

## 2023 WFB INC – THE YEAR THAT WAS

2023 has been a year of highs and lows. Fortunately, things started on a high with the induction of Alan Templeton as our association's first-ever Life Member, albeit this actually took place in December 2022 at last year's AGM.

The highlights of 2023 include:

- Our merchandising manager Kathy Clarkson, with the assistance of Jeff Clarkson, adding WFB Inc polo shirts to our range of merchandise options;
- Karen Forde and Jeff Clarkson hosting the first-ever Easter long weekend session of social walking football at George Clayton Park on the Wynnum foreshore;
- The relaunch, by Siggy Nowak, of the WFB Inc newsletter, last published in 2019 and now called 'WALKING FOOTBALL MATTERS' – a clever title coined by Peter Thorpe;
- The naming of several of our members in Australian walking football representative teams – Wally Vicig, Siggy Nowak, David Groth, Ritchie Callaghan, Anthony 'Ozy' Iles, Dr Wayne Gibbon, Alan Templeton, and Sonia Gegenhuber;
- Being invited by Football Queensland to showcase walking football on the FIFA Women's World Cup Unity Pitch in Brisbane's King George Square in front of a live national TV audience on the Channel 9 'TODAY' show;
- The establishment of a regular Friday night social walking football venue at The Gap, thanks to the efforts of Steve Fabri and Ritchie Callaghan. The trophy at this venue is called the 'Ken', named after our ever-reliable referee Kenneth 'Fossil' Haikings who is, sadly, no longer with us;
- Michael Black becoming the first winner of our inaugural 'Spot The Ball' competition, an initiative of Siggy Nowak. Mick's guess was the closest to the centre of the ball and won him the prize of a \$90.00 WFB Inc Loyalty Card;
- The introduction of WFB Inc banners for presentation to other clubs at their home events, with the first such presentation being to Coolum Beach Walking Football at this year's Sunshine Coast Walking Football Festival;
- The WFB Inc Facebook page achieving 900 followers, from here and abroad;
- The announcement that our association has, due to the efforts of Steve Fabri, been invited by Walking Football Nelson to participate in next year's inaugural International Club Walking Football Festival – New Zealand's first-ever international walking football tournament. In addition to Brisbane and Nelson, teams from Walking Football Christchurch, Coolum Beach Walking Football, and Ballina Walking Football Group will be in attendance;
- The successes of the WFB 50s and WFB 60s rep teams in various tournaments throughout the year, culminating in their strong performance at the Australian Masters Games in Adelaide;
- The naming of our wonderful Leonie Robertson as the WFB Inc 'Club Person of the Year'. Not only for the amazing work she does in managing our Club Oxley venue, but also for her contribution to the WFB Inc Management Committee and her support of, and involvement in, walking football refereeing; and
- Being invited by Football Queensland to showcase walking football at the official opening of its new facility at the Nudgee Recreation Reserve.

2023 was also a year of great sadness in which two much loved WFB Inc members passed away. On 19 September the always smiling but intensely competitive Maria Freeman finally lost her battle with cancer. Then, on 06 December, we tragically lost our wonderful Ken Haikings, the epitome of a gentleman, who also succumbed to this most insidious of diseases. Rest in peace dear friends, WFB Inc will never quite be the same without you.

This year also saw WFB Inc bid farewell to several of its members: Arch Caithness, who now resides on the Sunshine Coast; long-time member Stephen Thompson, who has “temporarily” moved to Sydney to better administer his grandfather duties; and Anthony ‘The Wall’ Pollock, who will shortly be relocating to Adelaide. You will all be missed but never forgotten.

Finally, the year cannot be wrapped up without WFB Inc expressing its gratitude to the many people who so generously give of their time to help make our association function. So here’s a huge thank you to: our Management Committee – (Current) Ritchie Callaghan, Gavin Weller, David Stoyakovich, Sonia Gegenhuber, Leonie Robertson, Colin Robertson, Adam Davidson, and our dearly departed Ken Haikings, (Recent Past) Kathy Clarkson and Jeff Clarkson; our venue managers and their wonderful assistants – Leonie Robertson at Club Oxley, Hassan Zarghami (formerly Ritchie Callaghan) at Perry Park, Steve Fabri at The Gap, Debra Stubbs in Coorparoo, and Gavin Weller in Albion; our stylish merchandising manager Kathy Clarkson; our tech-savvy webmaster Jeff Clarkson; our newsletter editor and international walking football ambassador Siggy Nowak; and all of our marvellous referees – Jimmy Reilly, Leonie Robertson, Clive Gaunt, Alan Barrow, Steve Fabri, Stephen Thompson, Wally Vicig, Stephen Carson, Louise Edgley, Stephen Williams, David Stoyakovich, and Kenneth ‘Fossil’ Haikings R.I.P.