



The President's Final Report

Daryl Melham AM

After more than four decades with my Revesby Workers' Club family, the time has come to write my final report for The Journal as President.

My journey with the Club commenced in November 1974 when I was employed as a casual barman and tray steward, which made my attendance at university possible. I remember my first shift, assigned to the now named Whitlam Theatre, serving in the lefthand side bar.

During my employment, I officially joined the Club on the 30 June 1976. Eight hundred people, like myself, were in the theatre being inducted as members.

In June 1978 I ceased my employment at the Club to commence my work in law as a solicitor in the Office of the New South Wales Public Solicitor (later known as Legal Aid Commission), 1978-1987, and as a Barrister (Public Defender), from 1987 to 1990.

In September 1980 I was elected to the Board. During my early years, under the guidance of then President Bill Bullard, a passionate advocate for supporting the local community that is still part of the Club's fibre today. I have vivid memories of attending the Club's community picnic at Warwick Farm on the 26 October 1980 when I was tasked with giving out free ice cream. By 1987 I was dressed in full costume as 'Wally the Worker' a character mascot for the Club that was introduced to entertain children.

In 1982 my fellow Directors voted me into the position of Vice President, and in this same year, the Club celebrated the appointment of its first female Director, Norma Smith, who would in 1995 become the first female President in a large NSW Club. This was hardly surprising given the Club's policy for the equality of women members from its very inception, which still rings true today.



In costume as Wally The Worker and posing with the current Wally.



Past President Norma Smith OAM.

The Club was also known for hosting quality entertainment. I recall artists like Honorary Member Little Pattie, Johnny O'Keefe, Col Joye, Sandy Scott, Tina Turner, Jean Pitney, Chuck Berry, Vera Lynn, Julian Jorg, and Tom Jones who

performed 12 shows in October 1983 – there were two shows a day across 6 days, with buses coming from as far away as Adelaide to see him.

Over the years the Club went from strength to strength, with the continual growth of its membership, a reflection of the changing community, and recognition of our operational excellence, winning numerous industry awards that included Clubs NSW Awards for Excellence in Restaurant Dining, Community Service, and Entertainment, to name a few.

Fellow Director Pat Rogan assumed the seat of President in 2008, following Norma's retirement. His leadership and vision laid the foundation for an expansion and diversification plan for the Club.

The Board and Management's commitment and understanding had long been the driving force behind the continual growth of the Club, aware of the strong foundation laid before us, the significance of portraying and preserving the Club's history to its members while continuing to live and breathe our core values.



The History corridor on display in the Revesby Workers' Club Atrium.

With the preservation of our history in mind, 2015 saw a new feature assembled in proud commemoration

of the Club's history. The Brett Street eastern foyer was revamped and a History Corridor linking the western and eastern foyers was created showcasing a timeline display along the corridor wall.

The History Corridor itself was designed to bring to life the story of the Club from its very beginning in September 1962 when the only "drinking hole" for locals was the Revesby Pacific Hotel, a stone's throw down the road from where the Club stands.

With every Club renovation, the preservation of our history was an important inclusion. The centrally located café, bar, and lounge were rebranded Café 240 and Bar 240 in recognition of the 240 original members, known as the 'Foundation Members,' of which fourteen were women, all with equal rights.

Rogues Sports Bar, which opened in late 2021, was reinvigorated but maintained its historic integrity with half the venue dedicated to the original snooker tables and darts and the other for local sports fan viewing. The name was inspired by the framed Rogues Gallery illustrations that hung in the original Sports Bar, a nod to the rogue well-known personalities of the original Sports Bar.



Enjoying a beer with Club CEO Scott Bennetts at the opening of Rogues Sports Bar.



Daryl's contribution to the Club over the past 40 years has undoubtedly shaped it into the progressive community-based organisation that it is today. Never in our history will we be privileged to see one person so dedicated to its community Club.

Club CEO Scott Bennetts stated at the recent AGM.



The President's Final Report cont.

The most recently completed renovation is the Function Centre and Whitlam Theatre. Each function room has been named after a significant Labor seat, with the Whitlam Theatre retaining its name in recognition of senior Labor figure the Hon. (Edward) Gough Whitlam AC QC. An Honorary Club Member since July 1996, Gough Whitlam has long been a friend of the Club, officially opening the 'Big Club' in August 1973, and later Club renovations in 1993, 1996 and 2000.

The important role our Club plays in the community was evident to me early on and still is today. The Club's involvement with schools and education began in 1986, and in 1998 The School Subsidy Program was formally established as an annual commitment that has provided more than \$2.2m to local schools. Our Tertiary Scholarships Program has supported more than 650 students to complete their studies over the past 25 years with funding now totalling over \$300,000.



Hon. Gough Whitlam AC QC.

The Club's commitment to education goes beyond school curriculums demonstrated by its commitment in 2018 to invest \$60,000 annually into Whitlam Institutes' Civic Education Program for the 'What Matters?' Writing Competition. The competition, rooted in Gough Whitlam's vision of empowering young Australians, invites students from years 5 to 12 to respond to the question, by sharing their perspectives on issues that are important to them.

The health and well-being of our Club community was also unwavering. Since 2018 and in memory of Club President Pat Rogan who passed in 2015, the Club has donated annually \$45,000 to the Asbestos and Dust Diseases Research Institute (ADDRI) in support of groundbreaking research to improve early diagnosis and treatment of mesothelioma, a deadly cancer linked to asbestos exposure.



John Rodwell, Patrick "Pat" Rogan OAM and Christine Butters.

The need for a women's shelter in Revesby became evident in 2018, when the State Government confirmed the area's need for crisis support due to an increase in domestic and sexual assaults within the Canterbury Bankstown LGA. The Club stepped in and provided a property for the shelter, and after essential building works were completed, Biyani House – Revesby Women's Shelter opened its doors in 2021. Within the first 12 months it had accommodated 127 women and children, and provided 6,108 safe bed nights.

At the heart of our Club lies a vibrant staff community, each member embodying the values of adaptability, teamwork, support, and strength. These values are not just words on a wall but the guiding principles that shape our daily interactions and drive our collective success.

In early 2020 our Club and staff community were faced with something it had never foreseen; multiple forced closures due to COVID-19. During this time, we realigned our focus, developed new strategies, and reinforced the above-mentioned values, which saw our staff receive \$2m in payments and the rollout of a separate Hardship Provision for those who were in extra need, which totalled \$500k, a decision made without hesitation by the Board and its management to ensure the well-being of our staff.

In closing, those today and of the past are recognised on glass panels, proudly positioned outside the Club's Boardroom. This includes all the Directors, CEO's, Patrons and Life members of the Club. Their location stands as a reminder to the current Board when making decisions on the future of our Club that we should always remain True to our Traditions.

To my fellow Directors, past and present, who have provided unwavering support and commitment over the years, to Club CEO Scott Bennetts, his management team, and all our staff for continually delivering operational excellence every day to our members and community, and to our members who without you this great Club wouldn't exist.



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Daryl's Revesby Workers' Club Timeline

