



NATIONAL EXECUTIVE MEETING - AGM MINUTES

Nov 19, 2025 7:00 PM GMT+10 |

Attendees:



☒	President	Nicole Strohfeldt	☒	Secretary	Cara Taggart
☒	Treasurer	Lubino Fernandes	☒	Admin	Maxine Gatt
☐	Accounts		☒	ACT	Jennifer Higgs
☒	QLD	Amy Phillips	☐	NSW	Goetz Richter
☒	Vic	Andrew Schellhorn	☐	TAS	
☒	SA	Bethany Nottage	☒	WA	Stephanie Fraser

Apologies: Goetz Richter, Adele Ohki, Susan Pierotti, Gabrielle Scherrer,

Other Attendees: Theo Kotzas, Evgeny Sorkin

Matters arising from minutes:

 Copy of 2024 AGM Minutes - unconfirmed

Acceptance of Minutes from 20 November -

Minutes of this meeting were found to be true and correct.

Proposed: Nicole Strohfeldt

Seconded: Amy Phillips

AGENDA ITEMS

Item	Discussion
Reports	• <u>President</u> • <u>Treasurer</u> Proposed: Nicole Strohfeldt Seconded: Daniel Holloway • Chapter Presidents • <u>QLD</u> • <u>NSW</u> • <u>ACT</u> • <u>VIC</u> • <u>TAS</u> • <u>SA</u> • <u>WA</u> • <u>Stringendo</u> These reports have been accepted as a true and accurate account. Proposed: Nicole Strohfeldt Seconded: Bethany Nottage The committee unanimously accepted the reports.
Acceptance of Financial Report and Audit	 AUSTA 2025 Draft Financial Statements - Updated 19 Nov 2025.pdf  Auditors Suggestions - Reporting to Management 19.11.2025.pdf presented the Financial Report and Audit. Proposed: Nicole Strohfeldt Seconded: Lubino Fernandes
Ratification of Board of Directors	Nominations for the position of President were submitted via email prior to the AGM. One nomination was received for Daniel Holloway, who is hereby elected unopposed. Proposed: Cara Taggart Seconded: Amy Phillips The committee unanimously accepted.

	We extend our sincere thanks to Nicole Strohfeldt for her service and commitment in the role. Nicole will continue as Immediate Past President. Cara Taggart will continue as Secretary and Lubino Fernandes will continue as Treasurer. We accept the existing board of directors. The positions of state representative will be decided by the chapter committees at their AGM. Proposed: Nicole Strohfeldt Seconded: Bethany Nottage The committee unanimously accepted.
Confirmation of Charity Status	As the activities of the organisation have not changed a resolution was put that the board believes that AUSTA remains a charity as recognised by registration with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission in December 2012. Proposed: Nicole Strohfeldt Seconded: Lubino Fernandes The committee unanimously accepted.
Other Business	

Meeting Closed 7:43pm AEST

REPORTS	
PRESIDENT	2025 AGM President's Report I would like to begin this final AGM report as National President by expressing how proud I am to be among such a dedicated group of volunteers. This team started as a very new set of directors, navigating our way through uncharted territory in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, and three years later I am proud to say that we are very much a dream team of dedicated professionals. This year we have worked tirelessly to improve the financial health of the organisation, removing unnecessary costs and finding ways to streamline the way that we do business. We have celebrated 50 years of this wonderful organisation, and enjoyed a National Conference, led by Goetz Richter and the AUSTA NSW team, that would make any event organiser proud.

	The Sydney Conservatorium was the perfect venue for such an auspicious occasion, and the hallowed halls were filled with laughter and delight. We have welcomed our new administrator, Maxine Gatt, and farewelled Emily Dittman and our long-serving and much beloved administrator, Gina de Francesco, who gave more than 20 years to AUSTA. Maxine has already settled into her role and is managing the job with ease and finesse, and we are so grateful to have her supporting us into this next chapter in our history. Susan Pierotti has changed the face of Stringendo in its new online format, and has once again provided us with an engaging, upbeat and exciting read in slightly more regular, bite-sized pieces. Cara Taggart, our national secretary, has jumped on board with AUSTA Pulse, delivering us exciting updates throughout the year and promoting the great work that AUSTA does. She has also been instrumental in the refresh of the website, creating a more user-friendly space for members. I am always grateful to our treasurer, Lubino Fernandes for his tireless work on our finances, and our incredible chapter presidents who provide such invaluable events and activities for our members. Thank you to Amy Phillips (QLD), Goetz Richter (NSW), Jenny Higgs (ACT), Andrew Schellhorn (Vic), Bethany Nottage (SA) and Stephanie Fraser (WA) for all that you do. You keep the string community vibrant in our country. Last but not least, I'm delighted to be handing over the reins to our president elect, Daniel Holloway. Daniel is a seasoned AUSTA member, having served on the QLD committee in almost every role, including chapter president. He is a dedicated teacher, thoughtful and intelligent, and he has a deep-seated passion for everything that AUSTA represents. I look forward to remaining on the committee as immediate past president, to support the wonderful work that Daniel does. In closing, I am proud to say that AUSTA is in a much better position than it was post-pandemic, and that we now have our eyes firmly focussed on the work that we need to do to enable string playing to thrive in Australia. Together we are mighty and we will continue this great work for decades to come. Thank you for giving me this incredible opportunity to lead an organisation that I have always held in such high esteem. I look forward to supporting it to flourish well into the future. Molto AUSTA!
TREASURER	Dear Members, I write with a positive feeling that has been with me since the Sydney Conference last July. The success of the conference was due largely to the excellent planning and organisation by

the NSW planning committee under the leadership of their President, Goetz Richter and the energetic support of our outgoing National President, Nicole Strohfeldt. That the conference made a profit of \$58,630 was not just a bonus, but a confirmation that AUSTA is important to the string community in Australia.

The [Profit & Loss report](#) for the 2024-25 financial year shows that AUSTA finished with a deficit of \$40,910, largely due to the loss incurred from the Barry Green tour.

The financial statements for 2024-25 highlight the following:

Income:

Membership income was up from \$59,274 in 2024 to \$64,931 in 2025.

Advertising income was down from \$20,837 to \$10,820, a significant deterioration.

Income from Workshops was also down from \$72,191 to \$64,048.

Expenses:

Wages & Salaries increased by \$3,000.

Stringendo and Newsletter production costs were down by \$16,989, a welcome reduction because of digitalisation.

Accounting and auditors' fees were up from \$11,400 to \$18,045. A considerable increase of \$6,645.

Maxine Gatt – our new Administrator & Accounts Manager

Gina de Francesco, who had been doing the AUSTA accounts for many years, retired in July'25 after the Sydney conference. Maxine Gatt is our new Accounts Manager. She has added the role of Administrator to her portfolio and is doing an excellent job running the organisation.

[Draft Budget – \(2025-26\)](#)

The committee prepared and approved a draft budget for the current financial year. It projects that we can expect to end the financial year ending 30 June 2026 with a profit of \$51,000.

[Stockspot investment](#)

We had to withdraw \$20,000 from Stockspot in December'24 and \$29,000 between May and September 2024 to deal with cashflow problems.

Out of an original investment of \$110,000 we now have only \$61,000 invested in Stockspot.

This investment has grown to \$85,136 over the 4 years we have held this investment, which translates to an account return of 7.71% p.a.

I hope that AUSTA has turned the corner and will reverse the trend of running losses in non-conference years. This is the challenge for the future, and I wish the chapters all the best in maintaining the artistic, pedagogic and financial health of the organisation.

Treasurer

QLD

AUSTA Q Report – AUSTA AGM 19/11/25

AUSTA Q commenced its annual events with the Reading Day on Sunday 9 February. AUSTA Q's flagship event provided opportunity for colleagues to gather together to play through and explore new repertoire by local composers. As always, the quality of new compositions presented by local composers was exceptional! The AUSTA Q Reading Day suitcase was then made available for other AUSTA Reading Day events across Australia.

It was my pleasure to attend the AMEB Qld 2025 Performance and Awards Ceremony on Friday 21 February. Congratulations to the AUSTA Q Strings Award 2024 award recipient Shinwoo Emily Lee (Viola).

Bundaberg also hosted a Reading Day on Saturday 1 March for their local AUSTA members and teachers in their community.

The Mini-Conference was held on Saturday 5 April and Sunday 6 April at BBC. The event celebrated 50 years of AUSTA and we honoured AUSTA Founding President Elizabeth Morgan AM and several of Queensland's founding members who were able to attend. It was a privilege to thank them in person for their vision, service, and long-standing dedication to AUSTA. A highlight of the Mini-Conference was the official launch of Quintessentially Queensland – a special 50th Birthday Composition Gift for AUSTA members nationwide. This collection features six original works by esteemed Queensland composers Stephen Chin, Loreta Fin, Alison Harbottle, Neridah Oostenbroek, Michael Patterson, and Keith Sharp. Members can download the works from the AUSTA website through the end of the year. The Mini-Conference also featured a series of inspiring and insightful presentations by Dr Anthony Young (Musicianship in the Instrumental Setting Part 2), Loreta Fin AM (Group Teaching), David Peirce (Music is Physical), Raquel Bastos (AMEB Viola Series 2 Part 2), Dr Bernardo Alviz (Double Bass), and Alison Harbottle (It's Not Just a Big Violin). We also enjoyed playing in the Delegates' Orchestra conducted by Warwick Adeney, and a fantastic concert by Taraf Tambal.

It was a pleasure to attend the AUSTA Golden Jubilee National Conference in Sydney (11–13 July). The event featured a wide range of outstanding presentations and offered an excellent opportunity to reconnect with colleagues from across the country. A heartfelt thank you to the National Conference Committee for organising such an enriching and memorable conference. It was another wonderful celebration of the 50th birthday of AUSTA.

On Saturday 26 July, AUSTA Q hosted the Concerto Championship, showcasing an impressive array of high-calibre performances, especially in the Advanced section. Congratulations to all the performers, teachers, and piano accompanists! The following day, Sunday 27 July, saw hundreds of students participate in the AUSTA Q Strings Festival. It was heartwarming to see so many proud performers and supportive families celebrating achievements, posing with their adjudications and trophies. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers, adjudicators, St Peters Lutheran College for hosting us, and to the music shops and organisations that donated items for the raffle.

	The AUSTA Q Professional Weekend was held on Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 October. We were honoured and delighted to have Doretta Balkizas and Patrick Murphy as the main presenters, and they were joined by Glenn Christensen, Michele Walsh, and several current UQ students and Alumni for some sessions. Doretta and Patrick presented two days of sessions focussed on the topics of practice, orchestral excerpts and orchestral careers, the changing landscape of musical careers, violin/cello/chamber music masterclasses, and a side-by-side rehearsal of Corelli's Concerto Grosso in D Major. It was an extremely valuable and inspiring weekend for all in attendance. Regarding regional events in the latter part of the year, the Sunshine Coast Beginner Strings Day took place on Sunday 31 August, the Bundaberg Stringfest on Saturday 1 November, and the Townsville Celebration of Strings on Friday 31 October to Sunday 2 November. The events were a huge success and provided excellent opportunities for our North Queensland members and their students. The AUSTA Q International Reading Day was available for members all over the country via Zoom on Sunday 9 November. Many thanks to Bernadette Connolly, Daniel Holloway, Theo Kotzas, and Neridah Oostenbroek for sharing their expertise in ensemble repertoire and researching new international works of interest to present at this event. This was our final event to close this important year celebrating 50 years of AUSTA. What an excellent year of AUSTA it has been, and we look forward to being part of the continued bright future of AUSTA. Molto AUSTA! AUSTA Q continued to produce regular issues of the AUSTA Q Newsletter in 2025 (3 issues – April, August, and December). We are grateful to the writers and advertisers that contribute to this to provide such an informative and high-quality periodical for AUSTA members. Many thanks and congratulations to the AUSTA Q committee for all the time, effort, dedication, and enthusiasm they give to making AUSTA Q events such beneficial and rewarding experiences, and the Newsletter so informative, for AUSTA members. We are looking forward to another productive and informative year in 2026. Amy Phillips AUSTA Q President
NSW	AUSTA (NSW) has had a busy year presenting a few string festivals, however, largely concentrating on the organisation of the National Conference in Sydney in July 2025. In February 2025 we welcomed new committee members and commenced the year with a regional String Festival in Armidale at the New England Conservatorium. String Festivals were also presented in Sydney in May and Kendall/ Port Macquarie in June. A second festival in Sydney was presented on November 16. These events are not only very popular, they also contribute much to the development of playing and we are seeing a considerable improvement and developing solidity of skills in the young performers. The organisation and presentation of the National Conference in July in Sydney kept the committee busy otherwise throughout the year leading up to July. The success of the conference including its pleasing financial result has been reported on numerous occasions and this report will not need to add to this. I would like to thank all my colleagues from the AUSTA Committee here in NSW for their

	wonderful, generous support and great teamwork throughout the year, making a complex year most successful: Dr. Evgeny Sorkin (Vice-President), Douglas Glanville (Secretary), Victoria Jacono- Gilmovich (treasurer), Caron Chan, Joanna Fairs-Wu (Regional Rep, Armidale), Natasha Florence (Regional Rep, Port Macquarie), Judy Hellmers, Martyn Hentschel, Sandi Oh, Adele Ohki, Kathryn Ramsay , Naira Yusofva. AUSTA (NSW) will hold its own AGM in February 2025 and is finalising its program of events for 2025 in the next weeks. Goetz Richter (President, AUSTA (NSW))
ACT	It has been a very busy but interesting year with 5 major events in the ACT. We began our year with Pedagogy Day, on Saturday February 22nd. The event was very interesting. It began with a presentation from Lauren Davis on the differences between teaching adult and child beginners. After this we broke up into upper and lower strings. In these groups we looked at bowing and right hand set up. The cellos were led by Louise Butler, and the violinists were led by Gillian Bailey-Graham. There were very experienced teachers present, as well young early-stage teachers and everyone I spoke to said it was a great afternoon. Our second event was our Reading Day on Saturday March 29th. This was fairly well attended, by our standards, and was a lovely afternoon. One of these were new to the event. The repertoire was, as always, enjoyable to play through and it was also a lovely chance to talk to colleagues and catch up with what is happening in their respective schools and workplaces. On Saturday May 24th we had our String Festival. This was, once again, an entirely non-competitive event which seems to work very well for us. This year we had an early bird rate which was the same price as last year and this seemed to encourage people to enrol earlier. It was wonderful seeing the number of students engaging with this event and lovely to see all the smiling faces from students, and the positive comments from the panel members, across the whole day. It was very well attended for ACT events with around 75 participants enrolling. On Sunday August 24th we held our inaugural Concerto Day. It was by all accounts a very successful enterprise and we will definitely be repeating it next year. This was a competitive event to be a contrast to the String Festival which is non-competitive. Robert Harris was our adjudicator, and he did a lovely job being both kind, generous and inspiring all at the same time. We have one more event this year; a workshop with John Ma on historically informed performance practice, on the Sunday 30th of November. This is a 'hands on' practical workshop for teachers. We will explore aspects of music from the Baroque and Classical era and see how some of these techniques emerged in the Romantic period and beyond. As part of this we will explore ornamentation, improvisation and notation in an historical context, or how harmony, pulse and bow use affect interpretation.

	In 2026 we have booked our dates for another Concerto Day, as well as Pedagogy Day, Reading Day and our String Festival for 2026. We are also planning a visit from Stephen Chin in March next year. Our final social event for the year is our AGM on December 6th and we will follow this with a Christmas dinner to celebrate the end of the year. Jenny Higgs ACT President
VIC	AUSTAVic report for 2025 AGM written by Andrew Schellhorn for Wednesday 12 November 2025 AUSTAVic as usual has had a busy but rewarding 2025. Many of our larger yearly events happened in the first half of the year with events post National Conference only being advertised after the conference. The AUSTAVic committee has again worked with real dedication and openness during meetings and events with members always doing as much as they can with the constraints of normal life outside of AUSTA affecting us all. I know as a committee member that it is impossible to attend all events every year, but I must mention the professionalism of all in the Victorian committee. Congratulations to Miranda Bell and also Adele Oppedisano (committee members) who both welcomed their first children during 2025. What wonderful role models these children have! Many thanks to the committee of Prue Jury, Emily Cameron, Miranda Bell, Diana Wuli, Rachael Anderson, James de Rozario, Peter Fabian, Andrew Moon, Adele Oppedisano, John Secomb, Tim Veldman, Lachlan Dent and our regional representatives Chris Robson, Rachel Levett, Ben Singh, Alison MacGregor, Colin Iverson, Carolyne Amery and Philip Trigg. Events pre National Conference were the 2025 Reading Day, String Performers Festival, String Orchestra Festival. Since the conference the Paul McDermott Violin Scholarship and an online Pedagogy Series were highlights and a proposed end of year members get together. Andrew Schellhorn.
TAS	No report
SA	This year has been a period of growth, activity and community connection for AUSTA SA. We were delighted to welcome three new committee members - Anna Piland, Jozefein Peelman, and Georgia Gamble, whose energy and ideas have already enriched our work. Our 2025 program reflects our continued commitment to providing meaningful opportunities for professional development, performance, and community

	engagement across all levels of string playing. Term 1 commenced with two well-attended professional development workshops - a Baroque Workshop, followed by a String Ensemble Repertoire Reading Session led by Lachlan Bramble, for ensemble directors. Both sessions provided valuable inspiration and resources to South Australian teachers. In May, we partnered with ABODA for a String Teachers and Ensemble Directors' Seminar, offering high-quality learning and collaboration opportunities for educators. These sessions were run by Julian Ferraretto and Fiona Portway. June was a significant month, featuring a series of events that supported players of all ages and abilities. Our first AUSTA SA String Showcase, gave young string players a welcoming performance platform. The Student String Ensemble Workshop, offering ensemble skill-building and mentorship. Our Adults Beginner Ensemble Workshop, facilitated by Robyn Handreck created a relaxed and joyful afternoon of chamber playing for adult learners. In August, we hosted the two-day SA Adult Cello Ensemble Weekend, giving cellists the chance to immerse themselves in chamber music and connect with fellow players. Thanks to Anna and Jozefein, it was enjoyed by all and will be on our events calendar in 2026. Our October online PD, <i>Beyond the Music</i> with Karen Kyriakou, focused on keeping musicians inspired and engaged was a highlight for teachers seeking fresh creative strategies. We also celebrated AUSTA's 50th anniversary, marked in South Australia by two beautiful String Showcase concerts on Sunday 16th November, featuring 28 student performers across two recitals and a celebration for String Teachers following. These events reflected the talent, dedication, and enthusiasm of our local string community. I am looking forward to an exciting and busy 2026 calendar. Thank you to the AUSTA SA committee for their wonderful contribution to our string community.
WA	AUSTA WA was presented in October with our 7 News Community Achievement Award nomination certificate for the Community Group Award at a beautiful Gala Dinner. Unfortunately Stephanie couldn't attend due to illness but Marlene Romeo (vice president) was there to receive it in person. We are so honoured to be nominated for this award and a huge congratulations goes to all the award recipients. We are currently in full swing planning for our first Summer Conference on January 23rd! Most of the WA presenters from the National conference will present as well as a luthier and ending the event with a multi level string orchestra play along. Current 2026 plan is: Jan- Summer Conference, March- Upper Strings Masterclass, April- Chamber Music Masterclass, May - Healing Stage Fright, June- Strings Festival (14th), July- Mid Year Social, August- Lower Strings Masterclass, September- AUSTA Recital, October-Teacher/PD Event, December AGM and Social  25WACAA Certificate_Part12 (1).pdf  Australian Strings Association (AUSTA) WA Chapter.JPG

Stringendo Report

AUSTA Stringendo 2025 Annual Report

Susan Pierotti, National Editor

April 2025 issue, Vol. 48, no. 1

The April issue had two themes: AUSTA's 50th anniversary and the National Conference. One long-time member and previous State President wrote about how AUSTA has shaped her life. Patron Robin Williams sent us congratulations on our golden jubilee.

An AYO Media and Communications delegate wrote about Emily Sun (who presented at the National Conference) and her recent collaboration with AYO. We also celebrated 50 years with 3MBS Australia's longest running radio channel dedicated to fine arts music.

Other articles included the state chapter reports from 2024, the importance of confidence in learning and performing, the hardanger fiddle, the development of a string app, Musica Viv's Strike a Chord competition, instrument valuation for insurance purposes.

This issue was 38 pages. There were 2 advertisers.

July 2025 issue, Vol. 48, no. 2

The July issue had two themes: AUSTA's 50th anniversary and the National Conference. The feature article was collected from nominated AUSTA members from different states and gave a wide overview of nearly every event and session. Other conference-related articles were from presenters Timothy Kantor Fintan Murphy and Vov Dylan.

Celebrating AUSTA's 50th anniversary, one of our longest advertisers, Twofold Media wrote on why they are still an AUSTA members. Patron Patricia Pollett also sent congratulations. We also celebrated 50 years of Pirastro's Evah Pirazzi strings.

The Living Treasure article featured an interview with AUSTA founder Elizabeth Morgan and Amy Phillips (AUSTA Q President).

Other contributions were Musica Viva's school program, a review of a string app and the importance of performing in the life of a teacher.

This issue was 46 pages with 5 advertisers.

September 2025 issue, Vol. 48, no. 3

The September issue continued the two themes of AUSTA's 50th anniversary and the National Conference. The feature article reflected three AUSTA member's impressions of the conference. A first-time presenter wrote of his conference experience and there were limericks from the conference dinner and congratulations from AUSTA Patron Barry Green.

Other articles included an interview with Maxine Gatt, AUSTA's new admin officer, and one son tension and hypermobility.

The issue was 37 pages with one advertiser.

December 2025 issue, Vol. 48, no. 4

The theme of AUSTA's 50th anniversary was concluded with articles from conference presenters on how learning strings shapes brain development, the documentary *The Last Violin*, and the Australian Music Centre celebrating its 50th anniversary with AUSTA. There were congratulations from AUSTA Patrons Simon Fischer and Howard Penny.

AUSTA's next National President Daniel Holloway shared his vision for AUSTA. Stringendo reviewers Jon Rose and Hollis Taylor were lauded on receiving the Richard Gill Award. Other articles were on the AYO international tour and what the Stringendo Reviews Editor role entails.

The issue was 48 pages with 8 advertisers.

The move to online for Stringendo has been well received and generally efficient. However, one of the main reasons for moving online was to increase revenue for AUSTA and this has not happened due to hiccups in our advertising. At the end of 2024, the role of Advertising Manager was rolled into the admin role, which gave Emily Dittman, admin officer at the time, no time to source advertisers with a *Stringendo* deadline of a few weeks. There was a large hiatus while a new admin officer was appointed. We had 4 issues in a row with virtually no advertising revenue. I would like to applaud National President Nicole Strohfeldt who chased up previous advertisers while she was also organising a National Conference and running her teaching practice. One previous long-time advertiser I contacted said they found the new rates too expensive and the online booking too complicated. No one seems to be taking up the social media packages that advertisers in the past advocated for. However, things have improved markedly since Maxine Gatt came on board as admin officer.

I would like to recommend regular meetings between the National President (or one rep from the National Executive who could report back to the Nat Exec), the *Stringendo* Editor and the admin officer. These have been most helpful in the past. Priorities would be the integration of social media and *Stringendo* and better liaisons with state chapters and the Stringendo team.

I would like to thank Mary Nemet (Reviews Editor), Louise Booth (graphic designer) and new admin officer Maxine Gatt, my colleagues in producing another four fine issues. As always, it has been a great joy and privilege being the National Editor of such a fine and respected publication.