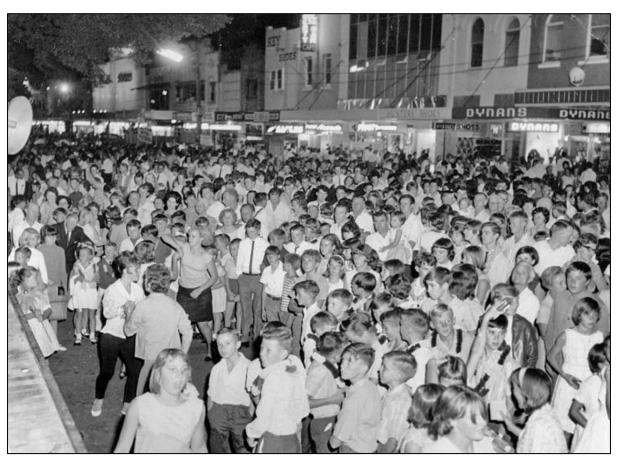# Open-air crowds on Dean Street

Greg Ryan

Albury is accustomed to seeing large crowds on Dean street for Anzac Day processions. Crowds filling the street on significant occasions was once a common sight on Dean street. Political rallies, festive occasions, musical events, troops leaving or returning for overseas service all attracted large crowds.

Before the Albury Town Hall (now MAMA) opened in 1908, it was from hotel verandahs that important speakers addressed an audience filling the street. It was often the Globe Hotel where in 1882 Henry Parkes spoke to a crowd at the intersection of Dean and Kiewa streets.

Once the new Town Hall opened in 1908, if there was something important for locals to hear, a speech would be delivered from the building's small front balcony. When the armistice was signed to end World War I, the *Border Morning Mail* described the scene as the Mayor announced the news from the Town Hall balcony: "the Mayor called for cheers, which re-echoed down the street from thousands of throats."

A large Dean street crowd, probably gathered for entertainment
during an Albury Floral Festival [photo: Keith Young]

Big crowds often spilled onto the street from events held in Dean Square (now QEII Square). Dame Nellie Melba performed in 1908 in the Mechanics Institute beside Dean Square. People came from miles around hoping to hear the great diva and unable to gain admission, packed into the Square – Melba instructed the doors be thrown open to "let them all hear."

After the Dean Square band rotunda was opened in 1913, Albury Town Band would give twice weekly concerts during the summer months. These events attracted huge crowds spilling out onto Dean street – a journal article reported in 1926 that "as many as 3000 persons [from an Albury population of about 8000] attend the open-air twice weekly band recitals."

For at least 60 years, the Albury Town Band traditionally played in the New Year to huge crowds at the Post Office corner. In January 1896 the *Albury Banner* reported "The Town Band played a number of musical selections on the balcony of the Globe Hotel, and the principal thoroughfares were thronged until a late hour." The scene was repeated each year and as the post office clock struck 12, the crowd would join in singing *Auld Lang Syne.*

The Albury Floral Festival would also draw huge crowds to Dean street. The first festival was held in March 1951 with a crowd in Dean street estimated at over 8000 revellers. Each year similar numbers would gather until the final festival concluded in 1972.