

Annual Dinner debrief on the 2011 dinner, held February 12th. 2011

The ticket price was the first topic raised and there was a lengthy discussion about the price of the tickets as well as the number of tickets to be available/sold. It was felt that the critical issue for the next dinner was whether to restrict the number of guests. In the past we have managed to accommodate every one who wished to attend with numbers over 850 and approaching 900 on occasion. A significant number of people suggested that when this number was “squeezed” into the Convention Centre, it started to detract from the quality of the evening and make it less enjoyable for the attendees. In particular seeing and hearing what was going on became difficult if not impossible for some people, and random conversations tended to break out and distract from the events that were going on.

Whilst the Convention Centre felt that they could “comfortably” handle 106 tables (ie 848 people), there was a concern that this was too high and that serious consideration should be given to limit the tickets next year to accommodate 750 people. (ie 94 tables). It was also felt that, subject to the 2012 dinner budget considerations, we should hold the price of tickets to the same as this year.

The program for the evening was felt to be fine. We need to keep it traditional with the toasts, entertainment and speeches as we do at the moment, and the order of activities was supported with the Immortal Memory straight after the intermission. Setting up for the Fiddlers this year seemed to distract the audience and needs to be addressed if they perform in the future, but consideration should be given to alternatives such as a smaller musical group or even some younger dancers.

One ongoing problem is the matter of dress. It seems that every year one or two individuals go out of their way to ignore the requirement for formal dress. It was agreed that the evening needs to be formal although we have accepted dark business suits in the past. It was suggested that the guidelines that accompany the ticket request form be strengthened in this regard and that it be emphasized that failure to conform in future will lead to individuals being refused entry. Would the use of Convention Centre Security be better than trying to police it ourselves – there would likely be an additional cost for this.

Behavior in the hall was touched on. Several suggestions were made – opening the doors earlier at 6.30pm to allow people to meet and greet at their tables, dimming lights to get attention, use of the gong etc. were all tabled. Individuals at the microphone need to be firmer and not proceed until the background noise has subsided. It is also important not to have gaps when nothing is happening, as that is when conversations really start up.

Other improvements that were suggested included;

- > The sound system needs to be improved as there seems to be at least one area that is not being well served at the moment.
- The Address to the Haggis needs to take place in the centre of the stage and not off to one side.

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- The layout of the stage after the intermission should such that the microphone and lectern are central for the Toasts and Immortal Memory.
- For the cost of the tickets the quality of the meal was felt to be ordinary and should be improved.
- Recognition of past members in the program was suggested.
- Specific guidance and direction needs to be given to the speaker to help ensure that the Immortal Memory is seen as the highlight of the evening.

Suggested specific actions are;

- Limit the ticket sales for 2012 to 750. This will need the approval of the Executive and the membership.
- > Arrange a meeting with the Convention Centre as well as Evolution and Jason Wright to see what improvements can be made to the sound system to ensure that everyone can hear everything.
- > Arrange a meeting with the Convention Centre and the chef to improve the meal.
- > Re-work the ticket form guidelines to stress the requirement for appropriate dress.
- > See what improvements can be made to enforcing the dress code.
- > Develop the program for 2012 bearing in mind the suggestions above.