

Federation of Victorian Film Societies Inc

INFORMATION SHEET 01 - (30th March 2026)



WHO CAN AFFILIATE WITH THE FEDERATION OF VICTORIAN FILM SOCIETIES (FVFS)?

Quick-Start Guide.

If you are considering starting a film society, NPV film festival or NPV community cinema, this is where you start. Then see the following Information Sheets. (NPV means Not-for-Profit, Volunteer-run),

To start or run a small to medium size, independent film society (the most common variety) you need to read sections 0, 1.0 and 1.1 of this Information Sheet. This type of film society is represented by column 1.1 in the diagram on page 9. For a small film society screening in a private home, read sections 0, 1.0 and 1.2. Your society is described in column 1.2 of the diagram on page 9.

Then go to Information Sheet 02 for important information, and Information Sheet 03 to design your film society constitution or rules.

Other columns of the diagram on page 9 cover other options described in section 1.3 onwards.

0. Introduction

To affiliate with The Federation of Victorian Film Societies (FVFS) an organisation must have an approved constitution, rules or by-laws, and aims that focus on the art of the moving image (in any form) and must be a not-for-profit organisation. Appropriate constitutions, rules and aims are developed further in Information Sheets 03 (Film societies), 04A (NPV Cinemas) and 04B (NPV Film Festivals).

The FVFS is incorporated with Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and the film society delegates to the FVFS are considered to be the Members of the FVFS in the eyes of CAV.

If you wish to qualify for ACNC, (Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission) - income tax-free status, the organisation must qualify as a charity – usually with the purposes of “advancing culture”. See details in Info Sheet 05 (Taxation issues).

1.0 FILM SOCIETIES

Film societies are organisations formed by groups of enthusiastic people who generally like to select their own films for screening to their members.

Their objectives may be to learn more about the on-going art, history and technique of cinema, to use the film to learn more about other cultures and to help bring people together (especially the socially isolated). In

addition, a film society should aim to ensure the best quality films are screened to their members in the best possible environment.

The films a film society screens may come from commercial film distributors, government libraries, embassies or private collections and some might not have enjoyed general release at cinemas or on TV. Film distributors and DVD rights holders have different rates of hire or screening rights charges depending on the technology, the average size of the audience and whether it operates in a non-theatrical mode (members only) or in a commercial manner (ie where some or all of the audience are charged for individual admission). There is more on non-theatrical screenings in Information Sheet 02 (Start a film society – Quick Guide).

Films screened may be from any medium - 35mm, 16mm or 8mm film, video, DVD, BluRay discs, 4K Ultra discs, MP4, streamed, downloaded or on DCP (Digital Cinema Package supplied on a hard drive, USB memory, streamed or downloaded), but must have been obtained legally. The film society then needs to obtain screening rights (ie permission) to screen that film in a public place. (Home screenings are an exception). Film screening rights for films screened on DCP such as in a theatre, are usually charged at commercial rates regardless of the audience.

[Note: In this and other FVFS documents, the use of the term “DVD” includes “BluRay and 4K Ultra” discs]

Despite the various cinema, television, video and DVD outlets, and streaming sites available for individuals to see or hire films today, film societies continue to thrive. This is due to the atmosphere, social interaction, flexibility of programming, member participation, the opportunity to learn about film making or world culture, quality of presentation and the informative and pleasant nature of the screenings. In many cases the film society has an important role to play in bringing a community together.

i. Requirements for becoming an affiliated film society

[These mandatory requirements should be covered in the society constitution or rules].

The film society will:-

1. Abide by a constitution (or rules or by-laws) which are adopted by members and approved by the FVFS. See examples in Information Sheet 03.
2. Treat film as a serious artistic, cultural, and educational medium and have appropriate aims reflecting this.
3. Operate as a not-for-profit organisation administered by a committee of volunteers (themselves members) and consisting of at least a President, Secretary and Treasurer, elected annually at an AGM.
4. Maintain a list of current members which is available to any member on request (subject to privacy laws). You must have a minimum of 5 members.
5. Organise finances independent of any other organisation and report on them to members annually. This may require a separate film society bank account.

6. Adhere to Australian copyright laws, which require that anyone screening a movie to the public, or in a public place must first get permission from the rights owners. This usually results in a fee.

[Note that the special ACOFS DVD screening rights agreement (with special reduced prices for screening rights) is only applicable for film societies who screen from DVDs, non-theatrically (members only, with no-one charged for admission). See note below, and Information Sheet 02.]

ii. Notes on charges for screening rights.

- The FVFS is a member of ACOFS (The Australian Council of Film Societies), who have negotiated an arrangement which will allow a registered film society to screen their own copies of DVDs, BluRays and 4K Ultra discs to their members at special, reduced prices. These prices apply only if the film society screens non-theatrically (ie members only – with the exception of the occasional come-and-try-it potential member - and with no-one charged for admission). Payment for a period membership (three months minimum) is acceptable. Rights charges are typically \$55 to \$85 per screening, but may depend on the size of the audience. For more details go to the ACOFS website www.acofs.org.au.
- A film society screening in a private home does not need to pay screening rights as long as membership is open only to family and friends (ie not the public).
- A film society is not obliged to screen to members only (non-theatrically), but if they do charge for admission they cease to be eligible for the reduced rate non-theatrical rights charges.
- 16mm and 35mm screening rights are negotiated directly with the supplier and are usually cheaper if the society screens non-theatrically.
- DCP screenings are usually associated only with the larger venues such as cinemas. Screening rights are usually \$300 or more, but may depend on the size of the audience and age of the film being screened.
- Screenings at NPV cinemas and NPV festivals are usually at commercial rates as the attendees can pay for admission to individual screenings.

iii. Recommended, but optional

1. We recommend that a DVD-based film society always screens non-theatrically ie screen to members only, (except for the occasional come-and-try-it visitor), and not charge anyone for admission to any screening (unless otherwise permitted by a distributor). In general, societies that screen DCPs may admit some of the audience as paying guests as they are already deemed to be commercial screenings.
2. Be devoted to screening critically acclaimed films with substance or with a worthwhile message.
3. Present films on a large screen in a cinematic environment with sound system to match.
4. Create an environment conducive to informative discussion sessions linked to the films screened. For example offer an attractive supper after the screening.

5. Create a comfortable, friendly social atmosphere for members.
6. Provide program notes for each film screened.
7. Provide an economical means of bringing films to members.
8. Include the term "Film society" and some indication of locality in the name of the organisation.
9. Members participate in the selection of films to screen at the society.
10. Keep members informed about relevant film related activities in their local area, areas of interest and in other film societies.
11. Remember that the film society's social activities are important, and are the key factors differentiating them from commercial cinemas or streaming at home.
12. Participate in the activities of the FVFS (eg attend information days and contribute articles to ReelNews).
13. Apply for an ABN and register for charity status, based on the film society's support of the Arts and Culture, as this proves the not-for-profit status of the film society (which is often required when dealing with council or government).
14. The larger societies and any that screen in a public venue should consider incorporation.
15. Maintain a DVD library of screened titles for members to "catch up" on any films screened, without charge.

iv. Other Possibilities

1. Film directors might be invited to introduce or discuss their films at film society screenings.
2. The society could arrange special social events based around screenings which help draw the community together. This may include the local community or any others who share their particular interests.
3. A film society might conduct a film festival for members and/or the general public. When promoted to the public, any regular film festival would normally be registered with the FVFS as a separate entity. Screening rights would not normally be covered by the ACOFS agreement.
4. As an optional extra service to members, the society might negotiate special prices at nearby cafes, bookshops or cinemas for members on showing their membership card.

An organisation does not have to use the term "Film society" in its name to be considered a valid film society and to be accepted as a member of the FVFS. For example, a film club may still be interested in screening films for their members but choose to emphasise the social aspect of the organisation in the community and support the socially isolated. Note however, that the "charity" category at ACNC relies on the film society having aims that include recognising cinema as an art form. And the use of the term "Film society" may enhance this recognition.

The term "Film society" is used throughout the FVFS documents for membership-based organisations for convenience.

1.1 THE TRADITIONAL FILM SOCIETY

See column 1.1 of the table on page 9.

The film society is completely independent and screenings are run by the film society committee for the film society members.

The most common type of film society is one that screens non-theatrically. In other words, admission to the screening is by membership and involves no additional payment. Some visitors may “come and try it”, but their visits should be limited. They might come for free, take out a three-month membership or offer a nominal (non-mandatory) donation.

Promotion of any screening should emphasise a period membership of the society although film titles may be quoted as a means of attracting interest in the society.

One impact of the above requirement is that when a film society screens in a public venue such as a pub, café or restaurant, it must be possible to isolate the screening. It must not be possible for non-members to participate in the screening except by special arrangement.

Some distributors regard any outdoor screening as a “commercial” rather than “non-theatrical” screening.

1.2 A FILM SOCIETY THAT SCREENS IN A PRIVATE HOME

See column 1.2 of the table on page 9

A film society that screens privately, in a private home for the benefit of friends and family, should operate in the same manner as above but they are not subject to the copyright requirement that screenings be approved by the rights owners, nor do they have to pay screening rights.

1.3 A FILM SOCIETY THAT SCREENS IN A NORMAL CINEMA USING 16mm or DVD

See column 1.3 of the table on page 9

To qualify as an approved film society an organisation must meet all the requirements listed in section 1.0 i, above.

Rather than have the film society committee run the screening, it is acceptable that a commercial cinema run the screening for the society and bill them for theatre hire, projectionist etc. as well as pay for the film or DVD hire. However, if the cinema pays for screening rights, they would pay commercial rates of up to \$300, whereas a registered film society screening non-theatrically (quoting the ACOFS agreement) need only pay a nominal \$50 - \$80 for DVD screening rights. (Perhaps a little more for some distributors, or if the society is a large one). In this option, the public would not be admitted (except on a one-off come-and-try-it basis) and no admission charges would be made.

If the film society or cinema charge for admission to members or the public, they lose the right to apply the ACOFS DVD screening rights discounted price agreement for that screening.

1.4 A FILM SOCIETY THAT SCREENS IN A NORMAL CINEMA USING DCP (DIGITAL CINEMA PACKAGE)

See column 1.4 of the table on page 9.

The only difference between this and Item 1.3, is that the venue is using DCP and they will probably already be paying commercial prices for screening rights at all screenings. The ACOFS special DVD screening rights will not apply as it would be classed as a commercial screening. The society or cinema may charge members or the public for admission. As both members and public may be attending, it would be to your advantage to distinguish members from non-members, eg with name-tags. Such a film society could also arrange regular members-only non-theatrical screenings, which would satisfy the ACOFS DVD rights agreement.

1.5 AUSPICED ORGANISATIONS

For film societies, see column 1.5 & 1.6 of the table on page 9.

For NPV film festivals or NPV cinemas see column 4.

- An auspiced organisation is one that operates under the guidance and/or support of a “parent organisation” but otherwise might operate independently. The parent may also be affiliated with the FVFS or an independent arts organisation such as an Arts Council, U3A, school etc. It may be a government or council organisation.
- The dependent organisation must have acceptable aims and rules which recognise the use of film as an art form.
 - The member organisation must operate as a not-for-profit organisation.
 - The operating committee may include one or more representatives of the parent organisation.
 - Rules and aims of the parent organisation must not conflict in any way with those of the member organisation.
 - Ideally the auspiced organisation would have their own budget, financial books, and have their own bank account.
 - The auspiced organisation must not operate to raise funds for the parent organisation, although reasonable payment for facilities and services is acceptable.
 - The organisation will be considered “non-theatrical” and can apply the ACOFS DVD rights agreement only if they screen to members only, with no charges for admission. (Not applicable to most film festivals and cinemas).
- Note that for a film society, the average audience is the basis of determining the appropriate rights charges, while the total membership is the determining factor when defining the FVFS size when affiliating.
- The rules of the auspiced group need not be as extensive as an independent organisation and may be presented as a separate constitution, rules, by-laws or supplementary rules.

The auspiced film society might operate independently or be integrated into the parent organisation.

- A. If **independent** the “members” of the film society would be separately defined (by a membership list) and would pay a membership fee to join the film society. Members of the parent group may be offered a discount for joining the film society. Alternately, to become a member of the film society an applicant may need to join the parent group before being eligible to join the film society.
- B. If **integrated**, the total number of “members” of the film society is the total of all members of the parent organisation. As this may seriously overestimate the number of “members” of the film society, organisations in this situation are able to estimate their “effective membership” as being 1.6 times their average attendance. This recognises that the normal film society averages about 60% of their members at an average screening.

2 NPV CINEMAS

See column 2 of the table on page 9.

NPV, or Not-for-Profit Volunteer-run cinemas, usually run on a volunteer basis by local community members. These cinemas generally hold screenings on a regular basis (eg a weekly or monthly screening) often in a venue that may not be purpose built as a cinema. This is a cost effective approach to providing film screenings in a small town.

The NPV cinema should meet all the requirements of a film society except they do not have defined members except for promotional reasons which may include a discounted ticket price. All admissions are by single session or multiple session tickets. For this reason the NPV cinema can expect to pay commercial rates (either a percentage of door sales or an agreed flat rate) for their films, DCP and/or DVD rights. Or they might be using DCP facilities, which again, are classed as commercial screenings.

3 NPV FILM FESTIVALS

See column 3 of the table on page 9.

These organisations operate in exactly the same way as NPV cinemas except that all screenings are held over a short period (eg a weekend) rather than spread throughout the year.

NPV film festivals, as with NPV cinemas, may operate as dependent or independent organisations. Commercial rates would normally be charged for screening rights.

4 AUSPICED NPV FILM FESTIVALS or CINEMAS

See column 4 of the table on page 9.

NPV Film Festivals and NPV Cinemas as described above may be auspiced by another organisation, in which case it should comply with the dot points under 1.5 above.

5 COMMERCIAL CINEMAS

See column 5 of the table on page 9.

Cinemas operating as part of a chain or as independent commercial cinemas are not eligible to join the FVFS as they do not comply with the essential not-for-profit conditions of membership.

6 WHY AFFILIATE WITH THE FVFS?

Services provided by the FVFS to affiliated organisations include:-

- Registration, which provides status and credibility.
- Advice and help to new groups wishing to start up.
- Emergency support for member organisations struggling to survive.
- Under some circumstances, financial assistance.
- Non-theatrical film hire rates and DVD rights charges to qualifying organisations.
- Provision of the means to swap information and skills between affiliated groups.
- Access to public liability and general insurance for affiliated groups at special rates.
- Publication of a regular film newsletter.
- Access to a DVD library.
- Library of independent films on DVD.
- Film appraisals.
- Support and expansion of technical advice to affiliated groups.
- Advice on running film societies, film festivals, film viewing weekends, appraisal sessions and other film events.
- Advice on suitable technology for screening DVDs and films.
- Provision of general, legal and operational advice on running film organisations.
- Management of DVD screening rights agreements.
- A voice at state and national level with film distributors, government and semi-government bodies.
- Regular meetings and Information Days involving representatives from other affiliated groups.

And of course the film society may simply wish to be part of the growing Film Society movement of Australia.

7 HOW TO AFFILIATE WITH THE FVFS

When you have formed your organisation you should consider affiliating with the FVFS, by doing the following:

1. Complete the appropriate FVFS affiliation application form (available on the FVFS website www.fvfs.org.au/join/). The on-line

version is recommended because it is simpler than the paper version, masks any question that becomes irrelevant based on earlier answers, provides an explanation on most questions, calculates the appropriate fee, lodges the application for you, and provides immediate feedback.

2. Provide a copy of your rules and aims.

3. Provide a copy of the constitution of your parent organisation if relevant.

4. Submit the electronic form on-line, and send appropriate payment, (preferably by EFT) to the FVFS treasurer – to the bank account or address indicated on the application form. (The affiliation fee depends on the size of the organisation and is calculated in the application form). Most societies now pay by EFT as it is quicker and easier, after completing the application form on-line.

8 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DELEGATES

All member organisations are represented at the FVFS by delegates appointed by the organisation. The number of delegates depends on the size of the organisation. The FVFS delegates are in fact the members of the FVFS as defined in the FVFS constitution. Their rights and responsibilities are contained in the FVFS Constitution which can be downloaded from the FVFS website.

9 FURTHER INFORMATION

Other information sheets are available which expand on many of the items mentioned in this information sheet.

Check out our web page at www.fvfs.org.au .

Contact the FVFS on (03) 9874 5270, write to the FVFS at 17 Bruce St. Mitcham 3132, or email to admin@fvfs.org.au

(See Paragraph)	1.1 (Traditional)	1.2 (Home)	1.3 (Cinema)	1.4 (Cinema)	1.5 (Auspiced)	1.6 (Auspiced)	2 & 3	4 (Auspiced)	5
Type of Organisation.	Society that screens DVDs or 16mm in a public venue to members only.	Film society that screens privately, in a private home.	Film society screening DVDs or 16mm in a cinema.	Film society screening DCP in a cinema.	Independent film society run by separate committee.	Integrated film society for all members of the parent.	Independent NPV film fest or NPV cinema.	Dependent NPV film fest or NPV cinema	Commercial cinema. (Independent or chain) **NOT an FVFS member**
Rules- see Info Sheet	Info Sheet 03, Appendix B	Info Sheet 03, App B	Info Sheet 03 App B	Info Sheet 03, App B	Info Sheet 03 App C	Info Sheet 03 App D	Info Sheet 04A App A or 04B App A	Info Sheet 04A App B or 04B App B	N/a
Technology.	16mm or DVD	16mm or DVD	16mm or DVD	DCP or DVD	16mm, DVD or DCP	16mm, DVD or DCP	DVD or DCP	DVD or DCP	DCP
Who attends.	Members only.	Members only.	Members only.	Members + some casual.	Members of society sub-group.	Members of the parent are all members.	Admission by sale of tickets only.	Admission by sale of tickets only.	No
Relevant rights fee.	ACOFS agreement (for DVD, BluRay & 4K) if no admission fee	No rights payable	ACOFS agreement (for DVD, BluRay & 4K) if no admission fee	Commercial – as negotiated with distributor	ACOFS agreement (for DVD, BluRay & 4K) if no admission fee	ACOFS agreement (for DVD, BluRay & 4K) if no admission fee	Commercial – as negotiated with distributor	Commercial – as negotiated with distributor	commercial
Run by:-	Committee of Members	Committee of Members	Committee of Members – assisted by cinema	Committee of Members – assisted by cinema	Sub-committee members plus parent	Sub-committee members plus parent	Committee of Members	Committee of Members plus parent	Private
Not-for-profit.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, so is parent	No
Has ABN & Charity status.	Usually	Probably not	Usually	Usually	Parent may have ABN.	Parent may have ABN.	Usually	Parent may have ABN.	Yes
Acceptable aims and rules.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, plus Stand. Res.	Yes	Yes – plus standing resolutions.	No
Committee of management.	Yes	Usually	Usually	Usually	Yes	Yes	Usually	Usually	No
Democratic /AGM.	Usually	Usually	Usually	Usually	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Single tickets sold by org. or cinema*	Maybe*	No	Maybe *	Usually*	Maybe*	Maybe*	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of "Effective members".	Actual number of members.	Actual number of members.	Actual number of members.	Actual number of members.	Number of members in sub-group.	1.6 x average attendance.	N/A	N/A	N/A

* If admission to the screening is by membership only (no sales) then the screening is "non-theatrical" and lower DVD screening rights may apply.
If any payments are made for admission, it is a commercial screening and a flat rate or % applies for film, DVD or DCP screening rights.

**** NOTE: A commercial cinema cannot become an FVFS member.**

Possible Modes of Operation.

