



President's Report – May 2011

There has been much happen on the world stage and indeed in our own Country since I wrote my President's Report 12 months ago.

Thank God Dunedin has thus far been spared any natural disasters like the two major earthquakes that devastated Christchurch, or the Pike River tragedy that claimed the lives of 29 Miners, or the floods that have devastated thousands of acres of farmland in the North Island. Disasters of such magnitude tend to galvanise us as one people and put life in to sharp perspective by focusing us on what really matters.

The upcoming Gathering, has in a sense served as a reminder in a positive and uplifting way that it is people and relationships that really matter in this complex, demanding and fast moving world.

From comments I have heard, it appears people are sensing at a deep level that The Gathering in many ways is going to be the closing of a chapter in the rich and proud history of the Dunedin Lebanese Community as we knew it. What better way to mark the passing of a great era than by celebrating our ancestry in such a grand and meaningful way.

We are now a fully integrated community. Many of the things that were desirable and attractive to our forebears are no longer relevant or as meaningful to younger generations. Consequently the level of activity provided by the committee caters to a people who want to preserve the last vestiges of a fading culture.

For those reasons, we take our senior citizens out for luncheons three or four times a year, we fly the Lebanese flag from the Mayoral balcony each year on Lebanon's Independence Day. This year we laid a wreath at the Cenotaph at the ANZAC Dawn Service in the Queens Gardens. Each year we put on a Christmas party for the young children of the community, as well as having the odd informal gathering from time to time for people of my generation.

Not only are we now a fully integrated community, but the unfortunate reality is we are diminishing in numbers by the year. In the last 12 months, we lost too many of our beloved members, some well before their time. So what does all this mean? I think it means we need to think about what we want our community to be in the next five to ten years, so that we don't just fade out over time. To that end, in my last report as President, I have said that consideration needs to be given to succession for the Presidency, otherwise we run the risk of the club finding itself in a precarious position post AGM 2012.



I would like to thank the committee for all it has done over the past year. As you would imagine, there has been a lot of work gone in to planning such a sizeable event as The Gathering, and the committee members have given generously of their time to ensure its success.

Change is a constant we live with in today's world. Life goes on but as we look back we remember with love and great joy the colourful characters and the vibrancy of our community as it was not so many years ago. I look forward to us hosting The Gathering in October which not only promises to be a grand and momentous occasion in our history, but promises to be amongst the greatest memories of all.



Richard Joseph

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PRESIDENT