

Strategic Plan



2019 - 2022

Star Cinema

WHO ARE WE?

Star Cinema is an incorporated Not For Profit community organisation

WHAT DO WE DO?

- Screen a diverse range of films
- Provide a boutique cinematic experience
- Support community fundraising
- Hold film based events
- Partner with local and state-wide organisations
- Give vibrancy to the Eaglehawk Town Hall, a wonderful heritage building

OUR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Star Cinema is a much loved Bendigo institution
- Cinema operations are made possible by a dedicated body of more than 45 volunteers



Star Cinema

OUR VISION

To provide a vibrant cultural experience in Central Victoria through the medium of cinema

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to:

1. Provide unique entertainment experiences to the Bendigo community and visitors
2. Bring people together to celebrate, engage and learn
3. Support our community to grow and connect through shared experiences

OUR VALUES

Inclusive. We are a reflection of the community we engage. We recognise, respect and embrace diversity in all of its forms, in every way we work.

Vibrant. We are passionate about the work we do. We are constantly energised by the endless possibilities of the creative arts.

Local. We belong in Bendigo and we provide a safe, welcoming space for all communities here.

Listening. We are committed to learning and growing to deliver the most engaging and enjoyable experiences we can. We value the insights of every conversation to inform the work we do.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES

Our objectives over the next three years focus in the following areas:

- Strategy 1: Support + Foundations.** Ensure structures are in place to maintain the quality of what we do and expand and develop in the future.
- Strategy 2: People + Growth.** Increase and broaden our audience and revenue bases by recognising and building on our strengths and identifying and testing new opportunities.
- Strategy 3: Space + Place.** Pursue opportunities to maximise the space we use and the place around us.
- Strategy 4: Community + Connection.** Deepen our ties to communities as an audience and as partners.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Star Cinema faces a challenging operating environment. Alternate entertainment and rising costs are tightening the movie going market. But the outlook for the Star Cinema remains bright as a unique boutique, independent and creative community institution much loved by the Bendigo community.

The cinema industry in Australia is holding steady in light of new trends and increasing competition. Specifically:

- There is increasing individualism and personalisation in entertainment.
 - In 2018, over 13 million Australians had access to some form of Pay TV/Subscription TV, up 11.7% from 2017.¹
 - In 2017, consumers, predominately young men, spent \$3.23 billion on games and gaming hardware in Australia, an 11% increase from 2016.
- According to research, cinema attendance rates among all age groups remains consistent.
 - In 2017, 72% of Australians had been to the cinema over the preceding 12 months, including 85.9% of 14-24 year olds.²
- While the box office in Australia remains strong, attendance and profit are increasingly concentrated.
 - In 2018, films earned \$1.245 billion in Australia (up by 3.1%) but one third of total income was generated by the top ten films of the year.³

STAR CINEMA CONTEXT

Star Cinema is a community run cinema and event venue. It is led by a voluntary board, with five part-time staff managing and supported by about 45 volunteers.

Star Cinema is an anomaly. It is the only not-for-profit cinema in the State screening films seven days a week – highlighting both the perilous nature of the industry and the unique set of circumstances and strengths that enables Star Cinema's continued viability. Star Cinema has greatly benefited from the size and enthusiasm of Bendigo's film-going communities – aided by a relative lack of direct market competition. Star Cinema's location in the historic Eaglehawk Town Hall is a key asset. Lease negotiations with the City of Greater Bendigo will ideally provide long-term security and investment in the space.

Star Cinema has undergone significant change across the past five years. Serious cash flow shortfalls in 2017 resulted in a highly successful community campaign that has given Star Cinema a springboard for future growth. Star Cinema revitalised its screening times with the new 7@7 schedule that has proven popular with patrons. New couches, school holiday school festivals, increased advertising and growing opportunities for community fundraising have all added to the Star Cinema's currently healthy financial position.

Despite this success, fundamental challenges – including some of those that precipitated financial difficulties in 2017 – remain. These include:

- The need to engage a youthful audience demographic;
- Reliance on key individuals and lack of succession planning;
- Limitations associated with the leasing of the Town Hall venue; and
- Staff capacity to plan and implement strategic change with competing time pressures and narrow budgets.

¹ Roy Morgan Research. 2018. [Netflix set to surge beyond 10 million users.](#)

² Screen Australia. 2017. [Cinema Audience Trends.](#)

³ Screen Australia. 2018. [Cinema Snapshot.](#)

Strategy 1: Support + foundations

OVERVIEW

Ensure structures are in place to maintain the quality of what we do and expand and develop in the future.

IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES

1. Staff and volunteers are equipped to operate and grow the business
2. Audiences are growing and becoming more diverse

CONTEXT

Star Cinema is a Not For Profit community organisation that is governed by a volunteer Board. The Board employs five part time staff and the organisation is supported by a large pool of passionate volunteers. The support of volunteers minimises Star Cinema's operational expenses but requires creative management and flexible support mechanisms. Succession planning remains a key focus to ensure Star Cinema can navigate unexpected departures or changes.

In late 2017 Star Cinema faced financial difficulties and called for community support through the "Bums On Seats" campaign. The community response was outstanding and is a key reason for Star Cinema's current favourable financial position and increased patronage.



SUPPORT + FOUNDATIONS ACTION PLAN

EXISTING STRENGTHS	PRIORITY ACTIONS	OUTPUT	ASPIRATION	INDICATOR	IMPACTS
<p>>40 volunteers already engaged by Star Cinema</p> <p>High levels of staff and volunteer enthusiasm</p> <p>'Bums on Seats' campaign highlighted strength of Star Cinema's foundations and it's connection to the Bendigo community</p>	1. Conduct a review of volunteer skills and opportunities	Volunteer skills checklist	Volunteers are increasingly used and can effectively contribute in new ways	Annual volunteer survey	Staff and volunteers are equipped to operate and grow the organisation
	2. Train volunteers to improve customer service, professionalism and product knowledge	Volunteer training package	100% of volunteers undergo skills development training at Star Cinema every two year	% of volunteers completing training	Robust financial management
	3. Develop a business continuity plan	Business continuity plan	Star Cinema has appropriate plans and policies in place to weather staff departures or extended periods of leave	Continuity plan developed	Audiences are growing and becoming more diverse
	4. Recruit a volunteer, or board member, who can identify and write grants	Grant writer engaged as board member or regular Star Cinema volunteer	Star Cinema applies for at least four local or state-wide grants each year	# grants applied for \$ revenue generated through grants	
	5. Consider investing revenue for increased hours for paid staff or temporary project staff	Cost benefit analysis completed	Star Cinema has the resources to undertake ongoing operations as well as undertake new initiatives	% revenue spent on paid staff	
	6. Identify and address financial management skills and needs amongst Board and staff.	Financial management skills and processes audit	Star Cinema's personnel have the skills and process to manage finances effectively and efficiently	Successful audit	

Strategy 2: People + growth

OVERVIEW

Increase and broaden our audience and revenue bases by recognising and building on our strengths and identifying and testing new opportunities.

IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES

1. Audiences are growing and becoming more diverse
2. Income streams are diversified

CONTEXT

While Star Cinema currently maintains consistent break-even audience numbers, the cinema industry at large is under pressure to compete with more personalised and home-based entertainment experiences. In recent times a significant proportion of Star Cinema's audience is women over the age of 50, but recent trends do show an increased diversity. More diverse audiences also attend one-off events, festivals and programs. Maintaining the ongoing patronage of existing audiences, while simultaneously connecting with new demographics – potentially through different mediums – will remain the key long-term challenge for Star Cinema. The youth audience remains a challenge, projects need to be developed to engage with this audience.

Star Cinema's heavy reliance on box office takings and bar sales will need to be increasingly supplemented by membership fees, paid advertising and private events in order to ensure ongoing liquidity. Currently it is possible to run private events in the cinema space in daytime Monday to Thursday as there are no daytime screenings, this presents an opportunity.



PEOPLE + GROWTH ACTION PLAN

EXISTING STRENGTHS	PRIORITY ACTIONS	OUTPUT	ASPIRATION	INDICATOR	IMPACTS
Screenings already averaging above break-even minimums New patrons are discovering Star Cinema High levels of loyalty and word-of-mouth promotion	1. Develop a marketing and communications plan	Marketing and communications plan	Increase average screening attendance to 45 tickets	Ave ticket sales per screening per month	Audiences are growing and becoming more diverse
	2. Ensure quality editorial of Star Cinema programming is maintained	Screenings that attract and resonate with audiences		Periodic patron surveys	Income streams are diversified
	3. Establish and host focus groups with target audiences				
	4. Introduce point of sale at bar and box office and work towards Introduce online pre-paid ticket purchases and couch bookings	Point of sale used and online sales operating	Speeds up box office sales and assists volunteers. Pre-payment creates a financial commitment and avoids current non occupancy of booked couches	# point of sales reports reviewed each year # pre paid tickets	Efficient box office and bar sales Enhanced volunteer experience
	5. Enhance reach and effectiveness of direct market	Increased social media presence	Awareness of Star Cinema increases	# online engagements	No unpaid and unoccupied couches
	6. Explore opportunities to diversify income streams (including school groups, sub-letting and corporate income options)	Income diversity analysis	Regular school groups and corporate services utilise Star Cinema, probably Mon-Thu during the day	\$ generated through school and corporate screenings	Quicker box office processing for pre-paid tickets
	8. Continue to grow paid advertising	Paid revenue increases	Net income from paid advertising increases to \$30,000 annually	\$ paid advertising per year	
	9. Review free pass policy	Policy reviewed	Increase % of paid tickets per session	% of free passes utilised per screening	

Strategy 3: Space + place

OVERVIEW

Pursue opportunities to maximise the space we use and the place around us.

IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES

1. The Eaglehawk Town Hall is used as a multipurpose community space
2. The rooms and spaces within the Eaglehawk Town Hall are regularly used
3. Revenue increases
4. Audiences are growing and becoming more diverse

CONTEXT

Star Cinema's historic Eaglehawk Town Hall location and inviting theatre set-up is perhaps its greatest selling point. The history of Star Cinema is intrinsic to its character, marketing and appeal. Star Cinema is the only dedicated boutique cinema in Central Victoria. To expand Star Cinema's audience base demographic to include visitors to Bendigo is difficult. The lack of complementary businesses around Star Cinema, such as bars or restaurants make a visit to Star Cinema less of an evening event than it could be.

Star Cinema has several festival style programs which are run annually. There is the potential to expand on these programs to position Star Cinema as a known festival centre.

Yet, Star Cinema's lack of a formal lease means that Star Cinema has no capacity to hire out underutilised rooms and spaces within the Town Hall. Also, Star Cinema must completely vacate the cinema space for two major events during the calendar year which results in lost revenue. There are opportunities for both expanding services and co-sharing spaces (including a street-front office) that should be further explored in the coming years.



SPACE + PLACE ACTION PLAN

EXISTING STRENGTHS	PRIORITY ACTIONS	OUTPUT	ASPIRATION	INDICATOR	IMPACTS
<p>Unique heritage space</p> <p>Highly visible and memorable</p> <p>Opportunities for community groups/businesses to utilise unused spaces</p> <p>Comfortable viewing environment with big screen</p>	1. Investigate and market opportunities that could be developed in under-utilised spaces	Audit of spaces and list of potential opportunities	Star Cinema establishes ongoing partnership with at least two community groups and one business to co-share spaces/rooms	# of partnerships Frequency of room use	The Eaglehawk Townhall is used as the multipurpose community space
	2. Identify and pursue new opportunities using the big screen, including esports ⁴ , music screenings or pay-for-view sporting events	Trial of alternate big screen events	Monthly non cinema events held on big screen	# of non-cinema events per year	Audiences are growing and becoming more diverse
	3. Identify and foster partnerships with existing events and festivals	Event map showcasing opportunities in a calendar year	Conduct or Partner at least four festivals annually to host complementary screenings/events at Star Cinema	# of events tied to festivals per year	Star Cinema is known as a festival centre
	4. Improve the functionality and comfort of the theatre space	Heating and cooling installed	Maintain year-round comfort for audiences in Star Cinema	Periodic audience surveys	
	5. Ensure food, drink, visuals and sound meet or exceed audience expectations	Satisfied and comfortable patrons	Patrons surveyed highly satisfied with food, drinks and sound	80% satisfaction	

⁴ <https://www.cnet.com/news/hoyts-gfinity-esports-arenas-australia-elite-league/>

Strategy 4: Community + connection

OVERVIEW

Deepen our ties to communities as an audience and as partners.

IMPACT OF ACTIVITIES

1. Community partnerships are deepened and expanded
2. The Eaglehawk Townhall is used as a multipurpose community space

CONTEXT

Star Cinema is in spirit and in practice, a community organisation. It relies on volunteers to operate, while its connection to community audiences underpins its box office. Moreover, community events and fundraisers are increasingly complementing Star Cinema's core activities. There has recently been a significant increase in community fundraising events on Thursday nights at Star Cinema most likely because of several changes Star Cinema implemented to simplify the running of these events. There are significant opportunities for expansion of partnered events, particularly through partnerships with institutions such as the Bendigo Library, Art Gallery and Chinese Museum and events and festivals such as Zinda, Blues & Roots Festival, Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music, Autumn Music Festival and the Bendigo Writers Festival. Connections to the Melbourne Film Festival and the French Film Festival (run by Alliance Francais, Melb) are part of Star Cinema's existing festival partnerships.



COMMUNITY+CONNECTION ACTION PLAN

EXISTING STRENGTHS	PRIORITY ACTIONS	OUTPUT	ASPIRATION	INDICATORS	IMPACTS
<p>Community owned and operated</p> <p>Extensive reach to cross-section of community</p> <p>Already popular venue for community events and fundraising</p> <p>Opportunity to network off and building on existing relationships</p>	1. Analyse bottom line / financial risk assessment of events and partnerships including developing an event analysis template	Bottom line / financial risk assessment and template event analysis template	Event financials and operations clearly understood	Events and partnerships are profitable and operations follow template guidelines	Community partnerships are deepened and expanded
	2. Pending review of events, refine use of venue for ongoing fundraising events for community groups	Star Cinema is seen as a very desirable venue to host fundraisers	48 community fundraisers per year on Thursday nights screenings	# fundraisers	The advantages of fundraising events are well known in the Bendigo community
	3. Reach out to existing and emerging cultural communities to identify interests and opportunities	Ongoing connection with Bendigo's culturally and linguistically diverse community	At least two screenings per year in either Karen, Hindi, Persian, Arabic or Thai.	# of screenings targeting Bendigo's culturally and linguistically diverse communities	Increase the reach of Star Cinema
	4. Star Cinema to create its own film festival	A festival that engages with the community	A film festival run by 2021	Progress towards running a festival	The Eaglehawk Town Hall is used as the multipurpose community space of choice
	5. Expand and leverage off our Bendigo Tourism status	Bendigo Tourism features Star Cinema more prominently in information centre and online portals	Visitors to Bendigo account for 5% of Star Cinema's total audience	Audience surveys	
	6. Deepen relationships with Council staff and Councillors	Regular formal and informal contact with Council staff and Councillors	Council invests more in maintenance and improvements of Town Hall venue	\$ invested by Council	
	7. Ensure Board represents a cross-section of Star Cinema's community	Board contains diversity in gender, age and experience	Star Cinema Board is a dynamics and representative leadership group	Annual board profile	