ANNUAL REPORT 2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

This report comes in two parts. The first focuses on our operating year 2025-26, which runs from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. Our regulatory reporting obligations require that we publish annual accounts and annual reports for each annual reporting period. The annual accounts, with an independent audit report, are included with the agenda papers for this AGM. The first part of this report aligns with the operating activities covered by the annual accounts. The second part of this report summarises ECFA activities from 1 July 2026 to 25 September 2025, to ensure that the AGM has up-to-date information for its deliberations.

Summary of Activities of the Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia (ECFA) 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026

The Estonian Cultural Foundation in Australia is pleased to provide a summary of events and activities undertaken during the 2025-6 financial year.

Financial Performance

Our total income over the period 2025-26 was $37,610. This contrasts unfavourably with our total income in 2024-25 of $50,809. Once expenses, losses on the disposal of investments and distributions of grants are taken into account, our operating deficit after distributions was a loss of $7,023. This contrasts favourably with an operating loss of $20,424 in 2024-25. These losses largely explained by the loss sustained as a result the disposal of the Dexus Core Property Fund in 2024-25, and a fair value revaluation of our holdings in the separate Dexus Core Infrastructure Fund in 2025-26. The losses are noted in the annual accounts and explained in detail in the Treasurer's report. The Board made a conscious decision not to reduce the overall level of funding paid to community organisations in these two years. We hope to recoup the reported losses over a number years.

In March 2026, the ECFA Board initiated a review of ECFA's investments. Currently, over 77 percent of our assets ($551,979) are in property trusts and around 22 percent in deposits with the Commonwealth Bank ($153,226). We also hold a small parcel of shares in IAG ($7,143). An investment review led by a subcommittee of the Board (Elen Ellervee, Kristi Barrow and Hillar Ranniko) with a formal terms of reference is examining our current investment portfolio holdings, and developing options for a mix that optimises the overall return on investment for ECFA funds, including identifying a new source of investment advice. A report on progress on the subcommittee's work is included in the Treasurer's report.

ECFA uses its funds every year to support various groups or projects that aim to further Estonian culture and language across Australia, and bring together people with Estonian heritage or interests. An annual grants round is usually decided in July. We aim to match the grants given with the income generated by our investments in the previous year.

For the year 2024-25, ECFA generated $40,529 of investment income, provides our funding pool for the next year. In July 2025 we conducted our 2025-26 funding round, and distributed $38,000 in grants, against applications seeking a total of $57,100 in funding.

2025-26 Grants

Estonian Archives in Australia. $3,500.

To replace the old computers which are no longer fit for purpose by the Australian Estonian community's major repository of community history and information.

Estonian Language Curriculum Developing Workshop. $5,000.

This project brought together Estonian playgroup educators and community language teachers from across Australia (Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria, South Australia and NSW), for a three-day intensive curriculum development workshop in Sydney. The workshop, held at the end of April 2026, looked at how to extend language education for school-aged children and the potential for establishing Estonian Community Language Schools under the various State Education Departments across Australia. The aim is to strengthen alignment with the Australian National Curriculum for Languages, promote ongoing collaboration and resource sharing and explore available pathways, funding opportunities and implementation requirements for expanding the teaching of Estonian in Australia. This work will continue into the late part of 2026.

EstWest - Estonian Cultural Association in Western Australia. $1,500

This funding supported the venue hire for an Estonian family-and-music Christmas festival in December 2025. Over 170 people, spanning the generations, gathered to connect and celebrate Estonian Christmas food and traditions. Even Santa came!

Newy EestLASTE Kultuuriring **(Language and Culture Club for Estonian Kids in Newcastle). $700**.

This funding supported the ongoing work of the club, which runs classes for children in the Newcastle and Hunter regions 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**

This funding supported the work of the *Mudilasring* in Sydney, which meets weekly and promotes Estonian language, music and culture among Estonian families and their young children, including pre-school sessions for children aged four years and above. The playgroup is a place for Estonian families and children to meet, speak Estonian, sing, dance, and celebrate holidays.

Sydney Estonian Handicraft Circle (SESKKE). $2,000

SESKKE have established a 'library' of Estonian folk-costumes (*rahvariided*). They collect pre-loved folk costumes, either on loan or through donations, then repair, clean, maintain and lend them out to people for folk-dancing performances and community events. SESKKE is also

making new folk costumes from materials purchased in Estonia, especially for children. The funding for 2025-6 was mainly for software to manage and maintain the inventory of the library. ECFA has agreed to this funding being carried over into 2026-27.

Estonian Society in Melbourne. $2,000.

This funding supported an Estonian children's Language and Culture weekend camp in November 2025, which attracted 33 families with a total of 77 participants. This was the second such camp, and a third is planned for March 2027. The Camp aims to further strengthen the connection between Estonian families across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Gold Coast Estonian Society. $3,000.

This funding was for a weekend language and culture camp for the Estonian communities of Gold Coast and Brisbane. It was held in November 2025 at Tyalgum Ridge Retreat. Designed for families with children aged 0–15 years, it offered age-appropriate activities in Estonian – including folk craft, music, dance and traditional games – with a strong learning and development focus. It attracted 112 participants

Melbourne Estonian Society Craft Group (*Kirivööd*). $900.

A fully-subscribed workshop was held in early 2026 as a first step in reviving traditional Estonian crafts in Victoria. ECFA grant money was used to purchase eight specialised Ashford inkle looms, yarn and instructional manuals to teach traditional Baltic pick up weaving. Traditional Estonian weaving patterns were provided.

Sydney Estonian Society. Australia tour: *Piip ja Tuut*. $5,500,

The funding supported Haide Mannamäe and Toomas Tross, who form the clown duo *Piip ja Tuut*, to tour Australia in March and April 2026. *Piip ja Tuut* won the Estonian Theatre Prize of the Year in 2014 as the best company playing for the young audience. In 2022 they were decorated with a state award – the Order of the White Star – by the President of the Estonian Republic. They appeared across Australia, including at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, and in performances for the local Estonian community in Perth, Sydney, the Gold Coast and Melbourne.

Sydney Estonian Society. Australia tour: *Mamma Lood*

Margus Tabur's one man performance *Mamma Lood* (Nana's stories) toured Australia and New Zealand (Perth, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland) in February and March 2026. Bringing Hiiumaa humour and wisdom to the stage through stories about his grandmother's life and tribulations in Soviet times, Ugala Theatre's Tabur won wide admiration for his sentimental recollections of a resilient yet vulnerable woman.

Estonian *Sõrve* Childrens' Camp (7th to 14th January 2024). $8,000

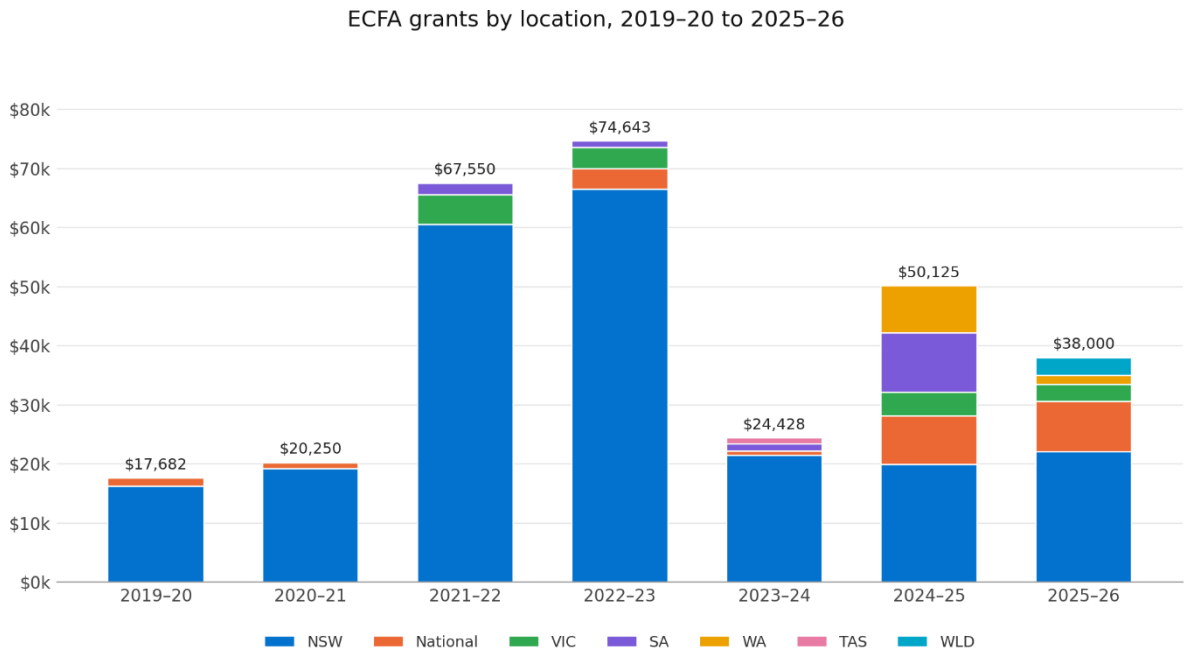
This annual camp has been running for over 65 years, for most of this time at Point Wolstoncroft Sport and Recreation Centre in regional NSW. It provides a rich experience for children and adults alike, and has served four generations of Australian Estonians. The program includes the sharing of customs, heritage, language, dancing, singing and a mix of sporting and team-building activities. The January 2026 camp saw 223 participants – including 95 children under the age of

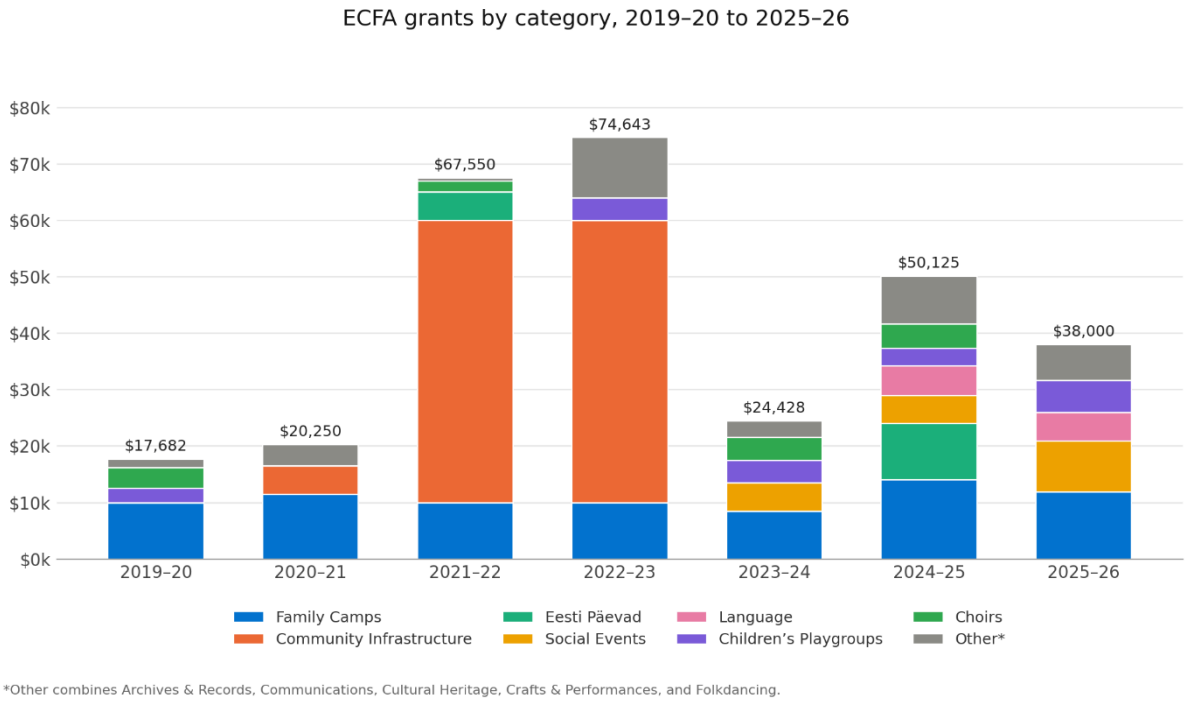
18 years, 32 camp leaders and 96 adults – attending the 7-night camp. The overwhelming majority were there on a full-time basis. ECFA has been a long-term supporter of the camp.

***Sõrve Sõbrad*. Hans Ots Grant. $1,900,**

This grant is provided by ECFA and has been administered by organisers of the *Sõrve* camp to top-up a financial assistance program for residents of 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.

A series of visualisations of ECFA grants over time appears below





*Other combines Archives & Records, Communications, Cultural Heritage, Crafts & Performances, and Folkdancing.

ECFA grants by category and year, 2019–20 to 2025–26

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	2025–26	Total
Community Infrastructure	–	$5,000	$50,000	$50,000	–	–	–	$105,000
Family Camps	$10,000	$11,500	$10,000	$10,000	$8,500	$14,000	$11,900	$75,900
Children's Playgroups	$2,550	–	–	$4,000	$4,000	$3,125	$5,700	$19,375
Social Events	–	–	–	–	$5,000	$5,000	$9,000	$19,000
Archives & Records	–	$2,750	–	$5,000	$1,700	$1,000	$5,500	$15,950
Eesti Päevad	–	–	$5,000	–	–	$10,000	–	$15,000
Choirs	$3,632	–	$2,000	–	$4,000	$4,300	–	$13,932
Language	–	–	–	–	–	$5,200	$5,000	$10,200
Cultural Heritage, Crafts & Performances	$1,500	–	–	$4,503	–	$3,000	$900	$9,903
Folkdancing	–	$1,000	$550	$1,140	$1,228	$1,500	–	$5,418
Communications	–	–	–	–	–	$3,000	–	$3,000
Year total	$17,682	$20,250	$67,550	$74,643	$24,428	$50,125	$38,000	

Colour scale is capped at $15,000; community infrastructure grants of $50,000 are shown in the darkest shade. – = no grant.

A summary of grants provided after the end of the 2025-26 reporting year appears at the end of this report.

ECFA Board activities

The ECFA Board has had a busy year. The November 2025 AGM saw the election of a new Director, Elen Ellervee, who is also the ECFA Treasurer. A Board meeting in December reappointed Elen as Treasurer, and elected Lembit Suur as Chairman, Kristi Barrow as Deputy Chairman and Dr Siiri Iismaa as Secretary. Ingrid Galloway (née Tartu), who had served for 19 years on the Board, and was Secretary for the first part of the year, departed the Board at the AGM. She was made an honorary life member of ECFA in February 2026 in recognition of her long and impactful service.

The previous Chairman and Deputy Chairman, Dr Juho Looveer and Dr Peeter Muttik, continue as ECFA Directors, and Juho has led the work on reviewing the ECFA Constitution. The results are reported in an agenda item for this AGM. I urge members to read the recommendations from this review and to support its outcomes.

The Board as at 30 June 2026 was:

Chairman	Lembit Suur
Deputy Chairman	Kristi Barrow
Secretary	Dr Siiri Iismaa
Treasurer	Elen Elleree
Directors	Maie Barrow
	Dr Juho Looveer
	Dr Peeter Muttik
	Ave Nukki
	Hillar Ranniko

The ECFA Board held eight meetings in 2025-26. From December 2025, the new ECFA Executive instituted a practice of formal regular formal executive meetings. The Executive met five times in 2025-26. In addition, Directors forming the Investment Review Subcommittee and reviewing the Constitution met on an as needed basis. These meetings were held using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Formal agendas are issued and formal minutes are kept for all Board and Executive meetings. A lot of work has been done to improve and upgrade the digital filing and storage of information and records.

Our annual reporting obligations to the national regulator – the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission - were completed within statutory timeframes by the end of January 2026. A number of amendments needed to be made to previous years' Annual Income Statement reports to ensure that ECFA showed a consistent publicly available time series of data. These amendments involved five previous reporting periods and were done in consultation with the regulator.

Efforts were made to improve communication about ECFA activities. Key externally facing processes – for grants applications and acquittals – were upgraded and digitised, and supporting documentation improved. We issued our first period newsletter to members in May 2026. Various articles appeared in the web-based journal HEIA, and the information on our website was reviewed and updated. We require successful grant applicants to submit formal grant acquittal reports at the completion of their project, or at the latest by 30 June, and we drew on some of these to publish stories about how our grants are used.

We hope that some of these changes lift the profile of ECFA and encouraging an uplift in membership. As at 30 June, we had 58 members, which is a modest number even for a community of our size. The Board has discussed various ideas for boosting member numbers, and we expect this to be a focus for 2026-27. Any ideas from our current membership are welcomed, as are personal efforts to get people to join. The better our networks and reach into the community, the better focused our grants program.

Some key new governance arrangements were developed and documented during the year. A policy on Committee Member Expense Reimbursement was developed, as was a formal Executive Job Descriptions document. We developed a Director's skills matrix to identify strengths and weakness in the collective capability of the Board.

Changes were made to the level of annual membership fees (now $20) and the membership period (now 1 July to 30 June to align with our operating and reporting year). The process for annual membership renewals was updated and streamlined.

Developments from 1 July 2026

Some of the key work initiated in 2025-26 has been finalised. The review of the Constitution has been completed and is earmarked for debate and decision at this AGM. The review of investments work has also advanced significantly and will be reported to this AGM by the Treasurer. We hope to have a new investment strategy agreed and a new investment adviser in place by the end of calendar year 2026. A new Conflicts of Interest Policy, which draws heavily on an ACNC model, has been developed for the Board and is available on our website.

In July 2026, a grant payment of €5,000 was made through ECFA to HEIA by the Estonian Foreign Ministry's Integration Fund. HEIA, which is not a legal entity, had applied for grant funding to support the development of its national communication platform, and ECFA acted as the legal entity for the application. However, full responsibility for delivering the funded activities and grant reporting rests with the HEIA team. The funds were transferred to HEIA on 9 July 2026. On 16 July 2026, the Melbourne Estonian House Co-operative fully repaid ECFA a $10,000 interest-free loan.

The Board met in late July and decided on grants for 2026-27. We received 16 applications seeking a total of $64,000 of funding. We awarded 14 grants totalling $38,331 to projects initiated by organisations and groups in NSW, Queensland Victoria and Western Australia. In addition, ECFA has provided a $10,000 sponsorship to the 30th Estonian Festival (XXX Eesti Päevad) in Sydney in April 2027. The Festival coincides with the 100th anniversary of the Sydney Estonian Society, an important milestone in the history of our small community. An article from HEIA announcing these grants is attached.

A final development to report is that the Sydney Estonian House Co-operative (which owns the Sydney Estonian House in Campbell Street, Darlinghurst) has approached ECFA and some other Estonian organisations in Sydney offering a share buy-back. ECFA currently holds 3,195 shares, or 20.89% of all shares issued, which exceeds a statutory ownership limit of 20%. The shares have a face value of $2.00 per share. The offer is to buy back 3,095 shares for $6,190, leaving us with only 100 shares but our current voting right unaffected, as each shareholder is restricted to one vote. The Board is in discussions with the Sydney Estonian Society and the Estonian Archives in Australia, which have been approached in the same terms, about how to respond to this offer, the effect of which is to reduce the holding of our three community groups in the Co-operative from 57% to 4.35%. As at the date of this report, these discussions are continuing.

I would like to conclude this report by thanking the Directors for their energy, enthusiasm and hard work through 2025-26.

Lembit Suur
Chairman
25 September 2026