

Presidents Report 2017 – 2018

8th July 2018

Good morning members,

In many respects this has been one of our busiest and most positive club years.

Firstly, we have been contacted by the Hume Council to explain the reason for the delay in moving forward with our clubroom extensions. It appears the Willowbrook Reserve became the subject of a Cultural Heritage Site investigation. These days all new developments need to be checked to see if the proposed development will disturb any significant Cultural artefacts. This process is still ongoing. The new carparks that were to be the first improvements to be made have been delayed until this issue can be resolved. However just a week ago we were advised that there will be a change in priorities and our clubroom extensions will begin first. In the next few weeks the committee will be sitting down with the council to finalise the details of what we would like included in the new building. These details will be written into the specifications before the project is put out to tender in a few months. Building should then commence soon after. This is the last chance for any member's suggestions on the improvements we should be requesting. This has been a long time coming so let's work hard to make sure we all get it right.

Secondly on April 24th this year we finally had our own electricity meter connected. From now on we will only be paying for the electricity we use. There will no longer be that eternal fight to get the football club to reimburse us for their electricity usage. In fact, a couple of months ago they paid us in full for their 2017 usage with no argument or delaying tactics. There are just a few weeks of the 2018 season for us to be reimbursed and then we will be up to date. The detailed work done by Rachel Almond our Treasurer in keeping accurate records meant we had irrefutable evidence of the money owed by the football club. In the end Rachel you won the battle and our bank balance is better off by more than \$5000.

Thirdly, we have now finalised our "Safe Guarding Children Policy". It is to become necessary for all clubs to have such a policy and we are way out in front of the pack. This is due to the diligent work of Michelle Todorov, Yasmin Alcin, Rachel Almond and Anthony Stromei. A copy of the policy will be put on display in the clubrooms for everyone to read. Most importantly it is imperative for all adults to abide by the policy and to also report anyone who is putting our children in harm's way. Too many children have become victims of the predatory behaviour of a few adults and it is up to the rest of us to be prepared to protect all children. Well done to Michelle, Yasmin, Rachel and Anthony for your considered work on this policy.

Fourthly we have partnered with Tennis Victoria and the Centre for Multicultural Youth to be a part of a three-year pilot program to help refugees and asylum seeker communities. The program aims to increase access and participation in sport for culturally diverse communities. While the committee will be involved in an administrative way the tennis

side of the pilot will be run by our official coach Anthony Guccione. There is some funding available to help the participants get some of the equipment they need and to cover the coaching costs. We are very proud to be a part of such a pilot program and we will do all we can to uncover the positive and negative issues that will ultimately result in a program that can be rolled out all over Australia. Michelle again took the lead on this program with support from Rachel and Yasmin Alcin with Coach Anthony running the day's tennis program.

These are not insignificant developments. Opportunities to grow and improve our services to the community must be taken when they present themselves. However you can only do that when there is a strong and committed team ready to take on the work to make them happen. The Westmeadows Tennis Club Committee is such a team.

Daniel Almond (Vice President), Rachael Almond (Treasurer), Michelle Todorov (Secretary), Nabil Chakelli (Senior Tennis Coordinator), Yasmin Alcin (Junior Tennis Coordinator), Jill Almond (Facilities Coordinator), Joel Ganino (Membership Coordinator) and Anthony Stromei (Was appointed to the Committee during the year to fill a casual vacancy and offered informed opinions on many topics) was your committee for the last 12 months. I am so proud to be a part of such a dedicated group of people who volunteer their precious time to serve our club and guide it towards being the best it can be.

Today we see three people retire from their respective positions.

Joel Ganino who joined the committee over a decade ago retires today to concentrate on his business. Last year I wrote all about his work at the club. At the end of this report are those words of gratitude for readers to review. We thank you for your work, your lateral thinking ideas and wish you all the very best in now building your business.

Michelle Todorov took over the role as Secretary at the last AGM and has done a fantastic job. By carefully reviewing all correspondence she has identified those opportunities that we needed to be involved in. Michelle has taken the lead on the Safe Guarding Children Policy and the pilot program to help refugees become a part of the community through sport. Thank you for stepping up Michelle and we wish you all the best in the final two years of your studies to become a Doctor of Philosophy in the field of Audiology.

The third person to retire is Fonda Ioannou. There were many serious issues in our junior section of the club when he came onto the scene as a club coach. In spite of having a full time job Fonda basically took the reins as our club coach and created some stability in the coaching department. He worked closely with Stuart Ilesley (past Junior Coordinator) to help resurrect our Junior section. He is a tough coach but very popular with parents as he drove his charges to become very successful, highly graded tennis players. When the coaching contract was awarded to Guccione Tennis he remained as a part of the Guccione team. Most of his charges have left the club unfortunately but he will always be remembered as being the driving force behind a real sweet spot of success for numerous teams. For instance, our top junior team won five premierships out of their last six in spite for being promoted to a higher grade each time.

It is sad to say we have also lost to our junior ranks three notable junior players who have been with the club for 13 seasons. Richard Ilsley (Junior Boys Club Champion 2017), James Ioannou (Junior Boys Club Champion 2016) and Danielle Ioannou (a future Club Champion anywhere she ends up playing) Thank you for your loyalty, thank you for becoming such great players who represented us even though they were in combined teams. We will always claim you all as our own. And finally a sincere thank you Fonda for your dedication, integrity and skilful coaching at Westmeadows Tennis Club. Your success was our success and we will miss you.

Two new members joined the committee this year.

When Stuart Ilsley retired Yasmin Alcin stepped up and took on the role. Straight away there were changes, a new beginning was evident. Functions were held and they were enthusiastically supported by parents and junior members. Yasmin was able to get everyone participating, working together to organise most memorable events such as last year's end of year celebrations. Parents gladly took on duties such as managing the canteen and of course being team managers. There was a new buzz around the clubrooms. She also was quick to participate on the Safe Guarding Children and the Multicultural Youth pilot. Yasmin also took it upon herself to organise tennis evenings at St Dominics, her children's school. With her two children Nazim and Hulya helping out they managed to get a small group of children from the school to have a go at tennis. This has been an extraordinary effort towards the club's growth and is therefore Yasmin is my President's Award Winner for 2017/18.

It was also a delight to welcome back to the club Anthony Stromei. Almost 30 years ago as a teenager he became Open Club Champion. When he was approached to fill a casual vacancy on the committee he accepted and was warmly welcomed back. This time he brought his family who have all become actively involved. Anthony also holds a Friday night team training session where he shares his extensive tennis skills with our junior members. Great to have you back Anthony.

So we have the best talent on the Committee. Soon we will have the infrastructure to rival any other club. We have the best coaching team headed by Anthony Guccione. In every way we have all a club could ask for and yet our senior competition teams are slowly diminishing. But worst of all our junior competition ranks have shrunk to their lowest level in many years. The job of the new committee will be to do some intensive market research on those that have left recently and even polling people on the streets to see why tennis has no appeal to them.

Tennis is literally a game for anyone irrespective of gender, age, size, religion or any other attribute. It is a safe game that accommodates any skill level, it is both a team game and an individual game at the same time. It teaches determination, self-reliance and that never giving up can reap rewards. So the game offers so much so why isn't the message getting through to the masses.

A part of the answer maybe that tennis does not get the public profile that other sports get from their leading institutions. Tennis Victoria/Tennis Australia spend millions on television advertising to promote the elite players at the Australian Open. There is the

occasional advertisement on late night television promoting Hotshots but unless you are already involved in tennis its message is obtuse. So the elite tennis players of Australia and the world are held up as tennis heroes and the beginner stage is vaguely promoted. As far as the community is concerned the benefits and enjoyment of tennis is not promoted to all the people in the middle which accounts for about 95% of the community. AFL, Cricket, Netball, Basketball all have a visible presence on television but not tennis. I believe Tennis Victoria that takes hefty subscriptions from the local community tennis clubs such as ours do very little to promote tennis as a social game. This has to change and how we get it to happen is a priority for the new committee.

From the list of juniors that have just left our club some cited playing another sport as the reason. This has to be looked into in more detail. If we don't make tennis an enjoyable fun experience for both the parents and the children, then we will continue to lose them to other sports, Tennis is just as good a sport as any other and it is fun to play.

Other children have gone to other clubs so we have to research what other clubs do better than us. Perhaps we will have to ask them if we did something to drive them away. The sad part we have lost children that have been long time members and we were still able to give them the standard of tennis they are capable of playing.

Of course some children are ageing out which means they are near 18 years of age. We must do whatever we can to encourage them to transfer over to senior tennis.

It is hard in these times of diminishing interest in tennis across the board to attract new members. So we must work harder to keep those we already have playing and not allow them to slip through our fingers for possibly minimal reasons.

Recently we had a briefing meeting with Anthony and Chris Guccione to discuss all of these matters. They have recognised that converting children from Hotshots and competition ready is difficult because the other sports children play are on Saturday mornings. They are trialling a solution where they are running an internal competition on Friday evenings to expose the children to the fun of competition tennis. It is encouraging to note that the coaching team has over 80 people, both young and old being trained here at Westmeadows. The challenge is converting them to members playing competition tennis.

We are about to have hundreds of thousands of dollars spent here by the City of Hume to improve our facilities. I hope we do not embarrass ourselves by not growing participation in tennis. Since Tennis Australia/Victoria seem to have that ostrich syndrome we may have to go it alone to do the promotion locally. That will be the challenge for the next committee.

Thank you again for allowing me to be a part of such a talented committee and heading up the best club any where. I look forward to seeing the club growing from strength to strength in the next 12 months.

David Puddefoot

President

Westmeadows Tennis Club (inc)