

GOSNELLS BOWLING CLUB MANAGEMENT

Throughout history all levels of management have modernised according to commercial or social change; the Gosnells Bowling Club along with management of Bowls in this State and nationally have experienced changes and responded accordingly.

Lawn bowls changes have been made to accommodate the societal advancement and expectations of both sexes at every level of the sport and in every club participating in the sport.

Lawn bowls in Western Australia has been played in stand-alone bowling clubs, multi-sport clubs, community and district clubs, all affiliated with Bowls WA., formerly the Royal Western Australian Bowling Association (RWABA) and the Western Australian Ladies Bowling Association (WALBA).

In operation, almost exclusively at club level the Ladies ran their own club within the established RWABA club, having their own constitution and funds. In most cases this system operated with reasonable harmony on allocated days with ladies running the kitchen and serving meals and afternoon tea on men's days as a money-making operation and a service to bowlers. They held their own bank accounts.

Management of Gosnells Club, and many others consisted of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, and nine general committee members. At their first management meeting of each year the various sub-committees were elected from the committee. The method resulted in some sub-committees being formed by members with little aptitude or ability to carry out their specific duties.

In 1984 the WA Government introduced Equal Opportunity Legislation that eventually turned the management of lawn bowls on its head; no longer could the ladies enjoy the privileges of half membership fees as Associates Members and have an Association exclusively for females.

While the new Act flexed its muscle in the workplace in the first few years, the Gosnells Bowling Club was affected in 1991 when the then Secretary Brian Fox re-wrote the Constitution to bring it into line with legal requirements on the voting system. In researching the requirements of legislation effecting the operation of the Club and the needs of affiliation with RWABA, assistance was given by the then Liquor Licensing authority to clarify some aspects. He then approached the Equal Opportunity Office to be rebuked for either excluding women from full membership or giving men the opportunity to become Associate members to enjoy the cheaper privileges. In other words, all members within each category of membership had equal privileges. It was time to have all committees voted into positions of personal aptitude.

A further re-write of the affected sections brought both sexes into full membership and equal rights and responsibilities of membership. To adjust the resultant shortfall in Club funds a compromise was accepted whereby the ladies paid a small increase and the men slightly less.

This would have resulted in a shortfall of some \$6,000 in Club revenue. A greens fee of \$1 per member for all in-season games was struck.

At a Special General Meeting attended by both sexes but with voting restricted to male members, the new constitution was passed unanimously. At the AGM of 1992 women became eligible for all management positions and full voting rights. A compromise had to be accepted to conform with the then powerful (and dictatorial) WALBA management, which insisted that the head of Ladies Bowls had to retain the title of Lady President. It was then agreed that the head of Men's bowls shared a similar title, giving three distinctively separate presidents within the Club. After a couple of years of this seemingly stupid situation the positions of each bowls section became properly titled Bowls Captain. This did not sit comfortably with some female members who saw the change as demeaning.

RWABA CHANGES

Gosnells had broken the ice in Club leadership and the change was heralded by the then WALBA President Annette O'Shaughessy. RWABA seconded Fox to their Administration Committee where he was voted into the position of Chairman with a responsibility for Rules and Zoning throughout the State.

The Gosnells Constitution was adopted as the model for other clubs which over the ensuing years modified their rules to meet legal and Association responsibilities.

His first change at RWABA was referral to a previous request from Gosnells to remove the capitation fee from all members to those only using Club greens. At that time Social and non-playing members were paying fees for a privilege that was not used. It was an unfair burden on clubs trying to increase their membership and revenue base. This was a time when social changes in liquor laws and increase in married women in the workforce led to a drop in club attendance and revenue.

Fox undertook a survey of all bowling clubs throughout the State to ascertain the membership status of all members. A good response from 67 % of Clubs showed many members were wrongly paying a fee for a privilege that they could not use. With the support of his committee, he presented an argument to RWABA whereby increasing by 12.5% the capitation for all bowlers entitled to use the greens, Clubs could improve their finances through expansion of Social Membership. The proposal was accepted by the Association and the Clubs responded accordingly.

At a general meeting of metropolitan clubs, Allan Eddy, regarded widely as a visionary of bowls in this State, addressed the meeting on the management of bowls in both metropolitan and country areas. More than a year later the Administration Committee was charged with exploring the structure throughout the State. Fox visited Eddy in his home and discussed his suggestions for improvement. The underlying problem was country bowlers not being properly represented at Association level through the system of allowing up to five proxy votes of country clubs to each metropolitan club.

At a RWABA meeting with the Zone at Kellerberrin, many clubs represented there by presidents and secretaries, revealed that not one had been contacted by a proxy member in

the previous year although proxy votes had been cast on behalf of their Clubs. In a subsequent issue a proxy vote was cast in opposition to that requested by country club. In effect country clubs were not being represented at State level.

Fox and his Committee put forward a new structure for RWABA, a structure that gave the clubs and their players a voice in the management of bowls at all levels, both metropolitan and country. The proposal drew the ire of a group of staid "old school" bowlers and two former Association presidents, leading to the proposal and its opponent views being fully aired in Jack-hi magazine. The new structure of the RWABA was subsequently adopted at an Association AGM.

The need for change was agreed due to better communication and ease of travel for country members. This was by far the greatest change in administration of lawn bowls in Western Australia in one hundred years and reflected equal representation for all members.

At this time no less than five members of the Gosnells Bowling Club were filling Association roles including its President, Secretary, Administration Chairman and other committees. Little wonder that Gosnells has long been regarded as a leading club.

Association Director Norm Wallace and Brian Fox visited most metropolitan and country clubs to assist them in club administration responsibilities, particularly relating to incorporation, compliance with the Liquor Act, insurance and association rules. It was found that two country clubs with "Inc" added to their title, had not bothered to become incorporated thereby leaving their management members open to personal litigation. Many clubs were assisted in upgrading their constitutions and in some cases a complete re-write at no cost to the club.

This type of visitation was an initiative of the Administration Director, Norm Wallace, with "hands-on" assistance for club management and was well received throughout.

MORE THAN A CLUB

No longer can bowling clubs survive in the modern environment without a strong and dedicated management team. Every year sees increases in the needs of compliance to Government regulations, community and member expectations. Accountability is now the by-word to run a successful club; total financial accountability, compliance with the many licensing, health and safety regulations, and expectations of members and Bowls WA, Gosnells Club has remained one of the leading clubs in this State.

Although some members fail to understand the complexity of a modern club, it has been evident for many years a necessity to run the club operation as a business where the game of bowls is the purpose and sporting activity. Several bowling clubs have closed as a result of failing to modernise in their management responsibilities.

Gosnells is a relatively low socio-economic area with many members on limited finances to meet growing costs of running the Club and providing amenities in keeping with modern standards. There is consequently an ever present and growing need to "grow" the income from use of our facilities. This issue was brought to notice by Life Member Brian Fox in 2013

and taken to management by the new President, Peter Charkiewicz. It was agreed to form a Planning Committee to develop long and short-term plans for the Club.

The nucleus for the planning Committee was the President Vice President and Fox, with other members who showed particular interest over succeeding years, making valuable contributions. The Committee is ad hoc referring all decisions through Management for approval. The purpose of the committee was to assure the long-term viability of the Gosnells Bowling Club financially and in promotion of lawn bowls in the community of Gosnells.

Following Bowls Australia guidelines, a health check of the Club was undertaken and referred to B A for assessment. They identified that the Club had only a primary source of income, the bar, and we needed further avenues to assure our financial viability. Having only one area for entertainment the Club is totally restricted in its use other than bowls events.

Bowls Australia and our State Office assisted with advice on the future of the game throughout the Nation, making it obvious that the clubrooms needed expanding to accommodate other activities beyond the sport. The City of Gosnells was approached with this information and required us to explore all avenues including re-siting the club to a new area, offering land suggestions adjacent to the Gosnells Golf Club and Harmony Fields in Maddington.

The Committee examined these proposals along with rebuilding on the present site, single- and two-story structures, and through a Committee member arranged for more than 100 Year three Architecture students at Curtin University to visit the Club, its environment and draw plans for a suitable clubhouse using our building brief. The most suitable of these were exhibited in the Club for member inspection. We obtained the voluntary assistance of a prominent architect to draw plans for a project at Harmony Fields as the Golf Club area would not be available.

All information was submitted to the City of Gosnells which determined that it was in the interests of the City the Club remain on its present site. We were back to where we started after years and considerable effort had been invested by our members. The Council carried out detailed assessment of our building determining that the building should be expanded and extensive renovations be done to the existing structure.

The President's business knowledge in structural planning has been instrumental in detailing the needs of members in the proposed extensions, particularly in the matter of flow and serviceability for members and staff. The plans have been displayed for all members and information meetings have been held in the Club, addressed by the City Planners.

WHO OWNS THE CLUB?

The City of Gosnells leases the land from the Perth transport Trust on behalf of the Gosnells Bowling Club. Like many other sporting premises, the improvements, greens and buildings were carried out by members through volunteer work and fund-raising, including loans from the local government authority. This system was altered several years ago when the City of Gosnells assumed responsibility for the buildings and major maintenance. In return the Club pays the City an annual fee, thereby saving the Club the cost of replacement of building

equipment and major repairs. In return the Club is responsible to maintain all facilities in clean and well-ordered condition through the House and Greens Committees.

The Management Committee and the Planning Committee have retained a close and co-operative relationship with the staff and councillors as demonstrated in the planning for upgrading our premises. It must be remembered that “stand alone” sports are unable to attract State and Federal funding grants. This was recognised in our Club Constitution through including **“supporting recreational, social, sporting, cultural and community dimensions of that interest within the City of Gosnells and surrounds”**.

Long-term viability of our Club will be assured through using our double entertainment areas for bowls and social activities concurrently. Lawn bowls remains the priority purpose for our premises and renting out the other area as required will generate the funds to support the game. Unlike many bowling clubs that have become community or sporting clubs, management of our premises will remain with the bowling club committee which will control all activities in the premises.

The Club website shows the plans for extensions of the building and replacement of the Albany Highway and Dorothy Street fences. Recent advice from the City that it will have to re-roof the existing building to accommodate the installation of new heating and refrigerated air conditioning throughout has now delayed commencement of the project to April 2024. While this is disappointing to all, the long-term advantage is immeasurable, benefitting our members for generations to come, thereby meeting the long-term plan produced by the Planning Committee.