

THE CELLAR CLUB President's Annual Report 2018

It is my pleasure to present to members the annual report for the year 2017 – 2018 at the AGM of the Cellar Club on this Wednesday 9 May 2018. The purpose of the report is to highlight and reflect on the activities and successes of the year and to acknowledge the contributions of both committee members and club members that have taken the club into its 39th year as a leading wine society in Wellington.

Rather than print copies for this year this report will be posted on the club's website.

Ensuring we maintain a viable membership is critical to the club's longevity and success and depends on your support. Keeping this good level of membership by organising the types of meetings and events you wish to see and attracting new members is a prime focus for the committee. It is satisfying to report that our membership remains at a sound level (around 60 financial members including 4 life members) and it is through a well designed, maintained and promoted website and having a most readable and well anticipated 'e-newsletter' that we have kept the club to the fore for those who enjoy participating in the wine appreciation and the education objectives of the club.

As well as being an incorporated society it is pleasing to report we are legal. Does this mean maybe we were not? Well perhaps? As part of the club's membership and promotion drive we chose to advertise on the Newland's buses. What this meant was that we were drawn to the attention of the city council and as a consequence we were required (compelled) to take out a liquor license at the associated cost to operate. This was not without some fuss and has been in place for 2017 and during March and April it has been renewed with all the necessary approvals that are entailed with the council, police, licensing authority and public health. Hence it is a new cost to us and a source of revenue for council. I want to extend my sincere thanks to Richard Taylor and Wayne Kennedy for the patience and work that has gone into this particular challenging exercise.

It is pleasing indeed to note the club's finances are in good shape allowing for the costs of venue hire, website license, liquor license and the fixed costs we incur. Our treasurer runs a tight set of accounts and has a remarkable "knack" of setting the 'right' door price, anticipating costs, proposing where events are able to be subsidised and getting it right just about every time. This keeps us in the black and allows the subsidising of the BBQ, dinners, wines in the club cellar provided at the likes of this AGM and a capped price at the door when we know the wine to be tasted is more expensive than per normal.

Our club meeting model is to ensure we pay our way with all wineries and distributors and they know this, thereby helping relationships and ensuring they are happy to return. We provide a thank you voucher to presenters and we pay their invoices on request, unless the presenter decides to waive the cost of the wine supplied. And some presenters do and this is often facilitated by the level of orders which sometimes are significant and I thank you most sincerely for the orders we generate from meetings. Also my thanks to the committee members who undertake to compile and distribute the orders as this is most convenient for the wineries and the distributors / merchants.

It may be of interest to you to know this particular cost model and approach is not the norm necessarily for all wine clubs either in NZ or even Wellington. Most have an annual subscription for members but a number of clubs expect the wineries to donate the wine, and either those clubs may cover the presenters costs such as for travel (capped) or sometimes clubs just expect the wineries to cover all the costs. For some clubs their operation depends on the levels of orders received so there are expectations on their members. These approaches can limit the range and calibre of presenters and I believe the mixed model we have developed is the best for our club members, fairest for the wineries, is

affordable and ensures we have remained viable for the length of time the club has. And indeed it is your support with subscriptions and attending that ensures this viability. Thank you.

Planning the annual tasting programme is always a challenge and a pleasure. By not planning too far ahead (as previously) we have been able to be flexible but occasionally that does not work.

Interestingly one of the best attended recent meetings was one where members actually presented after a winery withdrew, so we do have a Plan B. Keeping a modest cellar is a key to this cover as well as having cellared wines that you will be sampling later this evening and at dinner evenings.

In summary the meeting scope over the last year has been broad. We have had presentations from wineries (Seifred, Geisen, Stonecroft, Haythornthwaite) , from a leading wine writer John Saker talking us through some old vintages, from distributors with European wine experiences from Eurovintage and Macvine International, our own theme [Summer Rose] evening, two well attended dinners (Cashmere Lounge, the WellTec Bistro 52) and a great BBQ in January. Attendances across the board have probably never been better and I thank you for supporting these club events.

At this point I wish to extend my congratulations to Cecilia Parker on her nomination for life membership of the club. Cecilia has had a long association with the club, served on the committee with time as Secretary, President and until recently Vice-President and the club wishes you well Cecilia and trusts you will enjoy continuing your association with a club that you have contributed to so generously.

To the committee, there is a debt of gratitude for the sterling efforts that have gone into the club's business and organisation. The responsibilities have been willingly shared by a dedicated committee group, whose contributions to committee meetings and club affairs have been invaluable, namely

- the membership initiatives and vice presidential support (Anne)
- the club's financials are in great shape (Wayne),
- the minutes and secretarial work has kept the committee well informed & accountable(Jenny),
- the compilation of the newsletter (Robin) is a key to our successes, and with
- the management of the website (Steve), they have lifted the club's profile,
- our social functions, suppers and hospitality tasks (Gayl)
- our regulatory and licensing requirements (Richard) and
- with all of the committee working together, our presenter organisation and meeting and venue arrangements have been reliably undertaken throughout the year with no problems even when the presenter pulls out without too much warning.

I commented last year that the club is your club. Opening up wine horizons and building an appreciation of wine is the club's objective. Your regular attendance, support and ordering from our presenters is the basis upon which we can continue to thrive. I encourage you to provide feedback and guidance for the committee to keep our meetings relevant and topical. My thanks go to the committee members for your collective efforts and willingness to undertake a range of tasks, and to all of the club's members for your interest and involvement and the chance to share in wine with you.

Murray Jaspers

President, The Cellar Club Inc (9 May 2018)