

A Letter to the Dancers of Australia

Many still may not have heard about the changes to this Dance Programme at the National Folk Festival this year.

While it is impossible to confirm exactly what is happening, it would appear that the Coorong has been deemed "unsafe" for dancers and will **NO LONGER** be used as a Dance Venue. It is considered to be quite safe for concert attendees, and general belief is that it is just an excuse to turn the Coorong into a concert venue, at the expense of the dancers, to increase Festival revenue.

While the NFF has said they will enlarge the floor in the Mallee and the Oasis, neither is a match for the Coorong, despite its sound problems. It is believed that the new Oasis will be a marquee (tent). Given how hot other Marquees have been during previous NFF's, one can only wonder how suitable it will be as a dance venue.

Consequently, **the dance programme has been curtailed** - with only a limited Celtic content remaining.

The Colonial Ball has been dropped. I have been told that at least two applications were submitted to run the Colonial Ball this year and both applicants are still available. While the NFF has advised they are looking at alternatives for the Ball, I, suggest we do not hold our breath. The Scottish Ball is on Friday night, the Irish Ceili has been scheduled for Sunday Night and an American Caller has been retained for a Contra/Square dance scheduled for Saturday night. Could this have been decided many months ago?

There are some notes, hidden away on the NFF website, under Programme, then under 2010 Dance Information, They were brought to my attention only two weeks ago. Unfortunately, most people appeared to be unaware of the programme changes when they purchased their Early Bird Season Tickets.

An on-line petition has been established at: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/danceatnational> to petition the NFF to:

- **Reinstate the Coorong as a dance venue**
- **Reinstate the Colonial Ball to the NFF Programme**
- **Reinstate a full Colonial/Celtic Dance Programme to the NFF**

Individuals can sign there.

A hard copy of our petition can be downloaded here: [\(here please, Rob\)](#). If you are in a position to collect multiple signatures, ie a dance group, please circulate a copy at your next meeting or function and send it to me by mail.

While I understand that some recipients may have workshops or hope to secure workshops in the future, and may therefore not be prepared to sign, it would be appreciated if you would circulate it to your dancers anyway. The CCBDMA has no involvement whatsoever with the NFF and will be happy to deliver the petition.

I have been told that it took fifteen years to re-establish a dance stream to festivals in the US once it was dropped. Please don't let that happen in Australia. This is our best opportunity to show the NFF that the dancers of Australia are unhappy with the way we have been treated. Please stand up and be counted.

Robyn Graylin