

Newsletter 9:

Hello again!

Thanks to all of you who have sent feedback over the course of the month. One of the truly pleasurable things about my job is the opportunity it gives me to correspond directly with Members. Of course the feedback box isn't always full of compliments, but that just makes them all the sweeter when they do come.

Last month's column brought brick bats and bouquets in equal measure. It is fair to say that the whimsical nature of the piece was not to everyone's taste. And fair enough. So, in the interests of balance I am happy this month to provide something with a little more grist...

We received advice a few weeks ago from the Cooperatives Registry, that the "minimum spend" rule change which had been voted by Members last October, has been approved, and has now come into effect.

I have already received correspondence from some unhappy Members, which suggests to me that the situation regarding The Wine Society's cooperative status - and Members' rights and obligations in relation to that - is not generally very well understood. So here's some background, which I hope will both enlighten and reassure Members.

As a true cooperative, the Australian Wine Consumers' Co-operative Society Limited (**you** try saying that every time you pick up the phone) - known as The Wine Society - is subject to legislation contained in the Cooperatives Act 1992.

The Act contains specific provisions for Active Membership. (In fact it goes so far as to say that a person is not qualified to be admitted to Membership *unless there are reasonable grounds for believing that the person will be an **active member** of the co-operative.*)

So what is Active Membership? The definition is contained in section 12 of the Australian Wine Consumers' Co-operative Society Limited [rules](#). You'll find them on our website – go on, they make riveting reading! But if you have better things to do this weekend, allow me to interpret:

A Member is deemed to be an Active Member if, in the preceding 12 months she or he has purchased goods or services to the value of \$x.

In our 64 year history, the value of x has changed just 3 times. And this was the issue upon which Members voted last year.

The Board proposed to increase the minimum spend (that is, the value of x) from \$100 to \$250 (or \$125 for Members of 20+ years standing). The change was proposed to ensure that all Members contribute a minimum equitable amount to enable the cooperative to open its doors every day: maintaining the running of the business on a day to day basis, with the range of services and offerings that it makes available.

The Board felt that an annual purchase of (for example) two cases of wine at – say - \$10 per bottle was a reasonable minimum requirement to remain an active Member.

In October 2009, Members demonstrated that they agreed with this view when they voted to increase the minimum spend.

So, the value of x is now \$250, unless you've been a Member for greater than 20 years, in which case the value of x is \$125.

Are you with me so far? Now here's the tricky bit, the rules do not refer to a Calendar, or even a Fiscal year. They refer to the preceding 12 months. So, if you are concerned about whether or not you are an Active Member, the question you need to ask yourself is "Have I spent the required minimum in the past 12 months?" If the answer is yes, you're active!

If you're still reading congratulations! And thank you. It's important subject matter, if a little dry.

On a jollier note, I have been asked to let you all know that The Wine Society now has a [facebook](#) page, and you are all invited to visit it, and to do whatever it is that one does on [facebook](#).

As you may have guessed, I still have a little to learn about [facebook](#), and its relevance in the world. But I'm assured it's a very good thing. I was surprised to learn recently that the fastest growing group of [facebook](#) "embracers" are 50 – 60 year olds. Naturally, I raced home to set myself up with a facebook account (I'd hate to be the last living person on the planet without one) and within minutes I had a new friend! It's not really a new friend, it's a very dear *existing* friend and colleague whom I see every day of my working life. I'm not sure what we'll get up to together in cyberspace, but I think it might be fun.

Have a great weekend! This time next week, we'll all be enjoying a lazy long one! If you're going away for Easter, take care. In the meantime, if you feel moved to write, please send your feedback to: MemberFeedback@winesociety.com.au.

Cheers

Gillian Hyde

Head of Membership