

## PRESIDENTS REPORT 2016/17

The first quarter of 2017 will be best remembered as the time that we finally secured funding for our facility upgrades. Not only did we manage to fund the upgrade of our courts and surrounds but will also be able to upgrade our Clubhouse as well. We will seek to make the absolute most of this once in a generation opportunity and to build in some smart long term design features that will stand us in good stead for decades to come. If you do not have adequate facilities it is extremely difficult to provide good tennis programs and we have been working toward this announcement since 2008 so it is wonderful to finally be rewarded for our persistent efforts.

The significant challenge for most community based organisations is the decline in volunteerism. Without volunteers our Club cannot run and without a Club our facilities cease to be maintained, to the detriment of all current and future users. We are most fortunate that we currently have a very strong and long serving group of volunteers but we cannot be complacent as we search for the next generation of Club administrators and try to share with them the great sense of achievement that community service and volunteerism provides.

Sadly one of Sale Tennis Club's unsung heroes John Widdis Leslie, OBE, passed away on December 14. He was 97. John was an amazing supporter of local community groups and projects and Sale Tennis Club was fortunate to have his backing on the construction of our 200 seat grandstand and with our planned upgrades. It is sad that John will not be here to see our upgraded facilities opened but his influence will last for generations to come.

The highlights for the last year have been:

## Participation

- During 2016/17 we fielded a total of 67 separate teams in competitions in the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association, Sale & District Mid-Week Ladies, Traralgon Tennis Association and Club based competitions. This covered junior and senior summer pennant, night tennis on Tuesday and Thursday nights, mid-week ladies and winter junior pennant. In 2016/17 our junior participation numbers plateaued after 4 consecutive years of growth, to give us 25% growth over 5 years.
- Of the 14 Sale junior teams in the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association 12 teams made the finals. Of these 5 made their respective grand finals and 3 were successful in winning the grand final.
- In the seniors of Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association 2 teams made the finals.
- In Gippsland Premier League Sale finished 5th.
- Won a grand final in Section 3 Sale Heyfield Midweek Ladies Spring Pennant and were runner up in Section 2.
- Hosted our 8th Junior Points Tournament over the Queen's Birthday weekend attracting 90 entries from local, State and national competitors.
- Hosted our 1<sup>st</sup> Spring Junior Tournament, attracting 65 entries. In recognition of the delivery of past events our spring tournament has been upgraded from a "white" to a "silver" which significantly increases the ranking points for the players and should guarantee a larger field in 2017 as players chase valuable ranking points.
- Hosted the Tennis Victoria Bradtke / Luczak Cup for 15 & Under boys and girls in May. The event attracted teams from around the State and was won by a strong Central Gippsland team.
- Worked with Tennis Victoria and 4 local primary schools as part of the National Schools Partnership. In 2016/17 Gippsland Grammar, St Mary's Primary School, Araluen Primary School and Briagolong Primary School all delivered the ANZ Hot Shots program as part of their curriculum as well as receiving over \$1,200 of free tennis gear and a comprehensive training program.

- Delivered for the 10<sup>th</sup> year the Tennis Australia ANZ Hot Shots program. This program has gone from strength to strength with the numbers increasing from below 10 per week to now nearly 30 children participating in beginner tennis activities each week. Further in 2016 we continued to deliver the Hot Shots program throughout the full year giving children the opportunity to accelerate their tennis development. This was a first in country Victoria.
- Hosted 6 Family Tennis Nights on the 3rd Friday of each month during winter. Starting at 6.30 pm attendees were offered 3 sets of Fast 4 Tennis. Fast 4 is an initiative of Tennis Australia. This modified game format provides an exciting and much quicker variation on traditional tennis. The nights catered for players of all standards and families were especially welcome.
- We had Hunter Pearce 2017 Australian Open as a ballkid, which is now several years in a row that we have had officials at the AO.
- Delivered Cardio Tennis every week on Monday and Wednesday nights. Cardio Tennis is a group activity for anyone at any playing level looking for a fun way to burn calories and interact with others outside of the gym.
- Hosted another Corporate Challenge in October and November to encourage local businesses to try out the new Fast 4 format of tennis. Fast 4 is best compared with T20 cricket and has proved very popular for social tennis with its fast pace and fun format.
- Revived, the after an absence of over 10 years, the Dahlsens Challenge, an inter-town challenge for juniors and seniors played between Sale and Bairnsdale. Events such as the Dahlsens Challenge are essential for the development of junior players in regional areas as it provides a rare opportunity for them to be part of a larger team representing their Club and to compete with and test themselves against their peers from other areas.
- Created another series of junior player participation opportunities with a Friday night junior competition with up to 30 children playing each night. We had a “pizza pennant” and a “Subway slam” as the children had tennis and treats on a Friday night.
- Conducted a Free Tennis Day that attracted 70 participants who enjoyed a great day of tennis and tennis themed activities and introduced them to our Club and facility.
- Provided a “women only” competition on Wednesday evenings where women have a free lesson from the club professional coach and then 2 sets of Fast 4 tennis to practice their new skills. This women only format allowed beginners and ladies returning to the sport to enjoy tennis in a less competitive environment and attracted up to 24 women per night.
- After an absence of 4 years the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association Championships returned to the local sporting calendar. This year’s championships were held on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> of February at Sale Tennis Club. In a great show of support there were over 70 entries from the 8 clubs that make up the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association.

## Community

- In 2016 we were successful in obtaining an Australian Tennis Foundation - Tennis Cares grant to fund the delivery of a tailored program for 15 students from Sale Specialist School in the 12 to 15 age group. The group had 2 terms of a specially modified tennis program delivered by our club professional coach, Mick Mullen. The Tennis Cares program recognises communities are at their best when people are healthy, connected to each other and have hope for their futures and the feedback from the students and their teachers was so positive that we have continued the program in to 2017.
- In September we hosted a “Pink Day” fund raiser for the Footprints Foundation. The day attracted over 50 players and a large crowd and the money raised went to support local women suffering from breast cancer.
- Continued our involvement in the GippSport Healthy Sporting Environments program which is a structured program that assists with inclusion for all abilities, alcohol management, healthy eating, injury protection, UV protection and reduction of tobacco use. This in addition to our Club continuing to be a Level 3 Good Sports club.

- Unfortunately we have had an especially busy year in the support for club members who have taken ill. The incidence of cancers and life threatening disease's seems to have increased in our demographic and we attempt to provide as much support for each of our members and their families as possible at these times. We truly believe that this support role is a central function of community based clubs and organisations.
- During 2016 we finalised a lease on part of our facility for the establishment of a community garden. A community garden will provide the Sale community with an important social and recreational outlet and we are keen to encourage and support its establishment as best we can.
- Sale Tennis Club initiated a Sun Smart Round for the first round of the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association junior pennant. The day was an education opportunity for juniors on the need for sun smart behaviour and was delivered by Chris Arnold of the Skin & Cancer Foundation, the Cancer Council and our local MP, Danny O'Brien. Each of the 240 children in the Wellington Gippsland Tennis Association received a free "show bag" of sun care products, a water bottle and extensive educational material on preventing skin cancers.
- Sale Tennis Club hosted a ballkids trial in March. The trial was part of the selection process for the ball kids at the Australian Open 2017. This is the first time that Gippsland has hosted a ballkids trial and the day attracted children from all over the Gippsland region.
- In 2016 we participated in Parks Week and provided Hot Shots and tennis activities in the Sale Botanical Gardens as part of the Parks Week lifestyle program.
- Delivered Hot Shots at STAGGFAIR, the biennial fundraiser for the Gippsland Grammar school, where a whole new group were exposed to this beginner tennis program.
- In 2016 we conducted a further Responsible Service of Alcohol Course which was provided free of charge to all participating Club members and their immediate family. This brings to nearly 100 the number of Club members who now hold an RSA certificate as a direct result of our program.
- We had an estimated 35,000 separate visits to our facility from players, spectators, parents, tournament participants, school groups, casual users, function attendants, coaching students and other users.
- We have begun sharing our Committee Room with the training group of Sale Bridge Club. Ours is a community club and we are delighted to be sharing our facility with another community organisation.

## • Recognition

- Sale Tennis Club was awarded the 2015 Best Tennis Club by Community Clubs Victoria in April 2016. The annual CCV Awards recognise high performing clubs and individuals whose efforts contribute to the social and economic well-being of their local communities.
- The St Anne's campus of Gippsland Grammar was a finalist in the 2016 Tennis Victoria Awards. They have shown tremendous dedication to promoting tennis amongst their students. Tennis has become part of the curriculum, with a one hour weekly session for all Prep to Year 6 students. St Anne's is well supported by the Sale Tennis Club, providing the school with facilities and up-to-date tennis activities conducive to building skill level, involvement and integrity.
- Sale Tennis Club was recognised as a Tennis Victoria Top 50 Club with a membership of over 440. This placed us as number 44 in the State and the only member from Gippsland.

## • Facilities

- As noted earlier we have secured funding to proceed with our long awaited upgrades. With outstanding support from Wellington Shire Council, John Leslie, OBE, Tennis Victoria, Tennis Australia, local politicians, other Gippsland tennis clubs and user groups we were able to secure stage government funding from the Latrobe Valley Fund. This fund was set up to

create employment and ongoing event opportunities to assist the transition after the closure of Hazelwood Power Station. Our upgrades are scheduled to start in the last half of 2017.

Annual reports should acknowledge those who help to make things happen. Our three committees work tirelessly to deliver our programs. Kurt Best has excelled in his role as President of the Junior Committee. This committee has done a wonderful job and we should all be proud of the way they have brought together our junior program. A special thanks goes to Carmel Elliott who organised the canteen each Saturday morning. We were fortunate to have our latest Life Member, Debbie Krusic, continue as our Ladies President and with the help of her committee they have continued to make a major contribution. Debbie's enthusiasm and commitment for our ladies competition is the thing that keeps this unique tennis opportunity alive. Our General Committee has been very well served by: Our "Special K's" Karen Pollett, our Treasurer, and Karen Deschepper, our Membership Coordinator; Sonya Stephenson who has kept our minutes; Abe Schuback who coordinated our Club Championships; Paul Egan who is our WGTA delegate, and Murray Fitzclarence and Di Arnot who have ensured that our bar remains stocked. A special thanks to Sonya Stephenson for her herculean efforts with the catering at our Junior Tournament. Her efforts are both enormous and to many quite invisible. Thank you also goes to all of our other General Committee members for their ongoing contribution, commitment and guidance.

As with every year, I encourage everybody who enjoys the many benefits of our Club to find a way to make a contribution at some level. I also wish to acknowledge all of those people who have made a contribution, big or small, or have helped out in a myriad of ways. Without this support the Club does not run.

Thank you.

Robin Lowe  
President