the FAQ.

Another core part of our work is developing **the content ecosystem**. GlobalEstonian.com continues to function as a living archive of global Estonian life, combining in-house stories and interviews, curated coverage from Estonian media, and contributions from Estonians worldwide. Highlights included cultural features, community success stories, youth initiatives, and snapshots of Estonians participating in festivals, sports, arts, and heritage events. Among the most-read stories were pieces on [Eesti raamatu aasta](#), [diaspora journalism](#), [Canada's International Estonian Centre KESKUS](#), [Estonia's 2024 name statistics](#), and updates for the [Song and Dance Festival](#) and [ESTO 2025](#).

The portal's [monthly newsletter](#) highlights the most important updates, opportunities, and events across continents. On social media, GlobalEstonian.com maintained a consistent rhythm of 9–11 [Facebook](#) posts each month, sharing community stories, global celebrations, and major institutional announcements.

Events & Community Engagement

This year's [Kohtume!](#) series brought together around 40 participants from at least 14 countries, with 75 registered overall. The three free events focused on community building, Estonian literature, and practical skills such as project writing—each receiving warm and encouraging feedback.

For diaspora media members, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' regular virtual meetings provided a space to exchange knowledge and experiences. We also supported their [biannual Virtual Forums](#), which continue to explore topics relevant to Estonians abroad.

We strengthened partnerships supporting Estonian culture and language abroad (like with [VÄLEK/ Eesti Keele Instituut](#)), global networks (like [The Lydia](#) - Global Estonians Women’s Network and [the Global Estonian Youth Network](#)), and diaspora media. A November marketing campaign engaged Estonian influencers, developed new visuals, and expanded reach.

The team participated in key activities including Network Day in Tallinn (and other ESTO 2025 events), Martin Markkinat in Helsinki, the [Eesti Kultuuriseltside Ühendus](#) summer school in Sillamäe, and a thank-you celebration for international cultural leaders during the Song and Dance Festival. Highlights also included celebrating Germany’s *Eesti Rada* 80th anniversary in Hamburg and the progress of Australia’s HEIA virtually.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, GlobalEstonian.com will continue strengthening its role as an open platform for the global community. We aim to expand guidance materials, welcome more community contributions, and further develop tools that support engagement—whether through new country pages, updated resources, or fresh opportunities for collaboration.

The portal is built for everyone: communities can share events, request their own subpages, highlight achievements, and help shape the global Estonian information space. We welcome ideas, stories, and feedback from all who wish to contribute.

Share your story, your “Estonian bite”... what inspired you most this year?

www.globalestonian.com

info@globalestonian.com

GLOBAL ESTONIAN meeting in Tallinn 7th August 2025

Siri Rivers

1. Ülevaade eesti organisatsioonidest Austraalias (AESL)	1. Overview of Estonian organizations in Australia (AESL)
2. Kokkuvõidmise meetodid ja perspektiivid – AESL, Media Project HEIA, Global Estonian -meedia ja kontaktid	2. Methods and perspectives of saving – AESL, Media Project HEIA, Global Estonian -media and contacts
3. Ühtekuuluvuse loomise aspektid	3. Aspects of creating cohesion
4. Identiteet välismaal	4. Identity abroad
5. Formaalne meedia mis eksisteerib. Mis aspekte arendada.	5. Formal media that exists. What aspects to develop.
Kommentaari/ideed edasi arendamiseks –	Comments/ideas for further development –
Lisaks uudistele sisulise kontendi loomine, mis loob hingelist ühendust, väärtusi,	In addition to news, creating meaningful content that creates a spiritual

äratab huvi lugejas nii et ootab järgnevat juttu.	connection, values, arouses interest in the reader so that they wait for the next story.
Millel on perspektiiv areneda ja laieneda maailma, mis äratab tahet ja huvi olla eestlane?	What has the perspective to develop and expand into the world, that arouses the will and interest to be Estonian?



Members of the GlobalEstonian.com team enjoying a meeting-lunch. Left to right: Marika Sulg, Johanna Rivers, Kaire Cocker, Tarmo Saks (Dec 2025)



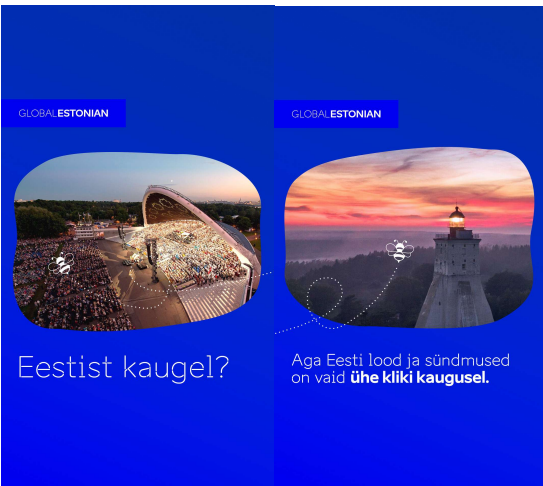
ESTO 2025 Network Day (July 2025)



Summer language and culture youth camp (Aug 2025)



Letters of appreciation to choir and dance leaders of international ensembles at the Song and Dance Celebration from Minister of Culture Heidi Purga. (Aug 2025)



GlobalEstonian.com sample advertisements (Nov 2025)



Virtual Forum Arutelu (Dec 2025) „Eesti noorte loovus ja ettevõtlikkus piiri taga“. Left to right: Liina Viies, Välisministeeriumi üleilmse eestluse ja kultuuridiplomaatia nõunik, Lasse Leminsky, Global Estonian praktikaprogrammis osaleja, konkurs „Parim Praktika 2025“ finalist, (Saksamaa). Kaisa Kasekamp, Ülemaailmne Eesti Noortevõrgustiku (ÜENV) president (Kanada), host Neeme Raud.

4.3. Vice-Chairperson's Report 2025

By Sirje Rivers

1. Organised event at Adelaide Eesti Päevad – MÖTTETALGUD – open mic event Where To, Estonians in Australia? December 2024. (see pages***)
2. Coordinated theatre to come from Eesti – Play TÕLL – to 4 cities in Australia. February 2025.
3. Wrote articles about AESL 2025 (History of - language, eesti päevad, sõrve camp, archive, media). Page set up by HEIA – aesi.eesti.org.au . Page covers – AESL; News; Support Areas; AGMs; Donations; Contact. About; Board; Constitution; Awards; Annual Booklets. Big thank you to HEIA for ongoing media work and improvement in Australia.
4. Meeting with Integratsioon/Global Estonian in Tallinn – August 2025.
5. Published a note about each AESL Board meeting, at AESL facebook space.
6. Other publications – AESL UNITES; Estonianism in Australia.

Attached –

1. Poster - Möttetalgud event
2. Posters - Play TÕLL
3. Photos AESL page before and now set up by HEIA
4. Global Estonian meeting
5. AESL Unites 2025
6. Estonianism in Australia 2025



KURESSAARETEATER

Autor **ANDRUS KIVIRÄHK**

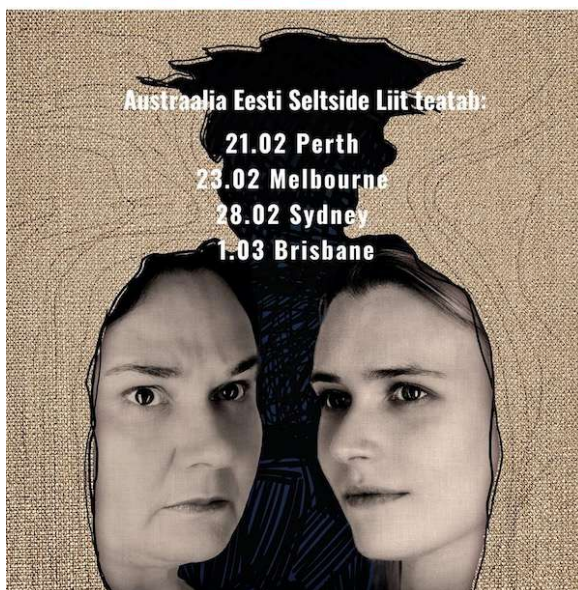
Lavastaja **AARE TOIKKA**

Kunstnik **LIINA UNT**

Osades **PIRET RAUK,**

LOVIISE KAPPER

TÖLL



KURESSAARETEATER

Autor **ANDRUS KIVIRÄHK**

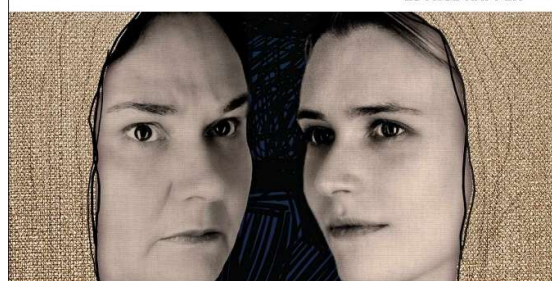
Lavastaja **AARE TOIKKA**

Kunstnik **LIINA UNT**

Osades **PIRET RAUK,**

LOVIISE KAPPER

TÖLL



AESL esitleb - KURESSAARE TEATER näidend Eestist

PERTH / Reede 21.2.2025 kell 6pm
 Canning town hall, 1309-1325 Albany HWY
 Cannington Western Australia 6107
 Event description – näidend TÖLL
 Purchase ticket - \$40 - Trybooking
 Contact Ane – 0424 262 365

SYDNEY / Reede 28.2.25 kell 7pm
 Eesti Maja, 141 Campbell Street Surry Hills NSW
 2010
 Event description – näidend TÖLL
 Purchase ticket \$35/\$40 – Trybooking
 Contact – Ane – 0431 662 873

MELBOURNE / Pühapäev 23.2.25 kell 3pm
 Eesti Maja, 49 Melville Road Brunswick West 3055
 Event description – Isesessus aastapäev, näidend
 TÖLL. 2.30pm baar avatud, suupisted peale
 näidendit
 Purchase ticket – Humanlix \$25/\$30 presale: \$40 door
 ticket.
 Contact – Ingrid – 0490 967 427

BRISBANE / Laupäev 1.3.25 kell 7pm
 Brisbane Latvian Hall, 24 Church Avenue
 Woolloongabba QLD 4102
 Vabariigi aastapäev algusega kell 5pm, tasuta ühes
 kohvi ja koojiga, järgneb näidend TÖLL
 Purchase ticket \$40 – Trybooking
 Kontakt Iiti – 0472 519 960

4.4. AESL Support Area: Estonian Language

THE REPORT OF THE AESL COORDINATOR OF ESTONIAN LANGUAGE STUDIES 2025

Iti Connor

eestikeel@eesti.org.au

Estonian playgroups with teacher-led language and culture programs across Australia continue to remain strong, active and popular. These playgroups bring together young families with Estonian heritage. The communication and cooperation between playgroup teachers has strengthened over the past year, resulting in more consistent program delivery and stronger peer support.

Experienced private language teachers continue to operate in various states, with most adult language groups meeting online. There has been an increasing number of enquiries about local language classes from adult learners, highlighting the need to find additional teachers who are available to take on beginner learners.

Alongside the long-established Sõrve camp, shorter language camps were held this year in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia. These ongoing camps provide valuable immersion opportunities for children and families.

Work is also progressing on a formal Estonian language curriculum (Foundation–Year 2 as the first phase), which has the potential to support the establishment of community language schools in different states. School-holiday programs remain a promising avenue for engaging more school-aged children in the future.

AESL extends its gratitude to all Estonian language teachers and group leaders in Australia whose commitment and ongoing efforts are truly invaluable.

Adelaide – Language Lessons

Anneli Lill

Anneli teaches an online language group in Adelaide every second Thursday. The group consists of four students, all working at the B1–B2 level. Anneli also teaches a Melbourne-based online group of three students. This class meets weekly on Wednesdays.

Atherton – Language Lessons

Eva Õim

Eva currently teaches one 18-year-old student from Brisbane. The lessons are conducted online.

Brisbane Estonian Playgroup

Iti Connor

The Brisbane Estonian Playgroup completed its 12th consecutive year of activity, returning to weekly Thursday sessions for children aged 0–5. A total of 43 sessions were held throughout the year, with an average of 8 children attending each week. Over the course of the year, 27 different children participated in the playgroup's regular programme.

Special events included a Christmas Party, a Mother's Day Concert-Picnic (36 children), and a Father's Day Pancake Party (12 children). The playgroup children performed songs, folk dances and played instruments at the Brisbane Estonian community Christmas party held at the Latvian House in December 2024, where 53 children took part.

Regular sessions were held in the community hall at Paddington Play Centre. Each two-hour session included age-appropriate language activities, themed crafts and songs, followed by outdoor playtime in the adjoining park. During school holidays, older children up to age 11 joined the sessions.

The playgroup was led by teacher Iiti Connor. Sigrid Vetevoed-Saar managed the Brisbane Estonian Children's Library.

Gold Coast Estonian School and Playgroup

Elina Peeduson

The Gold Coast Estonian Playgroup and Estonian School continued to operate actively in 2025, providing consistent Estonian language and cultural learning for babies, toddlers and school-aged children. At the beginning of the year, the previous combined group was reorganised into two age-based groups to better support children's development:

0–3-year-olds Playgroup, led by *Carmelina Kannelmäe* (substituting for Elina Peeduson)
4+ Estonian School, led by *Kättriin Vinkmann* (substituting for Elina Peeduson)

The Playgroup remains a playful, music-rich and age-appropriate environment where babies and toddlers are exposed to Estonian through songs, movement and free play. The Estonian School offers slightly more structured learning, using educational materials and themed activities, while keeping lessons creative, lively and child-centred to support natural language development.

Throughout the year, an average of 20–25 children participated in our activities:

- 10–13 children in the Playgroup
- 7–12 children in the Estonian School

Regular sessions were held twice a month on Sundays at the *Varsity Lakes Community Centre* — the Playgroup outdoors in the play area and the Estonian School indoors in the library spaces. As in previous years, the active participation of parents helped create a supportive and close-knit community.

In addition to regular sessions, we organised several larger community events, including a Christmas party, Easter celebration, Mother's Day and Father's Day, attended by up to 50 children.

Queensland Family Camp

The major highlight of the year was the first-ever Queensland Family Camp, attended by families from both the Gold Coast and Brisbane Estonian playgroups. Participants ranged in age from 0 to 16, with a total of 110 attendees, including 57 children.

The camp was organised primarily by *Elina Peeduson* and *Kättriin Vinkmann*, supported by more than ten dedicated parents. The camp was conducted entirely in Estonian, and

participant feedback was exceptionally positive — families expressed sincere gratitude and emphasised how valuable it is to have such opportunities while living far from Estonia.

Melbourne Estonian Children's Playgroup

Maarja Kamar

The Melbourne children's language playgroup met twice a month on Sunday mornings at the Melbourne Estonian House. Eight families attended regularly, with several others joining occasionally. On average, each session had 8–10 children, most of them between 4 and 6 years old.

During the first half of 2025, classes were taught by *Liis Hallikas*. In July, Liis relocated back to Estonia with her family, after which *Grete-Stina Witcombe* took over teaching the group.

Families contribute a quarterly participation fee. The group plans to continue in 2026, supported by the Estonian Language Institute and the Melbourne Estonian Society.

In addition to regular sessions, special Mother's Day and Father's Day events were held in cooperation with Melbourne Estonian Ühing, and a Christmas party is coming up.

Melbourne held its second Estonian Language camp for families at Anglesea YMCA Discovery Camp in November.

Perth Estonian Playgroup

Marin Hicks, EstWest

The Perth Estonian Playgroup has been active for over 10 years, meeting every Friday from 9:00–12:00 at the Lynwood Ferndale playgroup rooms. Sessions run year-round, including during school holidays. The playgroup was coordinated this year by Marin Hicks. Each meeting centres around play, singing, and a variety of informal Estonian-language activities and crafts.

This year, 16 families registered, and more than 20 children participated throughout the year, with an average of seven families attending weekly. The playgroup offers children a consistent and safe Estonian-speaking environment for play, social interaction, and language practice. Participation fees cover room hire, and parents bring snacks for themselves and their children. Birthdays and seasonal celebrations are also marked, including Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Family Camp

In October, EstWest organised a three-day family camp at Forrest Edge Recreation Camp, coordinated by Viktoria Saar. The camp welcomed 27 families and 47 children ranging from toddlers to teenagers. The weekend included age-appropriate activities for younger children, arts and crafts workshops, and sports games led by parents in Estonian, with individual translation provided when necessary. Activities run by the camp staff took place in English.

Language School

In October, an Estonian language school was launched, running over five weekend afternoons. Karoliina French taught 11 school-aged children with varying language

levels—some were fluent speakers, while others understood Estonian but lacked confidence speaking. At the same time, parents participated in a folk dance class led by Orvi Rõõmus-Kaasik. In the second half of the lesson, the children joined the adults.

Folk Dance Classes

Weekly adult folk dance classes also began in October, taught in Estonian by Orvi Rõõmus-Kaasik, with translation as needed. Children were welcome to join in, play nearby, or draw while parents danced.

Sydney – language lessons

Kirsti Horst

In 2025, a total of 14 adult learners aged 20–75 participated in the classes: 9 in the beginners' group and 5 in the advanced group.

Lessons were held in two groups: beginners met on Wednesday evenings, and the advanced group met on Monday evenings. Over the year, a total of 84 lessons were conducted, each 1.5 hours long. Most teaching takes place on Zoom, but occasional in-person meetings are held with Sydney-based students at the Estonian House.

In 2025, teacher Gyla Pesur from Estonia substituted for Kirsti for several months, taking over the lessons during that time.

Sydney – language lessons

Maris Saar

In 2025, there were 6 students in total, all adults aged 20–45. Classes were held once a week on Wednesday evenings at the Sydney Estonian House.

The lessons were based on the textbook “E nagu Eesti”, supplemented with “OK Jutukaardid”, “Keeleõppija mängupassid” and the Estonian conversation book “Mustmiljon küsimust”.

At present, the group has 4 remaining learners – three of them joined in recent months, and one has been studying since 2021.

Sydney Mudilasring

Elen Ellervee

The Sydney Mudilasring meets regularly at the Sydney Estonian House. A more detailed overview of the group's activities can be found in the annual report of the Estonian Society of Sydney.

4.5. AESL Support Area: Media

Estonian Media in Australia



HEIA has replaced eesti.org.au (noting we are on the same URL) and estonia.org.au is now defunct.

- HEIA launched the middle of 2025 and shifted from the AEMP (Australia Estonia Media Project) to ongoing operation of HEIA with a consolidated Steering Committee.
- HEIA has received excellent engagement and feedback from the community
- HEIA will look to improve website functionality (e.g. implement a calendar) and further explore an improved social media presence as resources allow
- HEIA is actively broadening our pool of content providers, both paid (nominal) and volunteer.
- The coming year is focussed on bedding down the processes behind the scenes and incremental improvements to the main website.

4.6. AESL Support Area: Estonian Archives in Australia



Registered Charity

ABN 36455306301

Address: 141 Campbell St Surry Hills NSW 2010, Australia

Email: archives.eesti.org.au | Web: archives@eesti.org.au |

LinkedIn: [estonianArchivesInAustralia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/estonianArchivesInAustralia) |

Instagram: [@estonianArchivesInAustralia](https://www.instagram.com/estonianArchivesInAustralia) | Facebook: [@estonianArchivesInAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/estonianArchivesInAustralia)

4.6.1. Estonian Archives in Australia Archivist's Report 2024-5

PRIMARY CONTACT: Dr Terry Kass - Archivist (*Arhivaar*)

Dr Terry Kass was formally appointed by the Council of Australian Societies in Australia (AESL) on 26 January 2024 as the honorary archivist succeeding Maie Barrow. A process of familiarising himself with the collection continues.

Exhibitions prepared during the year include the photographic exhibition 'The Great Escape 1944', commemorating the 80th anniversary of the exodus of Estonians ahead of the Soviet Russian occupation of Estonia. It was followed by a display of comparative photographs 'Then and Now' focusing on the area around Estonian House, showing photographs of streets and buildings at an earlier date and a contemporary photograph demonstrating how the place has remained unaltered or has changed. The next exhibition focused on Estonians and Estonian organisations in Adelaide.

After receiving a significant deposit of the records of the Estonian sub-branch of the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL), they were sorted and accessioned. A project listing the contents of the DP (Displaced Persons) boxes, which number nearly 30 archive boxes has been completed. A process of converting the data into an Excel spreadsheet will begin shortly. Sorting and arrangement of the Council of the Estonian Societies in Australia records continues. A backlog of personal records which had been deposited with the archive is being sorted and accessioned progressively.

Enquiries to the archive generally arrive by email. Most relate to matters of family history. Even when the archive does not hold any personal papers, it is often able to assist enquirers by directing

them either to state or national libraries or archives. Dr Terry Kass' experience as a professional historian has ensured that most people are provided with relevant information about sources in those repositories. In some cases, inquiries are forwarded to suitable knowledgeable individuals in other states, often drawing on the knowledge of the other volunteers in the archive.

As well as inquiries regarding family history, academic researchers also contact the archive. A project researching European trained émigré lawyers by the University of Technology Sydney has also been given ongoing assistance. The archive was contacted by the Orange Regional Museum regarding records, that the archive holds of Evan Antonie Lumme. He was an Estonian who arrived in the late nineteenth century who worked as a photographer. Whilst most of his unique images have been deposited with the National Library of Australia in Canberra, the Estonian Archive holds significant personal records of the man and his family. Discussions about the loan of some of these materials is continuing.

Some visitors come personally, mostly regarding matters of family history. On 7 July 2024, a group of high school students from Estonia competing in a robotics competition in Sydney toured the archive. Representatives from the Estonian parliament who were in Sydney for a space exhibition and conference visited the archive on Thursday, 2 October. On Friday, 31 October, a larger group of parliamentarians from Estonia were given a tour of the archive.

The archive would be useless and inaccessible without the efforts of the volunteers. I wish to acknowledge the professional advice and assistance of Maie Barrow, who continues in the archive as a volunteer. A solid core of volunteers keeps the archive functioning assisting enquirers whenever the Archivist is unavailable. Otherwise, they devote their time to sorting, packing, arranging and cataloguing the resources of the archive. I wish to gratefully acknowledge the help and good cheer of Eili Annuk, Ivo Kauniste and Taimi Nurm. Other volunteers are welcome. Kristi Barrow manages and updates the archive website and online data.

The opening times of the archive were altered to suit the availability of the new archivist. The archive is now open on Thursdays from 10 am to 3 pm.

The development of the archive and the role of Maie Barrow in steering and managing the archive from the 1990s to the 2020s is the subject of an online presentation prepared by Priit Laineste from Estonia. It can be viewed on <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BPDZNXxWeaEHKS81BkO8oMck-MtbEkJ7/view?ts=690d0381>.

Dr Terry Kass

Honorary Archivist

4.6.2. Estonian Archives Council Report 2025

The Estonian Archives in Australia maintains the records and artefacts of the Estonian community in Australia. Advice is also provided to other ethnic communities about establishing archives. In the past year, the Archives Council held 3 meetings. Office holders were:

Chairman (Esimees): Andra Krumins

Vice-Chairman (Abiesimees): Vacant

Secretary (Sekretär): Ivo Kauniste

Treasurer (Laekur): Taimi Nurm

Public Officer: Taimi Nurm

Members (Liikmed): Aale Kask-Ong, Maie Barrow, Virge Nielson

The Archives Council now conducts an Annual General Meeting to elect council members. The Archives Council held its annual general meeting on 7 November 2025. Siiri Iismaa was elected as a new member of the council. Aale Kask-Ong has reached the end of her term of office. The Council recommends her re-appointment. Dr Terry Kass resigned from his position as chairman of the Archives Council and has taken up the position of honorary archivist. In order to allow Dr Terry Kass to fill the position of honorary archivist, the opening day was moved to Thursday after consultation with the volunteers.

I would like to thank the members of the Archives Council who have served in the past year. I would particularly like to thank the volunteers who work in the Archives. Archive staff devote considerable time providing expert advice and assistance to researchers who visit in person as well as responding to many queries by mail and internet from Australia and overseas. The Archivist's Report provides further details of the Archive's activities. The archive can be contacted on archives@eesti.org.au.

Andra Krumins

Chairman (Esimees) 2025

4.6.3. Archives Council Financial Reports

Work programme for 2025/2026

1. Continue arranging, sorting and packing of archival collection
2. Complete database catalogue of film and albums
3. Continue digitalising oral history
4. Commence digitalising Estonian Festival VHSs'
5. Complete book catalogue
6. Continue indexing of organisations' archives on database
7. Continue database of displaced Persons Camp Material
8. Update archive webpage and Facebook

4.7. AESL Support Area: Estonian Children's Camps in Australia

The Sõrve camp in NSW has now been conducted annually for over 71 years. This is usually held at Point Wollstonecraft in NSW, as a one week live-in camp. (see page 117 for their 2025 report).

In recent years we have also seen new camps being run in the Gold Coast, Victoria, and Perth.

This speaks loads for the younger generations – the children who attend, but moreso the parents who organise and run these camps.

The next challenges will be to continue and build on these.

4.8. AESL Support Area: Eesti Päevad Festivals in Australia

It was over a hundred years ago that Estonians in Australia started to organise their social life. First it was just a desire for Estonians to get together (in late 1800s), then came purpose – let's get together and sing Estonian songs (in early 1900s), dance Estonian folk dances, teach children our language –

4.8.1. Eesti Päevad XXIX – Adelaide 2024

5.



XXIX EESTI PÄEVAD AUSTRALIAS

(29th Estonian Festival in Australia)

Adelaide 27th – 31st December 2024

200 Jeffcott St, North Adelaide, SA, 5006

The 29th Eesti Päevad in Australia (EP2024) was held in Adelaide over 5 days from 27-31 December 2024. The biennial event is sponsored by the Austraalia Eesti Seltside Liit (AESL - Council of Estonian Societies in Australia). The programme was well received and attended and a copy of the programme is included below for information. A five-day festival takes a great deal of organising effort by many volunteers. The committee of about 20 people started work in February 2023 with 18 further meetings held to prepare the programme, budget and bookings for the festival. A special thanks is given to Relika Williams living in Estonia who greatly assisted with finding and coordinating Estonian artists to attend the festival. A summary of each day's festival events is provided in the following paragraphs, with extracts from an article written after the festival by Esmee Okamoto.

PROGRAMME

Day 1 – ADELAIDE HILLS FARM DAY

Friday 27 Dec 2024 12:00 – 9:00pm

11:00am-12:00	Bus to Adelaide Hills	EM
12:30-2:00pm	BBQ Lunch	AH
2:00-3:00pm	Bus to Adelaide Hills	EM
2:00-2:30pm	Opening Ceremony	AH
3:00-4:00pm	Sports	AH
4:00-6:00pm	Performances	AH
6:00-7:00pm	BBQ Dinner	AH
7:00-8:00pm	Bus to Eesti Maja	AH
7:00-8:00pm	Hot Mic Discussion Forum	AH
7:00-8:30pm	Music	AH
9:00-10:00pm	Bus to Eesti Maja	AH

Day 2 – EXPLORE ADELAIDE DAY

Saturday 28 Dec 2024

9:00am-6:00pm	Option 1 - Winery Bus Tour	
10:30am-3:30pm	Option 2 - Walking Tour	
10:30-11:30am	Botanic Garden Tour	BG
11:30am-1:00pm	Lunch Break	
1:00-1:30pm	Museum Exhibition Open	MM
1:30-3:30pm	Self-guided North Tce Tour	
1:00-3:00pm	Option 3 - Youth Bowling	WTB
1:00-4:00pm	Arts & Craft Exhibit	EM
2:30-3:00pm	Arts & Craft Opening	EM
6:00-8:00pm	Literature/Poetry Reading	EM
8:00-11:00pm	Bar Night 1	EM

Day 3 – CONCERT DAY

Sunday 29 Dec 2024

7:45am-12:00pm	Golf	NAGC
8:30am-2:00pm	Folk Day Rehearsal	EM
1:00-3:00pm	Folk Rehearsal Lunch	EM
1:00-4:00pm	Arts & Craft Exhibit	EM
5:30-7:00pm	Ehin & Sepp Concert	EM
7:00-8:30pm	Dinner Break	EM
8:30-9:30pm	Villem & Heleza Concert	EM
9:30-11:00pm	Bar Night 2	EM

Day 4 – FOLK DAY

Monday 30 Dec 2024

10:00am-1:00pm	Market Stalls	EM
11:00am-2:00pm	Arts & Craft Exhibit	EM
2:00-5:30pm	Folk Concert	EM
5:30-6:00pm	Closing Ceremony	EM
7:00-11:00pm	Bar Night 3	EM

Day 5 – NEW YEAR'S EVE

Tuesday 31 Dec 2024

10:00am-2:00pm	AESL AGM	AI
7:00pm-01:00am	New Year's Eve Ball	EM

EM – Eesti Maja – 200 Jeffcott St, North Adelaide
 AH – Adelaide Hills Farm - 288 Oakwood Rd, Oakbank (Cnr Peacock Rd Sth).
 BG – Botanic Gardens – North Terrace, Adelaide (Eastern End cnr East Tce)
 MM – Migration Museum – 82 Kintore Ave, Adelaide
 NAGC – North Adelaide Golf Course, Strangways Tce, North Adelaide
 AI – Adelaide Inn – 160 O'Connell St, North Adelaide
 WTB – Woodville Timezone Bowling – 819 Port Road, Woodville

Day 1 was a family day held at an Adelaide Hills farm and vineyard, with a large marquee set up on a lawned area next to large shady trees. The relaxed day was a chance for families & friends to gather in the shade under the enormous branches of the beautiful green trees, enjoy BBQ delights, and some glasses of the local wine. Most kids headed straight for the slide and pool activities, while the coffee van kept the adults energised throughout the day. At the Eesti Päevad opening ceremony Dr Peter Salu, the chairman of the EP2024 committee, welcomed everyone to the festival and both Dr Juho Looever, President of the AESL, and His Excellency Mr Jaan Reinhold, Estonian Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand, wished all attendees an enjoyable festival.

The remainder of the day was filled with live folk music from “Kobin ja Kolin”, recently reformed just for us and featuring many of our talented community! Young & old enjoyed dancing to their tunes on the lawns, and much laughter was had. We were also treated to a short performance by Kristiina Ehin & Silver Sepp... giving us a taste of the fun shows and beautiful thought-provoking poetry to come.

Day 2 allowed people to explore Adelaide during the day and then gather at Estonian house in the evening for a meal and social evening. Some people went on an organised winery tour to the Clare valley, the youth went ten-pin bowling, others went on a guided tour of the botanic gardens where there was an exhibition of glass sculptures scattered among the trees, or just wandered along North Terrace in the city to the museums, art gallery and world-class Mortlock library. Day 2 also saw the opening of the arts & crafts exhibition at Estonian Hall and the Estonian cultural exhibition at the South Australian Migration Museum, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Adelaide Estonian Society.

Day 3 consisted of Folk Day rehearsals in the morning with all the choirs and folk dancers from Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney, followed by a lunch of pizzas before people went off to prepare for the evening of Estonian performer concerts.

The evening brought an extraordinary concert by Kristiina Ehin & Silver Sepp, whose poetic and out of the box performance captivated all. Kristiina's ability to convey emotions and imagery was a joy to behold.... and Silver's ability to create music with the most eclectic pieces of farm off-cuts, water bottles and water is inspiring. Later that night Villemdrille and Heleza then took the stage, lighting up the night with chart-topping rap and pop hits that had everyone on their feet, dancing and singing along! I think they had as much fun as we did!

Day 4 started with a Baltic Market, which was a feast for the senses, showcasing handmade creations that blended tradition with contemporary artistry. From timber crafts and jewellery to herbal teas and literary works, the market celebrated the skill and creativity of our community.

This was followed by the highlight of Eesti Päevad celebrations for many - Folk dancing and choir performances brought joy and nostalgia, as we reflected on the enduring strength of Estonian culture. It was a truly magical celebration of the Estonian traditions we hold so dear. Dressed in our finest Estonian folk costumes or team outfits, we danced, sang, and shared the cultural treasures passed down through generations. The smiles on everyone's faces... plus the energy and enthusiasm brought to each performance has us all convinced we'll have successful events for years to come. Following the folk concert people had a chance to relax and have a meal and some Estonian beers at another social evening.

Day 5 was a chance to sleep-in and relax before the New Year's Eve ball. The AESL members gathered for their Annual General Meeting and a working lunch of sandwiches, fruit, cakes and coffee. The celebrations culminated with a New Year's Eve Ball and Dinner, where we welcomed 2025 together with much dancing to great tunes from a live band. The warmth of shared stories, laughter, and gratitude filled the air, a perfect ending to an unforgettable festival.

EP2024 FINANCIAL REPORT

FESTI PÄEVAD ADELAIDE 2024



Day 1 – Kobin ja Kolin Folk Band



Day 1 – Folk Dancing



Day 2 – Botanic Gardens Walk



Day 3 - Silver Sepp & Kristiina Ehin Concert



Day 3 – Villemdrillem & Heleza Concert



Day 4 – Folk Concert Choirs



Day 4 – Folk Concert Dancers



Day 5 – New Year's Eve Ball

4.8.2 Eesti Päevad XXX – Sydney 2027

At the conclusion of the EP XXIX in Adelaide, it was announced that the next Eesti Päevad would be held in Sydney in April 2027.

Ms Ave Nukki (AN) had been appointed as Event Organiser (Project Manager) for this event. Elen Ellervee accepted the Eesti Päevad flag on behalf of Ave.

As at 9th January 2026:

- No agreement has yet been signed between Ave Nukki (for the organising committee) and AESL
- The AESL Board has not been informed of the Organising Committee members
- The AESL Board had not been provided with any information on plans or proposals for the event, budgets, etc prior to the information below being sent to some members of the AESL Board IN January 2026.

=====



Eesti Päevad Sydney 2027

Prepared by: Head of Eesti Päevad Sydney 2027

Overview

Since commencing formal preparations for **Eesti Päevad Sydney 2027**, substantial progress has been made in shaping the vision, structure, and momentum of the festival. The project has now moved decisively from concept into coordinated planning, supported by strong international interest and active local collaboration.

Key Meetings and Planning

- 27 official meetings have been held with:
 - Cultural organisations
 - Community groups
 - Key individuals locally and internationally
- In addition, 5 full days of intensive brainstorming and strategic planning have taken place.
- A full morning of professional filming has been completed to support future promotion and documentation.

These discussions have resulted in clarity around direction, scope, and feasibility, and the organising team is now genuinely coming together around a strong and exciting plan.

Artistic Participation – Confirmed

We are pleased to confirm strong early international and artistic commitment:

- 8 dance groups from Europe confirmed, including a dedicated coordinator for all dancers
- 3 choirs confirmed from Europe
- 2 individual singers confirmed from Estonia
- 1 band confirmed
- Catering team confirmed, with participants from Estonia and across Australia
- Photographer confirmed from Estonia

This level of confirmed artistic and production participation at this stage demonstrates strong confidence in the festival and supports the delivery of a high-quality, professional, and internationally relevant event.

Venues, Accommodation, and Infrastructure

- Productive talks are currently underway with multiple venues in Sydney.
- Hotel and accommodation discussions are in progress to support visiting performers, staff, and guests.
- The official festival website is prepared and ready, awaiting final approval to begin publicly announcing confirmed performers and program elements.

Funding and Support

- Grant applications have been submitted, with further applications and written materials currently in development.
- Letters of support have been received from:
 - The Honorary Consul
 - The Estonian Embassy

These endorsements significantly strengthen both the credibility and funding prospects of Eesti Päevad Sydney 2027.

Community and Organisational Matters

Support from AESL to date, particularly in relation to financial and administrative matters, has been limited. Given the national significance of Eesti Päevad in Sydney 2027, a loan-based arrangement is not considered an appropriate mechanism for supporting the festival's core operations.

To ensure clarity and alignment moving forward, we respectfully request guidance from AESL members during AGM regarding their position on financial support for the festival. Specifically, we seek to understand and vote:

- Whether AESL members believe this national cultural event should receive direct financial support from AESL?
- If so, what level of contribution members consider appropriate?

This direction will enable the organising team to plan responsibly and to structure funding in a way that reflects the expectations of the broader community.

Should AESL members determine that financial support is not appropriate, the organising team will proceed to secure alternative funding sources. In that scenario, AESL would not be the primary supporter of the festival, and reporting obligations would be adjusted accordingly to reflect that role.

Conclusion

Eesti Päevad Sydney 2027 is progressing in a strong, structured, and sustainable manner. The level of confirmed international participation, extensive planning work, and institutional support demonstrates that this festival is not only viable but already taking shape as something exceptional.

The immediate focus is on:

- Finalising venues
- Advancing funding outcomes
- Launching public announcements and performer confirmations
- Continuing to build a bold, modern, and inclusive Estonian cultural festival in Sydney

The commitment, energy, and vision behind this project remain strong, and the coming months will be critical in transforming this momentum into a fully realised and memorable festival.

Ave Nukki

9.01.2026

4.9 Communications and Social Media Coordinator report

No report provided.



5. AESL 2025 FINANCIAL REPORTS

5.1. Profit and Loss Statement 2025

5.2. Profit and Loss Comparison Report 2025 & 2024

5.3. Balance Sheet 2025-

5.4. Annual Statement 2025

Annual statement



Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012

1. This statement is for the association financial year ending

31/10/2024

2. Details of the association

Name of association	COUNCIL OF ESTONIAN SOCIETIES IN AUSTRALIA (AUSTRALIA EESTI SELTSIDE LIIT = AESL) INCORPORATED
Association registration number	A0113685Q

3. Date of the annual general meeting

31/12/2024

4. Number of association members at the end of the association financial year?

11

The association must have at least five members to be eligible to remain incorporated. You will need to seek new members for the association or you may apply for voluntary cancellation of the association's registration. For more information visit our [Incorporated association membership page](#).

5. Financial information of association

Gross value of revenue (income)	\$13,856.33
Gross value of expenditure	\$14,095.83
Gross value of assets	\$178,421.12
Gross value of liabilities	\$140.00
Mortgages, charges, securities	\$0.00

6. Was the association a trustee of a trust during the annual statement financial year?

No

7. Were any resolutions passed at the annual general meeting concerning the financial statements?

No

8. Submitted by

Name:	MAIE SIMSON
Date annual statement submitted	3/06/2025

For information on running an incorporated association, including ongoing obligations, visit our website at consumer.vic.gov.au/associations.

Tax Invoice Receipt

03/06/2025

MAIE SIMSON

Receipt Number: INVIA00000461

Transaction Details

01/11/2023 to 31/10/2024 Annual Statement - COUNCIL OF ESTONIAN SOCIETIES IN AUSTRALIA (AUSTRALIA EESTI SELTSIDE LIIT = AESL) INCORPORATED - A0113685Q			
Transaction Number - TRX00592981			
Item Name	Unit Price	Qty	Fee Amount
IA Annual Statement - Tier 1	\$49.00	1.00	\$49.00
	Sub Total		\$49.00
	Tax (GST)		\$0.00
	Total Amount		\$49.00

Payments Received

Payment Method	Payment Date	Payment Receipt	Payment Amount
BPAY	04/06/2025	RCTIA00000473	\$49.00

Balance Owing **\$0.00**

5.5. Budget 2026

6. AESL 2025 MEMBER REPORTS

See Section 3, starting page 64, for these.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

- 7.1. Proposed motions for the AESL AGM = NIL

8. ELECTIONS

These are based on nominations as received by the due date of 9th January 2026.

8.1. Ratification of Nominees from States

8.1.1. New South Wales – NIL

8.1.2. Queensland – Elina Peeduson

8.2. Election of one Independent Member

Juho Looveer – nominated by ECFA

8.3. Appointment of Estonian Language Study Coordinator

Iti Connor – nominated by AESL Board

8.4. Ratification of Chair and Board of Estonian Archives in Australia

Chairman (Esimees): Virge Nielson

Vice-Chairman (Abiesimees): Vacant

Secretary (Sekretär): Ivo Kauniste

Treasurer (Laekur): Taimi Nurm

Public Officer: Taimi Nurm

Members (Liikmed): Aale Kask-Ong, Maie Barrow, Siiri Iismaa

9. END OF MEETING

SINGING OF ESTONIAN ANTHEM

10. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

SECTION 2 – MINUTES OF 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING



AUSTRALIA EESTI SELTSIDE LIIT
COUNCIL OF ESTONIAN SOCIETIES IN AUSTRALIA Inc.
ABN 34 579 619 788

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF AESL MEMBER ORGANISATIONS**

Tuesday 31 December 2024

10:00 AM (AEST)

Face-to-face meeting

at Adelaide Inn, O' Connell Street North Adelaide

DRAFT MINUTES

1. OPENING OF MEETING: 10:20 am

1.1. Acknowledgement of country - read out by JL

Mindful of the consequences of past invasions and occupations of Estonia by foreign forces: we begin this meeting by acknowledging the traditional owners & custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

1.2. One minute's silence for those departed during the year

1.3. Minutes to be taken by: Esmée Okamoto

2. ROLL CALL

2.1. ATTENDEES - IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM

<i>Member</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>N Members</i>	<i>N Votes</i>	<i>attending</i>	<i>Mandate received</i>
Adelaide Estonian Society Inc	Martin Kurvits Richard Costi	106	4	In Person	Y
Brisbane Estonian Society Inc	Harry Ling Iti Connor	110	4	In Person Apology	
Melbourne Estonian Society	Bernadette Pilli Ingrid Provan Kristel Alla	165	3 2 0	In Person In Person Apology	Y
Estonian Society of Sydney	Ave Nukki Peeter Muttik	108	4	In Person Apology	Y
Estonian Association of Tasmania		0	0	Zoom	
Estonian-Australian Association of the Northern Territory (EAANT)				apology	
Wollongong Estonian Society (WES)				apology	

West Australia	Anu Läänesaar	20	0 (not yet member)	In person	
Sydney Eesti Seltsi Kunsti-, Käsitöö Ja Etnograafia Ring	Ingrid Renno	22	0	Apology	Y
(Handicraft group)	Maie Simson		2	In Person	Y
	Marissa Pikkat		0	Apology	Y
Estonian Cultural Foundation In Australia Ltd	Juho Looveer	61	3	In Person	Y
Sydney Estonian Parents' And Friends' Association - Sõrve Sõbrad	Sulev Kalamäe	124	4	In Person	Y
	Barbara Howard		0	Apology	Y
Virmalised Sydney Estonian Folk Dancers	Taimi Maidla	29	2	In Person	Y
AESL President	Juho Looveer	-	0	In Person	--
AESL Board - Vice-President	Sirje Jõgi-Rivers	-	0	In Person	--
AESL Board - Treasurer	Ingrid Provan	-	0	In Person	--
AESL Secretary	Iti Connor	-		Apology	
AESL Minutes Secretary	Esmee Okamoto	-	0	In Person	
AESL Public Officer	Maie Simson		0	In Person	
Independent Board Member	Siiri Iisma		0	In Person	--
AESL Archives	Maie Barrow	-	0	Apology	--
AESL Languages Co-Ordinator	Iti Connor	-	0	Apology	--
		Total =	30	19	

2.2. APOLOGIES & GREETINGS

- Welcome to all in attendance from AESL President, Juho Looveer
- APOLOGY - Iti Connor, Brisbane Estonian Society, per table above
- Lunch break to be at midday

2.3. GREETINGS FROM THE EMBASSY

- Welcome from Estonian Ambassador to Australia – His Excellency Mr Jaan Reinhold – read aloud by JL

Dear Participants of the AESL Meeting,

On behalf of the Embassy of Estonia and myself, I extend warm greetings to all attendees of the AESL meeting. I deeply regret that I am unable to participate this time.

Since my mandate as Ambassador began on August 7, I have had the privilege of meeting members of the Estonian diaspora in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, and most recently in Adelaide. I have been greatly impressed by the activities of AESL and other Estonian organizations, and I wholeheartedly wish you continued success.

The Embassy is committed to supporting Estonian communities in Australia, as was also highlighted by the recent visit of the special representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the diaspora. As Ambassador, I am dedicated to fostering stronger relations between Estonia and Australia through government-level engagements and involving members of our diaspora in these efforts.

If AESL as an organization sees the need for deeper collaboration, I would be delighted to discuss this further. Please do not hesitate to reach out.

I wish you a productive meeting and an inspiring continuation of Estonian Festival in Adelaide. May the new year 2025 bring happiness, success, and vibrant connections within our community!

Warm regards,
Jaan Reinhold
Ambassador of Estonia to Australia

2.4. MANDATES

- As listed above

2.5. VOTING ENTITLEMENTS

Märkus - organisatsiooni häälte arv sõltub liikmete arvust

- 1 vote for being affiliated with less than 20 members;
- 2 votes if 20-59 members
- 3 votes if 60-99 members
- 4 votes if 100-149 members

- 5 votes if 150 members or more.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE 2024 AGM

- Held on Saturday 20 January 2024

Moved: **Siiri Iismaa**

Seconded: **Ave Nukki**

That the Minutes of the AESL AGM held on 20 January 2024 be accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

AGREED

4. AESL 2024 REPORTS - refer to booklet

**Reports were taken as having been read prior to the meeting
Some brief comments permitted**

4.1. AESL PERSONNEL 2024

4.1.1. **BOARD - Noted**

4.1.2. **4.1.2 ASSOCIATES, OTHER OFFICERS - Noted**

4.1.3. **4.1.3. AESL REPRESENTATION: - Noted**

4.2. CHAIRPERSON' S REPORT - read out by JL

P. 23 - 29 of the Annual Booklet

- including Estonian World Council (ÜEKN);
Global Estonian Cooperation Committee (ÜEK);
National Baltic Council Report
- Monthly Chats - do we continue?
- Future of AESL Members
- Awards to Kristi Barrow & Matti Kivivali acknowledged
- Parnu Memorial - Australians should be very proud of the money raised and contributed to this project

That the acknowledgement of each person/family who donated be listed on our AESL webpage on Eesti.org.au in Alphabetical order, not in order of donation made

AGREED

4.3. VICE-CHAIRPERSON' S REPORT - S J-R spoke to this report

- *P. 30-32 of the Annual Booklet*

Moved:Esmée Okamoto

Seconded: Ingrid Provan

4.4. AESL BOARD PUBLICATIONS - Noted

- *p. 33 - 52 of the Annual Booklet*

4.4.1. Independence Day Greeting 2024 = pages 33 -37, 38 - 42

4.4.2. *Chairperson's Greeting for 2024 Commemoration of the Mass Deportations of the Baltic Peoples p43 - 45, 46 - 48*

4.4.3. *Restoration of independence Greeting 2024 = p49 - 50, 51 - 52*

4.4.4. *AESL Support Area: Estonian Language p53*

4.4.5. *AESL Support Area: Media p54*

4.4.6. *AESL Support Area: Estonian Archives in Australia p57*

4.4.7. *AESL Support Area: Estonian Children's Camps in Australia p58*

4.4.8. *AESL Support Area: Eesti Päevad in Australia p61*

4.5. Estonian Language Coordinator Report 2024 p.63

4.5.1. *Professional Development Workshop 2024*

"Strengthening Estonian Playgroups and Language Learning Across Australia" p71

4.5.2. *„Eesti mängurühmade ja keelettep tugevdamine kogu Austraalias" p73*

- **A big thanks to Iti for her work within these two important areas**
 - **AGREED**

4.6. COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR REPORT

- *Nil provided*

4.7. ESTONIAN ARCHIVES IN AUSTRALIA - NOTED

- *Page 75 of the annual booklet*

4.7.1. ESTONIAN ARCHIVES REPORT p.75

- Consider integrating Sydney, Adelaide & Melbourne if one or more of the houses is sold
- Melbourne - Archival material to be placed in temporary following sale
- Adelaide recently cleaned out a lot of old material prior to EP2024 - there's a lack of volunteers to review/cull material of value
- Rent paid – in Sydney goes to COOP not SELTS (clarified as often there is a misconception)

4.7.2. ESTONIAN ARCHIVES COUNCIL REPORT p.75

- Chairman of the Archives now is Andra Krumins
- Andra Krumins has reached the end of her term on the Archives Board, and is nominated for re-appointment for 2 years.
- Virge Neilsen is also recommended to be appointed to the Archives Board
- Registration has been transferred from ACT to NSW - Taimi Nurm is the new Public Officer.

4.7.3. ARCHIVES COUNCIL FINANCIAL REPORTS p. 80

4.8. XXIX EESTI PÄEVAD 2024 ADELAIDE p.82

- Future proofing - need to share 'tips & tricks' for securing performers, venues, grants, etc - maintaining a budget to ensure we don't over-spend

4.9. DONATION DRIVES 2024 P.83

4.9.1. 1944 MASS FLIGHT MONUMENT IN PÄRNU 2024

- Very big effort from Australia – noted by those overseas
- This shows us that targeted donation drives do work – let's use this technique for future quarterly drives; for children's groups, teachers, dancers etc.

5. AESL 2024 FINANCIAL REPORTS

5.1. PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT 2024

- Ingrid Provan (Treasurer) acknowledged bequest of \$5,000 from Karin Kesa
- Ingrid Provan (Treasurer) advised:
 - Total equity is approx. \$1XX,000?
 - Eesti Päevad account has approximately \$60,000 in funds – EP2024 currently has approximately \$10,000 worth of funds
- Incoming funds: interest, memberships & bequeath
 - Our income includes some interest payments but otherwise our only income is membership fees. We need to remind people attending functions what AESL can do for its members
- Outgoing funds:
 - Parnu monument
 - expenses: \$239.50 – same as last year
 - Grant to support the Estonian teachers camp & workshop

Discussion points:

- Several states are now starting to organise their own camps. Can we afford to keep supporting Sõrve to the level we have?
 - How can we fund equitably per child?
 - Camp subsidies could be pro rata so many dollars per adult and so many dollars per child.
- We have limited income simply based on our membership
- Not everyone knows about our grants let's ensure to share our Grant information on our website for all to use and apply for include also additional grants from the local government and Estonian government. Let's update our financial calendar to include closing dates.

5.2. PROFIT AND LOSS COMPARISON REPORT 2023 & 2024

- Ingrid Provan (Treasurer) advised:
 - Term Deposits working well for interest
 -

5.3. BALANCE SHEET 2024

- Noted

5.4. ANNUAL STATEMENT 2024

- Noted

5.5. Budget 2025 p.90

- Motion to approve budget
 - Moved: Harry
 - Seconded: Sirje

6. AESL MEMBER ORGANISATIONS' REPORTS 2024

**Reports were taken as having been read prior to the meeting
Some brief comments were permitted**

6.1. ESTONIAN-AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

- Northern Territory have approximately 150 members. They are still paying membership fees but only have interest in local activities.

6.2. BRISBANE ESTONIAN SOCIETY INC

- Brisbane are also a small community but are working at being active even with their limited Volunteer base their Midsummer festival Yanni Bev was the biggest ever their Christmas party had at least 40 children plus almost all of their parents came along as well as Santa

6.3. ESTONIAN SOCIETY OF SYDNEY p.95

- Renovations to Sydney Eesti Maja are expected to be completed by March 2025, though there may be other work needed
- Advised by COOP that the Church Hall at Concorde has been donated to them

6.4. WOLLONGONG ESTONIAN SOCIETY (WES)

- Juho Looveer advised - he will maintain connection with them as their numbers are dwindling

6.5. MELBOURNE ESTONIAN SOCIETY

- Bernadette Pilli advised:
 - they are constantly applying for grants from the government and Estonia to support and encourage their local groups, dancing, kids etc
 - Melbourne have a lot of young new members helping drive the relocation and assessing what's needed for their generation looking towards the future.
 - They held their first 'mini camp' which was very successful. They considered this camp to be a feeder camp for Sorve.
 - A great suggestion was made - existing leaders from Sorve camp could go down and assist or at least provide suggestions for games and activities

6.6. ADELAIDE ESTONIAN SOCIETY

- Very active but admit few new Estonians – many new members are from fellow Baltic groups – hence joint Baltic concerts, Arts & Crafts markets, Concerts etc. – mutually beneficial to keep the communities alive

6.7. ESTONIAN SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- Western Australia no report received however they are very active and moving forward with many events planned. They've had some great ideas to encourage volunteers and for activities they two have had Midsummer festival and Christmas very much focused on young Estonian Australian families.

6.8. ESTONIAN HANDICRAFT ASSOCIATION

- Maie advised that the Handicraft have been very active with lots of interest in the folk costume Library
- they have also proactively assisted with costumes for Sorve camp and Virmalised and always participate in Christmas markets etc

6.9. ESTONIAN CULTURAL FOUNDATION IN AUSTRALIA LTD

- ECFA have approximately \$900,000 invested and earning interest
- Each year they hand out approximately \$50,000 in grants - they have given EP2024 \$10,000

6.10. SYDNEY ESTONIAN PARENTS’ AND FRIENDS’ ASSOCIATION - SÕRVE SÕBRAD

- Sulev advised Summer camp is at full capacity for 2025. It’s a successful model with lots of new interest from new Australian Estonian families.
- New idea being processed is a camp exchange program considering exchange with Canada, Estonia, New York etc

6.11. VIRMALISED SYDNEY ESTONIAN FOLK DANCERS

- Taimi advised that rehearsals for Tantsupidu are going so well they have been invited to learn a dance specifically reserved for the elite group of dancers

7. AUSTRALIAN ESTONIAN MEDIA PROJECT 2024; EESTI.ORG.AU P.141

- Work in progress – new project team assembled
- Kristi received great government recognition from Estonia for her incredible work with this project

8. OTHER BUSINESS P.145

8.1. PROPOSED MOTIONS FOR THE AESL AGM = NIL

8.2. Monthly Australian Estonian chat sessions - via zoom; 2nd Wednesday every month

- Started out well lots of good information shared however needs more promotion to attract other people often. It’s the same three or four people who are already members of AESL consistently attending.
- Do we forge ahead or cancel it? Discuss again at first meeting.

That the member reports for 2024 be accepted

Moved: Harry Ling

Seconded: Sulev Kalamäe

AGREED

(Lunch Break)

9. BOARD ELECTIONS

9.1. RATIFICATION OF NOMINEES FROM STATES p.145

9.1.1. SOUTH AUSTRALIA - INCUMBENT MARTIN KURVITS

Moved: Maie Simson

Seconded: Barbara Howard

That MARTIN KURVITS be ratified as the South Australian nominee

ELECTED

9.1.2. TASMANIA = NIL

- There are two groups who unfortunately don't mix yet are both still active.
- A recommendation was made to promote the Cygnet Folk Festival, with two of our international guests from EP24 will be performing there. This will hopefully encourage locals to attend.

9.1.3. WA - INCUMBENT = ANU LÄÄNESAAR

Moved: Esmée Okamoto

Seconded: Sirje Jõgi-Rivers

That ANU LÄÄNESAAR be ratified as a West Australian nominee ex-officio (pending West Australia affiliating with AESL)

ELECTED

9.2. ELECTION OF TWO INDEPENDENT MEMBERS P.145

9.2.1. Nominees:

- **AVE NUKKI (Sydney)**

Moved: Sulev Kalamäe

Seconded: Harry Ling

That AVE NUKKI be elected as the independent member to the AESL Board

ELECTED

- **SIRJE JOGI-RIVERS (Melbourne)**

Moved: Juho Looveer

Seconded: Esmée Okamoto

That SIRJE JOGI-RIVERS be elected as the independent member to the AESL Board

ELECTED

9.3. Appointment of ESTONIAN LANGUAGE STUDY CO-ORDINATOR

- **ITI CONNOR (Brisbane)**

Moved: Harry Ling

Seconded: Esmée Okamoto

That ITI CONNOR be elected as the ESTONIAN LANGUAGE STUDY CO-ORDINATOR to the AESL Board

ELECTED

9.4. Ratification of Chair and Board of Estonian Archives in Australia

- Chairman of the Archives now is Andra Krumins
- Andra Krumins has reached the end of her term on the Archives Board, and is nominated for re-appointment for 2 years.
- Virge Neilsen is also recommended to be appointed to the Archives Board

Appointment of CHAIR AND BOARD OF ESTONIAN ARCHIVES IN AUSTRALIA

- **ANDRA KRUMINS (Sydney)**

Moved: Ingrid Provan

Seconded: Sirje Yogi-Rivers

That ANDRA KRUMINS be elected as the CHAIR AND BOARD OF ESTONIAN ARCHIVES IN AUSTRALIA to the AESL Board

ELECTED

10. BOARD POSITIONS

10.1. EXECUTIVE POSITIONS - as elected by the Board

10.1.1. PRESIDENT

JUHO LOOVEER

Nominated - Sulev Kalamäe

Seconded – Harry Ling

ELECTED

10.1.2. VICE-PRESIDENT

SIRJE JÕGI-RIVERS

Nominated - Ingrid Provan

Seconded -Esmée Okamoto

ELECTED

10.1.3. TREASURER

INGRID PROVAN

Nominated – Maie Simson

Seconded - Bernadett Pilli

ELECTED

10.1.4. SECRETARY

Replacement Minutes secretary to be sourced – SJR has someone in mind

Esmée Okamoto to assist/replace Marissa Pikkat in managing online promotions and communications media

- create Twitter account
- Share Melbourne & Adelaide newsletters or links (Adelaide still paid for membership to newsletter access)

11.FURTHER DISCUSSIONS

11.1. What is going well?

- Children's group we've had some excellent into generational activities. It's like one big family. We have a cultural commonality. We promote a buddy system partner new people with those who have been involved for longer period of time. Sense of belonging not just attending

11.2. What should AESL do to support members?

- Another idea is to create a welcome pack for new Australians. Interview new people not just oldies.
- How come we determine memberships for states?

11.3. Awards

- Awards who should be nominated and why each state must start their own list
- Begin with local recognition before moving onto National or International
 - Gold silver bronze
 - Create a criterion temp
 - Consider a youth award
 - Recognition certificate
- States should approach AESL to discuss nominations
- We need to communicate/share information.

11.4. Grants

- Assist with Grant support/writing
- What are we providing to members? We need to nurture and encourage our youth. We need to reach out to new Estonians and try and help. Encourage them. Integrate into our programs. Not be isolated.

11.5. Membership fees - ongoing

- How can we ensure membership fees are maintained?
- Free entry to some events take percentage from biggest event
- Recurring annual automatic credit card payments

12. End of Meeting

SINGING OF ESTONIAN ANTHEM

13. Meeting closed at 2:10 p.m.

14. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

14.1 Kristi Barrow project to create a digital news presence

- Kristi was invited to Estonia in Dec 2022 to attend a Communication Forum
- Since returning, Kristi has led a couple of sessions to discuss the options for creating a new information/news-site for the Estonian community in Australia
- Currently applied for a grant to create something similar to an online version of Meie Kodu, or similar, but of a more contemporary nature
- Aim is to have contacts/story submitters from every State
- Endorsed by AESL - copy of Code of Ethics and AESL Constitution were provided for the grant application
- Juho is in ongoing email communication re the requirements by Estonia for funding

14.2 Estonia World Communications Working Group

- AESL had been asked for nominations for this working group
- AESL had circulated the information and asked for expressions of interest to be forwarded to the President
- Following the process, AESL had nominated Kristi Barrow, and advised that they would like to nominate a second person to be named at a later date
- Lembit Marder advised this week that he had also nominated.
- Marissa Pikkat advised she is keen. Sulev nominated Marissa be nominated by Liit.

Moved: Sulev Kalamäe

Seconded: Esmée Okamoto

That AESL also nominate Marissa Pikkat to this working group

AGREED

14.3 Requirements for Funding from Eesti

- Juho took part in a recent session from Eesti about their new systems and requirements for funding. Notes and PowerPoint (with translations) had been circulated.
- These requirements had been necessary for the funding application by Kristi Barrow as above (see 10.1)
- To be able to be compliant in future, AESL would need:
 - A By-Law to allow Pres to be the spokesman for AESL
 - Need to allow Pres and one other executive member to enact legal documents
 - Need to endorse a Code of Ethics (a sample from the Estonian government website was presented, and had been circulated)

=====

SECTION 3 – AESL MEMBER REPORTS 2025

1. ADELAIDE Estonian Society Inc

AESL MEMBER ORGANISATION's ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – ADELAIDE ESTONIAN SOCIETY Inc.

1 November 2024 – 31 October 2025

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Organisation Name ... Adelaide Estonian Society Incorporated (Adelaide Eesti Selts)

Primary Contact Name... Mr Martin Kurvits

Email ... adelaide.estonian.society@gmail.com

Phone ... Martin Kurvits: 0414 786536 Email: mart.kurvits@gmail.com

Committee Members/ Positions -

Mr Martin Kurvits - President

Mr Richard Costi – Vice-President

Ms Tiina Kallaste - Secretary

Ms Eve Smart - Treasurer

Mr Thomas Sarapuu

Ms Maarja-Liis Schmidt

Ms Terje Õll

Ms Madeleine Sarapuu

Ms Hille Bailiit

Committee meetings held during the year... 11

Number of memberships in the Society...106

ACTIVITIES from November 2024 to October 2025

Activity Title... Our Home Co-operative Society AGM and Estonian House Social Club AGM

Activity Date... 3 November 2024

Activity Description... The Annual General Meetings for both the Our Home Co-operative Society Ltd. (which manages the Estonian Hall) and the Estonian House Social Club Inc. (which manages the bar and clubroom).

Activity Title... Baltic Christmas Market

Activity Date... 24 November 2024

Activity Description... An arts and crafts market featuring stalls by Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian community members. The market was held at the Latvian Hall with at least 22 stalls set up with various art, craft and food items for sale, and a light lunch available for purchase from the Latvian kitchen.

Activity Title... Adelaide Estonian Society Exhibition

Activity Date... 30 November 2024 – 9 February 2025

Activity Description... An exhibition was held at the South Australian Migration Museum to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Adelaide Estonian Society and showcase the history of Estonian migration to South Australia and our Estonian culture. The opening ceremony was held on 30 November and a special Eesti Päevad event was held at the Museum on 28 December 2024.

Activity Title... Estonian Christmas Function

Activity Date... 1 December 2024

Activity Description... A casual function was held at the Estonian House to celebrate Christmas. The usual traditional Estonian Christmas meal of pork, verivorst, hapukapsas and fried potatoes were served, followed by cakes and coffee. There were performances by the Mixed Choir “Hapu Koor” and Folk Dancing Group “Vikerkaar and a special appearance by Jõuluvana.

Activity Title... Eesti Päevad 2024 (EP2024)

Activity Date... 27-31 December 2024

Activity Description... The 29th national Estonian festival “Eesti Päevad” was held in Adelaide over five days from 27 -31 December 2024. It was a heartfelt celebration of Estonian culture and community, bringing together friends and family from near and far to

share, showcase and participate in Estonian music, dance, arts and crafts, poetry and friendship. For five unforgettable days we shared stories, traditions, and laughter, creating memories for years to come. A special thank you to all the volunteers who made this festival such a special and successful event.

Activity Title... Estonian Independence Day Function

Activity Date... 23 February 2025

Activity Description... The Estonian Independence Day Function was held at the Adelaide Estonian House and was well attended by approximately 90 people. Entertainment during the afternoon was provided by the "Vikerkaar" Folk Dance group and the "Hapu Koor" mixed choir. The children's group led by a few of the mothers performed several dances and were once again the highlight of the afternoon. The official programme ended with the singing of the Estonian National Anthem and a toast to the continuing independence of the Estonian nation. The Adelaide Eesti Selts then provided the attendees with a wonderful afternoon tea of sandwiches and cakes.

Activity Title... Adelaide Eesti Selts AGM

Activity Date... 23 March 2025

Activity Description... Adelaide Estonian Society Inc. Annual General Meeting held at the Adelaide Estonian House.

Activity Title... Visit by Estonian Crossbow Team

Activity Date... 23 March 2025

Activity Description... We had a surprise visit to Eesti Maja on Sunday 23 March by the Estonian National Crossbow Team who joined us for a Sunday night BBQ meal. The team of 14 from the Eesti Amburite Liit were in Adelaide to compete in the World Crossbow Shooting Championships being held at Rowland Flat in the Barossa Valley from 18-24 March 2025. The team received 15 individual medals, 7 Gold, 6 Silver and 2 Bronze, and three medals in the team's category, one Gold, one Silver and one Bronze.

Activity Title... Sunday Movie Afternoons

Activity Date... 17 November 2024, 30 March 2025, 25 May 2025, 20 July 2025, 28 September 2025.

Activity Description... Screening of an Estonian produced film in the Estonian House clubroom followed by coffee and cake.

Activity Title... Vikerkaar Pub Night

Activity Date... 05 April 2025

Activity Description... The Vikerkaar dance group held a pub night on Saturday 5 April to help raise some funds for the four Adelaide dancers performing at the Estonian Tantsupidu and Laulupidu being held in Tallinn from 3-6 July 2025. Vikerkaar performed several dances during the evening and held a few games and a raffle of donated goods and \$2,000 was raised. Heather Tiivas and Oxana Sarapuu provided some tasty food including kransky, sauerkraut and potato salad as well as open sandwiches for those who desired a lighter meal.

Activity Title... Eurovision Pub Night

Activity Date... 17 May 2025

Activity Description... The “Eurovision Pub Night” returned this year with the Estonian Social Club hosting a night of fun, music and food on Saturday 17 May 2025. The enthusiasm this year was created by the catchy and quirky tune “Expresso Macchiato” by Estonia’s contestant Tommy Cash, overwhelmingly the favourite among the Estonian crowd here in Adelaide. Lucy Semenov and Madeleine Sarapuu manned the kitchen and provided the attendees with hot dogs with the lot and veggie burgers, while Tom was serving a selection of Estonian beers and his famous chili vodka from the bar.

Activity Title... Baltic Commemoration of Deportations

Activity Date... 14 June 2025

Activity Description... A commemoration ceremony and wreath laying held by the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian communities at the Migration Museum to commemorate the 84th anniversary of the forced deportations of Baltic people in June 1941. This included performances from the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian mixed choirs.

Activity Title... Jaanipäev / Võidupüha

Activity Date... 08 June 2025

Activity Description... Jaanipäev / Võidupüha function held at the Adelaide Estonian House with performances by the Mixed Choir “Hapu Koor” and Folk Dancing Group “Vikerkaar”. The Eesti Selts and Estonian Social Club provided a delicious barbeque lunch of marinated pork shaslik, sausages and salads, including kartulisalat and rosolje, and followed by cake and coffee. A treasure hunt was held for the children and a raffle of 5 baskets of mixed gourmet food items was held as a fundraiser for the Eesti Selts.

Activity Title... Baltic Way Freedom Concert

Activity Date... 23 August 2025

Activity Description... The Baltic Way Freedom Concert was held at the Latvian Hall to celebrate the restoration of independence in the Baltic States in 1990/1991 and was attended by approximately 200 people. Performances were made by the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian choirs and folk dancing groups and Mr Martin Hoile made a brief address that outlined the background to the Baltic Way protest, which was a defining moment in the struggle towards restoring independence in the Baltic States. The Estonian Mixed Choir "Hapu Koor" and Folk Dancing Group "Vikerkaar" performed, which included a special performance by the children's folk dancing group.

Activity Title... Estonian Solar Car Team "Solaride" Dinner

Activity Date... 30 August 2025

Activity Description... The Estonian "Solaride" Team competed in the 3,000km Solar Car Challenge race from Darwin to Adelaide, arriving in 2nd place in the Cruiser Class after 5 days on the road. The Adelaide Eesti Selts organised a free BBQ dinner for the team on Saturday night 30 August that was well attended by about 30 team members and 50 people from our local community. The final race results were announced at an awards ceremony at the Adelaide Convention Centre on the following Sunday evening and the Estonian team were awarded 2nd place in the Cruiser Class out of a field of 8 cars in this class, a remarkable achievement in this tough race. They were also given the Cruiser Class Design Award while in Darwin for their car's focus on safety, solar efficiency, and passenger comfort.

Activity Title... Virgats Newsletter

Activity Date... 6 Issues – February, April, June, August, October, December

Activity Description... The Adelaide Estonian Society newsletter "Virgats" is issued every two months by mail or email to members with articles on recent events, the dates for future events and other general information and notices. The donation of \$600 by the AESL to the production of the Virgats newsletter is very much appreciated and helps cover some of the costs to print and post the newsletter to our community members.

Activity Title... Estonian House Social Club Bar Operations

Activity Date... Every Friday and Sunday Night

Activity Description... The Estonian House Social Club operated bar and clubrooms are open every Friday and Sunday night with a community barbeque held on Sunday nights.

Activity Title... Estonian Choir and Folkdance Practise

Activity Date... The Estonian Choir and Folkdance practises are held every fortnight on a Sunday, depending on availability of instructors.

Activity Description... Choir and Folkdance practise for forthcoming performances.

Activity Title... Estonian Language Classes

Activity Date... Every fortnight on a Tuesday, depending on availability of the teacher and students.

Activity Description... Two 90-minute adult classes are run each fortnight by Ms Anneli Lill, a beginner class and an intermediate class. The classes have been run by teleconference and the numbers of students has fluctuated during the year from 3 – 4 students in each class.

Activity Title... Baltic Committee Representation

Activity Date... Monthly committee meetings.

Activity Description... The Adelaide Estonian Society has two members on the Board of Directors of Amber Aged Care (Baltic community aged care home) and the Baltic Council of South Australia. The Chairman of the Amber Aged Care committee is currently an Estonian - Mr Martin Hoile. The Amber Aged Care committee oversees the management of the Aged Care facility, and the Baltic Council of SA organises the joint Baltic events listed above.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Comments for future on 2026 events... The usual Estonian and Baltic community events are planned for 2026.

General Comments The Society has continued to cooperate with the Latvian and Lithuanian communities in Adelaide to share and rotate joint functions. While the number of members in the Society has remained fairly static, with older members passing away but replaced by a few new members, the number of volunteers to run committees and events has been slowly declining placing pressure on the ability of the society to fund and run events.

Report completed by...Mr Martin Kurvits.....Date...28 October 2025

Adelaide Estonian Society – AGM Report Photos 2025



Estonian Exhibition at Migration Museum



Vikerkaar Dancers - Children & Mothers



Estonian "Solaride" solar car team celebrate arriving in Adelaide after their 3,000km, five-day race from Darwin.



Combined Choirs at Eesti Päevad



Folk Dancing at Eesti Päevad



Vikerkaar performing at Pub Night



Hapu Koor performing at Baltic Way concert

2. BRISBANE Estonian Society

AESL MEMBER ORGANISATION ANNUAL REPORT – 2026

ORGANISATION NAME: Brisbane Estonian Society

PRIMARY CONTACT: Iti Connor

EMAIL: bestonians@gmail.com

PHONE: 0472519960 (Iti Connor)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS/POSITIONS:

Siim Sipelgas/President

Andres Truus/Vice President

Mooris Stepanov/Treasurer

Kati Virtaal, Elina Peeduson, Jaak Mardiste/ Accounts Verifiers

Iti Connor/Secretary

Iti Connor/ AESL representative

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 115

ACTIVITIES IN 2025 (01.01.2025 – 01.12.2025)

EVENTS

📅 **Christmas Party**

08/12/2024 at Brisbane Latvian Hall

Brisbane Estonian Society and Brisbane Estonian Playgroup celebrated Christmas in traditional style at the Brisbane Latvian Hall, with a record attendance of 135 people.

The concert featured a folk-dance performance by Folkroos, a children’s string ensemble and a children’s choir singing Estonian Christmas songs, followed by a warmly anticipated visit from Jõuluvana. The shared table was filled with a wide selection of Estonian Christmas dishes brought by guests, contributing to a festive and familiar atmosphere enjoyed by all.

📅 **AGM, Independence Day Celebration and “Tõll” by Kuressaare Theatre**

01/4/2025 at Brisbane Latvian Hall

In 2025, the Society hosted a combined AGM, Estonian Independence Day Celebration, and performance of “Tõll” by Kuressaare Theatre. The program offered a unique opportunity to experience Estonian theatre in Australia, with “Tõll” bringing a powerful cultural element to the



evening. The Independence Day segment featured a special appearance by multi-instrumentalist Jaan Kirss from Estonia, whose engaging performance — together with the equally talented Helena Victoria Kirss — was very warmly received by the audience. The AGM portion of the event was conducted quickly and efficiently.

Jaanituli

07/6/2025 at Saga Vikings Camping Ground

Jaanituli 2025 was once again a major highlight of the year, with close to 300 people in attendance. The celebration was held at our regular location at the Saga Vikings Camping Ground in Joyner and brought together a wide range of traditional activities and everything Estonian — including children’s games, face painting, social games, music, folk dancing, a bonfire, singing by the fire and traditional Estonian food and drink. The event was a great community effort and a wonderful reflection of shared culture that lasted well into the night.





OTHER NON-ESTONIAN SOCIETY ORGANISED ACTIVITIES:

Brisbane Estonian Playgroup

2025 marked the 12th year of the Brisbane Estonian Playgroup, offering a regular teacher-led language and culture program. Playgroup returned to weekly gatherings, hosting 42 in-person sessions throughout the year, with many new families joining and strengthening the community. The continued growth and participation highlight the importance of providing young families with opportunities to connect and learn together through language and cultural play.

Special events organised by playgroups:

☒ Mother's Day Concert and Picnic

10/5/2025 Minnipi Parkland

☒ Father's Day Pancake Party

30/8/2025 Victor Scouts Hall

Brisbane Women's Folk Dance Troupe FOLKROOS

Folkroos continued regular rehearsals and participated in a range of community events throughout the year. In 2025, the group successfully performed at the XXVIII Song and XXI Dance Celebration "Iseoma" in Estonia. Their participation also received recognition in Estonian media. We thank the group for their commitment and enthusiasm, which continues to bring Estonian culture to life in Brisbane.

COMMENTS ABOUT 2025 EVENTS OR INTERESTING EVENTS AHEAD

The Estonian community in Brisbane is diverse in background, experience and connection to Estonia, and the Society is pleased to have united these groups through our annual celebrations. We look forward to continuing this tradition, including our upcoming Christmas celebration on 7 December.

This year also saw the formation of a new European Roundtable for Brisbane-based European cultural societies. This forum aims to encourage informal discussion, idea-sharing and cooperation between communities, supporting ongoing cultural activities and collaboration across the region.

GENERAL COMMENTS/ SUGGESTIONS

Brisbane Estonian Society continues to host a small number of traditional annual events, which remain popular and well-attended social gatherings. The size of our volunteer base, as well as the absence of a budget-friendly venue, remains a limiting factor in how many activities can be delivered; however, the events that do take place are valued and enjoyed by the community. The Society also consistently supports and promotes initiatives organised independently within the wider Brisbane Estonian and Queensland community, recognising their contribution to cultural activity and connection. We encourage ideas, participation, and new volunteers to help bring future activities to life, as well as collaborations between different societies.

COMMENTS/THANKS/RECOGNITIONS

We would like to thank all active board members and volunteers for their time and ongoing commitment. In particular, we acknowledge and appreciate the sustained efforts of Andres Truus, Kati Virtaal, Elina Peeduson, Siim Sipelgas, Iti Connor, whose long-term dedication has played a key role in upholding the Society and maintaining participation despite limited resources.

Report completed by ___ Iti Connor 26/11/2025 _____

3. Estonian Society of SYDNEY



SYDNEY EESTI SELTS "Eesti Kodu Linda"

Estonian Society of Sydney Inc.
ABN 20 577 079 279

ANNUAL REPORT – 2025

ORGANISATION NAME:	Sydney Eesti Selts "Eesti Kodu Linda" (Estonian Society of Sydney Incorporated)
PRIMARY CONTACT:	Ave Nukki
EMAIL:	info@sydneyeestiselts.org.au
PHONE:	0431 662 673
COMMITTEE MEMBERS/POSITIONS:	9
	Ave Nukki – President
	Martin Kukk – Vice-President
	Siiri Iismaa – Secretary
	Ximonie Clark – Treasurer
	Lia Chinnery – Meeting Minutes
	Taimi Maidla – Social Media
	Giles Parker – Co-op representative
	Peeter Muttik – Committee member
	Jaak Sildnik – Committee member

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 159

President's Report 2025
Sydney Estonian Society
Ave Nukki, President

Dear Members,

The year 2025 has truly been a year of growth, connection, and remarkable activity for the Sydney Estonian Society. Our House has been busier than ever, filled with events, meetings, visitors, and new faces, reflecting the strong and growing interest in Estonian culture and community life in Sydney and across Australia.

Throughout the year, we hosted and participated in a wide range of cultural, educational, and community events. Highlights included concerts, theatre performances, literary discussions, workshops, markets, national celebrations, and international collaborations. We welcomed visiting artists, students, diplomats, and community leaders, and strengthened our relationships with Estonian organisations both in Australia and in Estonia.

A particularly encouraging development this year has been the **increase in membership numbers**, as well as growth in our **newsletter subscribers and social media platforms**. Our digital presence has expanded significantly, allowing us to reach a wider audience and engage more effectively with both long-standing members and those discovering the Society for the first time. We are especially grateful to see how many people are finding their way to our **newly uplifted Estonian House**, which has become a lively and welcoming hub for community activity.

The year also brought important internal developments. Following the AGM, several committee members concluded their terms, and we warmly welcomed new committee members. Considerable time and effort were dedicated to onboarding, administration, and strengthening our internal systems, ensuring that the Society continues to operate smoothly and sustainably.

Our work extended well beyond Sydney. Committee members represented the Society at national and international meetings, festivals, and commemorations, including Independence Day celebrations, Estonian community events across Australia, and major cultural gatherings in Estonia. Media appearances and creative projects, including filming and interviews, further raised the profile of the Sydney Estonian Society and the wider Estonian community in Australia.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication of our committee, volunteers, collaborators, and members. Your time, energy, and willingness to contribute—whether through organising events, attending meetings, promoting activities, or simply showing up—have made 2025 such a successful and vibrant year.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone involved. Together, we have shown that the Sydney Estonian Society is not only active and resilient, but also growing, welcoming, and forward-looking. I look forward to continuing this work with you in the year ahead.

With gratitude,

Ave Nukki
President
Sydney Estonian Society

ACTIVITIES in 2025 (1.01.2025 – 31.12.2025)

January

19.01 Kristiina Ehin & Silver Sepp concert- assisted with organising New Zealand performance



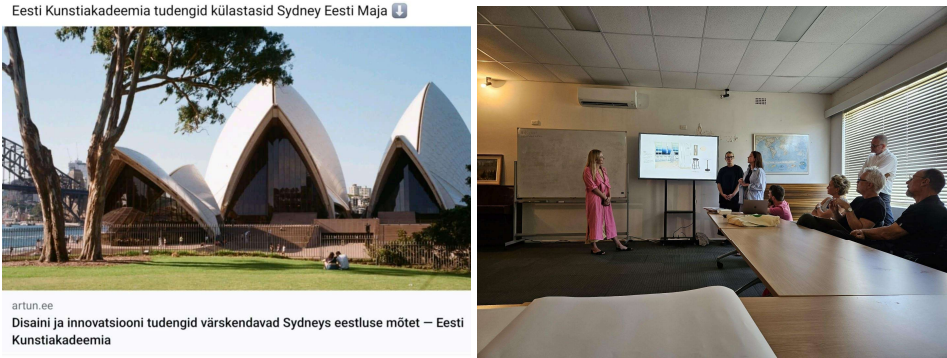
- Audit meetings with Elen Ellervee and Allan Mülle
- 8.01-11.01 Iti Connor Brisbane Society visited from Queensland to see Sörve camp which we visited for a day

February

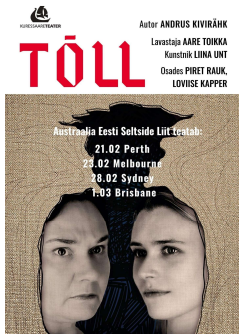
23.02 Independence Day celebration



20.02-25.02 EKA students' visit with project presentations of Estonia House



28.02 Tõll - from Kuressaare theatre



- 8.02 SES was invited to attend SESSKE AGM
- 21.02 attended Tõll Australia tour first performance at Perth WA
- 27.02 INVITED- Independence Day celebration hosted by the Estonian Embassy in Canberra, attended by four of our committee members and representatives of the Brisbane Society



March

6.03 Selts Committee meeting

23.03 Six members stepped down, and we warmly welcomed Martin, Siiri, Lia, Ximonie, Giles, and Taimi.



- 8.03 attended Sõrve AGM
- 21.03 Sander Õigus performed in Sydney, SES helped to promote



- 30.03 Baltic Beetroot soup making at Latvian house



April

Throughout the month – The month was dedicated to onboarding new committee members, granting access to shared drives, email accounts, accounting systems, and other operational tools.

- 5.04 Invited SESSKE photoshoot
- 6.04 Invited- Co-op new bar and kitchen opening party
- 13.04 ÜEKN AGM
- 16.04 Treasurer meeting
- 27.04 Greetings from new committee newsletter

May

2.05 Vappu party with Fins- Jericho performed



6.05 Selts committee meeting

- **Guest appearances** – Presentations by; Elen Ellervee on Mudilasring; and Iti Connor, Australian Language Coordinator, on Estonian grant opportunities, with a focus on funding for children's teachers' fees. Appearances by 2025 auditors.
-

10.05 Mothers Day

- **Filming** – Created the "12 points from Australia" video supporting Tommy Cash's Eurovision entry, achieving 20,000 views in total. Influencer from Estonia helped to put it together.



"Espresso Macchiato" love hits Sydney – 12 points from Australia to Tommy Cash!
 Today, Facebook wasn't ready for what hit it – and no, it wasn't just another cat video or someone's homemade sourdough, it was the...

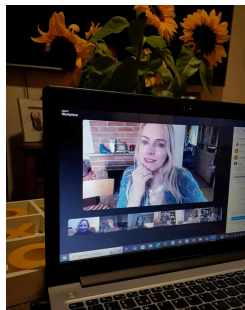
17.05 Kooskõlas choir fundraiser, Society received Tänukiri



21.05 Joint Co-op and Selts meeting

23.05 Ambassador Jaan Reinhold meeting

25.05 Lõunapoolkera Lugesisklubi Kristiina Ehin - zoom



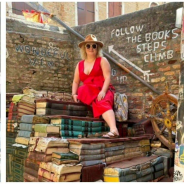
Southern Hemisphere Estonian Book Club launches today
 The brand-new Lõunapoolkera Lugesisklubi (Southern Hemisphere Estonian Book Club) is launching tonight, Sunday 25 May, with a special guest – acclaimed Estonian author Kristiina...

- **14.05 Invited to attend EACCI cyber and Estonia event**



June

President Ave Nukki was featured in Global Estonian and can read about it in Heia



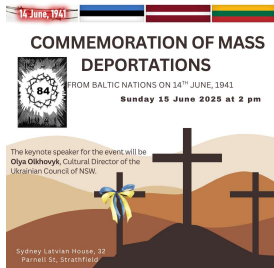
Ave Nukki featured in Global Estonian newsletter

We're absolutely delighted to share that Global Estonian has featured our very own Ave Nukki, President of the Estonian Society in Sydney and the lead of the next Eesti Päevad, in their June newsletter – and what an inspirational story it is!

- 7.06 attended Brisbane Jaanituli



- 15.06 Invited to Baltic Commemoration



- 27.06 Estonia- Foreign Ministry meet up with Marin Mõttus, Kadri Linnas and Liina Viies. Riigikogu visit with Taimi Maidla



July

All female members of our committee were at Laulu and Tantsupidu in Estonia



Estonian Australian women take the stage and the spotlight in Tallinn

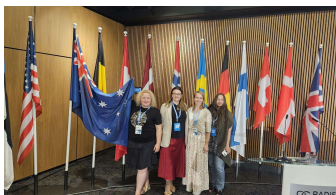
Five dynamic Estonian Australian women from Sydney swapped committee meetings for centre stage at Laulu- ja Tantsupidu 2025 – singing, dancing and proudly representing Australia. They didn't just show up... they shone.



Rein Rannap sent us greetings, meeting with

Lipuvabrik.

- 1.07 Invited to Esto2025 representing Estonia House with Giles Parker, second half attended communication, from Sydney we had many reps and we covered majority of the workshops
- ÜEKN annual meeting - along with Victoria rep Kristel Alla, SA Eve Smart and WA Marin Hicks

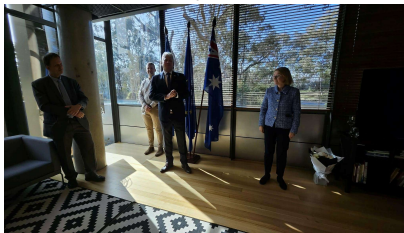


- 1.07 Invited to EACCI annual meet

1 JULY 2025 - Annual EACCI Event in Estonia



- 26.07 Busy times ahead newsletter
- Invited to say goodbye to Merike Grünthal and welcome our new nõunik Kristjan Kuurme at Canberra Embassy



August

17.08 EV 34 Restoration - we had visitors from Melbourne and Finland who filmed and sent us 10min short video of our whole event.



From Sydney with Estonia in our hearts
 Sydney Estonian House was filled with voices, music and the warm aroma of cinnamon buns as we gathered to mark Estonia's 34th year of restored independence.



24.08 Solaride Movie night- meet the team



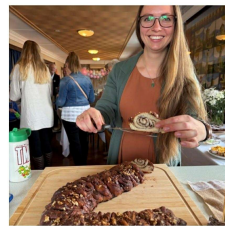
- 10.08 Visit Melbourne Estonia House, joined end bit of their meeting



- 14.08 webpage meeting

September

13.09 Kringel workshop- Anu Läänesaar from Perth



Let's bake kringel — workshops in Sydney and Melbourne
 Ready to braai, bake and bond? Join our kringel baking workshops in Sydney and Melbourne this spring!



17.09 Mallukas Salajutud



K17/SEPTEMBER · SYDNEY EESTI MAJA, SYDNEY · 19:00
"Salajutud" vestlusõhtu - Sydney



Salajutud poured secrets and champagne
Estonian podcast queens Salajutud finally made it to Sydney — and let's just say, Sydney Estonian House will probably be blushing for weeks after this visit.

28.09 Selts Committee meeting

- 3.09 September newsletter
- 8.09 Meet with Tasmania Estonia Society leader Tiiu Rääbus



- 27.09 Baltic market all Ambassadors and all Society leaders meet



Sydney Baltic markets with a special address from Ambassador Jaan Reinhold
Baltic unity was on full display at the Sydney Baltic Markets with Estonian food, crafts, song and dance — and a special address from Ambassador Jaan Reinhold.

- 28.09 Co-op AGM
- Nominated 9 people across Australia to Estonian awards, one nomination was successful
Andres Truus QLD



Australian Estonians recognised at Estonia's Folk Culture Awards
Recognition crossed 15,000 kilometres this year as 11+ Australian Estonians were honoured among nominees for Estonia's 2025 Folk Culture Awards.

October

2.10 Space delegation with Parliament member Mario Kivistik



Riigikogu delegation in Sydney to discuss Estonia's economy, security and future
 Estonian lawmakers visit Sydney on 31 October 2025 for an open discussion on Estonia's economy, security and new Indo-Pacific partnerships – register now for the free event.



- 10.10 October newsletter
- 18.10 attended Melbourne Spring Fair



- 24.10 Busy week ahead newsletter

November

9.11 Eesti- Suomi Spring market



16.11 Tule Tikkima with SESSKE



23.11 Xmas market- in collaboration with Santa Maria and estonian influencer Ane Mitt recipe video was filmed from our market, when the screenshot had 164 thousand views.



28.11 Terminaator concert



- 3.11 November newsletter
- 10.11 Invited- Ukrainian Honorary Consul at Parliament house



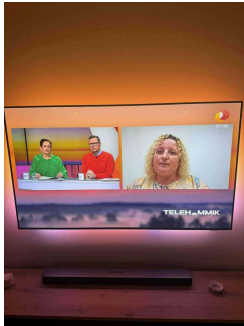
- 18.11 Xmas market newsletter
- 19.11 Joint Xmas dinner with Co-op
- 20.11 Global Estonian meet

December

7.12 Xmas lunch - we had the honour to have Jaan Reinhold with his family, Honorary consuls from WA, NT, NSW. Lutheran church bishop from Estonia Ove Sander.



- 23.12 Xmas wish newsletter with upcoming months calendar
- Interview with Kuku Radio and live at Kanal2 Telehommik



CULTURAL GROUPS

Virtualised mixed folk dance group <https://www.facebook.com/sydneyvirmalised>

Rehearsals on Mondays at Sydney Estonian House from 18:00-21:00 and twice per month to prepare for Dance Festival in Estonia in 2025; led by Ella Scott.

Their report to AESL is sent separate

Estonian Handicraft Association

Meet at Sydney Estonian House on the first Saturday of the month from 10:00-12:00. Bigger workshops, where also non-members attended were held on 9 Aug (weaving workshop) and 11 Oct (embroidery workshop). Led by Ingrid Renno. Participating at the Christmas Markets.

Their report to AESL is sent separate

Sydney Estonian Children's Playgroup

The Estonian Children's Playgroup in Sydney, aka Sydney Mudilasring

Sydney Mudilasring enjoyed another warm and engaging year in 2025, bringing together children, parents, and grandparents to share Estonian language and culture. The playgroup gathered on average once a month at the Sydney Estonian House, where families sang Estonian songs, danced, read books, and created crafts together. These sessions provided not only language practice but also a welcoming space for community connection and cultural belonging.

Participation has grown so much that we have often outgrown the small room at Eesti Maja, and many times sessions needed to be moved into the larger room next door to accommodate everyone. This growth reflects the increasing diversity of the Mudilasring family, with more mixed families and parents actively joining in. One family even travels from Canberra to take part in both the pre-school lessons and Mudilasring sessions, showing the strong pull of the program across distance.

This year marked an important milestone with the introduction of pre-school lessons for children over 4 years old, led by teacher Elen Ellervee. These sessions encouraged some families who had not been active for many years to rejoin. For the youngest children, regular playgroup sessions continued, while the intergenerational program at Thilmere Estonian Village, run by Merike Viigisalu, strengthened ties across generations.

At the beginning of the year, the group visited Colour World, setting a creative tone for the program. Across the year, there were a total of 27 sessions, including playgroup meetings for 0–3 year olds, pre-school lessons for 4+ year olds, and Thilmere intergenerational gatherings.

The playgroup's growth and diversity in 2025 highlight its role as a welcoming hub for Estonian culture in Sydney. Families contributed not only by attending lessons but also by supporting the wider Estonian community in NSW. With renewed energy, expanded programs, and strong

participation, Sydney Mudilasring continues to nurture language, culture, and belonging for Estonian children and their families.

Elen Ellervee

Kooskolas – National choir

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/313519635746138>

Rehearsals on the second Sunday of the month at Sydney Estonian House. National rehearsals three weekends to prepare for the Song Festival in Estonia in 2025. Notebashing every Sunday. Choir conductor Naomi Cooper. Performed at Sorvė Childrens' Summer Camp, the Independence Day and Restoration Day celebrations, at the June Deportation commemoration event held in Sydney Latvian House, Christmas Lunch and at the Galston church. In March the choir recorded some audition songs for the 2025 Song Festival in Estonia. July 2025 attended the Estonia Song festival.

Rukkililled – womens' folk dancing group

Rehearsals every first and third Saturday of the month at Sydney Estonian House from 13:30-15:00. Led by Steven Buchert. Performed at the Mothers Day, Restoration Day and Xmas lunch concert.

Lepatriinud – kids folk dancing group

Created at the beginning of the year. Rehearsals every second Sunday of the month at Sydney Estonian House from 13:30-15:00. Led by Imbi Semmelweis and Ella Ranniko, later on the year Ella Scott. Performed at the Mothers Day and Xmas lunch.

Madis and Tiina Alvre – folk dancing group

Created at the beginning of the year. Rehearsals every second Sunday of the month at Sydney Estonian House from 15:00-16:30. Led by Madis and Tiina Alvre. Stopped in July due to extended Estonia holidays

Estonian language classes

Mondays and Wednesdays from 18:00-19:30 via Zoom and once every couple of months at Sydney Estonian House (Teacher Kirsti Horst). Wednesdays at the Sydney Estonian House and Thursdays via Zoom (Teacher Maris Saar).

Comments about 2025 events or interesting events ahead

SES dates for 2026:

18.01.2026 Kino - ESTCubo-2.X: Ten Years to the Stars



8.02.2026 Lõunapoolkera Lugesisklubi- Lilli Luuk Ööema



13.02.2026 Friends Day Gig - From Estonia Jaan Kirss and her daughter Helena Victoria



22.02.2026 Independence Day



22.02 Mamma Lood



29.03.2026 AGM

29.03.2026 Piip ja Tuut



1.05.2026 VAPPU with Finns

3.05.26 Mothers' Day
23.08.26 Restoration Day
8.11.2026 Kids Spring Market with Finns
6.12.26 Christmas Market 13.12.26
Christmas Lunch

PS! Some dates may change.

General Comments/ Suggestions

AESL should think about their report dates! The end of November is not ok for Sydney Selts, next year we will complete it by mid January! Thank you

Comments/Thanks/Recognitions

SES would like to thank the Co-Op- new bar and kitchen is just fabulous SES would like to thank everyone who helped throughout the year

Report completed by Ave Nukki
Date 22.12.2025

4. Estonian Cultural Association of WESTERN AUSTRALIA



President's Report
Annual General Meeting
Date: 25 September 2025

Prepared by:

Marin Hicks

President, Estonian Cultural Association of Western Australia Contact Information:

Email: president@estwest.org.au

Phone: 0450 142 629

Date: 25.09.2025

Introduction

Welcome everyone to the second Annual General Meeting of EstWest. This meeting covers our first full financial year, from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

Appreciation

I want to begin by acknowledging the amazing people who make this organisation possible. On behalf of myself, the committee, and the broader Estonian community in WA — thank you to every single member, volunteer, and supporter who has contributed to building EstWest.

We are a grassroots organisation that thrives on community effort. Without you, none of this would exist. Your time, energy, and care have helped us grow, and your support is truly appreciated.

Our Mission

At its heart, EstWest was created with a simple goal: to bring Estonian culture to life in WA. And we've succeeded.

We've reached the point where people now say, *"Sorry, I can't make this one — but I'll be at the next."* That tells me EstWest has built something reliable and consistent — a community space where Estonians know there will always be another opportunity to connect with culture, language, and each other.

Year in Review: Key Events & Activities

1. Estonian Kids Holiday Program (3–5 October 2024)


A professionally run school holiday camp that immersed children in Estonian language and culture.

Held over 3 days from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm in a structured, drop-off/ pick-up format

Delivered by paid Estonian-speaking teachers, with catered meals

Parents praised how much their children used Estonian afterwards

Required major effort in logistics, planning, and volunteer coordination

☑️ A  success — showing how cultural learning can be joyful and impactful for kids

EstWest Christmas Party (7 December 2024)

One of our most memorable events of the year.

229 pre-booked guests, plus walk-ins

Traditional Estonian food cooked and served by volunteers

90+ children received free gifts

A huge team effort: from entertainment to bar service, everything ran smoothly

🎄 Positive community feedback on atmosphere, entertainment, food, and drinks

🎉 A festive and unifying event that showed off our culture with warmth and style

Estonian Music Festival (4 January 2025)

Held just after the holidays, this festival brought two distinct musical acts to Perth:

Kristiina Ehin & Silver Sepp — poetic, folk-style audience

Villemdrillem — modern rap/pop, drew a younger crowd

97 attendees, lower than expected, but artistically rich and diverse

🎵 **Proved** we can deliver high-calibre Estonian music, even from afar

“Tõll” Theatre Night (21 February 2025)

A sold-out performance hosted at Jome Theatre

74 tickets sold

Organised primarily by one committee member

👏 While the event ran smoothly and was well received, it highlighted the risks of solo workloads — future events must be shared and better supported.

5. Pancake Morning (4 May 2025)

A light-hearted community breakfast that brought 194 people together

Traditional pancakes served (with some delay due to prep timing)

Kids' entertainment was missing, which required flexibility 🤖 Despite hiccups, the mood was warm and 🥞 social

A great reminder of the power of low-key events to build strong connections

6. EstWest Thank You Event (24 May 2025)

A warm, community-centred celebration honouring our volunteers — small in scale but huge in heart.

~50 volunteers with families were invited for a relaxed evening at Rivervale Community Centre

Wood-fired pizzas, shared platters, a sweet table featuring ‘kringel’, and drinks provided

Certificates of appreciation, along with EstWest mugs and flowers, were presented to volunteers who were recognised for their outstanding support

🌻 cosy, family-friendly gathering that strengthened our sense of community and reaffirmed the shared values that unite the EstWest community

☑️ A meaningful gesture of gratitude that energised our volunteer community for the year ahead

7. Baltic Midsummer Celebration (14 June 2025)

The biggest, boldest event of the year — and a major turning point.

350 tickets sold out + 100 on the waitlist

Involved Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian performers and guests

Complex venue logistics, volunteer shortfalls, and unexpected organiser issues required the committee to step up massively 💧 The event succeeded because of teamwork, resilience, and deep community spirit 🔥

☑️ A landmark moment for Baltic unity and EstWest's reputation

Upcoming Events

Father's Day Science Party – 28 September 2025

The event will be held at the Lynwood Ferndale Playgroup. Morning tea will be provided, and the programme will include a photo corner and a series of science-based activities designed to engage participants of all ages.

EstWest Christmas Party – 7 December 2025

The annual Christmas gathering will feature traditional Estonian food and a schedule of activities suitable for all age groups. A visit from Santa is planned as part of the programme.

New Developments

We are now evolving beyond standalone events and building ongoing cultural programming.

We are transitioning from standalone events to a sustained programme of cultural activities.

Estonian Folk Dance Classes

Weekly sessions will begin on Wednesday, 22 October 2025, and continue until 10 December 2025.

In addition, classes will take place on the following weekends: 19 October, 25 October, 9 November, 23 November, and 14 December 2025.

Estonian Language Classes


A new series of classes will commence next month, held over five weekends: 19 October, 25 October, 9 November, 23 November, and 14 December 2025.

Family Camp






Preparations for the next Family Camp (3–5 October 2025) are largely complete, with only final details remaining.

All of this is possible because of the extraordinary work of Viktoria Saar — not only as our main grant writer, but also for stepping into the Secretary role when we needed her most.

Her contribution has been game-changing. Viktoria has enabled nearly all of our 2024–25 events through successful grant applications, and her willingness to cover gaps in committee operations kept us moving forward.




 Thank you, Viktoria — for your talent, commitment, and belief in what we do.

Additional Highlights

-  Committee-led events delivered to a professional standard
 -  Growing collaboration with other Baltic & Estonian organisations
 -  Increased volunteer interest through active outreach
 -  Greater visibility and impact in the wider WA community
 -  Proactive work on governance, systems, and organisational maturity
-

Challenges Faced & Lessons Learned

Funding & Capacity


-  We secured multiple grants — a huge win
-  But our internal capacity is stretched thin
-  Next step: Explore part-time admin roles or capacity-building support

Volunteer Shortages

Ongoing struggle to recruit and retain volunteers


-  Action: Offer smaller, low-barrier ways to help; improve onboarding

Lack of Forward Planning

We're often reactive — scrambling close to event dates  Action: Adopt a 12-month calendar and plan early

Committee Engagement

Some roles not clearly understood; contributions inconsistent

-  Action: Governance training + clear expectations and accountability


Parents & Participation

Hard for parents to volunteer with young children

-  Action: Family-friendly meetings and child-friendly spaces


Digital Organisation

Our document storage is messy, and transitions are difficult

 Action: Centralised digital system + documented handover processes

Membership & Governance

Our Model Rules are outdated and current tools don't reflect how we operate

 Action: Governance review and modern membership systems

Event Limitations

Weather, permits, and last-minute changes continue to affect delivery

 Action: Develop clear contingency plans and permit checklists

Looking Forward

As we move into the next year, EstWest is on the edge of a new chapter. We are no longer just hosting events — we are building a living, ongoing cultural home.

Priorities for the year ahead:

- Long-term event and programming calendar

- Volunteer re-engagement

- Digital system overhaul

- Governance & membership modernisation

Closing Remarks

As I step down from the role of President, I do so with pride and gratitude.

It's been a joy to help build something meaningful with all of you — and I'll continue supporting EstWest in whatever way I can. I look forward to seeing this organisation continue to grow under new leadership.

Thank you all for your trust, hard work, and spirit.

Marin Hicks

President, Estonian Cultural Association of Western Australia Contact Information:

Date: 25.09.2025

5. GOLD COAST Estonian Society - ANNUAL REPORT – 2025

ORGANISATION NAME:	Gold Coast Estonian Society
PRIMARY CONTACT:	Elina Peeduson
EMAIL:	info@goldcoastestoniansociety.com.au
PHONE:	412294960
COMMITTEE MEMBERS/POSITIONS:	Elina Peeduson - President, Kättriin Vinkmann - Secretary, Heidi Berg - Treasurer
TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS:	15

ACTIVITIES REPORT – 2025

Gold Coast Estonian Society (GCES)
Reporting period: 01.01.2025 – 01.12.2025

1. Conducted Activities

1.1 Gold Coast Estonian School & Playgroup (Eesti Kool ja Mängutuba)

2025 marked a significant year of growth and restructuring for our educational activities. We officially launched the **Gold Coast Estonian School**, operating alongside our long-running **Estonian Playgroup**. For the first time, we established **two separate groups**:

- **Playgroup (ages 0–3)** – led by **Carmelina Kannelmäe**, with instructional support from Elina Peeduson
- **Estonian School (4+)** – led by **Kättriin Vinkmann**, with instructional support from **Elina Peeduson**

Average participation remained strong throughout the year:

- **Playgroup:** 10–13 children
- **School:** 7–12 children
Combined attendance sits at approximately 20-25 children per fortnight.

Lessons were held *twice monthly on Sundays* at the **Varsity Lakes Community Centre** (outdoor play area for playgroup, library room for the school). Teaching remained fully in Estonian, with English support provided only when necessary to assist families.

1.2 Seasonal & Community Events (Conducted)

Playgroup Celebrations

- Easter Party
- Mother's Day Celebration
- Father's Day Celebration

Each of these events attracted **60–70 participants** including both children and parents.

• Film Nights

Family-friendly, community-building events:

- Film Night: "Kalev" – 20–30 attendees
- Film Night: "Vigased Pruudid" – 20–30 attendees

• Queensland Family Camp (Queenslandi Perelaager)

A historic first for our community.

- **110 participants** (Gold Coast + Brisbane families, ages 0–16)
- Entire camp was held **in Estonian**
- Extremely well received; many families requested pre–waitlist for the next camp
The camp was primarily organised by **Elina Peedson** and **Kättriin Vinkmann**, with the support of **10+ parent volunteers**, who contributed to planning, materials preparation, logistics, and activity delivery.

• Jaanituli – Midsummer Festival

Organised in collaboration with the **Brisbane Estonian Society (BES)**.

GCES assisted with volunteer coordination and provided a lot of the staff for bar and ticketing.

• Meeting with the Estonian Minister of Education

Our long-serving teacher **Kättriin Vinkmann** represented Gold Coast at a Melbourne reception hosted by Minister **Kristina Kallas**.

Kättriin met with the minister, advisers, Ambassador **Jaan Reinhold**, and other Estonian-language program leaders in Australia.

She received an official **Certificate of Appreciation** for her 8 years of dedicated work teaching Estonian children in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast.

We extend special thanks to **AESL for sponsoring Kättriin's travel**.

• Terminaator Gold Coast Concert

A major musical collaboration between **GCES** and **Peppermint Events**.

A wildly successful Estonian-language rock concert at Miami Marketta, drawing in the wider community and showcasing Estonian culture.

- **“Selts ja Sõbrad” – Community Thank-You Event**

A warm appreciation gathering for volunteers, supporters, and active members who contributed to GCES initiatives throughout the year.

2. Ahead / Planned Activities

- **Film Night: "Kiik, kirves ja igavese armastuse puu"** (scheduled upcoming event)
- **Gold Coast Estonian School & Playgroup Christmas Celebration**
 - ~100 registered participants, including **48 children**

3. Cancelled Activities

No major events were cancelled in 2025.

4. Online Activities

No regular online events were conducted in 2025, as all activities took place in person. (However, administrative communication, teacher meetings, and camp planning sessions occurred online.)

5. General Comments & Suggestions for 2026

5.1 School Growth & New Structure

Our main organisational goal for the coming year is **expanding the school program**. In 2026 we aim to transition to **three age groups**, with the two oldest group receiving:

- **Two back-to-back learning sessions**
- **An additional monthly sports and movement class**

This reflects the rapidly growing interest among families and the increasing number of school-aged children in our community.

5.2 Language Preservation

Our primary mission remains to support **active Estonian language use** among children in Australia.

All lessons, camps and events are conducted in **Estonian**, with English used only as needed to ensure inclusivity.

5.3 Events Strategy for 2026

- We will likely host **fewer movie nights**, replacing some with **social sports events for adults** to strengthen community bonds.
- We are exploring options for **another concert** and expanding cultural programming.

6. Comments, Thanks & Recognitions

Our society is thriving thanks to the ongoing participation of our families, volunteers, teachers, and community supporters.

We extend heartfelt gratitude to:

- **Society Members:** Everyone participated in delivering our program in one way or another
- **Teachers:** Carmelina Kannelmäe, Kätriin Vinkmann, Elina Peeduson
- **Parent volunteers**, especially those supporting the Family Camp
- **BES** for collaboration
- **AESL** for ministerial visit support
- **Peppermint Events** for concert partnership
- And all families who consistently attend, help, encourage, and bring life to our Estonian community on the Gold Coast.

Our collective efforts ensure that Estonian language, culture and identity remain vibrant for our children — now and for the future.

Report due in 29.11.2025

Report completed by Elina Peeduson

6. MELBOURNE Estonian Society - Report 2025



MELBOURNE ESTONIAN SOCIETY

PRIMARY CONTACT:	Ingrid Melotte
EMAIL:	melbourneestoniansociety@gmail.com
TELEPHONE:	0490 967 427
COMMITTEE MEMBERS/POSITIONS: 10	
Chairperson:	Ingrid Melotte
Vice-Chairperson:	Rano Uesson
Secretary:	Michael Payne
Treasurer:	Ingrid Provan
Deputy Treasurer:	Gabry Mikkar
Membership:	Marion Perlin
Deputy Membership:	Jana Murphy
Communications	Kristel A
Committee Member	Kristina Roots
TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 108	

ACTIVITIES IN 2024 (1.1.2024 – 31.12.2024):

FEBRUARY

Melbourne celebrated Independence Day with a ceremony and performance by Kuressaare Theatre production of Tõll.

The Estonian Ambassador Jaan Reinhold held a speech and presented certificates recognising the work of Lembit Marder and Matti Kiviväli. The 2025 *Aukiri* Award was presented to Bernadette Pilli.

There was a large audience of 75 over 100.

MARCH

Melbourne Estonian Society AGM

SANDER ÕIGUS COMEDY PERFORMANCE

Saturday, 29 March 2025

Sander presented his new solo show "Straight to the Point!" (Otse kümnesse!), There was an audience of around 50 people.

MAY

MOTHERS' DAY

Mothers' Day Celebration saw approximately 40 young parents with about 15 children.

JUNE

COMMEMORATION OF DEPORTATION DAY

Organised for the Baltic community by the Lithuanian community at their centre in North Melbourne.

JULY

LAULUPIDU

Melbourne choir, Kodu Kaja, performed at Laulupidu. Melbourne community members were also among the Kooskõlas choir members singing there.

Kodu Kaja, was honoured with a Letter of Appreciation from Estonia's Minister of Culture, Heidi Purga, for their participation in Laulupidu.

AUGUST

BALTIC WAY COMMEMORATION

Melbourne Estonian Community participated in the Baltic Way Commemoration at Melbourne's Latvian House. The day was filled with music, memories and unity as Baltic communities marked the anniversary of the 1989 Baltic Way. Highlights included Arvo Pärt's music, heartfelt testimonies, and a symbolic hand-in-hand Baltic Chain re-enactment.

SEPTEMBER

FATHERS' DAY

About 30 family members were in attendance for games and delicious food.

OCTOBER

KRINGEL MAKING WORKSHOP

Community members gathered at the Estonian House for a hands-on Kringel (kringle) Making Workshop with Anu Läänesaar. 15 community members participated.

BALTIC FESTIVAL

We hosted the Melbourne Baltic Festival at Estonia House. This was a large crowd, with 150 performers and about 75 in the audience.

Performers from the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Finnish communities delighted the crowd with a collection of dances and songs to remember the evening by.

NOVEMBER

Estonian Language Camp for Children in Victoria organised by the Melbourne Estonian Society at Anglesea on the south coast of Victoria.

This year saw an increase in numbers of 40 children and 35 adults. Children, parents and grandparents attended, all with varying language skills. The Society had successfully applied for funding from the Estonian Language Institution, AESL and Melbourne Ühing.

DECEMBER

Melbourne hosted a meeting of Estonian teachers from across Australia. Four teachers who participated – Anneli Lill, Grete-Stina Witcombe, Iiti Connor and Kättriin Vinkmann. They received letters of appreciation from Estonia's Minister of Education and Research, Kristiina Kallas, who was visiting Australia. This

acknowledgement means a great deal to our community teachers and gives them renewed motivation to continue their work.

The community also had the opportunity to meet with Kristiina and Ambassador Jaan Reinhold. There was a diverse range of topics discussed and questions asked. At this event the inaugural Lembit Marder Award was presented by Kistina Kallas to a young outstanding Camp participant. Hilja Toom was also presented with a certificate in recognition of her outstanding work over many years with the choir.

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

150 adults and 50 children in attendance. A sell out event. The last Christmas at Estonian House in Melbourne. The day was celebrated by performances from the Ladies Choir and the Dance groups, including the children.

Comments about 2025 events or interesting events ahead

2025 was a very successful social year.

2025 saw the second Estonian Family Language Camp. The focus is on language throughout all activities – craft, sports. We successfully applied for funding from the Estonian Language Institution, AESL and Melbourne Ühing. 75 people attended, 40 adults and 35 children (kinder and primary school). Hopefully it will become a springboard for Sõrve as the kids get older.

Maarja Kamar facilitates playgroup activities and funding applications for the Estonian language-based playgroup. This meets regularly at Estonian House.

Children's folk dancing meets fortnightly with teacher Jenny Wall. This has been an excellent vehicle for both newly arrived Estonian and Australian parents to come together, to develop new relationships, through their children.

Adult folk dancing under Rein Kiviväli and choir Kodu Kaja led by Hilja Toom. A major focus for the choir was *Laulupidu 2025*, where 13 members performed.

GENERAL COMMENTS/ SUGGESTIONS

Membership

Our numbers are down this year as we have been in the process of changing our working year from financial to calendar year. Plus we have been moving membership enrolments and renewals to an online system. People have been confused about what is due when and how to pay. We plan to have a membership drive in the new year. Subscriptions to Teateleht have risen to 248, we need to encourage these people to become paid members of the Society.

Melbourne Estonian House Relocation

In October 2025 Estonian House was sold. A sub-committee is now searching for a new location.

Locating a smaller space, of about 750 sq.m., to accommodate future activities and some events, is the prime focus as we move forward. We are considering purchasing options which are within a 10-kilometre radius of Melbourne's CBD, prioritising a location that will be convenient for Society members. A list of essential requirements has been created to ensure the new venue meets the needs of various activity groups, such as the folk dancers, choir and playgroup.

The Melbourne Estonian Society remains committed to organising activities for the local Estonian community, even if permanent premises aren't secured by August 2025, when hopefully, the keys are to be handed over. Temporary rental options will be available if needed.

COMMENTS/THANKS/RECOGNITIONS

Ingrid Melotte is stepping down as chairperson of the committee this coming year.

Thank you, AESL for continued financial support for the publication of the Melbourne *Teateleht*. We now have 248 email subscribers to this quarterly newsletter.

7. WOLLONGONG Estonian Society (WES)



Wollongong Estonian Society 2025 AESL Report.

WES Committee.

Chairperson: Merike Harvey.

Secretary: Claudia Kalnin.

Ass. Sec.: Linda Tiltsen.

Treasurer: Vanessa Angela Stevenson.

Committee Members: Helen Hallingu. Leanne Mahe.

WES currently has 20 members and 1 life-member.

2025 WES Calendar of Events included: Independence Day, Mother's Day, Jaani Päev, Restoration Day, Father's Day, and Jõulud celebrations, with lunch and meetings held at the German Club in Kembla Grange.

In May, we enjoyed a visit from Ambassador Jaan Reinhold and his wife Krista Reinhold at Wollongong Harbour for brunch.

In June, sadly we mourned the passing of one of our life-members Herr Anton Erich Ups, Puhka Rahu.

In July, our President Merike visited Estonia to spend time with her family.

WES history continues to be an ongoing project.

Members continue to enjoy meeting, celebrating Estonian traditions and Estonian cultural events and lunching. Attendance fluctuates due to other commitments.

Report completed by Claudia Kalnin, Secretary. 1st September 2025.

Contacts.

Merike Harvey: merikeh@live.com

Linda Tiltsen: cabbageroll60@gmail.com

WES Group Email: wollongongeestiselts@groups.outlook.com

8. Estonian-Australian Association of the NORTHERN TERRITORY (EAANT)

The EAANT has been largely inactive in the recent years.

The Honorary Consul from Estonia to Northern Territory recently informed that there are less than 120 Estonians currently in the Northern territory. However, he has talked with Manfred Mletsin and there are plans to resurrect the EAANT in the coming year

9. Estonian Society Of TASMANIA

This group dissolved in recent years, though people still gather at times in more informal situations.

10. Estonian Cultural Foundation In Australia Ltd = ECFA



Summary of Activities of the Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia (ECFA) July 2024 – June 2025

The Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia is pleased to provide a summary of events and activities undertaken during the 2024-5 financial year.

In recent years we have moved most of our funds into investment portfolios. In the twelve months up till 30 June 2025, the company generated \$40,528 surplus from our investment portfolio. The details of financial results are shown in the Annual Accounts.

The Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia (ECFA) uses its funds every year to support various groups or projects which aim to further Estonian culture and language across Australia, and bring together people with Estonian heritage or interests. This includes any activities held anywhere in Australia, and we look at these as partnerships where we support these activities.

In 2025, we had applications seeking a total of \$57,1000 in funding.

ECFA has a general policy of only allocating amounts from the profit from our investments each year, so that we do not diminish our investment base. For 2025-6, this was \$40,528.

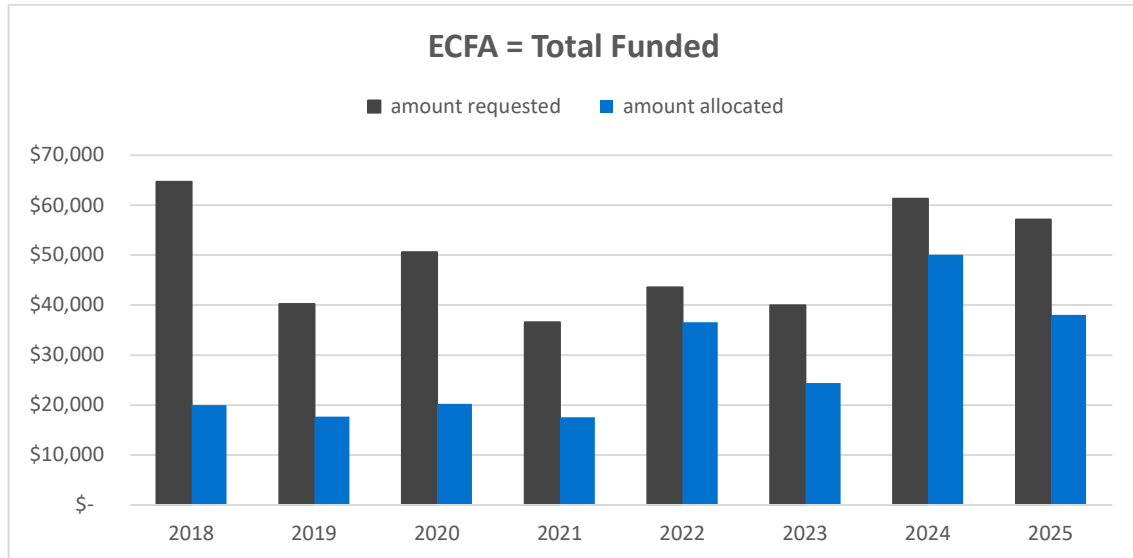
Funding approved in 2024 for the 2024-5 year included Eesti Päevad in Adelaide, as well as choirs and dance groups heading to Estonia for Laulupidu and Tantsupidu, hence that year was a large approval that also drew upon cash reserves. After considering the funding requests received this year, total funding approved in July 2025 for the 2024-5 financial year was \$38,000, as below.

It is also noteworthy that while most of our funds came from NSW, we are supporting the diaspora across the entire country.

We are waiting reports and pictures from other funding recipients. Once received, these will be posted to our website.

Donations or bequests to ECFA are most welcome, so that we can continue supporting Estonian culture and heritage across Australia.

Amounts allocated in recent years:



This shows that over recent years, ECFA has generally been increasing the amount of funding allocated.

Details of funding from ECFA approved for 2025-6

Estonian Archives in Australia = \$3,500, to replace the old computers which are out of date and cannot be upgraded. The Estonian Archives are an important repository of our memory of our culture and events in our diaspora across Australia.

HEIA - Hello Estonians in Australia (formerly the Australian Estonian Media Project / eesti.org.au) = \$2,000,

HEIA has been launched !

HEIA aims to keep you informed on what's happening in the Estonian community in Australia. Keep up with the latest events, news, consular and passport information, cultural activities, and more.

People receive an email with updated news via HEIA a few times each week, or you can simply go to their website at <https://eesti.org.au/>

This funding has been rolled over from the previous year, and will support the team who are looking to commission specific original content from professional Australian-Estonian journalists/writers in the coming year.

Estonian Language Curriculum Developing Workshop = \$5,000

The Estonian language is a key fundamental to maintaining our culture!

We have teachers working with the Mudilasrings (children's learning and playgroups) and other groups in each state.

This project involves bringing together Estonian playgroup educators and community language teachers from across Australia for a three-day intensive curriculum development workshop to be held in Sydney in February 2026. The main aim is to develop a practical implementation plan for use in Estonian playgroups and potential Community Language Schools.

This workshop will focus on Curriculum framework for Estonian language education in older playgroups and primary school year levels Prep–Year 2. It will consider alignment of curriculum objectives and content with the Australian National Curriculum for Languages.

It should also strengthen the national network of Estonian language educators, promoting ongoing collaboration and resource sharing.

EstWest = Estonian Cultural Association in Western Australia = \$1,500, towards the venue hire for an Estonian family-and-music Christmas festival in December 2025.

The Perth Estonian Christmas Festival aims to bring joy and connection to over 250 children and their families in their community. This event is designed to engage both young school-aged children and youth, while also including meaningful, intergenerational activities that welcome seniors in a supportive and festive environment.

Newy EestLASTE Kultuuriring (Language and Culture Club for Estonian Kids in Newcastle) = \$700, to provide ongoing opportunities for Newcastle and Hunter region children to get acquainted with Estonian language and culture through songs, dances, stories, games, cultural activities and excursions.

Sydney Mudilasring, Estonian Children's Playgroup in Sydney = \$2,000, to support the work of this group in fostering and developing Estonian culture for young children in Sydney. This Mudilasring meets weekly and promotes Estonian language, music and culture among Estonian families and their young children, and strengthens the Estonian community in Sydney. The playgroup continues to be a place for Estonian families and children to meet, speak Estonian, sing, dance, and celebrate holidays. In 2024, this group expanded to also include pre-school sessions for 4 years and above.

Sydney Estonian Handicraft Circle = \$2,000

SESKKE have commenced the **establishment of a “library” of Estonian folk-costumes (rahvariided). in Australia**. They aim to collect pre-loved rahvariided, be it on loan or donated, then repair, clean, maintain and lend out to people when needed for performances. They are also making new rahvariided from materials purchased in Estonia, especially children’s clothes. Funding for 2025-6 is mainly for software to manage and maintain inventory of the library.

Estonian Society in Melbourne = \$2,000,

to conduct an Estonian childrens' Language and Culture camp.

Building on the success of last year's initiative, the Estonian Children's Language and Culture Camp 2025 aims to further strengthen the connection between Estonian families across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Gold Coast Estonian Society = \$3,000,

to conduct an Estonian childrens' Language and Culture camp =

Queensland'i Perelaager. The Gold Coast Estonian Society, is organising a family camp in November 2025 for the Estonian communities of Gold Coast and Brisbane. The 3-day, 2-night camp will be held in Tyalgum and is designed for families with children aged 0–15, offering age-appropriate activities in Estonian. The camp aims to foster a deeper sense of cultural identity and ensure the long-term sustainability of the Estonian diaspora in Australia. The camp is already fully booked, with a substantial wait-list.

Melbourne Estonian Society Craft Group = \$900,

Kirivööd - Estonian-Baltic band weaving. The aim is to conduct workshops to teach traditional Estonian pick up band/belt weaving in Victoria. The group plans to expand on this to other activities in future years.

Sydney Estonian Society, Australia tour: Piip and Tuut - Children/Family play = \$5,500,

This funding is to support the promoters to bring a 2-person play to Australia, with performances in main cities. (<https://piipjatuut.ee/>)

Piip and Tuut won the Estonian Theatre Prize of the Year in 2014 as the best company playing for the young audience and were nominated for the same prize in 2018, 2021 and 2023; However, they have a unique audience by appealing to the whole family. In 2022 they were decorated with a state award - the Order of the White Star by the President of Estonian Republic.

Sydney Estonian Society, Australia tour: Mamma Lood (Nana's stories) - Children/Family play = \$2,000,

This funding is to support bringing a performance to Australia, with performances in main cities. Actor Margus Tabor - Ugala Theater.

In almost everyone's life there has been a Nana. A confident woman who raised a flock of children, who persisted through fire, floods, soviet rule and of course a drunk husband. Nana through her long life's experience has many stories to tell. Sadly her stories are disappearing with time but some still survive. To memorialize this priceless inheritance, Viljandi Ugala theater's Margus Tabor brings his own Nana's stories to the stage. And not just her stories but the entire life philosophy of Hiiumaa!

Estonian ‘Sõrve’ Childrens’ Camp (7th to 14th January 2024) = \$8,000,

the annual camp, is a key cultural and social Estonian community event, that has been running for over 60 years, and provides a rich experience for children and all adults, sharing customs, heritage, language, dancing and singing. As in previous years, the camp is to be held in regional NSW.

Hans Ots Grant = \$1,900,

This grant is provided by ECFA and administered by Sõrve Sõbrad. The purpose is to provide financial assistance to children or leaders who are resident in Australia and who, because of excessive cost of travel, financial or other hardship reasons would otherwise not be able to attend the annual children’s summer camp. By agreement, this year’s grant was reduced due to a surplus from previous years.

TOTAL AMOUNTS AWARDED for 2025-6 = \$38,000

As noted in last year’s report, we need to consider the future and possible implications for the Estonian diaspora across Australia.

Our Estonian diaspora is expanding the range of activities, and increasing their number. To date, we have been judging applications on their merits, projected impact and value to the community, as well as on how they contribute to Estonian culture. It is likely that as these keep increasing, we will need to determine priorities according to how much the activities contribute to the wide diaspora.

We plan to further discuss our investments in the coming year, in particular our appetite for risk – do we want to chance increasing our income and our assets?

The Board has been considering the dwindling ECFA membership, and considering the composition of the Board for the future. Ideally we would like to expand the membership to people from other states, and see new Directors from there as well.

Our new Constitution, adopted on 20 March 2022, generally limits Directors to six years; after that time, they should step down for at least a year, to enhance rejuvenation of the Board. This Rule is impacting on this meeting’s decisions.

While preparing for the 2025 AGM, we uncovered a contradiction in the Constitution. Hence the first item of business in the agenda was a Special resolution to amend this situation.

We also became aware of an anomaly in the appointment of the Treasurer in the last year. As soon as this was realised, the Board took steps to rectify this situation.

In the coming year, we will continue to review the Constitution, as part of our due diligence. We continually need to update e.g. developing procedures to accommodate modern technology, and enhance meetings.

I thank my fellow Directors for their ongoing contributions throughout the year, and look forward to continuing this work in the coming years.

In particular, I would like to thank Hillar Ranniko, who has served as a Director of ECFA for 23 years; Dr Peeter Muttik, who has served as a Director for 22 years; and Ms Ingrid Galloway (nee Tartu), who has been on the Board for 19 years.

I would ask you to all join me in giving these three people a standing ovation for their contribution to Estonian culture over many many years.

We look forward to continue working with the Estonian diaspora in Australia, to enhance Estonian culture and language and community.



Dr Juho Looveer
Chairman
20th October, 2025

ORGANISATION NAME **Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia, Limited**

Board Members/ Positions (2024 – elected on 5th November 2024)

Dr Juho Looveer – Chairman

Dr Peeter Muttik – Deputy Chairman

Ms Ingrid Galloway (née Tartu) – Secretary

Ms Elen Ellervee – Treasurer

BOARD MEMBERS : - Mr Hillar Ranniko
 Ms Maie Barrow
 Ms Kristi Barrow
 Mr Lembit Suur
 Ms Siiri Iisma
 Ms Ave Nukki

11. Sydney Eesti Seltsi Kunsti-, Käsitöö Ja Etnograafia Ring = SESKKE

Handicraft

ORGANISATION NAME: Sydney Eesti Seltsi Kunsti-, Käsitöö- ja Etnograafia Ring (SESKKE)

PRIMARY CONTACT: Ingrid Renno

EMAIL: koreneff@bigpond.com; seskke@eesti.org.au

PHONE: 0404 460 661

COMMITTEE MEMBERS/POSITIONS: President Ingrid Renno

Vice President Marissa Pikkat

Secretary Maie Pikkat

Treasurer Koidula Muttik

Archives Linda Savi, Hiie Pank, Pia Raynard

Rahvariide Library Administrator Maie Pikkat

Media Liaison Esmée Okamoto, Marissa Pikkat

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 22

ACTIVITIES IN 2025 (01.01.2025 – 01.12.2025) – please include conducted, ahead, cancelled, online events

Making Pirukad in the Southern Highlands, NSW, Australia:

On the **9th of November 2024**, in the beautiful forest area of Colo Vale, NSW, Maie Pikkat's kitchen became a hive of activity. Dough was slowly rising, fillings had been prepared, the large kitchen island bench was waiting for us with rolling pins, circle cutters and flour. SESKKE had organised a special event - a Piruka making workshop with the goal of creating 800 pirukad!!!

Could this really be achieved? And how long would it take? Well, the simple answer of course is, "We're Estonians and Estonians can do anything!".

Energy levels and spirits were high with lots of chatter and aprons donned in anticipation of dustings of flour as we all found our positions and duties around the bench.

Rolling pins began to roll as we flattened the dough and cut circles of dough ready to receive their

filling - there was carrot, mushroom and pork fillings waiting to be spooned onto the smooth silky dough and encased.

Outside, the hot oil was bubbling, waiting to cook the raw pirukad, till crisp and golden. Did I mention that 2 husbands graciously offered their help in this final part of the process?!

Over the hours we shared our fond memories of making pirukad with an older generation of Estonians from our childhoods. Here in Australia, families passed down their special dough recipes and favourite fillings - no two were ever exactly the same but always delicious. As a child, with my own Vanaema, "Granny", I always looked forward to special celebrations, as it was a given that pirukad were on the menu! Didn't every family in Sydney make pirukad? How special that our Estonian traditions were being kept alive and passed down from generation to generation, maybe even more so now in today's fast paced world. Thankfully we can learn to treasure those things that remain unchanged.

My husband, who grew up in the USA with Estonian heritage, fondly recalls similar experiences with his "Memme". Currently, our daughters, Tara and Kati-Rose, continue our family tradition of making pirukad each Christmas.

Now, as the pirukad were cooking, each of us enjoyed reflecting on this shared activity where it became strongly evident that this feeling of belonging and teamwork further assisted us to keep going to reach our goal. We all felt like we were part of a bigger family who wanted to share our efforts with the wider Estonian community.

Soon it was time for the important taste test - we all agreed that the end product was a success. They were delicious and incredibly, we achieved our goal of 800 in total!!! Next, we were ready to package the pirukad into bags of 1 dozen each, ready to freeze.

These were ordered online and were available for sale at the Sydney Jõululaat on Sunday, 1st December 2024 at the Sydney Eesti Maja.

11th November 2024 - Soome, Eesti Laad, Sydney Eesti maja



Sydney Eesti Selts requested that our group assist with the running of a Children's craft activity

during the Finnish/ Estonian combined community event. Paddle pop stick weaving was a popular activity, where children were creating Christmas tree decorations and mobiles. An introduction to a weaving loom and woven utility bag making was a more challenging activity.

30th November 2024, Christmas gathering at Linda Savi's (written by Ingrid Hansen)



“On

November 30, 2024, we came together at Linda Savi and Kalev, who generously welcomed us all into their home, to celebrate Christmas and another year of talking about our handicrafts, and plans for projects in the year ahead. The rain held off for us to enjoy a festive table gathering on the back deck, surrounded by nature.

Ten of us from SESKKE, plus any partners, gathered around a table that was overflowing with delicious Estonian dishes. We had fresh veggies, crisp salads, fruit, herring, potato salad, chicken, meatballs, deli meats, and of course the Estonian black bread, must leib. And then came the sweets and cakes, which were as refreshing as they were decadent.

We talked about the year, which was full of creativity and wonderful workshops, including embroidery workshops, photo sessions for the beautiful calendar showcasing the diverse range of Estonian folk costumes. Also, a kringle baking workshop, and a pirukad making gathering added to the collection of learning of cooking traditional Estonian foods. Whether it was finishing a tricky project, learning something new, or just sharing ideas, we've all added to the joy of handicraft.

Lucky to have a wonderful group of people who give their time and knowledge to pass on their craft to others, to educate and enjoy the rich culture of Estonian folklore, through handicraft and food.



December, 2024 - Market Day - Children's Craft activity



SESKKE members assisted in providing wool, instruction and craft supplies for the children's craft activity room which ran in conjunction to the Christmas Market Day. Our members provided resources and instructions and Mudilasing representatives facilitated the activities with our assistance.



Mai Buchert (on behalf of SESKKE) ran a drop-in workshop for children's handicraft workshop at Eesti Maja. There were at least 15 children (4-10 yrs of age) attending. We did wool craft & card weaving. They made Decorations for the Christmas tree. Lots of fun was had by all. Even parents participated.



1st December 2024 - Market Day

The Annual Market Day was arranged by Sydney Eesti Selts and the Sydney Estonian Handicraft Assoc. was again proud to present our group’s annual achievements. Beautiful embroidered pin cushions, Christmas tree decorations, quilted and stitched items, wooden items decorated with pyrography were featured and embellished with Estonian folk designs. Pirukad which had been made in an earlier group workshop were sold at the markets as a fundraising exercise.



The

inaugural 2025 Calendar “Meie Kogukond” was displayed and on sale. The calendar features photographs released from the Digital Archive of Estonian Folk Costumes in Australia, showcasing our community members wearing their treasured folk costumes plus many from the Folk Costume Library. The Digital Archive and the Folk Costume library are projects which are facilitated by our members.

In addition, SESKKE ran the annual raffle with members donating lots of treats for the making of hampers and raffle prizes. The funds raised by the raffle will assist in provisioning annual donations to the Estonian community groups.

8th December 2023 – Christmas lunch raffle

SESKKE members again donated approximately a dozen raffle prizes to assist with a fundraising effort for Selts and managed raffle ticket sales. Prizes included tasty treats, refreshments and three handmade Christmas wreaths made by one of our members. Close to \$400.00 was raised through by the raffle and donated to Sydney Eesti Selts.



SESKKE Rahvariide Library Report 2025



Sõrve 2025 Cultural Day was a highly successful and visually striking event, with nearly all participants wearing items from the Rahvariided Library. Both children and adults radiated joy while dressed in their *rahvariided*, creating an atmosphere that was warm, vibrant, and truly electrifying. The presentation was engaging and demonstrated the deep connection our community maintains with Estonian cultural traditions.

We were especially honoured by the presence of Estonian Ambassador Jaan Reinhold, who remarked that it was “the largest collection of *rahvariided* he has seen outside Estonia.” His words were a significant acknowledgement of the community’s dedication to preserving and celebrating our heritage.

Over the past year, the Rahvariided Library has expanded considerably thanks to the generous donations of valuable traditional garments. We extend our sincere thanks to all contributors. Their support has played an essential role in strengthening and showcasing our cultural heritage within the diaspora.



Following our AGM on the 8th February 2025, we held a regular meeting where we determined our activities for the 2025 calendar year.

5th April, 2025, Photography for the Digital Archive of Estonian Folk Costumes in Australia continues

The pop-up photography studio was again setup in the Sydney Estonian House. We had a dedicated team of handicraft group members arranging for the advertising, scheduling of models into a 30-minute session time, liaison and the distribution of documentation. The photography day was managed by another team who arrived for an early morning setup of lighting, photography equipment, layout of props and ironing of the backdrop. The bump-in process and equipment testing takes approximately three hours of active work for the team of four.

Community members modelled their own cherished folk costumes as well as costumes from the Handicraft Association Folk Costume Library. 13 sets of Folk Costumes were modelled and photographed.

A selection of photos from this 5th April session and many prior sessions since EP2022 have been released for inclusion on the 2026 Our Community / Meie Kogukond Calendar.

Following up from the request we received last year, to “pretty up” the cushions for the Eesti Maja foyer, here are some refreshed and new cushion covers.



Anne Simmul wrote the following about **Craft Camp 2025 held in Viljandi**.

This was my first time attending Craft Camp Estonia held in the delightful town of Viljandi 13-19 July 2025 organised by The University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy, the department of Estonian Native Crafts.

I found that it was an enriching experience to be immersed in Estonian heritage and culture. The organisers and teachers were very friendly and willing to impart their knowledge across a variety of workshops that were held throughout the week. There were participants from around the world and several from Australia who have attended previously. There was also delicious food eaten at dinners, with local musicians providing the entertainment. The local mayor even lead an evening walking tour around the historic sights of Viljandi.

Some of the workshops on offer were taught in the traditional methods used by our ancestors so that these precious skills would not be lost. My favourite though was Eco printing where we used native leaves and flowers to imprint their colours and shapes onto some material creating beautiful designs.

The highlight for me was a day trip to Kihnu island organised by the camp where we learned about the community still living a traditional life and the importance of crafts in their lives. We visited a church, the heritage museum which had an abundance of local knitted, sewn and woven artifacts on display. We also were provided with a delicious lunch comprising of smoked fish and fish soup. I was happy to also have the chance to peruse and purchase some homemade knitted and woven items incorporating the Kihnu designs.

I would recommend this craft camp to anyone who is interested in Estonian arts and crafts.



We held a Mulgi Embroidery workshop 11th October Eesti maja where participants learned about the history of Mulgi embroidery, the meaning of the traditional symbols used and created Mulgi designs on either a bag, Christmas decorations or serviettes. Laughter and happy faces abounded whilst learning this valuable heritage skill. A delicious morning tea and lunch were included in this fun filled day.

Anne Barratt wrote about the Embroidery working bee for the 500 years of literature and literary writings wall hanging from Eesti. We were sent 3 metres to embroider.

Today I had the honour of stitching a small piece of something big — a global embroidery project celebrating the Estonian language and culture. ✨🧵

Women have gathered around crafts like this for thousands of years... creating, storytelling, healing, and preserving identity together — thread by thread.

It was so special to sit alongside the incredible ladies from the Handicrafts Committee at the Estonian House today, adding our stitches to a 7-metre story that will join work from Estonians all around the world.

Our hands added love, history, and connection into every stitch... and soon, our piece will travel from Australia to Estonia to become part of something truly meaningful. EE 🇪🇪🧵

Here's to heritage, community, and the threads that keep us connected across distance and time.



Piruka working bee, 8th November 2025, Maie Pikkat's Colo Vale

Again, we had a piruka making working bee where we gathered at Maie Pikkat's welcoming home to make approximately 1200 meat / carrot / mushroom pirukad to be sold at the Christmas markets later in November.

Christmas markets 23rd November 2025 Eesti maja

Tables were set up, pirukad sold and collected (pre-ordered) and raffle tickets sold. Eesti Maja was a hive of activity on the Sunday with Eesti-style products sold to happy purchasers.

Comments about 2025 events or interesting events ahead

General Comments/ Suggestions

Clarification on the dates for reporting please – if calendar year, then the report can only be completed in very late December or early January. Previously, it has been beginning of November to end of October.

Comments/Thanks/Recognitions

My sincere thanks go to Anne Barratt, Mai Buchert, Ingrid Hansen, Esmée Okamoto, Maie Pikkat, Linda Savi, Anne Simmul for their valuable contributions to this annual report. It is an honour and a pleasure working alongside the enthusiastic and dedicated members of our group. We have had a productive year and I look forward to 2026 being just as exciting with some new activities to be scheduled into our calendar.

Report compiled by Ingrid Renno

12. Sydney Estonian Parents' and Friends' Association – SÕRVE Sõbrad

AESL MEMBER ORGANISATION ANNUAL REPORT – 2025

ORGANISATION NAME:	The Sydney Estonian Parents and Friends Association 'Sõrve Sõbrad'
PRIMARY CONTACT:	PO Box 9 Balmain NSW 2041
EMAIL:	admin@sorve.org.au
PHONE:	(M) 0414 601050 (Sulev Kalamäe)
COMMITTEE MEMBERS/POSITIONS:	President - Sulev Kalamäe Vice President - Arvi Lehtsalu Secretary - Barbara Howard Treasurer - Elen Ellervee Registrar - Katrin Porm Communications – Taimi Maidla Merchandise - Toni Lehtsalu Special projects: Danae Pikkat Special projects: Ella Ranniko.
TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS:	124

ACTIVITIES in 2025:

Introduction

- The Estonian Childrens' Summer Camp 'Sõrve' is a successful annual project that continues to nurture and strengthen cultural bonds within the Australian-Estonian community and help develop future leaders for the community.
- It is now well into it's eighth decade of operations since the first camp was held in 1953.
- Whilst nominally a summer sports camp, 'Sõrve' has a strong focus on the Estonian culture, language and traditional dancing, singing and customs and food.
- 'Sõrve' gives its participants the ability to develop their creativity, relationship skills, communication skills, organisational skills, physical and sporting skills, craft skills and leadership skills.
- Relationships formed at 'Sõrve' often last a lifetime.

Committee Activity

The 'Sõrve Sõbrad' Committee is the elected body of parents and friends which directs and shapes the nature of camp and its associated events, and supports the Leadership Team in running each year's camp.

- Our AGM was held on 8 March 2025 at Sydney Estonian House.
- Following the AGM, the Committee has met 8 times during 2025.
- The focus of the Committee has been the detailed preparation & planning for the next camp, to be held from 4 - 11 January 2026.
- Two delegates from the 'Sõrve Sõbrad' Committee attended the ESTO 2025 'Global Estonian Diaspora Networking Day' in Tallinn on 1 July 2025, and exchanged knowledge and experience with other like-minded Estonian children's camps across the world. They also witnessed the Estonian Foreign Minister's plea on the need for the diaspora to preserve and develop Estonian culture abroad.
- As a result, the 'Sõrve Sõbrad' Committee has decided to establish a new key Leader role, called 'Kultuurijuht'. The aim is to increase the amount of Estonian language & culture learnt at camp.

Camp Leadership Team

Sõrve volunteer leaders are instrumental to the successful planning, organization and conduct of camp. Our Sõrve volunteer leaders begin planning the next camp only weeks after the last camp finishes and meet regularly throughout the year for planning meetings and skills development workshops.

- During the course of 2025, our Camp Leader Erik Tults has assembled a team of over 28 young leaders with Estonian-minded backgrounds from across Australia, who have agreed to donate their time to plan and run the upcoming January 2026 camp.
- An intensive leaders' planning workshop was held over the weekend 15 & 16 August 2025.

Fundraising Events

Whilst the main camp activities take place over a period of a week in January, the larger Sõrve 'family' still stays active throughout the year. Events and gatherings are typically organised to raise money or to develop friendship networks either at Sydney Eesti Maja or other outdoor locations.

- Many members of the Committee and camp Leaders were involved with a heavy program of rehearsals resulting in performances at the Song Festival & Dance Festival in Tallinn in July 2025.

- Nevertheless, a 'Sõrve Disco' fundraising event was held on 13 September at Sydney Estonian House.

January 2025 Camp

- The 2025 camp was successfully held from Sunday 5 January through to Sunday 12 th January at Point Wolstoncroft Sport and Recreation Centre, Gwandalan NSW.
- Attendance at camp totalled 233 people, which included 96 children and 122 adults attending both on a full-time and part-time basis.
- The good levels of attendance and popularity of the camp is evidence that Sõrve continues to be a key cultural and social event for Australian Estonians, both young and old.
- It is clear to the Committee that 'Sõrve' is developing more into a 'family' camp. This year we again witnessed the growing attendance of the 'under 8 year old' group - ie. babies, toddlers and infants together with their young mothers and fathers.
- The Committee recognizes that care must be taken to nurture this younger demographic group, as it represents the future of the 'Sõrve' community.

January 2026 Camp

- The 'Sõrve Sõbrad' Committee and the Camp Leadership team is in detailed planning & final preparations for the next Sõrve camp, scheduled to be held on 4-11 January 2026.
- Once again we are planning to link camp sporting & outdoor activities with Estonian cultural experiences and Estonian heritage, through teaching of Estonian language, story-telling, Estonian music, singing & song-games, Estonian folk-dancing and Estonian arts & crafts. This is the first year we are trialing the new 'Kultuurijuht' role, with the appointment of Ella Scott.

Financial assistance & acknowledgements

- The Sõrve Sõbrad Committee is reliant on the Estonian community to assist with Camp funding and organization to ensure that we can maintain the present camp structure that has been successfully held for 65 years at Point Wolstoncroft.
- The cost of camp is fully met by camp participants, but additional funding does allow for increased Estonian cultural activities, to help meet increasing insurance costs, and to assist with increasing the level of attendance from interstate and regional areas.
- The Sõrve Sõbrad' Committee gratefully acknowledges the vital financial and in-kind assistance provided by the following Estonian community organisations and individuals:
 - Council of Estonian Societies in Australia (AESL),
 - Estonian Cultural Fund in Australia (ECFA)
 - Estonian Society of Sydney (SES) 'Eesti Kodu Linda'.

- Estate of the late Maud Kaljot

In particular, the Sõrve Sõbrad Committee would like to thank the dedication and tireless enthusiasm of our young volunteer Leaders, without whom our camp would not be the happy place it is.

Report completed by Sulev Kalamäe, Sõrve Committee President

17 November 2025

13. VIRMALISED Sydney Estonian Folk Dancers - ANNUAL REPORT – 2025

ORGANISATION NAME: *Virmalised* – Sydney Estonian Folk Dancers

PRIMARY CONTACT: Ella Scott

EMAIL: sydney.virmalised@gmail.com

PHONE: 0477 297 890

COMMITTEE MEMBERS/POSITIONS:

President – Ella Scott

Vice-President – Ella Ranniko

Secretary – Charlotte Boyd

Treasurer – Ximonie Clark

Elen Ellervee

Haz Rodgers

Rhys Maidla

Taimi Maidla

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 33

ACTIVITIES IN 2025 (01.01.2025 – 01.12.2025)

Rehearsals have been held as listed below, with dancers attending either in person at Sydney Estonian House, or online via Zoom.

- Weekly rehearsals on Monday nights for the Sydney *Virmalised* group.
 - Beginners from 6-7:30 pm
 - Advanced from 7:30-9 pm
- Until May: Fortnightly rehearsals from 1:30-3:30 pm on Sunday afternoons for the NSW based dancers in the *Austraalia Virmalised* group (preparing for the XXI *tantsupidu*).
- Until May: National rehearsals have been held from 1:30-4:30 pm on Sunday afternoons every 8 weeks for all *Austraalia Virmalised* dancers (preparing for the XXI *tantsupidu*).

In 2025, Sydney *Virmalised* performed at *Sõrve's* cultural performance in January, *Eesti Vabariigi aastapäeva aktus* organised by *Sydney Eesti Selts* in February, *Emadepäeva aktus* organised by *Sydney Eesti Selts* in May, *Eesti Vabariigi taasiseseisvumispäeva aktus* organised by *Sydney Eesti Selts* in August, the wedding of a member of the Estonian community (Jacinta Boyd) in August, Baltic Markets organised by the Sydney Latvian Society in September, *Thirlmere põlvkondadevaheline mängupäev* organised by *Sydney mudilasring* in November and *Jõululõuna* organized by *Sydney Eesti Selts* in December.

Austraalia Virmalised filmed our second and third rounds of audition videos for the XXI *tantsupidu 'Iseoma'* in March and April, respectively. We were officially accepted to perform a *tantsupidu* in

March. In July, *Austraalia Virmalised* travelled to Estonia for a week of rehearsals before performing in the *XXI tantsupidu 'Iseoma'* in Tallinn, which was a remarkable experience for all involved.

In addition to rehearsals, the *Virmalised* committee organised a social dancing night at Sydney Latvian House in November together with *Jautrais Pāris* (Latvian), *Sūkurys* (Lithuanian), *Lajkonik* (Polish), *Veselka* (Ukrainian) and *Zahrava* (Ukrainian) dance groups. This event gave us the opportunity to mingle and make friends with the groups with whom we shared the stage with at our concert called "*Keskpõrandale kokku / Centre stage, all together*" in November 2024. We taught each other a few social dances from our respective countries and had dinner followed by some more impromptu but very enjoyable social dancing. Our *Virmalised* committee also got to know the committee members/dance teachers from the other dance groups throughout the organisation process and we all seem keen to organise other events together in the future, which is exciting for the future of the Australian Baltic and Slavic communities.

COMMENTS ABOUT 2025 EVENTS OR INTERESTING EVENTS AHEAD

We had the privilege of being invited to perform at or be involved in the events listed above and share our love of Estonian folk dance, so *suur aitäh* to everyone involved.

We are excited to continue performing in 2026 with the following performances planned:

- *Sõrve's* cultural performance in January 2026 – *Sydney* and *Austraalia Virmalised*
- ACT Government's National Multicultural Festival in February – *Sydney* and *Austraalia Virmalised*
- *Eesti Vabariigi aastapäeva aktus* organised by *Sydney Eesti Selts* in February 2025
- *Emadepäeva aktus* organised by *Sydney Eesti Selts* in May 2025
- *Eesti Vabariigi taasiseseisvumispäeva aktus* organised by *Sydney Eesti Selts* in August 2025

In addition to our performances, we will be learning new dances and rehearsing for the *XXX Eesti Päevad* organised by Sydney in April 2027.

COMMENTS/THANKS/RECOGNITIONS

Virmalised would like to thank *Sydney Eesti Selts* for the use of *Eesti Maja* for our regular rehearsals, as well as the SES Zoom account for our online rehearsals. We appreciate the work of the Estonian House Co-operative Society in renovating Estonian House while still accommodating our needs as an active dance group that rehearses in the main hall.

We are grateful to Helena-Mariana Reimann, Kati Grauberg-Longhurst and Ingrid Hamer for sharing their expertise in Estonian folk dancing as well as Reet Piiri from *Eesti Rahvamuuseum* for her expertise in Estonian folk costumes. We are also grateful to the other Estonian dance teachers around Australia for sharing information, knowledge and ideas: Ingrid Hamer and Piret Vaughan (QLD), Amy Tiivas (SA), Rein Valling (VIC), Marin Hicks and Orvi Rõõmus-Kaasik (WA).

Report completed by Ella Scott.

SECTION 4 – AESL SPEECHES AND PUBLICATIONS 2025.



ESTONIANISM IN AUSTRALIA

*At Eesti Päevad Festival, 2024 Adelaide, AESL held **MÖTTETALGUD** – an Open Mic afternoon to gather thoughts about “Estonianism in Australia”. Organised way of being Estonian in Australia, where lays our future?*

The feedback included some great ideas indeed. Let’s keep them coming!

Following is Sirje Rivers’ opening of the event, thereafter some of the thoughts and suggestions that came from it.

Sirje Rivers -

Kicking off MÖTTETALGUD in the bush – hello and warm welcome to everybody to think along – Estonians in Australia, why stick together? Do YOU want to keep your heritage here? If yes then how?

My name is Sirje, have lived in Australia for 30 years. My estonianism started naturally from month one – I like singing so I joined eesti choir in Melbourne and have continued to this day.

Started teaching eesti keel at University High School, worked at SBS radio producing programs for Estonians, joined Melbourne eesti society and the umbrella organisation – Council of Estonian Societies in Australia.

When I came to Australia, I was the first “new Estonian”. There were only the after-war Estonians here and it was a closed society as one can expect from 40 or so years exclusion from homeland.

I have seen a few changes in my time – the old generation Estonians handing over to born here Estonian generation, different waves of new Estonians arriving, and this takes us to today.

As the amount of new Estonians grows bigger and louder and shows initiative, historically speaking, we can compare this time to Estonian organisations that were in Australia since 1800s until the war refugee Estonians arrived and created their own kind of estonianism. One aim of this Möttetalgud is, that should a transition happen again, to explore how we establish a good connection between the existing and the new, and make the change work.

To make what work? We may not look or sound different but we are, because we have walked different ways to get to this point.

I give examples how people may see things differently.

What would you do, in the following situation? New Estonians want to use the kitchen at Estonian House to practise cooking, without being able to pay the set hiring fee.

The attitude that I am suggesting is that if someone is Estonian or has Estonian background, to say YES. First say YES and then see how to make it work.

The “kitchen people” could have used the kitchen for free for a couple of months for their private practise, in return we could have asked them to cater and make an event for us.

We would have created a win-win-win situation – new Estonians get the kitchen that they needed, society get an event out of it, we would have established connection.

We would have enriched the existing society by offering variety and who knows what the future would bring.

New Estonians come with fresh initiative and have different ideas. No need to be weary of our difference. Difference is good - in the long run, for everyone to benefit and to rise together to a new vibrant level.

What about born here Estonians? I give this example, something that new Estonians are not aware of –

In Melbourne, it was Vilma’s mum whose name I do not know but she arrived after the war. Then Vilma was the folk dancing teacher all her life. Then Sven and Vilma’s son Matti, then Matti’s children Rein and Megan, and now Rein’s little children dance. This counts 5 generations of Kiviväli family. This is nothing but a miracle. This is how tightknit and established our society is. Same in every city - folkdancing and choirs have survived and flourish far away from homeland.

Of course it is complicated situation when we name certain names. The saying “no one is irreplaceable”, we do not have the luxury to use. There is no plan B or plan C. Many events are tied to one person’s initiative and massive contribution.

Maybe our next leaders will come from the new Estonians?

We have many second, third, fourth generation Estonians in Australia who are professionally doing strong and interesting things.

Maybe new generations will want something completely different? Maybe future Estonian Houses emerge as a base for business connections between the two countries? We do not know unless we give each other a go and let the new leaders evolve.

What we need is a breeding ground established where this great mix will work, learn from one another and grow. What are the ideas for creating this?

It is good not to stay the same. Difference is not to be afraid of or to shut down, this is an opportunity to learn and to enrich Estonianism in Australia. Both sides have its differences but this is strength.

We have four speakers today. This is where my introduction ends and I hand over the mic to -

Lembit Suur – AESL history; Juho Looveer – AESL future; Kristel Alla – new experience in Australia. Let's GO!

.....

IDEAS PROVIDED FOLLOWING MÖTTETALGUD EVENT -

1. **AESL** constitution states the AESL objective. No issues there – it is followed. Yet people ask, AESL why? (Government, why?) Consensus is needed, what actions make AESL wanted, so society respects AESL actions.
2. **Lembit Suur** – AESL to identify a defined purpose, then plan direction for actions that society respects and needs. AESL talk of Estonians on national level not city by city. AESL talk of Estonians on international level – what is the involvement in Estonian World Organisation and with Estonia? Also AESL Board to be organised in a way that it can take political action IF ever comes the need.
3. **Juho Looveer** – Investigate how to improve communication. Improve personal contacts. How to build up nurturing culture.
4. **Lembit Marder** – eesti majad disappear, move towards cafeteria type venue instead (business) where people can step in at any time. Open to all, with occasional eesti events as needed and wanted.
5. **Richard Semenov** – AESL was formed to unite eestlased in political sense, now Estonia is free, to embrace Estonian culture. Support what community likes, with aim of bringing people together. Events in nature and camp activities – camps like in NSW, Victoria and elsewhere. Bring people together and promote our culture.
6. **Philosophical view** – Estonians have left Estonia, forced or voluntarily, and they want to keep their nationality in a different country. Why? What do they get out of it? To find out. What is relevant, what do people seek and why stay in touch as “Estonians in Australia” – then develop that direction.
- 7 **Collective resources**– gatherings/events are city based, the rest should be national – no city based media but national (newsletters, info), no city based

language but national (zoom, events), materials to share nationally from one space for study/teachings, zoom events filmed/fun videos for kids play in Estonian to save money doing all individually but to set up one database plus sharing ways.

8 How To Belong – new people feel isolated. “Coming to Australia” notes (manual) to publish and share – how to make contact, with whom for what, where to go, how to belong.

9 Harry Ling – Kids Kids Kids. AESL to encourage all children’s activity ideas. Once the connection to Estonianism / language in early childhood is lost – it is lost for ever. Versus - once Estonian always Estonian. Also to promote the thought — why bring kids to esto environment.

10 For next Eesti Päevad - kids room needed. Parents want to attend events and drop kids to eesti environment for that time.

11 For next Eesti Päevad – set up financial account under AESL so this does not rotate from city to city

12 Articles - more to promote and spread the idea of Estonianism. Why to folkdance? Where and how? Melbourne promotes well kids group activities on Sunday mornings. Opportunity to move up from play to deeper culture.

Brisbane folk dance does fantastic promotion. More city based articles are needed – which to set up to be published in one media space for all to read.

13 Sulev Kalamäe – Sõrve experience and its leadership mentoring program – identifying young leaders among eesti kids and the year after promote them to leader’s position and other leaderships will follow from leading the camp activities. Identify and nurture.

14 Harry Ling – Brisbane experience, stepping aside and leaving all in the hands of the “new”, kind of sink or swim – and the “new do swim”.

15 Rahvariided library - rather than keep rahvariided collecting dust at home, loan your rahvariided to the library. Owners can still get them back whenever want to, catalogue with contacts to collect, meanwhile people can borrow long term.

16 Publicity - videos of events held reach more younger audience

17 AESL Zoom “Conversations” sessions to rebrand, whom to invite overall, should cities be represented; whom to invite for topics, one guest speaker per event

18 HOW TO? AESL to write and Media Project to create space where are published pointers – how to organise Eesti Päevad Festival? Grants info, how to apply? How to look for sponsors?

19 Ambassador's help - Grants timeframe to apply is short in Estonia – but can be prepared upfront as grants remain same each year. Should you wish for collaboration please reach out, says Mr Jaan Reinhold.

20 Manuals – Guidelines how to run board; Guidelines for money ; Guidelines how to plan big events; distribute resources to share

21 Media – every city continue writing their events held and upcoming, same as now. Media Project to create and set up space where each city can upload and that it gets published and spread nationally and sent out automatically.

22 Awards – whom does Estonia recognise, how do they get the info? Think in one month now, Independence Day awards – to whom? Different levels? City awards for local outstanding work and contribution, AESL award to follow once action reaches national level and has been done for 10 years. Not for sitting on board but for what has been achieved and contributed. City levels recognitions are different, recognise after 2-3 years of contribution, young recognition set for encouragement, initiative award etc. Tänukirj for any special work done.

23 Buddy system for new arrivals – someone to greet at door, to establish connection with one person, not to feel alone, to be welcome, to be accepted, to get introduced to city and sets, moving towards participating and belonging – a buddy to talk and show initially around

24 Stories - Media Project and AESL collected and shared successfully stories of The Great Escape. Now to include the new Estonians stories as well, how have the new found their way around in their new city in Australia, work-shopping-renting.

25 AESL International – audience to be informed what AESL do in UEKN and Global Estonian– regular informing articles about cooperation on world level

Last but not least. There is no AESL Board on salary, meaning how to attract the skills needed for considering all the above, and to implement? We know we want to! Especially big THANK YOU goes also to people who following the MÖTTETALGUD event, offered their willingness, ability and time and will join in the voluntary work!

People gave their names up to join city organisation, Media Project, AESL Board. What skills do you have, what do you want to be part of?



SPEECH at close of XXIX Eesti Päevad in Adelaide, 30 Dec 2024

by Dr Juho Looeer, President AESL,

Nii ajaratas ringi käind . . .

Me kaunid päevad mööda läind . .

The words of our *Lahkumise Laul*, the last song sung by our choirs, are beautiful. It is one of the songs, like *Ema Süda*, that I can not sing, because the emotions it evokes send me to tears. It is an appropriate and perfect way to end our Festival.

And today it was sung so beautifully by our combined choirs – Thank You to all singers!!

Kaunimad Laulud . . .

I can't remember hearing our choirs any better than they were today – a great thank you to the singers, and also to the conductors who have developed these groups, and the organisers behind them.

And now might be an appropriate time to announce a couple of things . . .

Kooskõlas has members from across Australia – Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide – and even Perth! The choir has sung at the last two Lalulupidus. We have now heard, in the past ten days, that they have passed the first round of auditions and are shortlisted for the coming Laulupidu in 2025.

At the same time, the Melbourne Ladies choir has also auditioned. And they have also passed their audition - for the **Elite** womens' choirs section of the Laulupidu.

And all of our rahvatantsijad – the dancers. WOW!!

New dances, new choreography, new repertoires – so much energy from all groups, and across all ages. So delightful to see. We must all thank the dancers, and especially their leaders, who have led this.

We have seven dance-couples who are also auditioning for the 2025 Tantsupidu, but unfortunately they won't find out till late March.

Me kaunid

As we think back to the dancing, the singing, all the youngsters and Mudilasringid, the handicrafts, and other activities, I am confident in saying that our Estonian culture in Australia is looking good and really positive. It augurs well for the future!

Ajaratas . . .

We are at the end of the year. And seventy years ago today, the first Australian Eesti Päevad were ending. This festival started because our early community leaders wanted a gathering for Estonians across Australia, where we could share our culture, demonstrate it, showcase it, and enjoy it, together. Eesti Päevad is the most important event for our diaspora, and we have maintained this festival for 70 years.

We need to thank all the people who have organised these events; in this case, Martin Kurvits, President of the Adelaide Estonian Society, and all the people who have helped.

Me kaunid päevad . . .

As one Eesti Päevad ends, we look forward to the next festival.

I would now ask the chief organiser of the XXIXth Eesti Päevad to bring the Eesti Päevad flag forward . . .

Most Eesti Päevad in Australia have been held between Xmas and the New Year; a few have been held at easter or other times. That suited our diaspora in the past.

However we note comments from many, about the expense of travel and accommodation at peak times. And many young families say that Xmas and Easter, for them, is family time.

So, the next Austraalia Eesti Päevad will be . . .

. . . held in Sydney

. . . in 2027

. . . from 8-11 April

This covers the common weekend for school holidays across Australia, and hopefully should suit more families.

I now invite the project leader for the XXXth Eesti Päevad, Ms Ave Nukki, to come forward to take the flag.

And now,

Nii ajaratas ringi käind . . .

I thank all participants, and declare the XXIXth Eesti Päevad CLOSED !!

See you all in Sydney in April 2027 !!



INDEPENDENCE DAY GREETING from AESL PRESIDENT 2025

LUGUPEETUD EESTI PEREKOND AUSTRALIAS

To OUR ESTONIAN FAMILY ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Last year I wished everyone a Happy Birthday for 24 February – as it was the day that in 1918, Estonia declared its independence for the first time.

As many others have previously done, last year I looked at some of the history, some of the events that led to this momentous occasion. [*Past AESL speeches and addresses can be found at eesti.org.au].*

The day is celebrated around the world – back in our homeland, as well as in many other countries by the diaspora. We all do it in our own way, whichever way is meaningful for us.

And we share this with our friends, our families, and most importantly, with the newer younger generations. Indeed, much of our future will lie with the next generations, the mudilased.

So let us all lift our glasses and have a drink as we say “Happy Birthday”, and **“Elagu Eesti Vabariik!”**

Many of us are here because our parents, grandparents or other relatives fled the Russian purges and the great war in the 1940's.

Last year, 2024, we unveiled a monument in Pärnu to commemorate the refugees = those who did not want to leave, but could not stay. It was a bitter time. I don't want to dwell on that today, but we need to remember that our freedom did not come cheaply, but with a lot of effort by a lot of people.

Unfortunately, I believe, history will see our great day overshadowed.

For on 24 February in 2022, this was the day that Putin's forces invaded Ukraine.

This is a most tragic event. But we need to note it – it reminds us of the russians, and how they see Europe, and their neighbours. They care little for international opinion, sadly even less for many of their own people.

And just in the past two weeks we have had that silly Trumpet from America trying to change history, claiming that Ukraine caused the war.

Facts are facts! = Russia invaded Ukraine; Russian troops stormed into the Ukraine, not the other way around.

In Sydney, the Ukrainians have invited us all to a one-hour commemoration ceremony to be held at St. Mary's Cathedral Square, on Monday 24th, from 6-7 p.m. Many countries will be there with their flags; even our Premier has agreed to attend.

We might have thought some 30 years ago that Estonia's independence was guaranteed from now on; but if Putin takes Ukraine – who will be next = Hungary? Poland? Eesti and the Baltics?

Last year I cited former Prime Minister of Estonia Kaja Kallas:

"after restoring our independence, we have raised a generation of young people who take the current organisation of our society for granted."

– i.e. the freedom, the democracy, and so on

"The current situation in Europe resembles the tensions before World War II."

"Our freedom has never been under such a serious attack in the last thirty years as it is today"

While we celebrate our great day on 24th February, we need to also support Ukraine and our fellow Europeans and their struggles to maintain their own independence, and be ready to again support the fight, the struggles.

In Australia, we celebrated our Eesti Päevad festival in Adelaide between Xmas and the New Year. It reminded us of how much we can enjoy our culture. Most heartening was to see so many young people taking part, and the emergence in the diaspora of so many Mudilasringid.

The AESL traditionally gives our thanks to some of our outstanding Estonians every year on Independence Day.

Today we celebrate and recognise just a few of these people. This year's Honours are awarded to –

Bernadette Pilli Victoria for her outstanding a long-term service in leading and working with the Melbourne Estonian Society.

AESL would also like to acknowledge two people who have demonstrated a commitment to the Estonian culture in Australia.

Maie Pikkat Sydney long-term involvement with the Handicraft group

Ella Scott Sydney a young person who has shown a lot of commitment to the Sõrve camp, and now is leader of the Virmalised folk-dancers.

Dear Estonians in Australia, AESL wishes you joyful Independence Day celebrations and success in enterprises that take will take us to the future.

So, I say to you

Happy Independence Day!

Long live Free Estonia! Elagu Eesti Vabariik !

24 February 2025

Dr Juho Looveer

President, AESL = Council of Estonian Societies in Australia

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AUSTRALIA EESTI SELTSIDE LIIT

COUNCIL OF ESTONIAN SOCIETIES IN AUSTRALIA Inc.

ABN 34 579 619 788

ISESEISVUSPÄEVA TERVITUS AESL PRESIDENDILT 2025

LUGUPEETUD EESTI PEREKOND AUSTRALIAS

Eelmisel aastal soovisin kõigile palju õnne 24. veebruariks – just sel päeval kuulutas Eesti 1918. aastal esimest korda välja oma iseseisvuse.

Nagu paljud teised on varem teinud, vaatasin eelmisel aastal mõningaid ajalugu, sündmusi, mis viisid selle tähtsa sündmuseni. [Varasemad AESL-i kõned ja pöördumised on leitavad aadressil eesti.org.au].

Päeva tähistatakse üle maailma – tagasi meie kodumaal, aga ka paljudes teistes riikides diasporaa poolt. Me kõik teeme seda omal moel, kuid see on meie jaoks tähendusrikas.

Ja me jagame seda oma sõprade, peredega ja mis kõige tähtsam, uuemate nooremate põlvkondadega. Tõepoolest, suur osa meie tulevikust on järgmiste põlvkondade, mudilaste käes.

Tõstkem siis kõik klaasid ja jooge üks jook, kui ütleme "Palju õnne sünnipäevaks" ja "Elagu Eesti Vabariik!"

Paljud meist on siin sellepärast, et meie vanemad, vanavanemad või teised sugulased põgenesid 1940. aastatel Venemaa puhastuste ja suure sõja eest.

Eelmisel aastal, 2024, avasime Pärnus mälestussamba pagulaste mälestuseks = need, kes ei tahtnud lahkuda, kuid ei saanud jääda. See oli kibe aeg. Ma ei taha sellel täna pikemalt peatuda, kuid me peame meeles pidama, et meie vabadus ei tulnud odavalt, vaid paljude inimeste suure pingutusega.

Kahjuks usun, et ajalugu jääb meie suure päeva varju.

24. veebruaril 2022 oli see päev, mil Putini väed Ukrainasse tungisid.

See on kõige traagilisem sündmus. Kuid me peame seda tähele panema – see tuletab meile meelde venelasi ja seda, kuidas nad näevad Euroopat ja oma

naabreid. Nad hoolivad vähe rahvusvahelisest arvamusest, kahjuks veelgi vähem paljudest oma inimestest.

Ja just viimase kahe nädala jooksul on meil olnud see rumal trompet Ameerikast, kes üritas ajalugu muuta, väites, et Ukraina põhjustas sõja.

Faktid on faktid! = Venemaa tungis Ukrainasse;
Vene väed tungisid Ukrainasse, mitte vastupidi.

Sydneys on ukrainlased kutsunud meid kõiki ühetunnisele mälestustseremooniale, mis toimub Püha Maarja katedraali väljakul (Sydney raekoja kõrval) esmaspäeval, 24. päeval kell 18-19. Paljud riigid on seal oma lippudega; isegi meie peaminister on nõustunud osalema.

Me võisime umbes 30 aastat tagasi arvata, et Eesti iseseisvus on nüüdsest tagatud; aga kui Putin võtab Ukraina – kes on järgmine = Ungari? Poola? Eesti ja Baltikum?

Eelmisel aastal tsiteerisin endist Eesti peaministrit Kaja Kallast:

"Pärast iseseisvuse taastamist oleme üles kasvatanud põlvkonna noori, kes peavad meie ühiskonna praegust korraldust iseenesestmõistetavaks." – st vabadus, demokraatia ja nii edasi

"Praegune olukord Euroopas sarnaneb pingetega enne Teist maailmasõda."

"Meie vabadus pole kunagi viimase kolmekümne aasta jooksul olnud nii tõsise rünnaku all kui praegu."

Kuigi tähistame oma suurt päeva 24. veebruaril, peame toetama ka Ukrainat ja meie kaaseurooplasi ning nende võitlust oma iseseisvuse säilitamise nimel ning olema valmis taas toetama võitlust, võitlusi.

Austraalias tähistasime jõulude ja aastavahetuse vahel Adelaide'is oma Eesti Päevad. See tuletas meile meelde, kui palju me saame oma kultuuri nautida. Kõige julgustavam oli näha nii palju noori osalemas ja nii paljude Mudilasringide esilekerkimist diasporaas.

AESL tänab traditsiooniliselt igal aastal taasiseseisvumispäeval mõnda meie silmapaistvat eestlast.

Täna tähistame ja tunnustame vaid mõnda neist inimestest. Selle aasta autasud saavad –

Bernadette Pilli Victoria silmapaistva pikaajalise teenistuse eest Melbourne'i Eesti Seltsi juhtimisel ja koostöös.

AESL soovib tunnustada ka kahte inimest, kes on näidanud üles pühendumust eesti kultuurile Austraalias.

Maie Pikkat Sydney pikaajaline seotus Käsitöörühmaga

Ella Scott Sydney on Sõrve laagrisse palju pühendunud noor inimene, kes on nüüd Virmalised rahvatantsumeeste eestvedaja.

Armsad Austraalia eestlased, AESL soovib teile rõõmsat iseseisvuspäeva tähistamist ja edu ettevõtetes, mis viivad meid tulevikku.

Niisiis, ma ütlen teile

HEAD ISESEISVUSPÄEVA!

JA PALJU ÕNNE SÜNNIPÄEVAKS!

ELAGU EESTI VABARIIK !

24. veebruar 2025

Dr Juho Looveer

President, AESL = Austraalia Eesti Seltside Liit.



AUSTRALIA EESTI SELTSIDE LIIT

COUNCIL OF ESTONIAN SOCIETIES IN AUSTRALIA Inc

ABN: 34 579 619 788

RESTORATION-of-INDEPENDENCE DAY GREETING from AESL 2025

LUGUPEETUD KAASMAALASED – FELLOW ESTONIANS

Who went to the Laulupidu (Song Festival) or Tanstupidu (Dance Festival) in Estonia this year? Or who visited Estonia this year?

How did you feel when you went to these events?

How did you feel being in this wonderful country, our homeland?

I think that most people who went had a really great time, and felt so good about being there.

Indeed, we have a right to be happy and proud of our homeland.

As is internationally recognised, Estonia took back its freedom on 20 August 1991. And many thanks can go to the Song and Dance festivals, which helped unite our people and gave them a vehicle for passive resistance.

Since then, Estonia has performed exceedingly well. It is a leader in technology; a leader in Start-ups; acknowledged for its super results in international educational tests, and so much more. Estonia has taken major leadership roles in the European Union and other international organisations.

And while we are proud of the achievements and development, there is still much work to do at home – education, mental health, population growth, political reform, etc

But our leaders are also very cognisant of our responsibilities to protect ourselves and our neighbours. While we may have thought through the 1990's that our freedom was the future, events in recent decades have served to make us wary again. In Europe, we have Putin as a major concern.

But we also see so much other turmoil around the world.

There is no simple solution to such international situations, but we need to provide advice and support as we can.

Estonia continues to be one of the major supporters to Ukraine per capita. Indeed, we had one Australian Estonian volunteer in Ukraine earlier this year.

Outside Estonia, we can help by providing moral support, and making sure that we urge our politicians to do what they can to ensure peace remains.

They need to be aware of our history, and how we see the dangers in Europe.

Meanwhile, we can continue to share and promote our culture here. It has been really heartening to see a successful Eesti Päevad at the start of this year, which brought members of our diaspora together in Adelaide. We are now working for the next Eesti Päevad to be held in Sydney in April 2027.

It is encouraging to see so many children's groups coming alive across the country – playgroups, activity groups, camps, choirs, dancers, etc. There is also a lot of work in the handicraft groups.

Many younger Estonian families want their children to mix with others with a similar background; people from youth groups are tracing their ancestry.

I see a vibrant revival of the Estonian communities across Australia, and being led by the younger generation. The older generations can safely pass the baton now, and be proud of the work they have done to keep our culture alive.

Dear Estonians in Australia, AESL wishes you joyful celebrations and success on this key date, and in the future.

Happy Re-Independence Day!

Long live Free Estonia! Elagu Vaba Eesti!

20 August 2025

Dr Juho Looveer

President, AESL



TAASISEISVUSPÄEVA TERVITUS = AESL, 2025

LUGUPEETUD KAASMAALASED

Kes käis sel aastal Eestis laulupeol või tantsupeol?

Või kes külastas sel aastal Eestit?

Kuidas te tundsite neil üritustel?

Kuidas te tundsite selles imelises riigis, meie kodumaal?

Ma arvan, et enamikul inimestest oli väga tore ja nad tundsid end seal viibimise üle nii hästi.

Tõepoolest, meil on õigus olla oma kodumaa üle õnnelikud ja uhked.

Nagu rahvusvaheliselt tunnustatud, võttis Eesti oma vabaduse tagasi 20. augustil 1991. Ja suur tänu tuleb anda laulu- ja tantsupidudele, mis aitasid meie rahvast ühendada ja andsid neile vahendi turvaliseks ja passiivseks vastupanuks.

Sellest ajast alates on Eesti esinenud äärmiselt hästi. Eesti on tehnoloogia liider, idufirmade liider, tunnustatud suurepärase tulemuste eest rahvusvahelistel haridustestidel ja palju muud. Eesti on võtnud endale olulise juhtrolli Euroopa Liidus ja teistes rahvusvahelistes organisatsioonides.

Ja kuigi oleme saavutuste ja arengu üle uhked, on kodus veel palju tööd teha – haridus, vaimne tervis, rahvastiku kasv, poliitilised reformid jne.

Kuid meie juhid on ka väga teadlikud meie kohustusest kaitsta ennast ja oma naabreid. Kuigi 1990. aastatel võisime arvata, et meie vabadus on tulevik, on viimaste aastakümnete sündmused meid taas ettevaatlikuks teinud. Euroopas on Putin meie peamine mure.

Kuid me näeme ka nii palju muid segadusi kogu maailmas.

Sellistele rahvusvahelistele olukordadele pole lihtsat lahendust, kuid me peame pakkuma nõu ja tuge nii palju kui võimalik.

Eesti on jätkuvalt üks Ukraina peamisi toetajaid elaniku kohta. Tõepoolest, meil oli sel aastal Ukrainas üks Austraalia eestlasest vabatahtlik toetus ja abi.

Väljaspool Eestit saame aidata, pakkudes moraalset tuge ja veendudes, et me kutsume oma poliitikuid üles tegema kõik endast oleneva, et tagada rahu säilimine.

Nad peavad olema teadlikud meie ajaloost ja sellest, kuidas me näeme ohte Euroopas.

Samal ajal saame jätkata oma kultuuri jagamist ja edendamist siin. On olnud tõeliselt südantsoojendav näha selle aasta alguses edukalt toimunud Eesti Päevade üritust, mis tõi meie diasporaa liikmed kokku Adelaide'is. Nüüd töötame selle nimel, et järgmine Eesti Päevad toimuksid Sydneys 2027. aasta aprillis.

On julgustav näha nii palju lastegruppe üle kogu riigi ellu ärkamas – mudilasringid, tegevusgrupid, laagrid, koorid, tantsijad jne. Ka käsitööringides on palju tööd.

Paljud nooremad eesti pered soovivad, et nende lapsed seguneksid sarnase taustaga inimestega; noorte gruppide liikmed otsivad oma päritolu.

Näen Austraalia eesti kogukondade elavat taaselustamist ja seda juhib noorem põlvkond. Vanemad põlvkonnad saavad nüüd teatepulga julgelt edasi anda ja olla uhked töö üle, mida nad on teinud meie kultuuri elushoidmiseks.

Head Austraalia eestlased, AESL soovib teile rõõmsaid pidustusi ja edu sel olulisel kuupäeval ja tulevikus.

Head taasiseseisvumispäeva!

Elagu Vaba Eesti!

20. august 2025

Dr Juho Looveer

President, AESL



HEIA HELLO ESTONIANS IN AUSTRALIA!

<https://eesti.org.au/2025/10/29/estonian-parliamentary-delegation-visiting-new-zealand-and-australia/>

Estonian parliamentary delegation visiting New Zealand and Australia

29 October, 2025

By [Dr Juho M. Looveer](#)



Source:

Private collection of Dr Juho Looveer.

This October 2025, a parliamentary delegation from Estonia embarked on an official visit to New Zealand and Australia — the largest Estonian delegation to undertake such a tour.

The delegation includes **Marko Mihkelson**, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu; **Juku-Kalle Raid** (MP), **Henn Põlluas** (MP), and **Birgit Keerd-Leppik** (Chief of Staff of Committee), together with His Excellency **Jaan Reinhold**, Estonia's Ambassador to New Zealand and Australia.

After meetings with political leaders in New Zealand, the delegation continued their visit in Australia, engaging with local communities and officials.

Meeting with the Ukrainian community in Sydney

On Sunday, 26 October, the delegation met with members of the Ukrainian community at the Ukrainian Youth Centre in Lidcombe, Sydney.

The Ukrainians were already gathered for a meeting involving representatives from their media, film and story production, demonstration organisers, fundraising groups, and those coordinating humanitarian support to Ukraine — all people deeply involved in assisting Ukrainians affected by the ongoing conflict.

Andrew Mencinsky, President of the Ukrainian Council of NSW, noted that many in their community were eager to hear the thoughts of the Estonian delegation. It was also acknowledged that **Estonia has contributed more support per capita to Ukraine than any other country.**

Why has Estonia done so much to help Ukraine?

The delegation outlined several reasons:

- Estonia understands what it means to be occupied and how devastating it is to live under Russian rule.
- The Estonian and Ukrainian peoples share many historical and cultural similarities.
- Members of the delegation have personally visited the front lines and witnessed Russian atrocities.
- From Georgia to Chechnya, **Russia's pattern of aggression has continued unchanged** — it is, they said, part of its political culture.

There are about 60,000 Ukrainians in Australia's diaspora, while Estonia is currently home to approximately 80,000 Ukrainian refugees.

A T-shirt fundraising campaign launched in Estonia has raised over 100,000 euros to support Ukraine's defence efforts.

Europe's unity and the war's outlook

When asked whether Europe is becoming more or less united in its support for Ukraine, the delegation responded that support remains strong and shows no sign of weakening. However, Russia continues its propaganda and disinformation campaigns in many countries.

"We do what we have to do," said the delegation. "It's not just about big talk or promises — it's about taking action and providing real, ongoing support."

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee Marko Mihkelson stressed that Europe must thank Ukraine for showing leadership in unifying nations and reminding them of the importance of defending democratic values.

Solidarity and practical support

Kateryna Argyrou, Chair of the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, thanked Dr Juho Looveer and the Estonian and Baltic communities for their moral support — especially for involving Ukrainians in Sydney's annual commemoration of the 1941 Mass Deportations. This, she said, gave Ukrainians a valuable platform to share their story. She also thanked the Sydney Estonian House for providing a venue for meetings and events.

Kateryna emphasised the need for continued advocacy from national bodies like the Council of Estonian Societies in Australia (AESL), through letters to politicians and other forms of active support.

While Australia pledged military aid such as tanks in 2023, many deliveries only occurred this year, and there has been limited new assistance in 2025. Numerous vehicles and equipment (e.g. aeroplanes, tanks and tractors) remain in Australian depots — items that could be urgently needed on Ukraine’s front lines before winter.

She also highlighted a concerning fact: **in 2025, Australia became one of the largest purchasers of Russian oil globally, importing over \$2 billion worth of Russian-origin petroleum products.** Despite sanctions, Russian crude oil continues to reach Australian refineries via third countries such as India and China.

“Support for Ukraine,” she said, “must be measured by current actions, not past promises.”

A wider perspective

Delegation members noted that while Putin’s regime is ageing, successors with similar worldviews are already waiting in line. Younger Russians are being taught a distorted version of history — one that cements the regime’s ideology for generations.

“This is not just Putin’s war,” they said. “It’s a war driven by Russia’s leadership and its culture.”

Estonia continues to collaborate with Australian IT specialists to strengthen cyber-security and counter security threats.

The road ahead

When asked about the possible outcomes of the war, the delegation outlined two stark scenarios:

If Russia wins, it may turn its aggression towards NATO countries — a path that could lead to World War III.

If Ukraine wins, it will secure not only its own freedom but also the stability of Europe and neighbouring countries such as Georgia.

“If Ukraine does not win,” they warned, “there will be no peace in Europe.”

The delegation emphasised the importance of cultural organisations (like AESL) maintaining an active political and advocacy role to support these efforts.

Continuing engagements

Following their meetings with the Ukrainian community, the delegation travelled to Canberra for discussions with Australian politicians. They are scheduled to return to Sydney the following weekend to meet with the community at the Sydney Estonian House on Friday evening.

HEIA HELLO ESTONIANS IN AUSTRALIA!

ABC News:

Estonia calls for stronger unity to deter global aggression

30 October, 2025

By [Kristel Alla](#)



The chairman of Estonia's Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, Marko Mihkelson, has urged Western nations to strengthen their collective response to global security threats, during an interview with ABC News while visiting Australia this week as part of a parliamentary delegation.

Marko Mihkelson expressed concern that the West has not done enough to counter Russia's aggression in Ukraine. "War is going on, and Russians are not even interested in a ceasefire," he said, noting that Ukraine's offer of an unconditional

ceasefire in March was rejected. He argued that military and economic support must be more robust, including cutting off all energy imports from Russia, which he described as “immoral” while the war continues.

Global interconnections and Australia’s role

Drawing a link between the war in Ukraine and rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific, Mihkelson stressed that “potential conflict zones are interconnected”, warning that inaction today could lead to “a much more costly situation in years to come”. He praised Australia’s support for Ukraine, highlighting that “an absolute majority supports Ukraine, and also the help given by the Australian Government... is critically important”.

Lessons for the Indo-Pacific

Marko Mihkelson pointed out that countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan should continue strengthening cooperation on security matters, much like NATO allies in Europe. Reflecting on Estonia’s visit to Taiwan last year, he said maintaining stability in the Taiwan Straits and South China Sea is important for the global economy and the rules-based international order.

Call for coordinated action

He emphasised that the defense of Ukraine and the preservation of peace in the Pacific are part of the same challenge — upholding democracy and deterring aggression worldwide. “If we want to maintain stability and a rule-of-law-based world order, then the most critical task is to make sure Russia will not succeed in their aggression,” Mihkelson said.

Strengthening ties

While the interview focused on global affairs, Mihkelson’s visit underscores Estonia’s growing engagement with like-minded partners such as Australia, both in supporting Ukraine and in fostering cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

You can watch the full ABC News Australia interview (6 minutes) here:

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x9srvzm>



Some thoughts on the Future and the Role of the AESL

Juho Looveer
Chairman, AESL
November 2025

BACKGROUND

AESL was formed on 5th February 1952.

This was in response to the Seltsid (Estonian societies) that had grown in Australia since the influx of refugees in the late 1940's. The seltsid would continue to look after local activities, but the AESL would look after matters that crossed borders, and link to international groups and activities. This remains as the basic ethos for the estonian diaspora in most countries.

Due to the communications available at the time, it was agreed that the AESL Executive would rotate thru the three main or larger centres of Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, being three years in each city.

As well, there were Vice-Presidents, one for each affiliated state, as the communication link between AESL and states

The AESL Executive had been centred in Sydney from 2016-8.

The Sydney Executive had discussed issues such as the role of AESL; incorporation; etc and some longer term planning. However, when the executive moved to Melbourne in 2018, much of this did not seem to have been picked up by the new Executive.

I first attended an AESL meeting in January 2018, as a representative of the ECFA (then called the ERC = Estonian Relief Committee). It was frustrating to see the lack of progress in various areas e.g. incorporation.

At the AESL Annual General Meeting held in Melbourne on Sunday 26 January 2020, I moved the following motion, that:

“AESL form a Committee to consider the purpose, function and structure of the future of AESL, and to review any previous work in this regard.

This Committee to report back to AESL by 31 May 2020”

This was agreed to unanimously.

CURRENT CONSTITUTION

In early 2020, a Committee of nine people (plus some others) from across Australia met for 2-3 hours every Saturday for 10-11 weeks to discuss aspects of the organisation. Various policies were developed and a brief of ideas for the preparation of a new Constitution were presented to AESL in September 2020.

It was agreed to incorporate in Victoria, as at that time, it was the only state which did not require the public officer to be a resident of that state.

A Latvian lawyer in Melbourne had agreed to write up the new Constitution *pro bono*. However, nothing was produced in the ensuing months.

In the end, Dr Juho Looweer took the model rules for an incorporated association in Victoria and adapted these according to the brief that had been agreed to. This was then circulated to all members of AESL for comment

The final version of the AESL Rules for an incorporated association was agreed to and finalised on 17th August 2021 and could then be processed further to be able to incorporate AESL.

The Department of Consumer Affairs of Victoria provided a Certificate of Incorporation dated 21 August 2021.

STRUCTURE OF AESL

In developing the 2021 AESL Constitution, various models were considered

Rotating Executive (e.g. model current up to 2020)

Parliament for Estonians in Australia (similar to model in Canada)

Representational model two members from each of NSW, Victoria, South Australia, plus one member from each of Queensland, ACT, West Australia, Tasmania.

Delegational model The Executive will consist of one or two people nominated by each member organisation

Composite Model Elected Persons plus State delegates

Something else?

The Composite Model was agreed upon, as it allowed for delegates from states/members, as well as a few people who would be involved independently of states/members. This was seen as the best compromise.

However, it was also pointed out that research showed that the most effective Boards comprise of 7-9 people, with an odd number being preferred (depending on whether the Chair has their own vote or not).

RELATIONSHIP TO MEMBERS – Seltsid AND others

HISTORICALLY

Whilst the original members of AESL were the Seltsid (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, plus several others), the membership has changed over the years. This has included scout and guide groups; sports groups, chess clubs; choirs; dance groups; handicraft groups; RSLs (returned service leagues = ex soldiers etc) and others.

As is obvious, the issues for AESL were not centred just on the interests of the seltsid (societies). Rather, AESL brought the groups together to consider overall issues, according to what was possible, given the communications available at the time. These were mainly political issues (freedom for Estonia; fighting communism, and soviet dictatorship), and co-ordinating Eesti Päevad

Note that in the 1970's, AESL was able to coordinate protests across Australia with only a few weeks' notice!

The seltsid took turns in organising and conducting the Eesti Päevad, but the main groups these were aimed at were the participating choirs, the dancers, artists, handicraft groups, sports people, etc. And of course all the people who travelled and came to join in what was seen as the main gathering and occasion for the estonian diaspora in Australia.

As the Eesti Päevad (Estonian Days Festival) already brought a majority of key people together to the one city, it was sensible to hold the AESL AGM with the Eesti Päevad when possible, to save on time and costs of travel.

In years when there was no Eesti Päevad, the AGM was held at an agreed time and place.

RECENTLY

Even nowadays, we have a small number of societies (seltsid) as members of AESL, along with various other groups. The activities of the societies and AESL members are important and is of interest to many other members. However these can not be the only focus of AESL.

In 2021-3, AESL Board meetings started with a round-the-table discussion, with people sharing news of what had been happening locally. This was of much interest, but it also took much time, and cut into time available for discussion of other issues.

To manage this better, In 2023-4 we tried running a monthly on-line chat session, where we did discuss what had been happening in each state, as well as other issues that arose. Perhaps timing was the main restriction, but attendance dwindled and these sessions petered out. It was interesting that none of the societies (apart from Adelaide) had key people join in these sessions. This suggests that they had little interest in sharing ideas, or learning from all other groups. Perhaps there is a small number of societies that need to combine for larger ideas?

Unfortunately it seems that over the years, the states appear to have become quite insular, only interested in their own activities and are not particularly interested in what goes on interstate.

AESL BOOKLET

This was produced every year, in time for the AESL AGM, so that AESL members would have information about what each member had done in the past year. These also provide a good historical record of estonian organisations in Australia and their activities.

To preserve records of what the estonian diaspora has done over time, we need all members to submit reasonable reports for this booklet.

NOTE that as late as January 2020, the booklet was still produced in the estonian language – although some sections were in English by then.

It is accepted that some people report that writing annual reports in November-December is onerous. But this is a historic timeline, set to fit in with AESL Meetings set for late December or January.

Perhaps it is time to review this, and move our general meetings to some other time of the year?

AESL members have their own AGMs at various times throughout the year. So the difficult part will be coordinating AGMs and financial years for all groups. Possibly we accept their annual reports, with an addendum to add events since their Annual reports were written?

It would also be sensible to change the AESL financial year to either a calendar year or the financial year.

AESL FINANCES

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Estonian World Council (UEKN) has as its members the umbrella organisations of the larger Estonian expatriate communities, ie Canada, USA, UK, Sweden , Germany, Australia and Russia and the main Estonian societies in Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine and the Czech Republic. Australia is one of the earliest members. If AESL is abolished, that would leave Australian Estonians without a voice in expatriate affairs.

The recent Estonian governments have formed a section in the Estonian Foreign Affairs, called Global Estonian. This group has three specific objectives:

Promoting and preserving Estonian identity abroad.

Involvement of the global Estonian community in the life and development of society, promotion of co-operation and provision of quality services.

Supporting return to Estonia and (re) adaptation to Estonian life.

However, to be part of this movement and to be eligible for funds, Australia must have an umbrella organisation that looks after the interests of the Estonian community in Australia in general, and hence needs a broad membership.

Australia needs an umbrella organisation to endorse applications, and to be involved in the conferences, so as to be able to influence the directions and plans of this group.

STATED PURPOSES OF AESL

AESL Constitution prior to 20021 . . .

3. Objects

- (a) To act as a charitable non-profit organisation;
- (b) To co-ordinate activities of Estonian community organisations in Australia in their pursuit of the preservation and advancement of Estonian culture and heritage;
- (c) To supply humanitarian aid to Estonia;
- (d) To act as a centre for distributing of information and financial aid to community organizations.

AESL Constitution adopted in 2021 . . .

2. Purposes

The purposes of the association are:

AESL will

- 2.1. be the peak body for Estonian organisations in Australia.
- 2.2. be a cultural organisation sustaining a cultural footprint and living heritage for Estonians in Australia;

- 2.3. support and foster traditional Estonian cultural activities such as singing, folk-dancing, handicrafts, and promote the Estonian language.
- 2.4. help set the goals for Estonian community activities in Australia, including through a program of cultural development;
- 2.5. represent Estonian organisations of Australia in Estonian World Organisation;
- 2.6. act as an information clearing house, including by maintaining a website that communicates and reports on community events and raises issues for debate;
- 2.7. be the voice for the community on policy issues, including political issues and incidents;
- 2.8. be a central contact point to and from other Estonian organisations overseas.
- 2.9. be the owner of the Estonian Archives in Australia
- 2.10. promote Estonian Festivals (e.g. Eesti Päevad) in Australia

WHAT KINDS OF ISSUES SHOULD AESL BE DEALING WITH?

Our local societies appear to be more self-centred, focussing on mainly cultural and c community activities for their own communities. This is as expected and is fit and proper.

But who then looks after **international issues like the Ukraine situation** – writing letters to the governments; meeting with various groups as necessary; uniting with other groups, in country as well as international groups?

National activities such as Eesti Päevad need to be coordinated/organised at National Level. These DO need a rethink of how they are organised and funded.

We also need some **national coordination of language teaching** – sharing of resources means less work for everyone, and hopefully a better coordinated system.

AESL owns the **Estonian Archives** in Australia, and needs to maintain this.

Noted that the Archives have their own management committee which runs their activities

We can only send **delegates from one umbrella organisation to international bodies** such as UEKN and Global Estonian.

There is no point in AESL doing the same things as the societies or other members – we have limited people. If 3 or 4 or 5 societies want to collaborate on something (e.g. bringing an act from Estonia to tour Australia), they can do so, but do not need to involve all the members of AESL. Similarly for other members or activities.

AESL is the umbrella organisation for estonian groups in Australia. This structure is common for many ethnic groups, here and in other countries. It is not intended to organise local activities, but should be looking after higher level issues (e.g. politics; links to other groups; links to international groups; etc) or issues which are better when coordinated at national level (e.g. language teaching; management of archives).

As suggested by one of our community leaders. . .

Now that ECFA is effectively funding/supporting most of the good cultural work, the AESL should now stop giving out grants, awards etc, and should focus on the political side of things. Like . . .

- being the Estonian community's peak body & 'voice' to Federal Parliamentarians, Media, etc,
- Representing Australian Estonians at the ÜEKN,
- Representing the Estonian Community to the Estonian Government.
- To be ready to 'spring to action' should Putin ever invade Estonia, heaven forbid.

The Ukrainian Federal Council in Australia may be a good role model for us..

The AESL should start asking for funds/grants from ECFA and from Estonian Government, for meaningful political projects.

Can the work of AESL be measured?

If a society runs a function, you can count how many people attend.

If you are selling something, you can count how much products you sell.

But how do you count when you are part of a conversation, developing ideas?

Not easy to do, nor to quantify.

FUTURE ROLE OF AESL

The Soviet occupation of Estonia gave the Estonian diaspora a focus to its international activities and an imperative to support and preserve Estonian culture, which was being undermined by state-sponsored terror, Russification policies and actions back in Estonia.

At various times, political action was required and the AESL helped to mobilise and put a focus for this - 1950s, 1974-75, 1989-91. That focus has now disappeared.

However, the situation with Ukraine has reinforced the issue that freedom and independence are not guaranteed – we must continue to be vigilant, wary.

We need to monitor what is happening in Europe, and be prepared to offer whatever support is needed. e.g. Martin Kurvits (Adelaide) has been in talks with the local Ukrainian organisations, and has started preparing list of issues we may need to consider if Russia turns its attention to the Baltics – things like supporting visa applications; access to accommodation; education; language support; funding; etc

STRUCTURE OF AESL FOR THE FUTURE

Currently, many of the people on the AESL Board have many other roles, mostly with local groups. They are occupied with these local commitments, and spend little time thinking about AESL level

issues. This is understandable, but frustrating, as people are time-poor, and there are few volunteer for various AESL tasks.

Would AESL work better with more people mainly independent of local groups? People who could devote more time to AESL?

The scheme of a **representative for each state** is problematic, and varies according to states. It seems to be okay in Adelaide, where all local groups belong to the Adelaide Selts. In contrast, in Sydney/NSW, little news seems to permeate downwards nor upwards. Is it feasible for one person to connect with various groups?

Perhaps AESL needs to have one representative from each member group?

However, then it becomes more like a large parliament – lots of discussion but little achieved = the experience of other organisations.

The notion has been raised at a recent AESL meeting that perhaps we should consider a newer combined model – meetings of all members every 3 or 4 months, to discuss issues such as finance, forthcoming activities, etc.

In between, AESL could be managed by an executive of maybe seven independent people, elected for those roles?

Should some of the AESL Executive have specific positions e.g. Donations Drive person; i.e. people get elected for specific interests or skills e.g. Ave Nukki with Cultural tours, etc.

We now have HEIA to promulgate news **across the country**. Are there other functions which could be done just once at national level, rather than by several members?

However, Marin from EstWest wondered if AESL could help societies and other members with issues such as some corporate reporting, or GST issues, etc.

But who would do this work for the members who need it? How much would we have to pay such a person for such work?

How much would we need to raise membership fees to enable such a person and function?

We also need to be **careful of burn-out** – some people get involved, put their all into their work for a few years, and then lose the energy or time to continue. We have seen this over many decades ago, and it is happening again now.

It would seem preferable to share the load across more people, let them develop experience and knowledge, and contribute over a longer time.

In the end, AESL is the sum of its members. Any work to be done must be done by the people elected to the AESL Board. If those people are already over-committed, then they are too busy to get much else done, and nothing will be achieved.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the key things that AESL should be doing?
2. What structures do we need to achieve our goals e.g. Board; State or member contacts
3. How can we keep AESL viable without draining people from their local work?
4. How often should the wider AESL organisations meet, and to what purposes?

SOME COMMENTS FROM OTHER PEOPLE

1.

Unfortunately over the years the states seem to have become quite insular, only interested in their own activities and are not particularly interested in what goes on interstate.

Even within NSW I am sad to see that there is little cross activity. As a member of Selts, Coop and ECFA I am saddened to see how few people bother to turn up to AGMs. They seem to be happy to leave that to someone else.

I know that younger people are reluctant to join the organisations. I hear "I dont have the time" and "Whats in it for me". Liit needs to let them know what Liit stands for and what it does but to do that Liit has to find the answers.

I dont think just sending minutes of meetings to the secretary of the member organisation is effective. They are usually noted as correspondence in but rarely read or discussed.

I think the political points that have been raised are important but I wonder how much they mean to the younger generation. The descendants of the refugees are a long way from the Great Escape and its consequences and many new Estonian don't see it their job to maintain the Estonian culture. I have heard someone say "I did not come here to be Estonian".

However I think that AESL needs to have definite goals and make them clear to their members. I don't think the past method of sending minutes to the secretary of an organisation in the hope that the information is passed on works. Maybe a summary of the meeting (not the whole minutes) published in HEIA will spread the word better.

I firmly believe that an umbrella organisation that represent Australia is necessary but what is the best format, that I dont know.



AESL UNITES

AESL Annual Booklets

AESL holds once in a year an annual meeting and discusses how we Estonians go in Australia, where are we headed and in what way. Everybody has a say. Society leaders attend the AGM and contribute.

Every city also is represented in AESL Board, this means that every city contributes ongoingly.

In December 2024 we added something different – not only society leaders, but wider audience was included in discussion. We covered AESL history and thoughts for future, did not shy off from differences between new and established Estonians in Australia, a “new” Estonian’s search to find her way and her inspiring story how she now contributes to Estonians Australia. This event was a bush “non conference” , open mic event MOTTETALGUD.

This is how AESL move along with times – we try to unite in new ways, gather fresh thoughts.

AESL has regular activities that do not change. The range of AESL activities is not covered in this article but readily available to read @ aesl.eesti.org.au

Today we cover one aspect – AESL ANNUAL BOOKLETS.

If AESL did nothing else but collect data and publish such annual booklet where ALL our Estonian Societies and Activities are covered, year in and year out – then this already is a valuable contribution, information that cannot be gained from anywhere else, stretch this thought through years and times!

Maybe you wonder, why have I not seen this booklet? Maybe it really is something good?

As I write this story, I do not exactly care if you have read. It is long, over 100 pages per year. Maybe it is even not interesting to you to read. Because you are in the middle of it. You live it. You may want to know how are the other cities doing though, what to learn from them and implement?

The value of the booklet is in CONSISTENCY, the idea of annual booklets. This is what AESL is about. We hold it together, we rise higher our small selves into big Estonian being in Australia and umbrella us all.

Year in and year out we collect data over Australia and make a book out of it. Book can be looked back at any time. Even the language used in the articles speaks volumes of the times. These days the booklet contains photos – it is recorded in our history what kind of handcraft we made in a certain year, for example. Going through the annual booklets we discover information how our society started, established, moved through different times and stages.

Let’s have a quick overview of 2024 annual booklet.

Last annual meeting was held by zoom and in person in Adelaide on Tuesday, 31st December 2024. Booklet contains speeches made within 2024, chairman's report (Juho Looveer) , vice chairman's report (Sirje Rivers), financial report (Ingrid Provan), board members publications included Eesti Päevad Festival's report (Martin Kurvits), eesti language report (Iti Connor), communications report (Marissa Pikkat) , Media Project's update (Kristi Barrow, Johanna Rivers), Cultural Foundation's update (Juho Looveer), archive report (Terry Kass), followed by cities organisations reports. AESL unites eesti organisations in Northern Territory, Brisbane (Iti Connor), Sydney (Kirsti Horst), Wollongong (Claudia Kalnin), Adelaide (Martin Kurvits) ,Melbourne (Bernardette Pilli), Handycraft (Ingrid Renno), Sõrve Sõbrad (Sulev Kalamäe), Virmalised (Ella Scott).

The names in brackets show who wrote the reports.

The word "wrote" is not emotional. What is behind the word, definitely speaks of value, commitment, contribution. Giving of self. Every person, in brackets, has given their time and written down our story. Seeing the good of being united and leaving its mark in history, in annual booklet.

How many member organisations AESL unites in 2024? All the mentioned above.

We also have Estonians in Canberra. Tasmania. Western Australia. Queensland. Small or big groups, who gather occasionally for 'Estonian event'. They are not yet or are thinking of the point of being united as one Estonian Society in Australia under the umbrella of Council (AESL).

It has come up – why should we join AESL? Is this also questionable – miks eesti riik? Why government to Estonia? Does Australia need government? We go about our lives, government or no government?

Why does one Estonian look up another Estonian when moves to a different country? Why does Estonian maybe not look up another Estonian until they have children?

Why come together on 2th February, why dance around the fire on jaanipäev, why to love when children sing in eesti to Santa on the eve of 2th December?

Because this is what our mind and heart needs, this is how we support our own, this is where our strength is and spreads from. We feel "the same".

Are we not like leaves from one tree, maybe even branches of root that make the tree. Make the tree grow. Make the tree strong to withstand a storm.

Eestlane olla on uhke ja hää – Know that song? Love it? Why? What does it mean to you?

While one is singing, another one thinking, third one keeps on publishing the booklets, collecting our stories. Together we make sense.

This is true, we may stick together in a small group, and AESL remains quite invisible in daily actions.

But AESL puts you and all of us in a book, ties it all together, represents every Estonian in Australia on national and international level.

Sirje Rivers, 2025



AESL statement on mass shootings at Bondi, 15 December 2025

POSTED ON MONDAY 16 DECEMBER 2025

Ju Ho's Post



AESL (Council of Estonian Societies in Australia)

Ju Ho · Admin · Rising contributor · 1h ·

The Australian Council of Estonians Societies (AESL) expresses its deepest sympathy and solidarity with the Australian Jewish community and all Australians following the horrifying attack at Sydney's Bondi Beach yesterday, on the first night of Chanukah.

Our thoughts are with the victims, their families, and all those affected by this shocking act of terror. The pain and suffering caused by this tragedy are profound, and we share in the grief of those impacted by such violence.

Acts of terrorism, motivated by hate and resulting in such abhorrent violence, are completely unacceptable in the multicultural Australia we all share.

