



Hi members, one again.

I recently spoke about a few changes that the board has approved.

Whilst I'm generally encouraged by the positive feedback I've received from staff and members, I'm also aware that some of our bowlers might be feeling a bit unsure about the direction we've taken.

So, this 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter is about allaying some or, hopefully all of your concerns.

For some time now the board has wrestled with our club tag line **"Your Family Club"** and what this means to our community at large. Internally, it means we want to remain relevant to our bowls family and externally, it was about creating an opportunity to encourage membership growth.

Strategically, the board has committed to growing our social membership numbers and our focus is on young families generating this growth. This has been achieved, and continues to grow. We currently have 11 Social Members for every Bowling Member. This means we must offer something that encourages these families to use the club's facilities as the days of small clubs being able to survive solely by providing bar, gaming and a bistro are over for a number of reasons.

Firstly, changes within our local demographic, and society generally demonstrate that more customers and families are looking for a friendly venue where they can meet, and socialise. Drinking trends have changed and "The Dining Experience" has taken over from the old style Steak Sandwich and Chips. One only has to look to

North Parramatta to see this change in the social and dining experience. The increase in bottle shop and home delivery sales highlights a trend in people entertaining at home.

Secondly, the advent of online gaming and sports betting has seen a decline in the appeal of the traditional club poker machine. Those wanting to have a 'flutter' can now use their home computer, iPad or smart phone to play online poker machines, bet on the races, sports or any other event. If there is no longer the need to visit a 'traditional' club, they are also not buying your drinks, or your food.

The board recently approved several strategic initiatives to further encourage this target demographic, namely;

- The submission of a DA to Parramatta Council to expand our entertainment precinct.
- The introduction of a social bowls class of membership to encourage younger members
- A trial to set aside the David Swindail Green for family, fun and social bowls

The board has already committed up to \$800,000 for various capital works projects and we hope that many of these projects are quite visible and are being enjoyed by members and other such projects will soon commence.

Following on from this will be the commencement of our entertainment precinct, estimated cost \$1,500,000.

### **So, what does all this have to do with us bowlers?**

Most small bowling clubs are struggling and the board is committed to ensuring we do not go the way of;

- West Epping – Closed
- Parramatta RSL - Closed
- Wenty Memorial – Closed
- Rydalmere – amalgamation EOI issued & up to 17 months to find new location
- Brush Park – amalgamation EOI issued
- Beecroft – down to one pennant team and running on volunteer labour
- North Epping – closed on most days during the week until late afternoon
- Rosehill – MOU signed with Australian Turf Club
- Pennant Hills – amalgamated with Seven Hills RSL

Plus, the 100's of other bowling clubs that have already closed their doors over the last 15 years.

So, we're investing in our future and we need our bowlers to trust that our vision can be realised, whilst we maintain our continued strong investment in competitive lawn bowls.

All your elected Directors, as well as the Club's General Manager, and Operations Manager come from within the bowls family and we are all passionate about driving our bowls strategy which is to be the best bowling club in Zone10 and Mitchell District.

But the landscape has changed and the game as we all know it is dying. The future of the game will rest in its ability to cater to a newer style of participant; particularly those that are "time poor". And more and more these days that means faster; shorter duration; less structured; and alternate and flexible game times.

So, do we just wait to see who is left to close the doors or do we adjust our strategic thinking to manage that change and move with the times?

Your Board's strategic position is to stay the distance on the bowls front so we are committed to a competitive bowls strategy and here are some statistics to help you understand that.

The bowls budget for 2016 is an estimated \$252,000 spend. Our investment in player recruitment, tournament prizemoney, pennant bonuses, umpire fees, coaching fees, ladies' sponsorship, travel & accommodation for state play-offs, presentation night, Christmas fours & other organised events etc is \$80,000.

We aim to field at least 7 sides, maybe more in the State Pennant competition in 2017.

We aim to compete as strongly as we can in the Metropolitan Grade 1 Pennant competition.

We will work closely with newly elected Lady President to assist with her development plans.

We aim to bring the Arthur Groves and Barbara Anderson Greens to the highest possible standards.

Our investment in the employment of a greenkeeper, groundsman, third year apprentice greenkeeper as well as a full-time bowls manager is testimony to our strategic vision for bowls.

But we must also focus on the need to drive revenue growth if we are to maintain that vision.

This means we've had to make some adjustments to utilise a space that can create a future revenue stream that is essential to secure our clubs long-term future.

We have therefore decided to turn the David Swindail Green into a family friendly, social bowls environment which we believe will secure our financial position.

In consideration of additional concerns, you may have, we submit the following questions and answers which we hope will help bowlers understand the board's rationale.

### **What exactly is the club planning to do with the David Swindail Green?**

The board has agreed to trial the setting aside, part of the David Swindail Green for a child friendly play area (approximately 3 rinks). We will shortly fence off the exterior perimeter and place a temporary barricade East/West starting from the steps coming off the verandah. This will leave 4 rinks available for social bowls whilst the kids play area is in use.

The kids play area will be open from 11am to 9pm from Thursday to Sunday and we will market this space as the perfect place for kids to play, so book in for a birthday party whilst the family relax on the verandah.

### **Why build the new extensions in the garden area?**

The decision to extend the club to provide a new dining precinct at the northern end of the club and behind the Swindail green was only taken on the advice of our Architects and only after many hours of investigation of alternate proposals.

The decision is based on a number of important factors. Firstly, all of the required services such as power, drainage, gas and kitchen services are already close by.

Secondly, to extend the club to the south over the Arthur Groves Green would lead to significant additional costs; not only because of the need to extend the services mentioned above, but also to require a major relocation and rebuild of the TAB and Gaming Areas. The cost? ..... upwards of \$4.5million.

Thirdly, consideration was given to the advice received from Parramatta City Council during our Pre DA Application meeting that RMS still have a long term objective to widen Windsor Road. When this happens, and it must eventually, it will have a severe impact on our front car park. We will need to be able to find or create new parking spaces to replace those lost to the road widening or the potential impact to trading outcomes could be catastrophic.

To this end a concept has already been investigated wherein the Arthur Groves Green is dug up and then replaced on top of a new concrete slab over a new undercover parking station.

That reinforced the Architects advice that the best option for our planned extensions are those finalised and submitted in our DA to Council.

### **Why take out the David Swindail Green and not the Barbara Anderson Green?**

The David Swindail Green is located adjacent to all the available services essential to making an entertainment precinct work for the club. All power, catering, cooking, seating, verandah access, observation of children and gazebo area are significant drivers of the board's decision to use this space and they are all located toward the Northern perimeter of the club.

Consideration was given to extending the club to the south by taking out the Arthur Groves Green but this was found to not be our best option.

In addition, by locating the Children's Play Area at the northern end of the Swindail Green we will be able to provide a buffer zone between this area and our two remaining competition greens; so as to mitigate any possible distraction for either social or serious bowler. It also places the Children's Play Area well away from smoking areas and our Gaming and TAB precinct.

The Barbara Anderson Green is positioned too far away from these services.

We have therefore also instructed the General Manager to bring the Arthur Groves and Barbara Anderson Greens up to the highest playing standard possible.

### **What happens with the lights we've just installed?**

The lights will stay. If our trial is successful we will consider permanently taking out 3 rinks for our children play area and then return 4 grass rinks to a standard capable of hosting social and competitive bowls. For now, those 4 rinks will be set aside for social bowls. Regardless, the lights will be utilised to ensure sufficient lighting floods the green. At some stage, we will look to lighting one or both of our remaining greens.

### **Is the club looking to become just a social bowls club?**

Absolutely No. As we've explained, our strategy is to create a best of both worlds scenario and develop our competitive bowls whilst we seek to develop a new source of revenue.

### **Some members are already talking about leaving, is this so?**

We certainly hope not as we have endeavoured to make NBC Sports Club a great club for all members and we believe we have delivered a very competitive value proposition for our bowlers. However, the board is committed to this expansion as it's in the best interest of the club's long term future and bowling members should weigh up what's best for them.

### **How can we run Pennants with only 2 greens?**

Zone 10 will be informed of the number of greens available for play and will ensure the draw only allows for a maximum of four home sides for any round of Pennants

### **Why haven't we been told about this before?**

Since 2013 members have been updated and informed of the club's strategic plan to create a family friendly area at each of our Member Forum's. We are finally delivering on one part of that strategic plan and this will give us the best opportunity to see whether our formal plans will succeed.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope we have explained our decisions succinctly.

And I look forward to all our bowlers bringing your children and grandchildren up to the club over the next few months for their or your next special occasion.

Regards

*Norm Muir*

**President**