

FIVE set Kedron-Wavell apart AWARDS



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There'll be an extra special buzz at the 40th birthday celebrations of the Kedron-Wavell Services Club later this year, thanks to the club's success at the 2010 IGT and Clubs Queensland Awards for Excellence.

Kedron-Wavell had to keep an eye on a remarkable five trophies at the after party, being named Club of the Year, Best (Large) Licensed RSL and/or Services Club, Best Club Brisbane North, Best Club Redevelopment over \$1 million, and induction

into the Hall of Fame (Best Entertainment Venue).

General manager Chris Sartori, who has been at the club for 19 years, said the extent of the club's success was a total surprise.

"We thought we might pick up one award - and of course we knew we were going to get into the Hall of Fame - but to come out with five was just unbelievable.

"We've regularly submitted for a number of awards and I believe the acknowledgement is important from a staffing point of view - to get Club of the Year is very special.

Chris said it really was a team effort and that included the contribution of their loyal patrons.

"We've put a lot of hard work in over the past 12 months and the awards are also an acknowledgement for our members - they're a big part of the success as well."

According to Chris, the difficult economic times didn't get a look-in at Kedron-Wavell.

"We've gone from strength to strength, which is a bit unusual

when you look at what's happening within the industry.

"But we've done a lot of lead-up work with our guys in promotions and marketing, a lot of work on our branding, and it's paid off, particularly over the past 12 to 18 months.

"We've been driving the overall package - we've got three styles of restaurants, our entertainment, for which we've won the award for three years in a row, they're getting a lot of people through the front door.

"So it's a culmination of a lot of things. We've been quite proactive with marketing and promotion and that includes making sure we are giving back to the members.

"The staff have also been great, working with us

through a process last year to upgrade our vision.

"We looked at what was no longer relevant and came up with a new vision, a new mission and a better set of service standards."

That new vision is unfolding a lot faster than Chris expected.

"The vision is to be the leading club in Queensland, so we're sort of half way there in getting the award. Now we want to take it to the next level and be considered the benchmark in the industry - so it's been an exciting 12 months for us."

Chris has seen many changes since he started at the club just prior to the introduction of gaming machines.

"There have been a heap of changes, particularly from a construction point of view. I think we're up to our eleventh stage of refurbishing, working closely with Paynter Dixon over the years.

"We've also put together a master plan for the next two to five - and then the next five to 10 years - so we're certainly not sitting back. We want to maintain the momentum."

"You wouldn't be in the same job for 19 years unless you enjoyed it - and I have. We've also been very fortunate to have a stable board, so that's been fantastic and we've got a lot of long-term staff, much the same as me, which is a bit difficult to achieve in this day and age."

Chris said it was also a priority to give back to members and, of course, to the community.

Kedron-Wavell Services Club Community Investment Grants provide financial, in-kind and fundraising opportunities to local organisations that make a valuable and long-term contribution. In 2010 total funding for 30 individual grants will be \$50,000.

Chris said the club also had a very loyal patronage and when you take a tour of the modern, three-level complex, it's clear that the roots of the club are respected.

First, there's the Gallipoli Bar, for which the club won Best Club Redevelopment over \$1 million.

"It was a big project," said Chris. "We gutted the original Anzac Bar, relocated the bar, relocated the TAB and created some natural light by knocking out walls."

There's also the Kokoda Bar and Grill, the Coral Sea Restaurant and the Blue Pacific Room.

In a thoughtful and stylish mix of the old and the new, modern designs are perfectly married with important memorabilia.

The club also respects various traditions and anniversaries. For example, lights are turned out at 7pm every night and the RSL Ode is recited. During the Ode, everyone in the club is expected to stand in silence and face the club's symbol of the eternal flame, and all other activities stop.

Otherwise, the club is a hive of activity and its geographic location means it's well-positioned to keep growing.

"In the past couple of years Chermside has dramatically increased in density and with the new apartment buildings being right next door, we are finding we are getting a new demographic from that.

"In addition I think our shows are one of the keys to getting a lot of reciprocal members, as well as business coming through."

And the club does have something for everyone – with a range of entertainment for adults and for kids.

It also established its own registered training organisation about three years ago.

"We wanted to look at diversifying instead of relying on gaming and alcohol for revenue," said Chris.

"We train our staff, as well as training externally. In particular, we work closely with schools and that gives a foot in the door for future staffing needs."

As for the past, the Kedron Sub-branch of the RSL applied to the Brisbane City Council for a lease of land at Chermside back in 1966, with bold plans to build a Community Hall and an Ex-Servicemen's Club.

It took until June 1968 to get that approval and in July of that year the Kedron Sub-Branch - with 300 members - and the Wavell Sub-Branch - with 100 members - amalgamated to use their combined resources to create an Ex-Servicemen's Club.

The inaugural meeting of the Kedron-Wavell Services Club was held on December 4, 1968.

In February 1969 the Kedron War Memorial Hall, which had been deeded to Kedron Sub-Branch in 1947, was sold to a then unknown fast food chain which was expanding its operations into Queensland.

Then in February 1970 the building of a public Community Hall and adjoining club premises got underway and on December 18, 1970 the club was licensed for business!

As for that 40th birthday celebration, the club is planning a special 70's themed birthday party on the last Saturday in September. So if you want to get groovy, get neat, flash your mood ring, find those flares and don't forget the platforms, they'd be happy for you to join the party.

You'll find more details about the party and our Club of the Year at kedron.wavell.com.au

- Astra Dadzis



General manager of Kedron-Wavell, Chris Sartori.



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