

## **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – President Graeme “Charlie” Walker closing address**

**25/2/2023**

I thank everyone for coming and sharing in our rich and varied history.

Over the past 52 years as you would have heard during the night the Moonee Valley Cricket Club has had its ups and downs – thankfully not too many downs.

In 2008/09 we were officially the biggest cricket club in the State according to a Cricket Victoria club census, with 26 teams – 10 mens, two women’s and 14 junior teams. It was quite an achievement.

Like our nation and the world, we’ve survived COVID. It brought unprecedented pressure and financial strain on sporting clubs across three seasons, and not everyone survived it. We did. We did sanitizing, signed in with QR codes, did social distancing – even had to do away with Moonee Valley’s famous afternoon teas. What would Ruby think?

And on it goes. Clubs are still talking about the unprecedented start to this season, when rain and floods of biblical proportions rubbed out the first five weeks of cricket. Even Spider had never seen such a start. We’re still talking about it now, but in reality it’s just a blip on the radar of our history.

While we’ve marked our first 50 years, our next task is to look to the future and ensure that our next half century is just as satisfying and productive.

You can rest assured that your executive and your committee is just as determined to forge ahead and build on what’s gone before us.

We will build on the stable structure which has been handed down to us by those that came before us. It’s interesting to note that there have been just 10 presidents in our 50 years, so that provides great stability and continuity, which are vital in any organization.

A lot changes over 50 years – let’s look at some of our rivals over the years that are no longer around – Batman Cricket Club, St Marks, Merlynston, Port Phillip Combine, Campbellfield – all gone.

If you have a look at our first season in the VTCA, in 2002/03, in our very first outing our Firsts were thumped for their lowest-ever score – 30 – by Flemington. In the Grand Final that year we were taught by Flemington how to bat the overs and squeeze a team out of the game – they batted for 175 overs to deny us any chance.

They were a big strong club. They had four strong men's teams and two or more teams in each junior age group. Today they're in Mercantile. Bottom of the ladder in the Firsts and Seconds with just one win, second bottom in the Thirds. One under 10 team and one Under 12s.

Pascoe Vale Central has been a powerhouse in the NWMCA for decades. This year it has five teams, all near the foot of the table and not playing finals. No Under 16s.

The old Aberfeldie Park – now calling themselves our old name, Moonee Ponds. Not a win all season in their Firsts and Seconds, and just one win in their Thirds. Five forfeits the previous season in VTCA Seconds. Certainly down on their luck.

So things can turn sour. We're determined that it won't happen to us, and with proper planning, a stable structure and by embracing change when needed, we'll stay on top of the wave – not down in the trough.

I like to think we're traditionalists at Moonee Valley. I still prefer us playing in whites. But we move with the times. Players take the field in colored strips now. Playing with white or orange balls. Most of our grades play one-day cricket, and the Twenty20 pyjama game has become popular.

When our great club first put teams on the field, any non-Anglo-Saxon names reflected the post-war immigration to Australia. Look at the names of some of our absolute legends – Capocchi, Polonidis, Jukic, our newest 350-club member Danny Terzini – all names with roots in post-war Europe.

Today's teams have a very strong sub-continental theme. We've had recent premierships teams captained by names such as Singh and Sharma. They are a big part of Moonee Valley's more recent history and just as big a part of our future.

So let's embrace our future for the next 50 years and ensure that it's a bright one for Moonee Valley. In the past couple of years we've had more and more past players and Life Members playing a more active part in our club – and tonight's function is testament to this. Let's build on it. You've heard earlier about the desire for a more active Past Players group, so let's become part of it.

It's been a great 50 year journey. Let's ensure the next 50 is just as rewarding.