

## **RLTA President's Annual Report 2003**

What a difference a year makes! This past year at the RLTA has seen some significant changes to the landscape as we undertook stage one of our site redevelopment with a view towards the construction of a new centrally located clubhouse.

It all began in December 2002 when a bunch of strong and fit volunteers (the crème de la crème of the RLTA) pulled up the synthetic grass from courts 5, 6 and 7. The contractors immediately began to relocate courts 6 and 7 about 20 m further north and about half a metre lower down the hill. The whole process was to be completed before the end of January 2003, in time for the start of fixtures. The State Government were sympathetic to our cause and provided a \$25k grant through the Community Benefit Gambling Fund. Even the weather was fine in January. However, no one counted on striking water (a natural spring) under court 7. A week's delay in locating the source of the water and in dealing with it caused a chain reaction of delays that resulted in major disruption to both day and especially night fixtures in the early part of the year. The courts themselves and the new lights have since proven to be very popular and well worth the wait and inconvenience.

But while the drama of the court relocation was being played out, our enthusiastic band of volunteers turned their attentions to the old rusting fences around courts 1 to 4. With the voluntary help and guidance of RLTA member and local fencing contractor, Ben Hayward, the fences were transformed with a few coats of paint and new black poly-coated chain wire, all in a fashionable shade of black. The complex was at last beginning to shed its old tired look and feel.

By mid-year, the scene was set to begin stage two of the redevelopment... construction of the new clubhouse. Architect and RLTA member, Shane Keefe, had finalised the plans; council had given their principal endorsement; the space in the centre of the complex had been created; and access to the building site from the northern side of the existing clubhouse had been created. All that was needed was approval for subsidy funding from the State Government's Department of Sport and Recreation. However, in June, we were informed that, while our project was eligible, our bid for the funding was unsuccessful.

While the State Government's decision was certainly a setback, it has not deterred us from our pursuing our redevelopment plans. Since that time, we have been fortunate to receive approval from Redland Council for a \$75k interest-free loan towards construction of the clubhouse. For this, we owe special thanks to Lord Mayor Don Secombe who has been quick to realise the community benefits in our plans and has shown a personal interest in them. While this loan money is insufficient in its own right to bridge the deficit between the total cost of the project and our own savings, it will certainly help in our revised bid for the State Government subsidy funding in the next round of grants. State Member for Redlands, Daryl Briskey, has offered his full support for our latest bid and we can only keep our fingers crossed that the State Government makes the right decision this time round.

But of course, that's not all! The mid-week ladies, under the guidance of Robyn Beck, have also been making their presence felt in giving the centre a new lease of life. In October, the ladies group organised 50 tennis court-friendly trees and new gardens to help soften the look and enhance the atmosphere around the complex. Another group of RLTA volunteers provided the landscaping muscle but it was club patron Jack Finney and the effervescent Keith Collier who actually planted and blessed each of the trees. Those trees have never looked back and should provide a northern wind-break in record time.

And there is even more! The mid-week ladies have also partly financed a replacement surface for the ageing court 3 to be completed in January in time for the start of fixtures (as long as the contractors don't strike water!). Once this and a refurbishment to court 4 are completed, the centre will have 7 synthetic grass courts that are all in excellent shape for the new year.

### *Tennis activities in 2003*

Yes, in between all the redevelopment activities, there was some tennis played in 2003. Our membership remains steady at around 500, but is tipped to grow significantly once the redevelopment has been completed. Our mid-week night competitions continue to grow in numbers and standard. The Thursday night fixtures are virtually at capacity for the available courts and the new Wednesday night fixtures that were introduced in conjunction with the Wynnum Lawn Tennis Association will have an additional two teams in 2004. The latter was an experiment in 2003, with both singles and doubles competition between teams from both Redlands and Wynnum and played at both centres.

The ladies mid-week competition continues to thrive and, judging by the group's contributions to the Association this year, they have been very successful financially. On behalf of the rest of the club, I wish to formally acknowledge them for their contributions and to thank them for their generosity.

Looking forward, it is important to note that the junior fixtures at the RLTA grew in 2003, which augurs well for the future of the Association.

Again, several interclub events were conducted this past year. Our regular inter-club competition (Tom Ferguson Shield) with Gold Coast, Beenleigh and Beaudesert was held at the Gold Coast centre in June and while we may not have won the day, it continues to be a great day for meeting like-minded individuals from the other tennis centres as well as a bonding activity for our own club. We also enjoyed inter-club challenge matches with our northern neighbour at Wynnum.

### *Thank you's*

Firstly, I would like to thank our resident coach/manager Jeff Schneider, for all of his support in 2003, for maintaining the smooth running of the centre, and for providing coaching expertise that would be the envy of all other centres in the State.

I would also like to thank Betty McCoy for her work in organising the junior fixtures and for stepping into the breach at short notice to take over the Honorary Secretary role when our secretary Joe Friend moved to Mt Tamborine. Most may not notice, but Betty works quietly and efficiently in the background and things just get done! In the same vein, I would also like to acknowledge and thank Bruce Young for his years of service to RLTA as Honorary Treasurer. Many of you may not know Bruce, but he, like Betty, was a quiet achiever behind the scenes, ensuring that the bills were paid and the clubs books were kept in order. Yet Bruce did not even play tennis. His membership at the RLTA was in support of his children who play there and I wish to congratulate him on being such an excellent role model for other tennis parents. In true succession-planning style, Bruce found a new treasurer this past year in the form of Bill Tapper, who has picked up where Bruce left off and provided excellent service to the club. I would like to thank Vice President Les Finney and the rest of the Management Committee for their support and guidance during what has been a very busy year at the club.

Last but not least, I wish to thank those wonderful volunteers (and those that were conscripted) who helped out in the club's redevelopment activities, whether that be in shaking sand out of synthetic grass carpet, shovelling mulch on new gardens, or simply cooking those delicious toasted sandwiches at the club's Spring Festival stall. With so many people taking such pride in their club, it makes my job an absolute pleasure and augurs well for the future of the RLTA.

Ian Somers

President RLTA.

