

ITEM 8 NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR JESS WHITTAKER - ILLAWARRA FOLK FESTIVAL

Councillor Jess Whittaker has submitted the following Notice of Motion –

“I formally move that Council –

- 1 Acknowledges the achievements of the Illawarra Folk Club and thank them for the contribution they make to the cultural fabric of the Illawarra and to the local economy.
- 2 Acknowledges the importance of affordable access to Bulli Showground for the delivery of this festival. As Council moves forward with the much-needed upgrades to infrastructure proposed in the draft Bulli Showground Masterplan, every effort is made to ensure an affordable and suitable venue continues to be available to the Illawarra Folk Festival.
- 3 Consider ways Wollongong City Council can contribute to the festival's success through grant contributions, promotion, in-kind support and site upgrades to ensure adequate power, lighting, plumbing and safe vehicle and pedestrian access.”

Background provided by Councillor Jess Whittaker:

The 38th Illawarra Folk Festival was held on 17 – 19 January 2025 at Bulli Showground, hosting 90 local, national and international acts across 8 venues with onsite camping.

The Illawarra Folk Festival has been operating for 38 years and, except for the Covid-19 years, has been providing an exemplary festival of national significance for performers, volunteers, festival goers and technical support people. It is a strong showcase for the Illawarra and how a national festival can operate sustainably within Wollongong City.

This year the festival saw 5,000 attendees, and despite the challenges of strong winds, rain and the sites deteriorating infrastructure, it was a resounding success. The festival committee is made up of dedicated volunteers from the local music scene and this year they were supported by 300 volunteers.

The Illawarra Folk Festival is a joy to be part of because when you turn up as a punter, you soon become a participant. Its success is a credit to the organising community who have survived the challenges of climate, pandemic and rising costs. In an era when many other festivals have folded, this not-for-profit model is growing in the quality and diversity of performers, number of attendees and volunteer participation.