



## Presidents Report 2021

Ahlan Wa Sahlan,

Last year I delivered a verbal report as the club had been in recess in 2019. We are pleased to say that we are now back operating under our normal modus operandi.

The presidents report usually covers activities from our local community, but it would be remiss to not acknowledge the precarious state Lebanon finds itself in today. Beirut's seismic explosion last year brought the country to its knees. This amid widespread corruption by successive governments has resulted in the country being on the brink of bankruptcy. Inflation is running at more than six hundred percent, there is a shortage of food, unemployment is at an all time high and to top that off there have been crop failures and extreme weather conditions making life a constant struggle in a country that was once known as the 'Paris of the East'. The Dunedin City Council flew the Lebanese flag at half - mast for three days following the explosion, a gesture much appreciated by the local Lebanese community. Please keep Lebanon's people and its recovery in your thoughts and prayers.

On a brighter note, I was proud to attend a function at Toitu Otago Settlers Museum in March which saw the handing over of a compilation book put together by the Dunedin Multi-Ethnic Council. The book provides a brief synopsis on a variety of ethnic communities that have made Dunedin their home. John Farry very kindly wrote about the history of our community. The book is available for the public to view at the Toitu museum.

Amanda Woodford held a workshop at the Dunedin Public Library in April called, Metaphors of Migration. The workshop used creative writing, collage and photography to create a visual artwork which will be archived in the library's Scattered Seeds collection. Thank you for your initiative Amanda and apologies again for me getting the wrong day.

The Cedars of Lebanon garden continues to be one of the most visited sites at the Dunedin Botanic Garden (DBG). I have had discussions with the manager of the DBG regarding its upkeep, and in particular the maintenance of the magnificent bronze cone. The cone was starting to become blemished due to oxidation which resulted in black marks on its surface. It has now been put on a six-monthly schedule.

There has been a development with our garden and the below paragraph is an extract from an email sent to me by the person who looks after it.

A vegetation clear pathway has been cleared through the bush just above the Cedars of Lebanon garden. This is in preparation for a wooden boardwalk to connect the top path from the Mediterranean Garden across to just above the Giant Redwood. This was in the original Mediterranean Garden plan but had to be cut due to budget. This will add to the aesthetics and pedestrian flow around the area. This has gone out to tender and as soon as alert levels allow, contractors will come onsite to price up. This will be an exciting addition to the area.

It was an enormously proud moment to see Margaret Farry-Williams recognised in this year's Queens Birthday Honours. Below is an extract from an article which appeared in VIVA fashion magazine

This year's Queen's Birthday Honours sees one of the fashion industry's most philanthropic figureheads recognised for her dedicated work to youth.

Auckland-based Margaret Marie Farry-Williams was appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM), for services to the fashion industry and charitable fundraising.

Margaret has dedicated her life to helping young men and women gain a sense of purpose and self-worth.



Much of my time this year has been taken up with pursuing a legal matter in relation to a claim that our club has against the old Lebanese club property in Wellington. It is a complex matter so I won't go into detail here. For your information below is part of a letter I sent to the Registrar of Incorporated Societies.

To Michael Brosnahan C/- David Josland  
Assistant Registrar of Incorporated Societies

Dear Sir,

RE: CASE **MB-4708401**

We are writing to you regarding the ownership of the property located at 128 Abel Smith Street, Te Aro, Wellington that is still in the registered name of the original "The Lebanese Society of New Zealand Incorporated".

The "Cedars of Lebanon Club Incorporated" is the successor affiliate to the original "Dunedin Branch No.2" of the original "The Lebanese Society of New Zealand Incorporated". I do not feel we need to go into the history of how our branch incorporated but retained affiliation many years ago as I am aware that you already have this information and copies of the documents outlining this in the letters and files from Auckland's "Lebanese Society of Aotearoa New Zealand Incorporated" which is the successor affiliate to the "Auckland Branch No.3" of the original "The Lebanese Society of New Zealand Incorporated".

At the time of dissolution of the original "The Lebanese Society of New Zealand Incorporated" only Auckland and Dunedin were still active. We are in agreement with Auckland regarding the position they hold that the current "The Lebanese Society of New Zealand (Incorporated) in Wellington is not the original Society but rather a 1991 new creation with no link to the original that we were part of. We object to any action under section 27 of the Incorporated Societies Act 1908 to transfer any ownership to this new Wellington based Society.

A huge thank you to Michael Nidd who has done an enormous amount of pro-bono work to navigate this complex matter for us.

As I have stated on numerous occasions we love to hear of 'success' stories relating to our community members. One such recognition is that of Adam LaHood who was earlier this year appointed as Chairman of the Otago Polytechnic Institute. This is a very prestigious appointment and much deserved. Congratulations to Adam, we are very proud of you.

It has been a quiet year for community socialisation made even more difficult by the on-going Covid situation. That said we have still been able to represent our community at annual events like the Otago Anniversary Day Dinner, the laying of the Wreath at the ANZAC Day Dawn Service and the Lebanese flag being flown from the Civic Centre balcony on Lebanon's Independence Day.

Who knows what these times of constant change and uncertainty will bring in the coming year? I draw encouragement from the saying, 'You can't control the wind, but you can set the sails'.

Stay safe, look after yourselves and each other and lend a helping hand where possible.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Richard Jensen'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Richard.