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New manager, new goals



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OPPORTUNITY: Ashburton Club and MSA general manager Cliff Downes has identified areas of excess, and underuse, at the club.

More weeks into his new role, Ashburton Club and MSA general manager Cliff Downes is making changes.

The 63-year-old has already identified areas of excess and under use.

He met with an Ashburton realtor last week to discuss sublease options for empty second-storey rooms.

"We have got a lot of space upstairs, that is absolutely not getting used. It's really about generating income," Downes said.

The upstairs has a couple of meeting rooms, a billiard room, kitchen and toilets facilities.

"It can be split up into offices...it's got its own separate access...it's got a lift," he said.

Downes has moved to Ashburton to fulfil the role, replacing former general manager Kevin Kamat, with his partner Tina, two dogs and two cats. He is the former general manager at the Whakatane RSA.

The move south has brought the couple closer to family. They have adult children in

Christchurch and Dunedin.

He said he was looking forward to opportunities the club offered him, and its 3500 members.

"I thrive on challenges and you can see the opportunities that can go on here. It's a pretty big place so there are all different options to open up to generate income from here.

"I've never run a bottlestore before, or a Super Liquor, so that's a new challenge for me.

His Whakatane role was his first time at an RSA.

"There is a lot of ceremonial process that goes on. They have welfare structures and things like that, which I wasn't too involved in.

"I'm an operational, hands-on sort of person," he said.

Today will be the first Anzac Day in three years where Downes will not be involved in RSA remembrances. He will however lay a wreath with MSA president John Withell during the civic service at Ashburton.

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