

Notes from Interview with Janet Dixon

23 June 2020

Welcome everybody. I'm Fiona Rollings, the Association Secretary and today we're with Janet Dixon, our Vice President, Quality Assurance Programme Mentor and our new assessment co-ordinator. Janet joined the Board in 2017 and has a background as a Psychiatric Nurse and a Management degree from Otago University. She has a significant number of years as a health manager, clinical quality and risk advisor, clinical supervision trainer, Senior HR Manager at Otago University and as a management mentor. Welcome Janet.

We've just heard all about your professional background pre owning a B&B. Can you tell us a bit about your family?

I'm married to Ian who some of you have met and we have two sons, Johnny and his partner Kelsey live in London currently where they have been there for nearly five years. Our youngest son Matt and his partner, Kerian, moved to Birmingham in March just before lockdown, so they're having an interesting time.

It must be stressful for you having them away overseas?

A little. We try not to think about it too much. They're quite sensible and doing very well. There's no need for them to come back to New Zealand. They both have a means of income over there and somewhere to live so all is well if you don't think about things too much.

How long have you owned your B&B and why did you start in the B&B industry?

We've been here in Picton with the B&B for seven years and why we did it is a question a lot of people ask us, and even we can't answer that in any sensible way. We came up here on a holiday from Dunedin one summer and thought we'd like to live here in a few years' time and six months later we were living here. That's the road life takes and we love it. Best decision we've made.

Why did you join the Association?

Partly because I'm a little bit lazy and here in Picton we had the Picton & Sounds Association, our local Association, and when I started looking at compliance and by laws and Innkeepers Act and things like that I thought someone else must have done these things so I don't have to reinvent the wheel. So I started looking at the B&B Association and I rang and the question was why do you want to join? I said because I don't want to reinvent the wheel. And Here I am.

You've just taken over the role as the Assessment Co-ordinator and can you just tell us about the assessment programme, what it entails and how it benefits our members?

The Quality Assurance Programme is made up of a series of modules where we aim to help properties get to what we believe to be a high standard within the New Zealand accommodation market. The modules cover things like compliance, health and safety, business planning, the best ways to set up rooms, what we should have in our compendiums, etc. All the things that make your property stand out from everybody else. At the moment, all of our quality assessed properties could say that they are a covid safe place to stay. We already have high standards of cleaning, of changing towels and doing all sorts so we already there in that regard and I think we can be very proud of that.

The Assessment Process - we are looking at making some changes to how the process has been to date. We recently had a zoom meeting with a large number of our assessors throughout the country and what we are looking at now is to assign members an assessor / mentor right from the very beginning of the process so that by the time that person comes to assess you, you know them well, you have a relationship and you've got over all those hurdles. Often we have stumbling blocks, just little ones, particularly with health and safety plans and

so your mentor will be able to walk you through that process. It is a changing environment but I would absolutely recommend everyone consider the quality assessment programme. When it comes to our conferences, we have a trade show for all the agents and our members who are quality assessed will be the ones that will stand out with those agents. That is another good reason to stay with the quality programme.

What do you think are the challenges facing the B&B industry in the next two to three years?

I think we have a few. Our biggest one, of course, is international travel. Many of us in the Association, our bread and butter is international tourism. New Zealand doesn't have the volume of tourists domestically that we see from overseas. So, there is not as many people to go around. We need to adapt to our New Zealand market. New Zealanders aren't big B&B stayers traditionally. It's about finding out about what people want to see in our accommodation and seeing if we can add value around that to attract the kiwi traveller. Hopefully we'll have an Australian bubble open in 2021 at some point.

I think there will be ongoing challenges with Central and Local Government. In terms of smaller accommodation providers like ourselves every though we can prove we are quality assessed. We're a small voice and as a Board and an Association we need to become a loud voice – I think we are starting down that path. It is challenging for us to compete against great big organisations, but we'll be doing our best along those lines.

I see the future as being very positive for us. As soon as those borders open everyone will want to travel because we can.

You live in Picton – what's the best kept secret in that region?

Picton is the heart of the Marlborough sounds. When you come to the Marlborough Sounds you can only get here through Picton. We're where the ferry starts, where you hop off the ferry, you hop onto our beautiful foreshore and think Oh my goodness I wish I was staying here a little bit longer. The Marlborough Sounds is not a big secret but it is our best feature. You can see the Sounds from anywhere in Picton. We have lots of beautiful walks, pathways that connect Picton to the Queen Charlotte track – easy walking. It is the heart of the Marlborough Sounds.

Apart from Ian, what is the top product that every B&B should have. I know Ian is amazing in the kitchen.

Ian is a very good product of this B&B and yes, not only does he do breakfast he does bathrooms as well – not my favourite task. Currently he is creating a great outdoor living space. Everybody needs an Ian. But I do think probably one of the key products for every B&B that we can offer for absolutely nothing is a smile and a "how can we help you today?". I think that's our biggest and best free product we can offer.

Thanks for your time.

If you would like to contact Janet you can do so on her email which is anchordownbbpictonnz@gmail.com