



General manager Kevin Kamat is marking six months at the Ashburton MSA.

PHOTO MALCOLM HOPWOOD

# MSA heading in right direction



**Malcolm  
Hopwood**

It's hoped Ashburton's MSA will return to profitability by the end of 2024 after a turbulent few years.

New general manager Kevin Kamat will mark six months in the job on August 1, and he says the financial fortunes of the club are "on the improve".

A vote of no confidence in the previous committee was passed by members in 2021, and at one stage the Noble 600 restaurant was losing \$30,000 a month.

Now it's run by Tony Potts, with Kamat saying "it made no sense for MSA to operate".

Kamat acknowledges the club needed to revamp its business model, and he set about addressing its cash flow and trading operations.

"I arrived to make changes and take over the board's operational roles so they could return to their governance responsibility," he said.

"They wanted someone with trading experience who could improve the culture of the club."

His role was immense. It covered planning, staff management, the business process, health and safety compliance and cash flow.

"I set out to improve business efficiency across the board," he said.

Despite still recovering from Covid

and the economic downturn, he said the MSA "is trading well and showing improvement month by month".

Over the last 15 years, Kamat has acquired non-performing businesses, turned them around and sold them for a profit. While that's not his intention with the MSA, he said the club needed a new financial direction.

"If its cash flow didn't improve, it faced a difficult future.

"What we needed to do was modernise and the board and staff were receptive to listening to new ideas to take the club forward."

He said staff have adapted to change management and "engaged with it very quickly".

"I've had great support from the board and each month we're

showing a better financial return in all departments. I'm confident that trend will continue."

Kamat has noticed a positive response from members. Thirty-five new members have joined the club this month, bringing the total to over 100 so far this year.

He's also noticed an increased frequency of use. Fridays have seen more than 100 people enjoying the MSA and its facilities.

He said six staff who used to work at the club want to return when there's a vacancy.

However he acknowledges there's more to do. He said the MSA has been part of Ashburton life since 1885 and he wants to take that message to clubs and organisations around Mid Canterbury.

He's targeting a younger age group through the MSA's social media and is populating its newsletter with information about its history and culture as well as weekly events and specials.

"We're also developing an app for our phones which, for example, allows members to purchase from the bottle store, pay for a meal, renew their membership and visit other clubs such as Hornby and Papanui," he said.

Kamat is also keen to give "added value" to its members as a means of thanking them for their loyalty and support. He has in mind fuel discounts and other financial benefits.

"We're heading in the right direction. It's going to be an exciting journey," he said.