



Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.  
**Research Project Membership of  
a Lawn Bowls Club**

Interim Contact No. 0438-262-091

6/06/2012

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**Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club  
Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.**

- This project derived from concern with the falling number of members at the Ringwood Bowls Club and, following further research, the falling number of members in the sport of lawn bowls around the world.

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**Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club  
Ringwood Bowls Club Inc**

- The project involved researching information derived from other organisations to create some ideas about how the "Membership" question is being dealt with at community clubs and by State and National bodies.

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**Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club  
Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.**

The content of the report is arranged over 7 chapters:-

1. Introduction and reiteration of the brief
2. Lawn bowls at Ringwood Bowls Club
3. The Member Satisfaction Survey
4. Strategic Planning
5. The Big Picture – BA and BV
6. Membership structures
7. What are other clubs doing?

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Ringwood Bowls Club Inc**

- The first element of our project was to endeavour to test the satisfaction level of members of the club in the Member Satisfaction Survey.
- Although we had only about 12% of members responding the issues raised were to some significant degree polarised which allowed us to draw some broad conclusions.

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Ringwood Bowls Club Inc**

- At this time the report on the 'Satisfaction Survey' has been completed but the real result rests in how the content is received and treated in the immediate and long term future.
- The steps we suggest we need to follow are to establish a Strategic Planning Committee who will then Review, Discuss, Plan Strategy, Plan Implementation, all subject to agreement of the Board of Management.

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- Changes in lawn bowls .
- Over the past season and a half we have witnessed two major changes in lawn bowls
- 1. Is the introduction of 21 end games –and there is more comment about this in the report.
- 2. Is the introduction of the Australian Premier League
- Bowls Australia is currently conducting three research projects that may impact on community bowls- 1 at Latrobe Uni., 1 at Deakin Uni, and one internal one.

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Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.

- What the outcome of these will be is anybody's guess BUT BA is aware of the dilemma facing community bowls clubs' and some very senior people are working very hard to bring about change.
- Does RBC need to be part of this to influence change?

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Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club  
Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.

- Some of the changes that are being worked on by both bowls associations and the Australian Sports Commission include
- More participant research,
- Getting more people of different abilities involved in activity at social and competitive levels,
- Managing and developing elite sports.
- The integration of the AIS and States Institutes of Sports into one policy making body.

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- Our predominant research finding is that the club must introduce Strategic Planning as a policy making tool as soon as possible.
- The club is now on the cusp of Premier League and the club must plan out how that move can be made if it is to be made.
- Change must be 'all of club' oriented –not aimed at one level.
- There must be greater consultation with members about where the club is headed
- Changes in the interim- we are aware that some changes we have included as recommendations have or are being introduced.

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- Some of you might be thinking about the challenge of simply reading this document.
- What we say to that is that the report was driven by the input- the more we looked the more we found.
- In the opinion of the research group it was important to provide as complete a big picture view as possible
- The Appendix consists of 43 items and the Bibliography of nearly 36 different pieces of research each and these all contain valuable and pertinent data.

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Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club  
Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.

- I will be pleased to answer any questions of a general nature if there is anything you wish to raise at this time.
- Future consultation both with the Research Group and the members is essential for any plan to be carried through.
- Thank you for allowing me to deliver this presentation to you tonight.

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Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.  
Research Project Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club  
Interim Contact No. 0438-262-091

The Chairman and Directors  
Board of Management  
Ringwood Bowls Club Inc

Dear John,

On behalf of the research group I am pleased to present the final report in the project "Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club- Ringwood Bowls Club Inc." for your consideration.

The project commenced with the development of a concept plan in late 2010 and was commissioned by the Board in May 2011. Motivation for the project was the recognition of two major traits at work in the club and in lawn bowls internationally.

The first was (and remains) 'why does the club (and the sport) lose members consistently year on year? and the second was ' what does the club (and the sport) need to do to reverse these trends?

In discharging our brief the research group firstly examined the membership history of the club and to open a pathway through which members can be involved in establishing a plan for the future of the club, and perhaps, the sport in the broader sense.

The research group took care to ensure that any findings we have included in the report are not the reflection of the private view as a member of the team or of the team itself. All findings are based on sound evidence collected from numerous sources including members of the club.

It is not my intention to take you through the report tonight! But to leave it with you to read and consider in your own time.

However we do suggest that consideration be given to arranging a specific discussion session involving the BoM and the research group to work through the main issues of the report and to plan any further actions that might be relevant.

Some may observe that the document is '*a bit long*' and all I can say is that the outcome was driven by the input of data relevant to the future and status of the club.

This report is only the first half of the total story! The real test and the future of the game itself depend on how facts are treated and the action taken to 'change the future'.



Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.  
Research Project Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club  
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In reading the report we expect that you will find some issues with which you agree, some with which you disagree, some which are contentious and some benign but, overall, we hope that you can see that the report is relevant to the continuation of lawn bowls at Ringwood and to the sport in the broader sense.

I leave it in your hands and look forward to further discussion.

On behalf of the research team - Graham McGrath, Bob Hedrick, Peter Bertie- and with our best regards

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stan Bannan", with a date "11" written at the end of the signature.

Stan Bannan

Wednesday, 13 June 2012

## LIST OF CONTENTS

Page No	Part No.	Title	Purpose
	1	Frontispiece and cover	Display report title
1	2	List of Contents	
2	3	Abbreviations used	Enable the reader to track content
3	4	Bibliography	Enable the reader to access some background material
4	5	Research Project Group Preface	To include publication details and presentation to the Board and any simple explanations.
5	5	Executive Summary and Summary of Recommendations	Summarise the content and list the recommendations.
	Chapter	Chapter Title	Purpose
13	1	Authority and Introduction	Formalise the authority for the project and to provide any Introductory comments
18	2	Lawn Bowls at Ringwood Bowls Club	An overview of the present situation and the opportunities for play provided plus other relevant matters
32	3	Member Satisfaction Survey	The MSS report including the report of the 'short' meeting.
53	4	Strategic Planning- The Way Ahead	Providing some suggestions about how the club might determine where it wants to be in 3 to 5 years
64	5	The Big Picture	The roles of BA, BV and other research documents.
75	6	Current and Potential Membership categories at Ringwood Bowls Club	Examine the membership categories to test their relevance in modern society
77	7	What are other clubs' doing?	Data gathered from other clubs in Victoria and interstate
80		Conclusion	
81	9	Appendix	Copies of material referred to in the report.

**This report of the research project "Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club- Ringwood Bowls Club Inc" has been completed on behalf of and for the use of the Ringwood Bowls Club Inc. and its members in relation to the conduct of the club.**

**The content of the report is relevant only to the Ringwood Bowls Club and may not be used in any other club or by any person who is not a member of the Ringwood Bowls Club for any purpose nor should it be replicated or copied electronically or in hard copy by any person without the express permission in writing of the Board of Management of the club.**

## **ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS PAPER**

In the course of the research we have contacted a number of organisations and referred to others. We have also referred to some publications.

In the pursuit of saving time and space we list the abbreviations used to represent these organization and publications.

- ASC                    =Australian Sports Commission
- ABS                    =Australian Bureau of Statistics
- BA                     =Bowls Australia
- BV                     =Bowls Victoria
- BoM                   =Board of Management of Ringwood Bowls Club
- Chairman            =Chairperson for the time being of the Ringwood Bowls Club
- RBC                   = Ringwood Bowls Club Inc.
- Deakin                =Deakin University
- Sweeney             =Sweeney Sports
- ACHPER             =Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
  
- SOI                    =Spheres of Influence International
- MCC                   =Maroondah City Council
- BIF                    =Bowls in Focus magazine
- SP                     =Strategic Plan or Strategic Planning
- SPC                    =Strategic Planning Committee
- RVBA                 = Royal Victorian Bowls Association (now Bowls Victoria)
- STA's                 =State and Territory Associations
- AIS                    =Australian Institute of Sport
- D/O                    = Development Officer employed by BA
- WPR                   =Weekly Peer Review

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>
National Bowls Census Report 2010	Bowls Australia
Bowls Victoria Annual Report 2010-11	Bowls Victoria
Bowls Victoria Weekly Bulletins Various dates	Bowls Victoria
Bowls Club Promotion Case Studies ;-	Henselite
St Kilda Bowls Club	
Longreach Bowling Club Qld	
Engadine Bowls Club NSW	
Somerton Bowling Club S.A.	
Donvale Bowls Club Vic.	
World Bowls Development (On line)	World Bowls Ltd.
Bowls Victoria Development (On line)	Bowls Victoria
Forty/40 Twilight Bowls	Bowls Victoria
Bowls Australia Strategic Plan 2009-12	Bowls Australia
The Shot	Bowls Victoria Official Publication
Bowl in Focus Various issues and articles.	Bowls Victoria
The Key to Membership Conversion Brochure	Bowls Australia
The Future of our Sport Brochure	Bowls Australia
The Perfect Delivery	Bowls Australia
Bowls Australia Reports Sweeney Sports	Bowls Australia & Sweeney Sports
The Future of Sport in Australia ( Commonly known as the Crawford Report)	Australian Government Independent Sport Panel October 2009
Australian Premier League (On line)	Bowls Australia
Para Hills Bowling Club	Mawson Lakes Community
Building Participation in Lawn Bowls	Sweeney Sports
The Strategic Plan- A guide for not-for-profit sport organisations	NSW Dept of Sport & Recreation
Annual Report 2011/12 Ringwood Bowls Club	Ringwood Bowls Club
Governance Principles (for Sporting Organisations)	Australian Sports Commission
User Friendly Sport	Vic Dept for Sport and Recreation
Active Australia- The Numbers Game	Australian Sports Commission March 2000
Australian Bureau of Statistics No 4102.0 2010	Australian Bureau of Statistics
Australian Social Trends No 4102.0	Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011
Involvement in Organised Sport.....6285.0	Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010
How Australians Use Their Time 4153	Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006
The Fun Factor Adolescents Self-regulated Leisure.....	Nancy Brooks & Jeanne Kentel From Deakin University
Global Self-Regulation and Outcome Expectations	Julie Son, Deborah Kerstetter, Andrew Mowen and Laura Payne. From Deakin University
Baby Boom to baby bust	Bernard Salt The Australian May 28 2011
Prepare for a generation of demanding retirees	Bernard Salt Herald Sun 21 April 2009

## PREFACE

In undertaking this research project and preparing the report of the research the research group have involved themselves with issues that relate to the Ringwood Bowls Club and some issues that have a wider community application to the sport of lawn bowls generally.

We have endeavoured to report in an honest and constructive manner to accurately represent the thoughts that have been expressed to us and, at the same time, have been conscious of the need to draw matters of concern to members to attention in the report. Equally of importance to the current club environment we have endeavoured to set out some ideas to move the club forward that might be considered.

As the operation of the club is a volatile and ongoing activity there will be initiatives addressed in this report that the club has addressed in the interim whilst our research has been conducted and this report compiled. We are bound to include those as they appeared to the researchers to be issues of concern at the time of our investigation and we do not have the time or the facility to re-visit every area to reconsider all of the material dealt with.

The information contained in the report does not necessarily represent the private views of the main researcher or the individual members of the research support group but is drawn from discussions with members and other sources.

The source of the content of the report is, in the main, the research group's interpretation of information provided by members and that drawn from published documents whether in print or electronically.

RBC was one of the first clubs' to change its management structure to a modern profile and in doing so exercised vision and forethought for the future well ahead of many others.

The time is now right to go the next step and demonstrate this Vision across the entire operation of the club both on and off the green- "Setting the PACE by Working Together".

The work of the Research team in this project concludes with the delivery of the report to the BoM but members will be available for further discussion and to answer any points that we have not made clear in the document.

We submit the report for your consideration and trust that you will find it forthright, challenging and relevant as you prepare for the future of the Ringwood Bowls Club.

**The Research Team**  
**Stan Bannan**  
**Primary Researcher**

**Graham McGrath**  
**Director and**  
**Reviewer**

**Bob Hedrick**  
**Member and**  
**Reviewer**

**Peter Bertie**  
**Member and**  
**Reviewer**

.....  
**May 2012**



## **Executive Summary and Summary of Recommendations**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The main purpose of the Executive Summary in a document such as this one is to provide the reader an easy to access five minute read of the main content issues in the report.

We have elected to do this on a chapter-by-chapter basis but with two exceptions.

The Board of Management of the Ring wood Bowls Club Inc. sanctioned the research and the report is directed to that body.

However we are strongly convinced that planning for the future i.e. creating a Strategic Plan, for which this document provides a working foundation model, is an *all of club exercise* which needs to be expediently managed and must become an ongoing responsibility of all members.

For these reasons our main strategic recommendations are that the report, as it is written, be available to all club members who request a copy and that a Strategic Planning Committee be appointed to create a three-year strategic plan and to oversee and manage, in cooperation with the Board and members, its implementation.

This would normally be a function of the BoM but it is our major observation that the primary and time consuming function of the BoM is to manage the day-to-day operations of the club and that the development of a strategic plan will require specific dedication and time beyond that normally available by people in other main stream positions in the club.

### **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

In this chapter we have reiterated the brief for this research project as agreed with the BoM and outlined the Methodology we have used in the gathering of information and formation of the report.

We have indicated that we have research material that has not been used or used only briefly that remains in the care of the main researcher but is available for reference by club members and/or committees who might be interested.

### **CHAPTER TWO LAWN BOWLS AT RINGWOOD**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the manner in which members are provided with opportunities to participate in the game at Ringwood.

We also consider the entry process for new members and suggest some alternative processes.

The main theme is to challenge the existing arrangements and to begin the process of testing some different ideas in relation to getting feet on the green to ensure that all members are satisfied with the programme provided by the club.

### **CHAPTER THREE** **MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

The membership Satisfaction Survey was conducted early in the 2011/12 season. The opportunity to participate was given to all members whether social or pennant but, unfortunately, only a very small number elected to respond. We make no comment about this other than that was each member's own choice.

This notwithstanding we have derived some information which, at the very least, identifies some trends which appeared to be of concern to a majority of the respondents.

In this chapter we discuss the concerns expressed by members and provide an analysis of the responses for each section of the survey.

### **CHAPTER FOUR** **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

In chapter four we introduce the concept of Strategic Planning and what it means to the club. The development of a Strategic plan will assist the club in examining all of its operation and in setting goals for the club to aim for in all aspects of its operation.

The introduction of a strategic plan enables members to have an input and to coordinate activities across all portfolios.

### **CHAPTER FIVE** **THE BIG PICTURE BA AND BV**

The role of both Bowls Victoria and Bowls Australia is pivotal to the role of the club in many aspects.

In this chapter we consider the relationship and some of the processes of both BA & BV and make some suggestions for the consideration of the club through the SPC and the BoM.

### **CHAPTER SIX** **MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES AT RINGWOOD BOWLS CLUB**

We take a brief look at the membership structure of the club and move into making some suggestions for consideration by members.

### **CHAPTER SEVEN** **WHAT ARE OTHER CLUBS' DOING?**

As RBC is not the only club exposed to membership drop off we have taken the opportunity to look at some information about other clubs'.

Members will be well aware of some popular examples of clubs' who have taken action to reverse these trends.

Without linking the report to any one of these we provide some data about how many of the clubs have developed strategies to work their recruiting more effectively.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this first section of the Summary of Recommendations we have included 6, what we have termed, "Primary Importance" recommendations.

These are the recommendations that the research team have identified as being of central or core importance in considering the method of using this report and of planning the future of the club.

The Research team has defined 4 critical recommendations for action for immediate consideration by the Board of Management and has left two open. This is because we consider that the four included are time critical and will set the direction for further consideration of this paper and potentially the direction of the club.

The other two are for the Strategic Planning Committee to include as part of their considerations.

**THE SIX PRIMARY IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS**

Primary Recommend No.	Page	Recommendation
1	7	This paper become the subject of a series of Member Forums for open discussion. That the club conduct a series of member forums to discuss the content of the Members Satisfaction Survey and the Member of a Lawn Bowls Club Research Project
2	7	That the document be available in a hand out to all members to collect from the club rooms or electronically
3	7	That a select committee of members to constitute a Strategic Planning subordinate committee of the Board of Management be elected at the first of these Members Forums.
4		That the club update its web site as a matter of extreme urgency and that Sporting Pulse be invited to present to the Board the scope of the Club Management programme, including web site management, which is endorsed by BA , BV and many other sporting associations.
5		
6		

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER ONE**  
**AUTHORITY AND INTRODUCTION**

Recommend No.	Recommendation
1	he paper is the subject of a series of Member Forums for open discussion.
2	That the document be available in a hand out available to all members to collect from the club rooms or electronically
3	That a select committee of members to constitute a Strategic Planning subordinate committee of the Board of Management be elected at the first of these Members Forums.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER TWO**

Recommend No.	Recommendation
1	"That the club moves to implementing an upgrade of its record keeping system to ensure a greater level of accuracy and to expand the amount of information which can be stored in relation to a members history in the club."
2	"That the club undertake a comprehensive audit of all members identified in each and any list of members to ratify its membership listing."
3	That membership listings be subdivided into a number of groups equal to the types of membership the club offers e.g. Level 1,2,3, Honorary Members, Life Members Junior members and others if they exist from time to time."
4	That the management, including maintenance, of the club members listing fall under the responsibilities of the club Membership Director as soon as possible.
5	"That a survey of members who are qualified to play competitive bowls but who choose not to be conducted to identify any sustainable reasons which may be able to be overcome or circumstances changed or to enable the club to sort its member list into categories and thus create a more reliable and valuable asset."
6	That those people not prepared to play pennant and who are classified as level 1 members be re-classified as level 2 members.
7	That the BoM investigate the implementation and integration of a quality standard 'tournament' each week that is open to all members and to members of other clubs'.
8	That the club consider the provision of two or three events each season in which side 1,2 & 3 players are teamed with side 4,5,& 6 members
9	It is our recommendation that the club approach BV to design a universal Exit Interview survey form for use by all clubs' to be sent to all leavers each year or more often."
10	It is our recommendation that The mentor system be re-introduced by September 2012 in time for the 2012/13 season;
11	That the mentor process be examined to ensure that the system is meeting the needs of the new members;
12	That the system be documented in a one page sheet to ensure that all mentors are working the same system;
13	That the responsibility for the appointment of all mentors and the total management of the programme be the responsibility of the Membership Director
14	That the club redefine its member list and develop a set of benefits to accompany each category of membership;
15	That the club examine the structure of the entire bowls programme it offers to incorporate more social accessibility and a higher level of non-pennant bowls, to members at all times including official pennant and competition days and particularly in the winter 'season'
16	That the club examine its approach to the conduct of events such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate bowls;</li> <li>• Sponsors days;</li> <li>• Get on the Green;</li> <li>• Forty/40;</li> <li>• A club charity day in conjunction with a major service club</li> </ul>
17	That the BoM consider these preceding issues (in relation to introduction of new members) with a view to introduction in time for the 2012/13 season: -

18	That the concept be referred to the Coaching Convenor for consideration by the coaching panel in time for the 2012/13 season;
19	That all 'new' and beginner bowlers be encouraged to participate in the 2-4-2 competition regularly.

**MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER THREE**

No	Recommendation
1	That the club conduct a series of member forums to discuss the content of the Members Satisfaction Survey and the Member of a Lawn Bowls Club Research Project.
2	Q3 indicates that 16 'newer' members considered the application process as poor and below in terms of efficiency of process and in providing information to the applicant. We recommend that the application process be reviewed with a view to providing an application process that is both effective and attractive to the new applicant
3	Recommendation: That the club undertake a major adequately funded project to build its membership by re-examining its operation with a view to providing a more welcoming attitude to new bowlers and to arrange to invite them to a club function free of charge.
4	That the club introduce a member's Information Book which outlines some of the history and processes of the club to be provided to new members upon application to join the club.
5	That the club conduct a series of Information Forums either at night or at other times in which members can be informed of initiatives of the club, ask questions of the Directors and meet other members
6	Research Note: This recommendation largely duplicates one that we have included elsewhere. More discussion on the points of the management of a Member Plan and the types of membership that could be offered are included in later chapters.
7	Recommendation: - That the club re-examine its application and entry programme and the application process and forms with a view to modernisation and 'softening' the process for applicants. Researchers Note: this recommendation links with those relating to mentors expressed in other places in this report
8	Recommendation; - That the club ensure that all public address announcements are supportive of members.
9	Recommendation from the Researchers: That the club appoint three people to act as Masters' of Ceremonies with announcements and to ensure that there is some order and that announcements are communicated effectively
10	Researchers recommendation; - that the club publish a short information sheet, outlining the Selection Process, the purpose and use of the Weekly Player Review and the MVP system. Particular emphasis should be placed on the manner in which the WPR form is used between sides and teams within a side. It is very difficult to imagine if a team is filling out forms independently and another is filling them on a group basis that the MVP will ever be awarded to anyone other than a member of the side filling out on a group basis.
11	Researchers Recommendation; that the club provide in the next Annual Report or at the Next Annual General Meeting or even as a special release some data and background for the club carrying the contingency fund and its intended use. This has to some extent been subverted by the article by Greg Allen in the Bias May 2012
12	Recommendation that all players should be asked at the time of annual fee renewal the following questions..... Do you intend to play pennant this year, and if so, in what side and in what position would you aim to play?

**STRATEGIC PLANNING**

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER FOUR**

No	Recommendation
1	<p>The research group recommends that the terms</p> <p><b>SAMPLERS</b>- those who attend Try Bowls days, TBAT, schools programmes, barefoot bowls and other introductory events;</p> <p><b>PARTICIPANTS</b>: -those who enter into a 'one off' event such as Get on the Green, Forty/40, barefoot bowls advanced, and other similar events;</p> <p><b>MEMBERS</b>: -those who play regularly in either a competitive or social setting and are include in the club's register of members.</p> <p>be adopted for use in recruiting programmes.</p>
2	<p><i>THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE Research Group is that the BoM</i> invite 'selected volunteers' with appropriate background experience to sit on a Strategic Planning Committee with the objective of developing a Strategic Plan for the club including on going management strategies.</p>
3	<p>The research group recommends that the areas defined in the preceding table be adopted as the club's main catchment area.</p>
4	<p>The research group recommends that the club expand its try bowls events to provide weekly and/or monthly opportunities to this effect.</p>
5	<p>That the club update its appalling web site as a matter of extreme urgency and that Sporting Pulse be invited to present to the Board the scope of the Club Management programme, including web site management, which is endorsed by BA , BV and many other sporting associations.</p>
6	<p>The research group recommends that a properly drafted expense based budget be drawn up and that the club finances, adequately from its reserves, the costs of mounting an extensive year round recruiting programme.</p>
7	<p>The research groups recommendation is that the club conduct a properly financed advertising campaign over an extended period to increase awareness of the club in its catchment area and to enhance recruitment drives as appropriate</p>
8	<p>The research group recommends that the recruitment of experienced bowlers be one of the primary responsibilities of the chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.</p>

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER FIVE**  
**THE BIG PICTURE – BOWLS AUSTRALIA & BOWLS VICTORIA**  
**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER FIVE**

No.	Recommendation
1	The research group recommends that the club express to Bowls Australia and Bowls Victoria its disappointment in the footnotes on pages 3 & 4 of the BA Annual Report 2009/10 and suggests that a more appropriate method of measuring try bowls samplers be used
2	The research group recommends that 'samplers' who have attended a try bowls event be allocated to a mentor who has the responsibility to follow up the newcomer with the primary aim of arranging introductory coaching sessions of upto 3 weeks duration on an individual or small group basis prior to the person being asked to join the club.
3	The research group recommends that the club contact BV with a view to raising concerns about non-responded communications and to including in Bowls In Focus a Letters to the Editor page or pages.
4	The research group recommends that the club approach BV to discuss the infrastructure and financing required to promote try bowls programmes.
5	The recommendation of the research group is that the club raise with BV the issues of different decision making processes within the various regions and the authority of BV to manage the game across the state in light of this current and foundation situation.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER SIX**  
**CURRENT AND POTENTIAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES**  
**and**  
**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER SEVEN**  
**WHAT ARE OTHER CLUBS' DOING?**

We have not included any recommendations in Chapters six and seven.

In relation to Chapter six we believe that the club must upgrade its entire membership structure and vary the categories of membership and the benefits that attach to each category. This may be a task considered by the SPC or by others at the direction of the BoM.

It also needs to upgrade the entry process for a new member.

In relation to Chapter seven in which is outlined strategies that other clubs have taken we have included this as evidence of a wide range of initiatives that are available to the club for consideration. In the end it will be that which the members determines is appropriate for its current situation that will provide the future direction of the club.

This section should, with respect, be treated as one of highest priority and be among the first considered by the SPC in the development of an aggressive strategic development plan for the club.



## Section Two

# THE RESEARCH REPORT



## **Chapter One Introduction to the Research Project**

### **Introduction**

### **Methodology**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The formal application to the Board of Management of the Ringwood Bowls Club seeking approval and endorsement of this research project outlined the trend of reduction in members and participants in the sport of lawn bowls at Ringwood, in each State of Australia and in all but two of the International Lawn Bowls Associations by member Stan Bannan in January 2011.

The main purpose of the project has been to consider the falling membership numbers at RBC, to make contact with other organisations and clubs who might be able to contribute to the project and to provide a report to the BoM including recommendations for future action in relation to member satisfaction, recruiting and development of members.

After some extensive discussion the BoM approved the project. The BoM requested some changes in the research documents and these were completed by May 2011. The main change requested and accepted, was that the research relate to Ringwood and not be extended to other clubs' in the BV Metropolitan fixtures.

The final approval for the project to proceed was given at the BoM meeting in May 2011.

The nominated project team was Stan Bannan, as principal researcher, supported by Bob Hedrick and Director Graham McGrath. Peter Bertie was added to the group later.

The proposal to the BoM is included as Appendix 1 and this includes the formal request and a power point package which provides visuals highlighting the present and historical status of membership of the sport in Victoria, Australia and internationally.

A central part of the approval was for the Research Team to conduct a Member Satisfaction Survey of members of the club. This was subsequently conducted and will be reported in a later section of this report. The responses to the survey have been collated and published in a separate document-"Results of the Member Satisfaction Survey 2011" which is included in Chapter Three of this report.

Upon acceptance and approval of the authority necessary to continue the project by the BoM the research group set out to establish a fluent and logical pathway to information which had the potential to assist us and then to examine and evaluate the gathered data.

A list of the material accessed in the progress of the project is included in the Bibliography.

The project has at least three main elements: -viz

- To measure the satisfaction of current members of the club with issues relating to how the club operates;
- To gather data relevant to the club's own status and to evaluate that information;
- To extract data and ideas that might affect the ability of the club to make decisions and to develop a forward planning-strategy to attract new members and participants and to retain existing members.

We took the view that each of these elements was an exercise in its own right with a common regime of background research, evaluation and decision making to create a series of findings relevant to the club.

An interesting observation is that some 'senior' members of the club had the impression that the research was solely related to the action of recruiting rather than the wider field that it does embrace. This in turn led to some antipathy and acerbic comments about a number of the questions that were raised in responses to the Member Satisfaction Survey.

In the request to the BoM to conduct the project, in letters to members' accompanying the MSS documents and in notices posted on the club's notice board it had been made quite clear that the scope of the project was to look at the entire aspects of membership at the club –not just recruiting new members.

The end product, for which we have aimed throughout the project, has been to create a set of recommendations that will have the potential to add some depth to the membership issues and therefore greater use of the facilities of the club.

Clearly there were neither financial nor human resources adequate to support this exercise at anything more than a part time activity. For example we would have liked to be able to conduct surveys of non-bowlers to gain their impressions and attitudes towards our sport as one of the launching pads for recommendations but that was not possible.

In the absence of these we have relied upon data from many sources that have been considered relevant to the project.

In some ways this project may have been a waste of time!

In the course of our research we have uncovered four fairly recent reports along similar lines to the objectives of this project which were prepared by members of the club, but as far as we can determine, not acted on with any diligence or commitment.

Whilst it is difficult to hypothesise it seems to us that some of the initiatives now being taken by others were identified in these papers and if appropriate action had been taken the club would possibly not be in the circumstances in which it finds itself today.

The papers to which we refer are: -

1. Dated August 1998 Headed Bowls Strategy and Development  
Prepared by Messrs Doug Corrigan, Don Jolley and Neville Fuller –Chairman This was prepared for the Men's Committee and referred to the Board of Management seeking approval.  
Included at Appendix 2.
2. Dated March 2001 Prepared by Greg Allen a 'survey of the men's section'.  
Included at Appendix 3.
3. Dated January 2006. Headed 'Bowls Strategy RVBA Section' prepared by Neville Fuller, Bruce Stephens and Graham Clements. This paper contained 32 recommendations for consideration by the Men's Committee. The then President of the men's section requested an evaluation of the paper and preparation of some comments. However neither the paper nor the evaluation were ever discussed by the Committee. This was followed by a reminder letter dated 21 April 2008 that, as far as I can see, was also ignored.  
The submission and the RVBA committee evaluation are included at Appendix 4.
4. In 2010 a Strategic Planning committee was convened by the then Chairman, Max Tresise, to develop a series of "Draft Strategic Objectives". The committee met and developed the paper but there has been no further action taken, upto the compilation of this report.  
Appendix 5

As many of the actions suggested in these reports are still relevant in that they have been identified as issues in the MSS 2011 these have been collated into a document "Strategic Planning Documents 1998-2011" as well as being identified as appendices to this report and should be read in conjunction with this report

From these reports it could be deduced that the management of the club, especially the RVBA section, over a fairly long period has developed a process of seeking advice but then ignoring the advice given. Whether this stems from not understanding what was prepared or not being willing to accept some 'new' ideas which could bring about change we are not able to comment.

One Board member has advised that 'they are not interested in reading submissions-they just want to get on with the job'.

Whilst prima facie this is a seemingly productive view to take it often leads to, and this is certainly is the case in relation to the club, the repetition of the past, the stemming of new ideas and the lack of acceptance of a need for change with the consequent failure to change the outcomes-in this case recruiting and retention of members- and a continual reduction in the number of members.

Strategic recommendations for this paper are that, after consideration by the BoM.

- 1.** The paper be the subject of a series of Member Forums for open discussion;
- 2.** That the finished document be available in a hand out form and electronically to all members to collect from the club rooms;
- 3.** That a select committee of members to constitute a Strategic Planning subordinate committee of the Board of Management be elected at the first of these Members Forums.

The responsibilities of this subordinate committee, if elected, would be

1. To review the content of the research paper;
2. To conduct meetings and allocate areas of examination to members of the committee;
3. To conduct meetings open to all members, to report progress on and to seek input to, the development of a forward strategic plan for the development of the club.
4. To advise the BoM upon priorities in relation to the adoption of all or any of the recommendations of this report or from any other source;
5. To create a three-year strategic plan for the club and to commence a process of rolling 3-year periods to continually update the strategy the club should follow.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **GENERAL**

The methodology we have used in developing a base of data upon which to base this report has been to gather as much information as possible through personal discussion, reading papers, internet searching to establish relevant links and through personal interview/ discussion wherever possible.

The principal purposes of this project have been detailed earlier. The immediate function was to begin gathering information/knowledge and to conduct the Members Satisfaction Survey.

There has been some research completed in the recent past particularly in relation to "knowledge" by other organisations and we have attempted to gather as much information from these projects as possible within the constraints of this project.

The initial phase of the project was to identify sources of data, collect input material and extract from these data relevant to the project.

Sources of information include the following

- Australian Sports Commission
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Bowls Australia
- Bowls Victoria
- Deakin University
- Sweeney Sports
- Australian Council of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
- Spheres of Influence International
- Maroondah City Council

We have received some technical background papers addressing the broad subject of attitudes towards recreation and sport among people of various ages. These papers are academic and international in their scope and perhaps of only broad based value in this project but they do provide a generally indicative profile of recreation trends.

As the reduction in "participant numbers" in lawn bowls is international we have included some of this data.

The research team has done some work around the question of what is being done in other clubs. We have collected data published on web sites by respected organisations that documents high profile (to that particular club) activities and by visiting other club's web sites to collect relevant data.

It is anticipated that the club-based data will focus on conditions of membership at the club, recruitment of new members and of increasing potential revenue streams and, we anticipate, will be valuable in creating the concept and assessing new initiatives that might be considered.

The project will also attempt to use the demographics to consider two aspects-the way people use their leisure time, including perceived benefits and constraints, nationally and internationally and specifically in the City of Maroondah which could be considered the club's main target area.

The project is in fact limited in its potential by dint of the resources that can be applied and this, in turn, leads to limited access to contemporary research resources.

Nonetheless the aim was to produce a report, which has some value to the club by

- Collating available data and potentially linking the club to other resources;
- Create recommendations for action for the consideration of the club and the Board of Management.

We trust that we have achieved these joint goals and that the paper is of some value in the creation of a positive and successful future of the Ringwood Bowls Club.

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER ONE**

Recommend No.	Recommendation
1	the paper is the subject of a series of Member Forums for open discussion.
2	That the document be available in a hand out available to all members to collect from the club rooms or electronically
3	That a select committee of members to constitute a Strategic Planning subordinate committee of the Board of Management be elected at the first of these Members Forums.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE GAME OF LAWN BOWLS AT RINGWOOD BOWLS CLUB**

- 2.1 Purpose and Introduction**
- 2.2 Present Mix of Events**
- 2.3 Experience since 1980- Local and International**
- 2.4 Converting Samplers**
- 2.5 Modernisation –What is Modernisation?**
- 2.6 Social, and Competitive Bowls**

#### **2.1 PURPOSE AND INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the game of lawn bowls as it is currently presented at Ringwood Bowls Club Inc. and to briefly address some often raised issue relating to modernisation of the game.

Lawn bowls is played under a rigid set of conditions known as the Laws of the Sport of Bowls Crystal Mark 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition January 2011 including domestic regulations for Australia and a separate publication entitled Rules for Competition in Victoria. These two documents provide the major framework for the playing of various lawn bowls events and are revised, added to and varied from time to time. As most members will be familiar with the content of these documents we have not included them in the Appendix.

These rules are added to, or confused depending on the point of view of the individual, by a time established set of lores commonly known as the Etiquette of Lawn Bowls.

Whether or not there is any need to change any of these over arching controls is not for this paper to consider. We will, however, later in this chapter identify some initiatives that might be considered by the members and the BoM of the club which have a relevance to the subject topics of the paper.

An observation that we must make at this point is in relation to the credibility of what is probably the core record of any sporting organisation- the 'lists of members'.

This project has been provided three 'official' lists, none of which include any reference, version number or control date and which vary greatly in their content. One list shows the club has 221 members, a second list shows 257 members and the list of members in the current 2011/12 members Handbook reveals that there are 239 members.

To further confuse the issue the Annual Report of Bowls Victoria advises that RBC has 198 that, we presume, is the number registered by the club.

This indeed makes mockery of the club's record keeping systems and draws into question the veracity of any record of the club.

Refer to Appendix 6 Lists of members and the club's entry in the Bowls Victoria Annual Report 2010/11 page 38 that is not included as an appendix.

We are moved to include 3 vital recommendations: -

1. "That the club moves to implementing an upgrade of its member record keeping system to ensure a greater level of accuracy and to expand the amount of information which can be stored in relation to a member's history in the club."
2. "That the club undertake a comprehensive audit of all members identified in each and any list of members to ratify its membership listing."
3. "That membership listings be subdivided into a number of groups equal to the types of membership the club offers e.g. Level 1,2,3, Honorary Members, Life Members Junior members and others if they exist from time to time."

In the past the responsibility for the active and accurate management of the club members records rested with the Secretary and there was strong and set resistance to the movement of the responsibility of maintenance of the record to what we might consider a more appropriate place.

This arrangement has clearly not been successful for some years and we now recommend that the management, including maintenance, of the club members listing fall under the responsibilities of the club Membership Director as soon as possible. We wonder also about the maintenance of all of the club's other business records and where and how they are maintained.

## **2.2 MIX OF BOWLS OPPORTUNITIES AT RINGWOOD BOWLS CLUB.**

The main reason, but not the only one, for the club's existence is to enter teams into the Bowls Victoria Metropolitan Pennant competition in accordance with the arrangements of BV and its various subordinate committees.

RBC has for season 2011-12 9 listed sides representing the club: - in Saturday pennant fixtures with one each in Div 2 Sec 4; Div 3 Sec 4; Div 4 Sec 4; Div 4 Sec 6; Div 6 Sec 4 and Div 7 Sec 5; and Tuesday pennant fixtures with one each in Div 1 Sec 3; Div 2 Sec 4 and Div 3 Sec 3.

Whilst this listing of 9 sides prima facie requires 6 sides x 16 players in Saturday = 96 and 3 sides x 12 players in Tuesday = 36 which is a total of 132 players each week it does not mean that that number of players is representing the club at any time.

Although we do not have access to accurate selection details, and there does not appear to be any official record of sections or results, we expect that most members who play in Tuesday fixtures also play in Saturday fixtures and we would estimate this number at in excess of 50%. Thus, allowing only 50%, the club places around 114 members (or less) into competitive pennant sides each week.

member numbers and working from the mid stream list of members i.e. the inbook, we can deduce the following statistics: -

members listed	<u>239</u>
members who do not play pennant	29
members who do not play pennant	11
of whom 17 do not play pennant	10
members who do not play	4
<u>hence members unavailable for pennant</u>	<u>3</u>
<b>members available for pennant selection</b>	<b>182+</b>

<u>may play pennant</u>	<u>2</u>
<b><u>whose status allows them to play pennant</u></b>	<b><u>184</u></b>

it is close, the number differs from the number of registered members of appears in the BV Annual Report at page 37.

of these 184 will have legitimate reasons for not being available to play bowls each week we wonder about the others. The club requires about 114 to fill its sides each week and from the additional 70 listed members it is potentially that the club has the potential to field another side.

hence, "that a survey of members who are qualified to play competitive bowls who choose not to, be conducted to identify any sustainable reasons which can be overcome or circumstances changed or to enable the club to sort its members into categories and thus create a more reliable and valuable asset."

hence, I recommend that those people not prepared to play pennant and who are currently level 1 members be re-classified as level 2 members.

non-competitive activity of the club is the 'Bankers' games played each Saturday at which attracts various numbers with estimates of around 16 level 2 members playing

to these major event fixtures the club conducts many social and /or informal events which are open to Level 1 &2 players and qualified members of other clubs. These include: -

- Club Championships-Open, B Grade, and Novice in gender based competition;
- Pairs, Mixed Pairs, Triples, 2 Bowl singles,
- 100 up singles,
- Night pennant, (not currently)
- Indoor Bowls (not currently).

The Carter Classic an invitation once per year event.

also conducts a range of one off or series events including

- Wednesday bowls among six local clubs
- Wednesday Mazda 2 bowls Triples
- Thursday 2-4-2 Jackpot open to all members and visitors
- Thursday Maroondah Sports Club pairs
- Sundays Three bowls pairs.
- Chemist Warehouse and Wm Matthews Funerals which are both 2 bowls triples events are both conducted once per year in March/April

also open to all members and is conducted on Monday morning for Tuesday pennant on Tuesday & Thursday late afternoon for Saturday pennant.



Throughout the winter season the club continues with Monday Nominated 2 bowls triples, 2-4-2 Jackpot on Thursday evening and Saturday social bowls. The managers of these events have the right to cancel events for various reasons including weather.

Many members of the club elect to visit other clubs tournaments on Sundays during summer and Saturday and Sunday during winter. The reason for this is that first they wish to participate at a higher level than Ringwood provides and the second reason is that they wish to broaden their knowledge of other clubs.

The BoM has for many years strongly resisted the numerous requests to provide a higher standard of bowls competition at least during the 'off-season'

We recommend that the BoM investigate the implementation and integration of a quality standard 'tournament' each week that is open to all members and to members of other clubs'.

There seems to be a propensity among the majority of Level 1 and Level 2 members to come together in club promoted events. However there equally seems to exist a separation among the majority of higher graded players and the 'also rans' in the club.

Whilst we can say that some higher graded players participate the common view is that there is certain segregation between the club's senior teams members and other members.

Generally, from our observations, reading and informal discussions, the bowling community as a whole is split into at least four levels of players: -

1. High performance players who aspire to participate in the highest level possible-Premier Division, Australian Open, Selected Invitation Events etc.;
2. Club high performance players who are seriously dedicated to the game, practice at the highest level possible and are continually striving to improve their own and their side/team game standards;
3. The serious "would be if I could be" player who plays mainly at club level and is always seeking selection in the highest rated side possible but who does not have the dedication to allocate a 'lot more time' to improving;
4. The hack/social bowler who gets stuck into the lower club sides, is limited in their ability to progress further and consistently within the club. Bowls is more of a social/ competitive activity rather than a competitive/ social one.

With some limitations & justification this break down applies to RBC members.

The research committee recognises that this break down has some logic to it with the proviso that the groups are open to any member to participate on the terms and conditions arranged by the group itself.

We do not subscribe to the theory that, because someone else does 'it' Ringwood should do 'it'. Clearly any initiative taken by the club should suit the club's membership and benefit the club as a whole.

Accordingly we recommend that the club consider the provision of two or three events each season in which side 1,2 & 3 players are teamed with side 4,5, & 6 members. The 'senior' players in each rink would act as mentors to the others in these games.

We had intended to include at this point comment about the age profile of the members of the club and their relevant standard of selection but this is not possible given the appalling state of the central members list/s and the lack of information available from the record.

At this time we can only rely on, as an indicator, the figures published recently by BV about their calculations of age profile. We have no reason to question these figures and expect that they are similar to the club's.

We would have also liked to examine the length of membership by the number of pennant games played by individual members- but again, as far as we can ascertain that information is not readily available.

As a point of comparison we include below the **male member profile** published in the club in the paper dated 2001 compared with the **total member** number for 2010: -

Age	Number 2001 <b>RVBA Section</b>	%	Number 2010 <b>All members</b>
U/45	19	7.75%	14
45-55	19	7.75%	14
55-59	16	6.53%	12
60-64	29	11.84%	22
65-69	48	19.60%	36
70-74	40	16.32%	30
75-79	34	13.88%	25
OBE	37	15.10%	28
<b>Total Playing</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>98.77%</b>	<b>181</b>

This table clearly demonstrates that, at that time, 22.03% were less than 55 years and 76.74% over. We expect that a similar ratio would apply if we were able to extract the detail today.

As far as we can ascertain there has not been a similar profile for female members of the club at any time.

BV published in the BIF magazine Oct-Nov 2011 in Peter Hanlon's "Lawn Order" (refer appendix 7) article the following comment about membership: -

Club Membership -Approx. 200 (of 525) clubs' have less than 70 members;  
Age of Membership- in many clubs there are only a few or no members under 60 years of age and there are no new members;  
Income- 90% or more of the clubs income is generated from members themselves."

The first question we need to ask about this number is where are these clubs located? A club in a small country village with strong volunteer input, may well be sustainable on those numbers but a club in a metropolitan or a large regional setting, which atypically, does not have the same level of volunteer input, may experience great difficulty in surviving at these levels.

In fact we would go as far as to say that a club in metropolitan Melbourne would be hard pressed to survive without a membership base of at least 100 without then considering the implications of the other factors of the age profile and sources of revenue.

If we were to apply these factors to RBC we find

1. Membership certainly exceeds 70 and 100 as far as we can tell;
2. The club's age profile is estimated at 76.4% (183) aged 60 and over and 22.03% (53) are less than 60 using the number of members as 239 as explained earlier. The club is in the ageing ball park and, with rapidly falling membership, this will become even more obvious;
3. Drawing from the 2009/10 financial statements published in the Annual Report, 78% of the club's income is derived from members and 22.00% from other sources. The 2011/12 financial statements of the club display that 72.41% is derived from member & bowls events and 27.59% from non-bowls sources.

The data relating to the club are drawn from a document "Men's Section Bowls Programme Survey" conducted in 2001 by Greg Allen, and (we presume) presented to the Board in March 2001. This is included as appendix 3.

An interesting side issue is that many of the issues which were identified then were also identified in the Member Satisfaction Survey 2011 which probably means, as we stated earlier, the problems have been identified in the past but nothing has been done to rectify those problems.

This is a direct and inevitable outcome of the attitude of don't read reports just get on with the job, or, in other words if I don't know what I don't know about the proven need for change I don't have to think about change and improvement and therefore nothing changes.

In some ways this would also contribute to the smaller than expected response. When a consumer is asked an opinion and no action results from that the consumer tends to say "I have told them and they do nothing about it." And do not respond to later questions.

### **2.3 EXPERIENCE SINCE 1980**

The club has continually referred to the 'last 10 or 12 years' as the problems ones in membership.

The member statistics in BV and BA need very careful consideration to draw a hypothesis which closer represents the actual facts.

The base statistics often referred to show that Victoria has had a 26.2% decline to 2009/10 compared to 1980 when there was 78842 members.

But this is only half the story!

The analysis clearly shows that there were 78842 members in 1980 and 58169 in 2009/10- clearly a reduction of around 26% - see appendix 8- and the number of clubs' was 534 in 1980 and reduced to 525 in 2009/10 - see appendix 9. This may seem a minor adjustment but it should be recognised that the number of clubs increased to 579 in 1996 and has reduced to 525 in 2009/10- a reduction of 54 (9.32%). Now in the National Bowls Census Victoria Snapshot 2011 we see the State has 503 clubs a loss of a further 4.1% See Appendix 10

Starting from the base of 1980 when there was 78842 members this number grew until 1989 when the number of members was 89814 an increase of 10972 (13.91%).

Since then there has been a steady and consistent reduction in numbers: -

• 1995	77397	reduction of	12417	13.80%
• 2000	65231		12166	15.71%
• 2005	60917		4314	6.61%
• 2010	58169		2748	4.50%

Thus the critical benchmark for measurement should be 1989 – the peak year- that would then show a 24583 (27.37%) reduction in membership to 2010

It could be deduced from these figures that lawn bowls is finding its own level in the community. Since 2000 the rate of decline, whilst still serious, has reduced dramatically from 15.71% to 2000, 6.61% to 2000-05 and 4.51% 2005-2010.

These figures clearly demonstrate a very significant and continuing drop in membership commencing from a peak in 1989 and highlight a downward trend each year.

The State target for the current planning period as shown in the 2007-11 Strategic Plan, is 69,389 an increase of 11220 or 19.28%. See Appendix 11

In relation to Ringwood this would translate to a target of approximately 20 additional pennant-playing members (net) to retain its present ratio of members to total members in BV into the future. We estimate that this would convert to a recruitment of about 35 people each year to have a net increase of about 20 and that is the challenge!

The figure which could be more interesting and which we have not been able to properly source is the percentage of the population who are trying lawn bowls now as compared to 1989. Whilst memberships have dropped across the board the population of every 'centre' in which lawn bowls is played appears to have increased quite substantially.

At the last minute some data has been received from BA/BV that provides data along these lines and this will be provided to the SPC for consideration.

If this case can be verified it clearly identifies that, in its present form, the game is not only losing members but is also losing its attraction to the 'come and try' community which then leads to difficulty in arousing interest from which to build.

The direct comparison of these state wide numbers is how does Ringwood compare?

Year	No members club total	Variation from previous Number & %	State wide members	Variation from previous Number & %
1989	N/a	N/a	89814	
1995	289		77397	-12417 (-13.8%)
2000	386	+97 (+ 33.5%)	65231	-12166 (-15.71%)
2005	340	-46 (-11.92%)	60917	-4314 (-6.61%)
2010	269	-71 (-20.88%)	58169	-2748 (4.51%)

These numbers clearly demonstrate the RBC is haemorrhaging at a rate equal to something like 4.5 times the overall state average.

And the question that must now be addressed is why?

One could be excused for thinking if data on these trends was or had been available to central management (state, regions, clubs) commencing 1980 and at any time or at any given year over the intervening 32 years why has some drastic action of substance not been taken to: -

- Identify and respond to community needs and expectations;
- Make membership more attractive;
- Help clubs' to become more market responsive;
- Consider & research the reasons driving the trends;
- As people have been leaving clubs' all over the nation what motivates them to make this decision to not only leave a club but to leave the entire game?

And each of these questions should be a principal question at Ringwood Bowls Club NOW!

During our research we accessed research conducted in the UK by Ipsos MORI, a marketing organisation, related to this topic of age and retention and some extracts have been included at Appendix 12. A full copy is available from the Researchers

A deduction that may be safely drawn from this table is that people, in the main, are not leaving RBC and retiring from lawn bowls but the majority who leave do so to join another club.

And this becomes possibly the most pressing question the club needs to examine, if it is to arrest the critical downward trend in membership – why is the club losing its place as a preferred club?

It is recognised that the club conducted a simple 'satisfaction survey' in 2001, apparently in recognition of the drop off in numbers, but it does not appear that the club has taken any action to introduce changes which were identified as, at least, desired, if not essential by members at the time.

As we stated in the Introduction there have been at least two other carefully drafted and relevant submissions about the overall management of the club since 2000 but both of those were kept to the Board and, as far as we can determine, largely ignored.

Often when challenging questions relating to membership are posed the justification has been most commonly: -

- That lawn bowls is an old peoples game,
- Natural attrition-age, illness and passing all play a large part (if this applies at RBC there must be something pretty crook in the water)
- Members move to a retirement village, to a different lifestyle community and many other simple and unsustainable reasons;

But rarely, if ever, and this research project has not been able to unearth any evidence, has the question 'why do people leave the Ringwood lawn bowls club?' ever been asked in a coordinated and systematic way and at a broad based level.

Some clubs', including Ringwood, have from time to time conducted their own independent 'exit interview/ survey' that has largely been left to the initiative and resources of the person responsible for membership but we believe that this should be a more common exercise across all clubs' concerned, in a common format developed professionally through BV. to obtain some uniformity of data input.

Surely BV and the clubs' have a vested interest in designing an effective Exit Interview form that should be sent to all leavers every year for use across the state by all clubs'. We acknowledge that some clubs' may not use a common system but we think the majority would.

It is our recommendation that the club approach BV with a request "to design a universal Exit Interview survey form for use by all clubs' to be sent to all leavers each year or more often."

Over time there has been some 'fiddling around the edges' to attract potential bowlers to 'come and try', including shopping centre demonstrations, Get on the Green, Forty/40, Try Bowls days, and probably many more initiatives at local club levels.

The challenge which confronts the entire Victorian lawn bowls clubs' managements' is to face the apparent issue that bowls by reputation, is a game for older people but which is not attracting people who are seeking an outlet which helps them to remain involved, avoid isolation and provides some social interaction.

Recruitment has traditionally been for the club's benefit with the objective of adding more people to its weekly playing roster.

It appears to this project that the main reason for an individual to join any organisation or pursuit is measured in terms of the benefits they, as an individual, might enjoy out of joining.

This is clearly obvious in many bowls clubs' which have very significant social memberships consisting of people who

- Have never played lawn bowls
- Have very little interest in playing other than perhaps on an occasional social level;
- But see that there is an attraction in being able to utilise the social facilities of an established club.

## **2.4 CONVERTING SAMPLERS TO MEMBERS**

One of the major issues in this question that needs to be addressed is that of the transition from the relaxed, quick fire, limited time events often played with friends in the relaxed 'come and try' environment in its various forms to the reality of all day, possibly two or three times per week, plus organised practice sessions, commitment to the competitive/social bowls involvement.

In RBC there is very little encouragement for the person who is seeking a relaxed mix of social intercourse both on and off the green to participate.

The club had in recent years a very successful New Members Mentor programme in which a new member was linked to an experienced member who acted as a guide and helped the new person to become familiar with the club and its members.

This successful system fell into disuse because, mainly, of confusion that developed in the management of the club about who was responsible for the management and organisation of the system.

There has been some very successful mentoring experiences and there have been cases where new members have been left standing like a shag on a rock not knowing anyone let alone the person they are supposed to contact for whatever the activity is on that day.

One would have thought it would be an easy task to link the person at least into a side in which they have been selected by an introduction to side or event manager and/or rink skip.

Further once a person agreed to be a mentor it was left to them to develop a programme of how, who, when and where they could conduct the role.

It is our recommendation that

1. The mentor system be re-introduced by September 2012 in time for the 2012/13 season;

2. That the mentor process be examined to ensure that the system is meeting the needs of the new members;
3. That the system be documented in a one page sheet to ensure that all mentors are working the same system;
4. That the responsibility for the appointment of all mentors and the total management of the programme be the responsibility of the Membership Director

The brief for this project has not allowed us to look at other clubs to ascertain their experiences in relation to member ebb and flow.

From casual conversations and observation we have formed the opinion that even clubs' with more sophisticated social facilities are experiencing the same trend as others such as RBC in that they are losing bowlers but have a significant social membership, many of who have never played bowls, as their base.

## **2.5 MODERNISATION**

To a very significant extent lawn bowls can be considered as a 'Retro' sport i.e. one that is competing in a very aggressive modern competitive market for members whilst having its core product-competitive pennant bowls- organised on an outdated model that, with some minor changes, dates back to the 50's or even earlier.

Most sports have undergone some modernisation to add elements to their base model to enable the sport to become more fast flowing, to be presented at different times and to have other supplementary additions to enable the sport to be accessed more easily than the base model allows by both spectators/customers and participants.

Today there are at least two challenges to attract new people to an activity they have not yet tried. In the case of lawn bowls we are generally talking about members in the 45 plus age bracket. This is not to say that clubs' do not, and should not, aim some attractions at other age groups from school age and beyond, but the fact remains that presently the main market for lawn bowls is the 45 plus group.

Today people are retiring with access to more funds than at any time in the past and this in turn opens other opportunities for using uncommitted time.

Lawn bowls is in competition with travel and touring, and one only needs to look at the caravan and recreational vehicle sales over the past 10 years to confirm that, the sport is competing with children's sport being played at times other than the traditional Saturday morning – events are now held right across the week end, we are looking at other spectator events which are played at a variety of times including week nights and right throughout the weekends and the community has a much wider range of opportunities to become involved in, what might be loosely termed, activities of interest.

Thus the market for participation in lawn bowls is more crowded and the sport has to devise some ways of providing some better and more seductive presentation to entice participation.

One of the major impediments identified as people over the age of 55 seek to participate in regular, organised activity has been the product of availability- the 'time poor generation' syndrome.

## **2.6 LAWS AND RULES**

Whilst the identification and recommendation of major changes to the rules etc. at the competitive level are beyond the scope of this paper we are firmly of the opinion that changes can and should be made to introduce a level of participation applicable to an introductory, socially oriented intra club or neighbouring clubs', competition.

We only provide a brief outline of this form of the game here, as we do not wish to occupy the reader with a comprehensive description at this stage.

The game could be included in a relaxed form of 'Bankers' events or in specific coaching/training sessions, as part of an extended pathway into the game that avoids the pressures and duration of commitment that often are immediate barriers to regular participation in the pennant competition.

Equally there is a pressing need to review the application of the laws of the game in concert with the introduction of a modified playing format to remove many of the overt, onerous and time wasting elements of "calling an umpire" to adjudicate in what, more often than not, is a simple measuring task.

We digress for a moment and suggest that the use of 'umpires' to act as an adjudicator in measuring is a process that could easily be removed from the competitive game. The responsibility for measuring, including access to all relevant equipment and tools, could be delegated to either the second or third in a fours game and equivalent others in other formats.

Reverting back to the 'new/proposed' we suggest that the law book be substantially ignored. Whilst we shall not attempt to set out the full summary of rules to be 'reconsidered' as this is a separate task for another time and place. We do provide a brief list of the proposed changes that could include: -

- Placing the jack- rolling the jack is a specific skill which requires dedicated practice;
- No dead ends- same rules as sets play;
- Relaxation of foot fault- within limits;
- Coaching allowed on the green by an appointed person;
- In a fours game each player to follow their second bowl to the head;
- **All** measurements be undertaken by thirds;
- Change positions every three or four ends depending on the number of ends or time allocated with the objective of all members playing in every position.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our major recommendations are

- That the BoM consider these issues with a view to introduction in time for the 2012/13 season;
- That the concept be referred to the Coaching Convenor for consideration by the coaching panel in time for the 2012/13 season;
- That all 'new' and beginner bowlers be encouraged to participate in the 2-4-2 competitions regularly.



## **CONCLUSION**

It is something of an analogy that, generally speaking, bowls competitions at the local and pennant level are arranged around a number of ends, a set target of points to be scored and, quite often, interest in the result wains very quickly as one side/team/player excels and yet all higher level competitions right upto and including Commonwealth Games are played on a sets basis which often sees a marked change of fortune between one set and another. This may be an avenue for potential to change.

In the interim we recommend

1. That the club redefine its member list and develop a set of benefits to accompany each category of membership.
2. That the club examine the structure of the entire bowls programme it offers to incorporate more social accessibility and a higher level of non-pennant bowls, to members at all times including on official pennant and competition days and, particularly, in the winter 'season'.
3. That the club examine its approach to the conduct of events such as
  - Corporate bowls;
  - Sponsors days;
  - Get on the Green;
  - Forty/40;
  - Club charity day

and to develop these and other initiatives designed to attract identifiable groups in the community to the club's facilities;

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER TWO**

Recommend No.	Recommendation
1	"That the club moves to implementing an upgrade of its record keeping system to ensure a greater level of accuracy and to expand the amount of information which can be stored in relation to a members history in the club."
2	"That the club undertake a comprehensive audit of all members identified in each and any list of members to ratify its membership listing."
3	That membership listings be subdivided into a number of groups equal to the types of membership the club offers e.g. Level 1,2,3, Honorary Members, Life Members Junior members and others if they exist from time to time."
4	That the management, including maintenance, of the club members listing fall under the responsibilities of the club Membership Director as soon as possible.
5	"That a survey of members who are qualified to play competitive bowls but who choose not to be conducted to identify any sustainable reasons which may be able to be overcome or circumstances changed or to enable the club to sort its member list into categories and thus create a more reliable and valuable asset."
6	That those people not prepared to play pennant and who are classified as level 1 members be re-classified as level 2 members.
7	That the BoM investigate the implementation and integration of a quality standard 'tournament' each week that is open to all members and to members of other clubs'.
8	That the club consider the provision of two or three events each season in which side 1,2 & 3 players are teamed with side 4,5,& 6 members
9	It is our recommendation that the club approach BV to design a universal Exit Interview survey form for use by all clubs' to be sent to all leavers each year or more often."
10	It is our recommendation that The mentor system be re-introduced by September 2012 in time for the 2012/13 season;
11	That the mentor process be examined to ensure that the system is meeting the needs of the new members;
12	That the system be documented in a one page sheet to ensure that all mentors are working the same system;
13	That the responsibility for the appointment of all mentors and the total management of the programme be the responsibility of the Membership Director
14	That the club redefine its member list and develop a set of benefits to accompany each category of membership;
15	That the club examine the structure of the entire bowls programme it offers to incorporate more social accessibility and a higher level of non-pennant bowls, to members at all times including official pennant and competition days and particularly in the winter 'season'

16	<p>That the club examine its approach to the conduct of events such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate bowls;</li> <li>• Sponsors days;</li> <li>• Get on the Green;</li> <li>• Forty/40;</li> <li>• A club charity day in conjunction with a major service club</li> </ul>
17	<p>That the BoM consider these preceding issues (in relation to introduction of new members) with a view to introduction in time for the 2012/13 season: -</p>
18	<p>That the concept be referred to the Coaching Convenor for consideration by the coaching panel in time for the 2012/13 season;</p>
19	<p>That all 'new' and beginner bowlers be encouraged to participate in the 2-4-2 competition regularly.</p>

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **MEMBER SATISFACTION SURVEY**

- 3.1 Purpose and Introduction**
- 3.2 Results of the Survey Part One**
- 3.3 Results of the Survey Part Two**
- 3.4 Special Comments Meeting**
- 3.5 Summary.**

#### **3.1 PURPOSE AND INTRODUCTION**

As Board members will no doubt recall, and as explained in the letter to members that accompanied the survey material, the conduct of the Member Satisfaction Survey (MSS) is a core element of the Research Project "Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club" with which we are currently engaged.

The survey draft was presented to the BoM meeting in May 2011 and was authorised, albeit with some concerns about the length of the survey and some about some of the content. The content matters were attended to and the survey was approved for distribution to members.

The distribution was delayed until September because of some maintenance that was needed on the Members database and the impact of more time critical projects. The selected method of distribution for convenience and to keep mailing cost down, was to send to e-mail addresses as the first option, to mail out to others who, at the time, were 'light' users of the clubrooms and to leave the balance for collection in the clubrooms.

Some surveys were distributed in an incorrect format!

Because of the delays in distribution some amendments were made via e-mail from me to the club. For some reason, unknown to me, the club computer did not pick up the document and the fact that the changes had not been effected was not discovered until too late. Among the changes was one that changed the target return date from September to October 31<sup>st</sup> and whether this had any impact on the number of responses I do not know.

One member advised me that he had lodged a return to the club's email but whilst the cover e-mail was, the survey document was not, sent on to me and was lost in the process-somewhere in the email black hole in the cosmos. The member had not kept a copy and refused to fill it out again.

#### **3.2 DISTRIBUTION**

With the valued assistance of Peter Brooks 103 surveys were sent to e-mail addresses with the potential to reach 124 members, a further 60 were mailed and 32 were left in the club rooms, in addressed envelopes, for collection. There were in total 216 surveys available for distribution with the potential to contact 224 members.

Leaving items for collection was an abject failure as the addressee who, in many cases, was known to frequently utilise the club facilities, in the main, ignored them. Others, I expect, did not visit the club or failed to see or understand the 'pick up' system.

Households in which 2 (or more) members resided were advised that a response could be linked in two or more names or a separate survey document could be requested. There were no such requests received.

Originally we set a return date of October 31<sup>st</sup>, allowing about 5 weeks for completion and lodgement and there were three methods of lodgement

2. Via e-mail either to the club or direct to me;
3. By mail either to the club or direct to me;
4. By leaving the return in the box in the clubrooms.

The return date was later extended to November 5<sup>th</sup> but submissions that were received after that date either have been included or will be included in a later review of the project.

The policy is to not exclude any submissions despite the fact that we had to draw a line somewhere to enable this report to be compiled.

### **3.3 RESPONSE INTRODUCTION**

There were typically, and not unexpectedly, 5 different reactions from members

1. That we were 'going over the top' as many members would not understand the purpose of the MSS;
2. Some felt that the survey was 'pennant-centric' and ignored social members;
3. Some said it was a 'bit long' and made them think about their membership;
4. Some resented the fact that we appeared to be trying, in their opinion, to challenge the experience of the club/members themselves.
5. Some demonstrated an attitude of could not care less-'agin the gov'ment'.

I will comment on each of these separately

#### **1. 'GOING OVER THE TOP'**

The presentation I made to the BoM in January very clearly demonstrated that the Ringwood Bowls Club, and the sport right across the world, is in crisis. I have not done any financial estimations or analysis but common sense tells us that, without some radical change, lawn bowls, as we know and enjoy it today, will not exist too far into the future.

When we consider the club's own experience over the last 13 years and the state of membership today that demise could be a lot sooner for the RBC!

As for the wider picture the decline has been evident since about 1980! However as we noted in Chapter 3 this is more complex than appears at first glance.

This view is shared by both BV and BA (not in relation to RBC) who are conducting right now far more sophisticated university based research into the same predicament as has motivated this project. I will discuss this more fully in later stages of the research document as more information becomes available

The survey was/is very extensive and was designed to look into the depths of the club's membership not just take an across the top view.

We need to remember that this MSS is but one part of the total project and I am clearly looking for an outcome that is both sustainable and effective out of the total project.

I do not agree that the survey has 'gone over the top'. Perhaps the outcomes will need to be 'over the top' to be part of an immediate, short and long term change programme over time and member input will be an extremely important and invaluable part of that process.

This is not to say that the next MSS, and I believe the club should do these surveys regularly, say every three years, would be in the same format. For example this one was designed for a qualitative response aimed for comments and expressions of opinion, whereas future surveys would probably be quantitative in that the outcome we expect is based on selecting a preferred action from a number of options. This would be more of a 'tick the box' response rather than a comment based response- and far easier to complete!

Lawn Bowls is strongly supported by the Australian, State and Local Governments and that enables it to survive at a fairly low cost to member clubs' and the sport must demonstrate some Vision and achievement of goals to sustain and, perhaps, grow that support.

## **2. 'PENNANT- CENTRIC'**

There were at least 3 senior pennant-playing members who expressed the opinion that the survey 'was pennant-centric' and could alienate social bowlers. This was certainly not our intention.

The responses from non-pennant players indicate that they did not seem to have any problem with the structure of the survey and got involved enthusiastically. If we take a percentage view the response from 'non-pennant' far exceeded that from 'pennant'.

The table of respondents that follows later in this report provides further data.

## **3. 'A BIT LONG'**

Yes, the survey was a 'bit long', but we needed to establish a clear overview statement of what members think of the club's core business- the club facilities, lawn bowls, and its many other aspects as well as how they saw their own role in the club.

Most of those who responded have given their responses much thought. A common thought expressed was that the survey had given them cause to think about issues that had just been taken for granted.

## **4. 'RESENTMENT' (OR COMPLACENCY)**

It was always clearly understood that some of the members would not participate and these are the ones who have either told me everything that is wrong with the survey or simply ignored it and who are often the ones who tell anyone who will listen everything that is wrong with the club.

I am not sure of the rationale that supports this attitude of, what I call, fundamental neglect, but I suspect narrow minded elitism, complacency and reluctance to change would all have a place.

Perhaps it is a bit 'old fashioned' but the adage often used in the past of "if a club/organisation is worth joining then it must be worth making some 'works' contribution to" should still apply today.

I also suspect that some of the attitude stems from the information provided in the Introduction to this paper where we noted that we had 'discovered' previous 'surveys' suggestions' put to the Board and or the RVBA Committee that were largely ignored.

This, I expect, will need to be faced full on shortly, because as sure as the sun rises in the morning major change is coming to the sport of Lawn Bowls.

## **5. RESPONSE OF THE SURVEY ANALYSIS PART ONE**

In my dreamtime imaginings I had seen (hoped for) a response level of about 65-70 surveys or around 35%; in my real life real time expectations I had envisaged about 40 or just under 20%.

Having received only 27 returns –just under 16%- was somewhat disappointing but there are enough for us to examine and at least define some common responses that would probably hold true with a larger number. Particularly questions that demonstrated a very high percentage response provide a trend link that could represent a whole of club response.

There were probably six or so others who commented that they had not completed the survey but 'it is on desk and I will do it tonight'. None of these eventuated.

I do not accept that the onus for this small response was entirely due to the length of the survey. This may have had some impact but the more significant impact, I suspect, came from the apathetic attitude of members at all levels to being asked to review their role in the club.

Generally this level of response was disappointing when considering a numerically sound representation of the membership would be to the order of 25-30% or about 54 submissions.

The following analysis of the profile of respondents indicates two things

1. That there are some challenges which have been solidly identified by respondents;
2. There are some initiatives that can be taken to reverse some of these.

Any recommendations for the consideration of the Board/ club will be listed in the second part of the analysis relating to the comments provided.

The following table sets out to provide a profile of the respondents. It is clear that respondents with partners did not identify with data presented by their partners so one can only assume that the response represented one person's view and the other person was a non-respondent

**Table 1: A Profile of Respondents**

Note: The response by side was based on teams selected for pennant on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2011

By Side (5/11/11)		By age		Period M/ship		With Partners	
1	2	< 40	Nil	10+	16	8	Nil response
2	4	40-50	2	5-10	3		
3	5	51-60	1	<5	7		
4	1	61-70	11				
5	-						
6	3	71+	11				
Social	4						
U/avail	6						
Not Ident	1		1		1		
No side	1		1				
	27		27		27	8	0

For the benefit of members who were not members of the BoM when the report was presented we have included this section of the final report, the tables of response for all sections .

As pointed out earlier the MSS report in its entirety is available, subject to BoM approval, separately. To obtain a copy please contact the Administrative Director and advise the format –electronic or hard copy, you prefer.

**Fig 1: Personal Identification Section**

Fig 1: Personal Identification Section			
Sect 1 Personal Identification			
1.1	Name	This section is personal data only.	
1.2	Contact No	Completed by all respondents except	
1.3	Age Range	1. G.Allen (Jnr) returned survey form but has not yet participated	
1.4	Member Years	2. One respondent did not supply name or contact details	
1.5	Skill Level	3. Partners did not supply partner information.	
1.6	Previous experience	4. There was no indication that the partner either agreed or disagreed with the response	
1.7	Qualifications		

There were three responses received from members of the BoM and nil from members of the Selection Panel.

One person responded but as he has not played nor actively participated in club matters at the time of the survey the return was not included.

One member advised that he had e-mailed a response through to the club computer but this did not reach me. The covering e-mail did but the attachment was apparently lost in the black hole of e-mails somewhere. He did not have a copy and was not prepared to complete another response.

Whilst the number of returns is less than expected the value in those we did receive is that they represent a mix of well experienced and long term members and new members who are able to relate to more contemporary issues as they affect their entry to the club.

The detailed document, including Tables of Responses, has been published to the BoM in January 2012 and, members requiring a copy should apply to the Administrative Director. If the BoM so wishes I am happy to make a copy of the analysis available to any member requesting same either electronically or in a hard copy format.



**SECTION TWO MEMBERSHIP PROCESS**

Sect2	Membership Process	Frien/Social	TV/.Brochur	Good Idea	New Sport	Int/retirem	Try Bowls	Self select	Activity	N/a
2.1	Motivation	5	2	1	9	4	2	1	2	1
2.2	Introduction	6	1	Return 1	Synthetic 1		5	11	1	
2.3	Application process	Excellent	V. Good	Good	Okay	Poor	N/a			
		1	6	4	3	7	6			
2.4	Why Ringwood	Facilities	Club	Loyalty	Location	Membs	Friends	Try bowls	Social/prac	
		3	2	1	11	1	4	1	2	
2.5	Expectations	Improve	Play Bwl	Okay	Pay subs	Curious	Friendship	Facilities	Participate	N/a
		1	9	1		1	6	1	1	4
2.6	Understanding	Volunteer	Rules	Pay Subs	Okay	Nil	Sports/ship	Very little	Play bowls	Good char.
		9	4	3	1	2	1	1	1	1
2.7	Intro to participation	Excelle	V.Good	Good	Okay	Poor	N/a	Try Bowls	Renew	
		3	6	5	3	5	2	3	1	
2.8	Intro to prelim coaching	Excelle	V.Good	Good	Okay	Poor	N/a	Prev Club	Dev Squad	
		2	7	5	4	2	2	1	1	
2.9	Intro coach	Named	18			Not named	7		Prev Club	1
2.10	Feel welcome	Friendly	Nothing	People	Feel like vis	Not much				
		21	1	1	1	1				
2.11	Social aspects	Yes	21	No	6					
2.12	Diversions	Yes	21	No	5					
2.13	Another club	Yes	12	No	14	N/a	1			
2.13	Reasons									

**NOTES TO THE TABLE SECTION TWO**

It is clear from the answers to Qs. 1 & 2 that the most common form of Introduction to the game and then to the club was by the 'Self Selection' of the member with 12 responses and then by 'Friends' with 11 responses.

The next most significant 'Motivation' (to join a club) was the identification of lawn bowls as a new sport that they could take up after retirement from other more active sports such as cricket and tennis or retirement from the workforce and a need to keep active mentally and physically.

In Q4 the most popular reason for choosing Ringwood was close to home. This could mean that the club has very little recognition in its community and people, when looking for a low physical level of sporting activity, rely on home based signage, environment and activity to draw them into the club.

Responses in this question provide a valuable lead to promotion and target markets and will be discussed later.

Q3 indicates that 16 'newer' members considered the application process as poor and below in terms of efficiency of process and in providing information to the applicant.

Contrary to these comments Qs 6,7,8 & 9 provided positive responses to the understanding that the club is volunteer based, that members are expected to

contribute (9 respondents) and the introduction to coaching and playing the game was effective and rewarding.

Q 10 indicates that most people feel welcome in the club. However something that perhaps needs to be considered is that whilst there was a small response indicating that people did not feel welcome, that response almost exclusively came from new members. This seems to indicate that there is a 'sink or swim' attitude towards making yourself at home in the club rather than one that fosters new people and helps them to find a place. Many of these are not yet pennant nor other team players and thus do not have an automatic link to other members.

In Q12 we asked if members felt that playing lawn bowls was a diversion from other issues in their lives. The fact that 21 answered in the affirmative indicates that this an important role of the club in assisting members to have a release from everyday tensions, feel wanted and to keep active in their retirement or, in some cases, other life roles.

The responses to Q13 are something that flags an area of concern. 12 respondents, nearly 50%, indicated that they had at some time considered moving to another club. There are a number of reasons for this trend included in the survey responses, and they will be notated in the proposed Report on Additional Notes. This is an issue that the club/Board needs to take seriously as, in the coming years, there could be situations in which members are under more pressure to support a particular club in the long term.

### SECTION THREE BENEFIT OUTCOMES

Sect3	Benefits										
3.1	Benefits	Exercise	Competing	Social	Friends	Skills	Spon Disc	Year round	Unsure	Greens	
		5	10	5	8	1	1	1	3	1	
3.2	Value from unif and equ	Yes	16	No	3	Don't know	3	Too dear	2	Dislike	
3.3	Benefits from services	Comp Bowl	Social Bowl	Greens	Coaching	Amen/bar	Car Park	Social	Distractions	N/a	
		4	2	1	1	3	1	5	1	10	
3.4	Support from club	Practice Fa	Acs grms	Competition	Facilities	Good	Coaching	Selections	Social	N/a	
		1	2	2	2	1	3	1	1	12	
3.5	Mentor	Yes	3	No	8	Refused	1	N/a	12		
3.6	Mentor	Named	2	Not Named	2			N/a	20		
3.7	Organised events summ	Yes	21	No	3		Social	1			
	Where	R/wood	17	Other Clubs	5						
3.8	Organised events off seas	Yes	17	No	10						
	Where	RBC	11	Other Clubs	6						
3.9	Open events other clubs	Yes	13	No	12						
3.10	More soc event @ RBC	Yes	16	No	5	50/50	2	N/a	3		

### **NOTES TO THE TABLE SECTION THREE**

The information provided in this section indicates that, overall, members are generally satisfied with the benefits they receive as members of the club without being over enthusiastic about membership.

It is important to note that in response to Q 1 28 responses indicated that the major reason for a person to become involved in lawn bowls is the activity and the friendship aspects that grow out of competing. These are clearly personal benefits and have little to do with how the club is managed.

Q 2 tells us that most members are happy with the price of uniforms although many commented that the quality is a 'bit suspect'.

Another element of the 'too dear' response was that some members felt that many other clubs provide free uniforms as part of their membership acceptance process and we should do the same. We do not know how widespread this practice is but it may be something to look into in the future. It is a practice that is 'conditionally' adopted by some neighbouring clubs.

Q's 3 & 4 Benefits and Support attracted a fairly wide range of responses. The disturbing part of the answers is that 10 for Q3 and 12 for Q 4 declined by providing a 'N/a' response that indicates either they chose not to answer the question or they did not think the question relevant to their personal role.

In Q's 5 & 6 that related to Mentoring only 3 people said they had been linked with a Mentor (Q5) and 2 could name their Mentor (Q6).

When linked to question 2.10 'Do You Feel Welcome' this could explain the 'feeling a bit lost' syndrome that is common among newer members. The large number of negative responses Q 5- 12 and Q 6- 20 does not necessarily concern me, as they were, in the main, older members who were in the club before the Mentor system was introduced.

The Mentor system was introduced as an initiative to assist new members to feel more welcome and it is clearly not achieving its goal. As explained earlier, there needs to be review of the system as it seems that it is likely to achieve a positive return on investment.

Q's 7 & 8 sought information about members involvement in non-organised events as opposed to organised (pennant) during both summer and winter.

For Q 7 21 said they participated and, of these 17 were at Ringwood and for Q 8 Organised Events in Off Season 17 said yes with 11 at RBC. About 50% of respondents advised they participated in similar events at other clubs during the year.

Finally in this section 16 plus 2 who were 50/50 would like to see more social bowls events at Ringwood. Some of the ancillary comments were 'depending on the time of staging', 'depending on my circumstances at the time' which tells the club that 'you do it but I wont necessarily support it!'

**SECTION FOUR PEOPLE**

Sect 4	People											
4.1	Office bearers	Yes	10	No	14	Some	2					
4.2	Effective communication	Yes	4	No	18	Not sure	3	Too early	1			
4.3	Officials do well	Yes	3	Limited	3	Day to day	12	No job desc	1	No comm	7	
4.4	Communication improve	Yes	Radio	Spec Proj	Video	Info nights		No Comm		No		
			17	1	1	1	1	2		1		
4.5	Officials easy to approach	Yes	15	No	3	Intimidating	1	Don't know	2	Mixed	2	
4.6	Volunteering for duties	Already do	19	Yes	2	No	4		N/a	1		
4.7	What area	Garden	Office	Greens	Various	Maintenan	Kitchen/gen	Direct Cont	Admi n	Schl Grps	N/a	
		4	1	1	9	1	2	1	1	1	6	
4.8	Social events	Yes	22	No	1	Not yet	3					
4.9	Appropriate to you	Yes	20	No	2	N/a	4					
4.10	Other social events	Yes	13	No	2	N/a	10					

**NOTES TO THE TABLE SECTION FOUR**

This section provided some interesting information

Q 1 indicated that 14 of the respondents do not know who the members of the Board are and this a real cause for concern. Most of the respondents indicated that they did know at least one person on the Board.

At Q 4 most people felt that the Board members handled the day-to-day affairs of the club effectively and 3 more simply gave a blanket yes. Another 3 said they, the Board, were limited in what they did.

It is interesting to note that one member said there are no Job Descriptions against which to judge performance. J D's were introduced some time ago but are now well and truly out of date.

More recent attempts to modernise these have been resisted by the incumbent Board at the time. When the club changed its structure to a single BoM was an opportune time to reintroduce modern J D's but those who managed the change did not think that relevant or necessary at the time.

Almost as a contradiction to Q 1, in Q 5 the majority of members felt that officials were easy to approach-but the qualifying factor is that many of them said they spoke to the person they know rather than 'the Board'.

Not surprisingly a significant majority considered that communication in the club is poor and needs to be improved. The chart clearly shows that 17 simply want improvement whilst others nominated specific areas of improvement they would like to see. An example of this could be the club's web site that is not only dull but also completely out of date showing Office Bearers from at least two years ago and showing nothing in the results section.

19 of the respondents indicated that they already volunteer in various roles

Q's 8, 9, 10 were aimed at the social events of the club.

It is pleasing to note that the majority had attended and found the activities most suitable. Some respondents said they prefer not to go out at night and therefore did not attend. About half the respondents to Q 13 indicated that they were open to more 'fun' events on the social calendar.

**SECTION FIVE PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT**

<b>Sect 5 Personal Involvement</b>											
5.1	Goals 2010/11	Yes	14	No	6	No point	1	N/a	1		
5.2	Perform against goals	Excellent	Good	50/50	Poor	N/a	No point				
		3	7	5		6	1				
5.3	Action to improve	Yes	19	No	2						
5.4	What action	Coaching	Practice	New equip	Comp's				N/a		
		7	11	1	2				3		
5.5	Facilities for training	Yes	20	No	2	N/A	1				
	How often do you pract	Once pw	1	Twice pw	9	Three pw	1	4 or more	1		
5.6	Playing involvement	More at prac	Okay	Limited	Good	Average	MoreStruc	Pen/centric	Social	Not improve	N/a
		1	3	2	4	1	1	2	1	1	6

**NOTES TO THE TABLE SECTION FIVE**

It is interesting to note that 14 members set achievement goals for the summer season and of those 10 performed well against their goals and a further 4 considered their own performance 50/50.

Of the others, 6 advised N/a, and these were in the main social (bankers) bowlers although at least one senior and respected player is in this group. One person responded 'No Point' and I am not sure what this means as goal setting in any activity is a personal measure against oneself- not against some outside force.

Q's 4 & 5 reveal that the majority of respondents practice regularly, mainly twice per week and some more. It is felt by some that a more structured approach to practice should be taken by the club and efforts made to get those people who do not attend training sessions to participate more.

Those who do not attend any practice are mainly non-pennant (bankers) players who participate at a social level and play to enjoy rather than to compete in a structured competition, but there are a significant number of pennant players who do not deem it necessary to practice.

**SECTION SIX PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT**

Aware of coach support	Yes	21	No	3	N/a	3			
Formal coaching	Yes	No	Casual	Important	N/a				
		17	3	1	1	4			
Opportunities to discuss	Yes	18	No	5	N/a	3			
Information nights	Yes	18	No	6	N/a	2			
Attendance	Yes	13	No	6	N/a	8			
Relevance of coaching	Yes	26	No		N/a		Helps	1	
Coaching tech knowledge	Yes	13	No		N/a	7	Some	7	
Coaching understanding	Yes	11	No	1	N/a	10	Some	5	
Members pennant survey	Yes	16	No	6	N/a	3	Partly	2	
Off season coaching	Yes	17	No	7	N/a	2	Not at pres	1	
Side coaches	Yes	3	No	15	N/a	8	Doubt it	1	
In season coaching	Yes	6	No	7	N/a	14	None	1	
Game plan	Yes	11	No	9	N/a	7			
Pennant	Yes	21	No	5	Not yet	1			
Paid coach	Yes	9	No	12	Not now/sure	3	N/a	3	

**NOTES TO THE TABLE SECTION SIX**

The responses in this section indicate quite clearly that the members who responded have a sound knowledge of the coaching that is available to them throughout both the summer and winter 'seasons'. However many were concerned that programmes were a) unpredictable in their timing and b) often very basic and repetitive.

There is, in Q12, an indication that some would like to engage in more formal coaching sessions during the summer season and, at Q10, many would like an off-season programme which is perhaps more intense than we have been able to offer in the recent past.

There is however a very limited knowledge of the side coaches system which has been in place for 2 seasons with 15 saying they did not know their side coach, 8 providing a N/a response and one saying "Doubt it" which I cannot interpret.

In relation to the engagement of a paid coach the majority -12- responded in the negative and another 3 said 'Not now' or 'Not sure' but many of these were qualified responses. For example some said 'not at this time' & at least one other said 'get back to first division before you appoint a paid coach'.

Many respondents referred to the years when Clements was coach as being the most productive and that the two more recent appointments were only interested in the topside. Whether this is considered factual or not, it represents some members' perception of paid coaches in the club's environment.

If the club was to consider the appointment of another paid coach my impression of the responses is that members would like to see in place, prior to the appointment, a work plan that

ensures that the lower graded players receive some clearly visible and tangible benefit from the appointment. It is interesting to casually observe that at the appointment of the most recent paid coaches some members from the lower sides elected to leave the club, as they did not believe that they would get value for money from the appointment.

### **SECTION SEVEN PRACTICE**

<b>Sect 7 Practice</b>											
7.1	How regularly	1 per wk	3	2per week	11	3 + per week	6	Not often	4	As required	2
7.2	With side/team	Yes	7	No	10	Sometimes	6			N/a	3
7.3	Improve specific skills	Yes	21	No	2	N/a	3			Sometimes	1
7.4	Game plan	Yes	7	No	15	N/a	4				
7.5	Practice & team strength	Yes	11	No	4	N/a	9	Confidence	1	Bonding	1
7.6	Individual skills	Yes	21	No		N/a	5				
7.7	Side/team unity	Yes	15	No	6	N/a	5				
7.8	Structured practice	Yes	11	No	5	Time	2	Possibly	4	N/a	4
7.9	Practice alone	Yes	12	No	6	Sometimes	5	N/a	2		
7.10	Why	My Time	6	Circumsta n	4	Spec Xerc	6	Don't know who	1	N/a	8
7.11	Access to special coaches	Yes	20	No	5	N/a	1				
7.12	Improve in "off season"	Yes	16	No	7	Pointless	1	Not yet	1	N/a	1
7.13	Goals for 2010/11	Yes	17	No	6	Pointless	1	N/a	1	Not yet	1

### **NOTES TO THE TABLE SECTION SEVEN**

There are two stand out indicators in this set of questions.

At Q 2, 10 members say they never practice with their team or side members whilst at Q7 the majority response is that such side/team practice would be of benefit in building team unity.

There appears to be a very strong interest in a more structured coaching/practice regime during both the "on and off" seasons but the main consideration is that the time at which it could be provided to suit members.

It is interesting to note that in S5 Q1 we asked 'had you set goals for season 2010/11 and 14 said yes. In this section Q13 asked if you have set goals for 2011/12 and now 17 said yes and 1 said 'not yet'. This indicates to me that, through the coaching efforts of the recent past, there has been some influence in moulding members approach to their bowls.

**SECTION EIGHT SELECTION**

<b>Sect 8 Selection</b>											
8.1	Understand selection	Yes	8	No	16	N/a	1	Y/but nt Obj	1		
8.2	Selection easy to under	Yes	5	No	11	N/a	10				
8.3	U/s select in 'your' side	Yes	6	No	12	N/a	8				
8.4	Selection on skills	Yes	No	N/a	Compatible	Inconsistent					
		6	6	7	1	4					
8.5	Evals based on WPR	Yes	No	N/a	Typecast	"Joke"	Sometimes	No Foll up			
		5	7	9	1	1	4	2			
8.6	Able to ass player skills	Yes	5	No	10	N/a	7	Probably	2	Reservation	2
8.7	WPR easy to understand	Yes	14	No	5	N/a	6	Nt usd Tue	1		
8.8	I comply WPR diligently	Yes	17	No	1	N/a	8	Rink decis			
8.9	Knowing the side =prep	Yes	16	No	3	N/a	6				
8.10	Selection helpful in prep	Yes	4	No	5	N/a	13	Not sure	2		
8.11	C/ship group selec	Yes	3	No	8	N/a	12	Don't u/sta	2		
8.12	Players unavailable	Personal	Health	Dissatisfied	No point	N/a	Lack Cmtmnt	Not play pen	Too many sds		
		2			1	3	5	1	1		
8.13	How should U/a players return	To prev level	Lower level	Selec discr	Consistently	Respect	N/a	Circumstanc	Not select ed	Ability	

**NOTES TO THE TABLE SECTION EIGHT**

It is important to note at the outset that this questionnaire is aimed at finding opinions about the process of each topic not the practice.

Save to the extent that the practice may influence a member we are considering members opinions about the process not the practice of Selection. One respondent, who has had experience elsewhere, indicated that what had been seen in RBC replicates that which occurs in other places.

The first three questions in this set indicate that generally members do not understand the processes of selection in the club. This could well warrant some sort of explanation paper that sets out what selectors do in creating sides for the upcoming round of matches.

A similar explanation of Selection was included in the paper prepared by Clements, Fuller and Stephens and this could be the model on which to base an up to date paper.



Q's 4,5,7 & 8 related to the use and understanding of the Weekly Peer Review slip each member is expected to fill out.

As the survey coincided with the introduction of a revised WPR I believe that the answers were mixed along the lines of "No I did not understand it but this one looks alright and I will give it a go".

In response to Q8 dealing with completing WPR's the greater majority claim to be diligent in filling the slip out each week.

However there are a number of different methods in play –

- "I treat it as confidential and do not discuss my ratings with anybody",
- "The team gets together and we discuss each person's game and rate collectively, i.e. each member of the rink fills out the slip in exactly the same manner"; and the other is
- "That I discuss with someone else-skip, opponent, another member of the rink and then make 'my own decision'".

We followed up anecdotal investigation of responses at the end of the season there seemed a greater level of acceptance of the 'new system' WPR forms but the different methods of filling out the slip was still the subject of some comment.

With the introduction of side level MVP awards the spread of votes is most interesting and we have not followed this up. The votes for the various sides were:-

Side	No. of votes
1	1343
2	1518
3	1709
4	1413
5	1301
6	1352

By itself this means nothing except that in some sides there appears to be a wider spread of votes than in others. Perhaps the members of some sides were more equal in their abilities and this is displayed in a wider spread of votes or in other cases the side relied on a smaller number with outstanding skills resulting in fewer 'leading' candidates. It would be interesting to study the votes lodged tables of each side and team.

The question of what do we do with players who have been unavailable for whatever reason when they return to availability provoked some interesting responses.

There was a mixed and broad response to this but the majority clearly stated that it should be left to the selectors discretion and the member should be treated 'with respect.

### **CONCLUSION PART ONE**

The preceding data represents the view of members of the RBC without any editing or other interference, other than the necessary interpretation to condense the response to a briefer comment.

I have not drawn any recommendations from this analysis, as I believe that it is up to the Research Committee, the SPC and the Board to have some input before we go down the path of defining action. Recommendations will be included in part two of the analysis that relates to the additional comments provided by members.

There is however some initiatives that the SPC or others might see fit to investigate in the interim.

In so far as it goes I am of the opinion that the majority of members, or at least those who responded, are generally satisfied with the club albeit seeking some changes along the way.

The next step in this Analysis of Survey Responses is to pay some attention to the notes to which I referred earlier in the report and to draw some relevance out of them.

This will be, I expect, something of a longer process, as it will require in some cases discussions with the authors and definition of their comments.

I propose commencing this almost immediately but I do not anticipate a completion date until end January early February.

I submit this document to your consideration and, as always, I am available for consultation with the Board or their nominees at your discretion.

## **RESULTS OF THE SURVEY PART 2**

The Board of Management will, by this time, have received and digested the first level analysis of the recent Member Satisfaction Survey that was distributed in December 2011. Having not received any acknowledgement, questions nor comments I can only assume that the paper has been presented and considered by the BoM and that they are reasonably satisfied with the content of the paper but have not been able to verify this.

This document is the Second level report that sets out to document the Additional Comments that were provided by some members in a direct response to a question or in the Additional Comments section that followed the survey questions.

Clearly the Introductory comments included in report 1 apply equally to this second report and will not be repeated.

This report sets out to list and, where appropriate, comment from the research perspective on these comments and suggest any course of action considered appropriate drawn from both the first and second reports.

## **REVIEW OF PHASE TWO COMMENTS**

In the original documents that were sent to members there was included an opportunity for each member to add comments outside those addressed by the main questionnaire.

Some members contributed very sound suggestions many of which have been taken up in this paper. An example of this was a member's request that the findings of the survey be made available to all members and become the subject of a series of members' forums. As the reader will have already seen this 'suggestion' has been taken up and included as a primary recommendation, without modification.

Four members contributed some fairly intense standout comments that we, the research group, decided required further discussion. Consequently we convened a meeting, to which each contributing member was invited, to discuss his or her comments.

Prior to the meeting, each invitee was told that those present at the meeting would be the Research group, Bob Hedrick, Graham McGrath and Stan Bannan plus the other respondents and we sought their individual preference as to whether they wanted to meet privately with the Research group or in a collective meeting with the others who were to be invited.

One member was unavailable at the time convened and met privately whilst the other three met as individuals in a group.

The process of the meeting was to work through the survey section by section and to enable the person making the comment under discussion to present their views and the others to then comment. The role of the research group was to participate in the discussion but mainly to ask questions to clarify as the meeting progressed.

During the meeting some diverse views were vehemently aired but progress in terms of 'fleshing out the comments' was achieved and the result is provided here in point form with added comment as required.

The comments are presented as they were recorded at the meeting with the proviso that recommendations emanating from the group or from the researchers as the result of the discussion have been added.

#### **4. Smooth transition from application stage to that of a satisfied member.**

Opinions of the entry phase for a new member suggested that the process was somewhat confusing and muddled and often left the 'new comer' bemused. One member presented an application for membership form that was very poorly reproduced and commented upon the image this gave a prospective member of the club.

Application to club membership - Suggestions included use of a club booklet, revamping the Website, better use of Email and regular Club information meetings, use, as many other clubs' do, on line application forms.

**Recommendation: - That the club re-examine its application and entry programme and the application process and forms with a view to modernisation and 'softening' the process for applicants and to ensure application forms are available 'on line'.**

**Recommendation: That the club conduct a series of Information Forums either at night or at other times in which members can be informed of initiatives of the club, ask questions of the Directors and meet other members.**

**Recommendation: That the club introduce a member's Information Book which outlines some of the history and processes of the club to be provided to new members upon application to join the club. This handbook should be only a few pages and should be augmented by a more detailed background to the club on the clubs web site.**

***Researchers note: the comments about the club's web site are extremely important and will be included in greater detail in a later chapter.***

***Researchers Note: this recommendation links with those relating to mentors expressed in other places in this report.***

#### **5. Feet on the Greens (particularly in off Pennant season)**

The members present were concerned by the poor use of the club's greens' particularly during the 'off-season'.

Suggestions were that the club needed to review its winter programme and a number of suggestions were offered including a higher standard of competition, prize money to attract 'better' bowlers, and a regular event to promote participation.

#### **6. Clarity and understanding of the Selection process.**

We have included some extensive comments about the selection process elsewhere and this discussion reiterated those comments.

***Researchers recommendation; - that the club publish a single sheet, if possible, outlining the Selection Process, the purpose and use of the Weekly Player Review and the MVP system.***

***Particular emphasis should be placed on the manner in which the WPR form is used between sides and teams within a side.***

***It is very difficult to imagine if a team is filling out forms independently and another is filling them on a group basis that the MVP will ever be awarded to anyone other than a member of the side filling out on a group basis.***

- a. **Alternative ways of raising income** to allay concerns with costs of Fees, Clothing etc.

A great deal of strong discussion evolved around the issue of the club having a \$200,000c investment account whilst the costs for members to participate are continually increasing.

***Researchers Recommendation; that the club provide in the next Annual Report or at the Next Annual General Meeting or even as a special release some data and background for the club carrying this fund and its intended use.***

The following responses are numbered to align with the question as included in the Member Survey form and summarise the responses.

- 2.4 **Why bowl at Ringwood?** -  
Mostly location, however it was suggested more involvement of local sporting clubs to boost numbers.
- 2.13 **Considered moving to another club?** -  
High cost of fees and clothing mentioned. On the positive side though, club atmosphere, social nights and bistro were thought to be improvements over the last 12 months.
- 3.2 **Uniforms & Equipment** -  
As mentioned costs are a serious concern (in comparison to other clubs) and the "A" Green needs replacing.(We note more recent advice that this replacement is now being done.)
- 3.6 **Mentor?** - System is obviously not working and needs to be overhauled or abandoned.
- 3.8& 3.10 **Events during the off-season** - Winter bowling program needs an upgrade. Some suggestions were Pick your own teams, mix up the types of games/format, incorporate a lunch break and make an early start.
- 4.10 **Office Bearers are?** - Most don't know.  
Suggestions include a board with photos
- 4.2 **Effective communication system?** - Survey indicates not. Although our consensus seemed to be that there has been improvement, particularly with "Ringwood Bowls TV" However, Website needs urgent overhaul.
- 4.10 **Social event ideas?** - BBQ's and Bistro mentioned but no real new ideas.
- 6.1 **Section 6 Coaching** - There were a number of issues relating to coaching within the club that were raised. Some of these included
- A predictable coaching programme
  - A coaching system
  - Off season coaching
  - Game plans
  - Coach training
  - Access to the Coaching centre
  - High performance coaching.

We are advised, by Bob Hedrick who is a current member of the Coaching Committee, that most of these issues are under current discussion and he will refer the comments of the survey respondents to the committee's next meeting that is to be held shortly. We, as we are sure do most members, look forward to receiving some update on the progress of these discussions.

The outcome and direction of the club's coaching panel, particularly the bridging of the gaps between levels is of utmost importance in the development of a Strategic Plan for the club if that route is followed.

## **Section 8 Selection Committee**

The majority of Survey responses indicated a non-understanding of the Selection process and we reiterate the comments from the analysis of part one of the survey in relation to selection: -

*"The first three questions in this set indicate that generally members do not understand the processes of selection in the club. This could well warrant some sort of explanation paper that sets out what selectors do in creating sides for the upcoming round of matches."*

***Recommendation is that the BoM arrange for the publication of a short explanatory note outlining the guidelines and process of selection as it is currently practised.***

The weekly "Peer Player Review" sheets seem easy enough to understand but not all are convinced that they are used in side selection.

***Recommendation was that all players should be asked at the time of annual fee renewal that.....  
Do you intend to play pennant this year, and if so, in what side and in what position would you like to play?***

That completes the summary of the special meeting with respondents and indicates that there is, quite clearly, a lot of work to do to satisfy members' expressed concerns.

This section clearly emphasises the issues that are causing members concern and also, because of the work involved in addressing these issues, highlights the essential need to engage a Strategy Planning Committee that would examine, discuss and prioritise these and the other issues concerning club members.

As the Principal Researcher I thank Bob Hedrick for the work he has done in analysing and collating this section of the report.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER THREE**

No	Recommendation
1	That the club conduct a series of member forums to discuss the content of the Members Satisfaction Survey and the Member of a Lawn Bowls Club Research Project.
2	Q3 indicates that 16 'newer' members considered the application process as poor and below in terms of efficiency of process and in providing information to the applicant. We recommend that the application process be reviewed with a view to providing an application process that is both effective and attractive to the new applicant
3	Recommendation: That the club undertake a major adequately funded project to build its membership by re-examining its operation with a view to providing a more welcoming attitude to new bowlers and to arrange to invite them to a club function free of charge.
4	That the club introduce a member's Information Book which outlines some of the history and processes of the club to be provided to new members upon application to join the club.
5	That the club conduct a series of Information Forums either at night or at other times in which members can be informed of initiatives of the club, ask questions of the Directors and meet other members
6	Research Note: This recommendation largely duplicates one that we have included elsewhere. More discussion on the points of the management of a Member Plan and the types of membership that could be offered are included in later chapters.
7	Recommendation: - That the club re-examine its application and entry programme and the application process and forms with a view to modernisation and 'softening' the process for applicants. Researchers Note: this recommendation links with those relating to mentors expressed in other places in this report
8	Recommendation; - That the club ensure that all public address announcements are supportive of members.
9	Recommendation from the Researchers: That the club appoint three people to act as Masters' of Ceremonies with announcements and to ensure that there is some order and that announcements are communicated effectively
10	Researchers recommendation; - that the club publish a short information sheet, outlining the Selection Process, the purpose and use of the Weekly Player Review and the MVP system. Particular emphasis should be placed on the manner in which the WPR form is used between sides and teams within a side. It is very difficult to imagine if a team is filling out forms independently and another is filling them on a group basis that the MVP will ever be awarded to anyone other than a member of the side filling out on a group basis.
11	Researchers Recommendation; that the club provide in the next Annual Report or at the Next Annual General Meeting or even as a special release some data and background for the club carrying the contingency fund and its intended use. This has to some extent been subverted by the article by Greg Allen in the Bias May 2012
12	Recommendation that all players should be asked at the time of annual fee renewal the following questions..... Do you intend to play pennant this year, and if so, in what side and in what position would you aim to play?

## **Chapter 4 STRATEGIC PLANNING- THE WAY AHEAD.**

### **PURPOSE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

### **DEVELOPING A PLAN**

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

### **MARKETING RBC**

### **RECRUITING EXPERIENCED BOWLERS**

### **EVENTS TO ATTRACT SAMPLERS**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this chapter is to develop some thoughts on how the club might lead itself into the future.

The premise upon which we work, in any club or sporting organisation, is that we are a business in competition with others who supply a similar product or service and are aiming to attract a similar group of 'users' (in our case members) in, often, the same geographic area.

If this premise is accepted, and it has been by the Research Group, this then leads us into the need for a plan that will provide a set of guidelines by which the management of the club might attract these defined 'users'.

This plan can be entitled a Marketing Plan, a Strategic Plan, a Forward Plan, a Growth Plan, a Three Year Plan or any one of a number of other titles.

For the sake of simplicity and in line with the modern practice used by sporting and business organisations we have elected to call this a Strategic Plan (SP) and this would be created and managed by a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) reporting to the BoM.

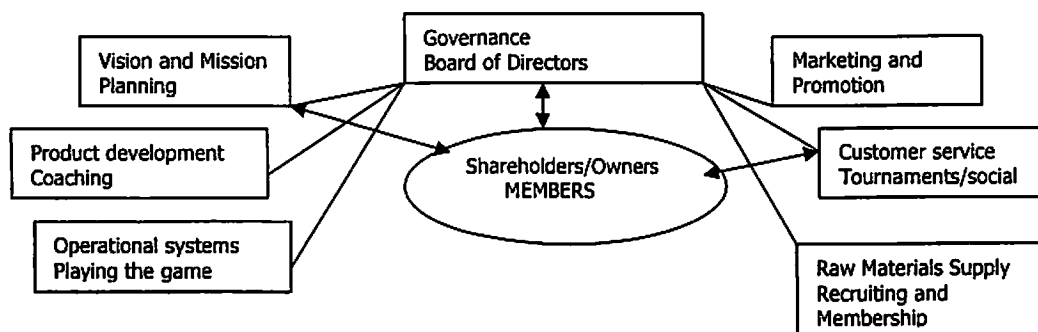
In this chapter we shall look at the elements of a strategic plan suitable for the purposes of the club and endeavour to provide some information that could be utilised in the development of the plan.

It is essential that two issues be observed in the progress of development: -

- That the plan reflect the 'owners', i.e. the club members, thoughts and desires for the club;
- That the day to day business of the club is not compromised by time being allocated to the development of the plan over and above an already crowded management agenda.

The following figure sets out to dissect a commercial business plan and to link the major tasks of growing a business with those of growing the club.





## **INTRODUCTION**

The fundamental idea of the Strategic Plan is to enable the organisation to formally document the product/s or service/s it delivers, the people who are most likely to use that product or service, and how the club gets its message to that potential user. As well as define the myriad tasks that go along with running the club.

This should be treated as a dedicated task among a small group who will act as the catalyst to collate data and seek input from all parts of the existing club membership with a view to seeking accord in the development of a comprehensive, but flexible, plan.

The research group therefore recommends that a Strategic Planning Committee be established to undertake this task and the terms of reference and scope of the committee be both wide ranging and flexible to enable the committee to avoid the inhibition of cross overs when exploring various factors.

The SPC would be charged with a number of responsibilities viz: -

1. To take this report and analyse it with a view to creating a viable and achievable set of action priorities;
2. To develop a formal Strategic Plan as the blue print for the growth of the club.
3. Review the papers referred to elsewhere in this report to extract any initiatives that are relevant to the club today;
4. To create opportunities for the club's members to make suggestions and to interface with the SPC;
5. To create and implement opportunities for the SPC to communicate with other individuals, clubs, state bodies, government departments, and organisations both in Australia and internationally in the pursuit of data.

There are a number of options that the research group have identified to place the SPC in the club hierarchy: -

- To have the role of leading the SPC as a duty of the Deputy Chairman- against this is the expectation that the DC must support and, at times, stand in for, the Chairman and this responsibility would add a significant amount of work to an already busy role;
- Use the option embodied in the club's constitution whereby the BoM may appoint an additional Director to take on a specific role-in this case that of Chair of the SPC. i.e. Director Strategic Planning
- To invite 'selected volunteers' with appropriate background experience to sit on a SPC with the sole purpose of developing a Strategic Plan for the club outside the function of the BoM but to be sanctioned by the BoM.

The third option is the one we most favour because it places the SPC closer to the membership

- *THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE research group is that the BoM invite 'selected volunteers' with appropriate background experience to sit on a SPC with the sole purpose of developing a Strategic Plan for the club.*

## **DEVELOPING A PLAN**

In this section we shall consider some of the issues that the SPC will need to face up to in developing a SP for the RBC.

Let us first understand the role and place of the BoM.

It is an important premise that must be accepted that it is not the function of the SPC to 'take over' the operational roles of any of the Directors nor of the many hard working volunteers who contribute to the club's day-to-day survival.

The role of the SPC is to develop an overall plan in conjunction with individual portfolio managers and to integrate that plan by policy and coordination across the entire club.

Strategic Planning is a volatile ongoing activity –not a set and forget one. Once the first SP is developed the role continues to measure progress and to plan forward of where the club then stands.

We have relied on a document "The Strategic Business Plan- A guide to preparation for not-for-profit sport and recreation organisations" as the major guide in preparation of the content of this chapter.

A copy of this document is included as appendix 12

This guide provides an introduction to the planning process in a concise and professional manner.

We will avoid going into too much detail, as we will rely on the SPC to refer to the document, or one similar to it, as a guide to completion of the Strategic Plan.

There are, however some title issues we would like to address viz: -

1. **Vision:** the need and role of a Vision Statement confuses some people. The Vision is simply a very concise statement defining what the club is aiming for. It may have more than one topic but each topic should be limited to one sentence of no more than (about) 25 words. For example the club may wish to include in its vision statement some direction for pennant, social and tournament bowls and each of these would consist of one sentence.
2. **Commitment:** - a 'commitment' statement should involve recognition and acceptance of the vision by the members of the club expressed in a general meeting called to discuss the issue, the BoM as the managing agent and subordinate groups within the club including selectors, pennant managers, tournament managers, coaches, umpires and others involved.
3. **Timelines:** - these are simply target dates by which each milestone is due to be achieved.
4. **Objectives:** -defines the goals of the club in all of its aspects pennant, social, tournaments, off green activity, communication, transparency and protection of members rights.
5. **Reporting:** -this requires regular reports on progress against the aims and objectives of the club's strategic plan by the BoM and the SPC and can be the catalyst for change if a defined strategy is not working it should be openly discussed and amended by the members.

6. **Contingencies:** - every influencing event cannot be anticipated but it is possible to identify some of the risks at the outset. It also provides a learning curve in so far as 'mistakes' can be corrected to reflect the new situation.

7. **Change:** -this is probably one of the most important as experience across all bowls nations tell us that bowlers do not accept change easily. But change we must be prepared to meet in our modern society and major changes must be reflected in the SP and in the member Information Meetings to ensure that the proposed change is open and transparent.

## **MARKETING PLAN**

There are at least two fundamental factors around which all other information is built in the development of a Marketing Plan and these are

- Knowing whom you are aiming to attract and defining the benefits relevant to each potential user.
- Knowing the product/service you offer and how that relates to the potential user.

These are usually characterised as

1. The target market
2. The product or service provided.

The following points need to be included in the development of these two major points

1. Who are the club's members?
2. Who does the club wish to attract?
3. Where are the potential new members?
4. What are the demographics of these areas?
5. What are the club's pricing strategies and why have they been adopted?
6. How can the club attract more sponsorship?
7. Who are the club's competitors for new members?
8. What benefits can the club provide to each level of membership?
9. How does the club welcome new members?

There is a lot more detail in the work to develop the club's Strategic Plan and this should be undertaken as a matter of urgency if the club is serious about turning the continuing drain of members into positive growth in the shortest time possible

In short the Strategic Plan enables and expects all members, officers and associates of the club to be working together to achieve the stated aims of the club in a cohesive and supportive way.

We shall leave it to the Board of Management to lead the way and the Strategic Planning Committee to develop the strategies necessary to see the club turn its fortunes around.

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

The research project has studied and considered demographic data from a number of sources that are listed in the Bibliography. For the purpose of this chapter we shall focus on that data refined for the City of Maroondah.

At the same time we are aware, and advise the BoM, that BA has established a select committee to consider 'participation' rates and governance of the sport and, from these, has commissioned two reports:-

- i. One by Latrobe University
- ii. One by Deakin University.

We could rattle on about demographics ad nausea but for the purposes of the club and the research project we provide only numbers that are relevant to our immediate situation.

Within a 10 km radius of the RBC there is an adult population of approx 315,995 people aged 21 years and over. Of these approximately 48.5% are male and 51.5% are female.

Also within this same radius there are at least 10 lawn bowls clubs' open to both male and female members.

Overall the City of Maroondah has experienced a 1.6% growth in population between June 2005 and June 2009 and that indicates that this is a very stable area with very little potential for significant population growth- refer Appendix 13 Victorian population Bulletin 2010.

Redevelopment of the Ringwood City Square project may bring a greater population to the (virtual) centre of Ringwood and this could well become part of the target market for the club- but that is in the future.

The logical catchment area for the club and in which it is suggested that it should focus its recruitment programming and promotional initiatives are in order of priority based on previous member lists: -

- Ringwood North,
- Warranwood,
- Warrandyte
- Central Ringwood,
- Ringwood East

We have examined the numbers in each of these areas and these are provided in the following table

Area	Estimated Adult Population
Central Ringwood,	15,337
Ringwood East,	9304
Ringwood North,	9119
Warranwood,	4666
Warrandyte	City of Manningham

Refer Append 14 Maroondah City Council Community Atlas.

More detailed information is contained in the Community Profiles that accompany this appendix. Wherever maps relevant to these nominated areas could be obtained they are include as part of the appendix.

The research group recommends that the areas defined in the preceding table be adopted as the club's main catchment area.

The research group's recommendation is that the club conduct a properly planned and financed advertising campaign over an extended period of, at least, 12 months to increase awareness of the club in its catchment area and to enhance recruitment drives as appropriate. It is broadly accepted in marketing that the retention of a subject in the mind of the target consumer will increase exponentially over a number of 'reminders'-in this case follow up promotional material.

Promotion is not just a one off effort because there is an event coming up but a sustained memory jogger to reinforce a positive message in the thought computer of the potential target. In short to keep the message in their face.

As to cost the club has a fund set aside for contingencies. In the opinion of the researchers this issue, the cascading loss of members, is perhaps the biggest 'contingency' the club will face and therefore it should be funded appropriately out of the contingency fund.

Despite the article in the May 2012 BIAS the money, in one form or another, must be found to fund this project.

Maroondah Council 'recently' conducted an activity survey of its population to gauge the activity practices and therefore potential health status of the population.

The information we have been able to gather relates to the 55+ age group and indicates that

- 51% walk for physical activity- Australian average 3%
- 11% swim 5%

Of the 55+ age group

- 80% participate in Maroondah
- 88% participate for health and fitness
- 61% for enjoyment
- 24% for relaxation
- 22% to spend time with friends and family
- 17% to spend time socially and to meet 'new' people.

In the 55-64 age years span 88% do not participate due to lack of time (the time poor syndrome) and of the 418 respondents 'less than 19', 4.54%, advised having participated in lawn bowls in the past 12 months. (Appendix 15 E-mail from Jackie Warren MCC).

Now one could ask 'what does all this mean?'

If we link the responses to this survey to those of the club's MSS we find that a significant number of the club's members joined with a view to 'meeting new people, to have a social outlet and for health reasons to take up a low level exercise with others'.

These could well be trigger issues in a recruitment campaign and, in our opinion, highlights the need and potential for the club to have a Social Member status that opens the door for many potential members.

A major concern of all health bodies- Federal, State and Local- is the growing incidence of Type 2 Diabetes in the 'older' population. One of the reasons for this is claimed to be lack of exercise by 'older' people.

The health aspect of a low impact outdoor sporting activity and social interaction such as that experienced at lawn bowls, could also represent a health benefit by reducing the prevalence of diabetes in the community and also provide growth opportunities for the club.

We do not have formal material to support these views at this time but discussion with the Victorian Dept of Health, the Diabetes Foundation and BV, could be useful in developing this as a strategy for this club, and others, to follow.

Under the broad heading of Demographics the club needs to consider the ratio of lawn bowls clubs to the populations in various centres and the capital cost of creating and maintaining a lawn bowls club.

It could well be that there is an opportunity to seek a merger, or mergers, linking, amalgamation with another club or clubs in the area to build a stronger entity with a potentially larger membership base in both skills and numerically.

In any 'merger' 100% of the members of both the merging parties are usually not satisfied with the strategy and this will represent some leakage of members to other clubs. For example when

Box Hill club 'merged' with Box Hill RSL club a significant number of Box Hill members sought to find another club in which to participate despite the presumed 'better' facilities at the RSL.

The club was involved for some time with the possibility of members from the Marysville club joining Ringwood but this did not eventuate as the main influencers at Marysville went to Premier Division clubs and the others 'scattered'.

If the club were to consider 'merging' as a strategy it should be done very carefully, confidentially and cautiously with only a very few people involved in the development and implementation of the plan.

### **MARKETING THE CLUB**

Our approach to the number of members question is to use three sub-sections that, we believe, mirror the journey into lawn bowls by a person attending an initial 'try out' event.

These are: -

1. **SAMPLERS:** - those who literally come off the street, albeit with a friend in the club or in response to some form of publicity, to try a bowls experience such as Try Bowls, TBAT or other bowls open days. In some circumstances they may be people who have attended a disassociated social event such as a wedding, birthday party etc. that included a bowls element, at the 'club's' premises.
2. **PARTICIPANTS:** - Those who enter into a one-off bowls experience having had very little, if any, previous experience in the game. These will include events such as 'Get on the Green', 'Barefoot Bowls' and many other similar events.
3. **MEMBERS:** -those who play regularly in either a competitive or social setting and are include in the club's register of members.

The research group recommends that terms

1. **SAMPLERS-** those who attend Try Bowls days, TBAT, schools programmes, barefoot bowls and other introductory events;
2. **PARTICIPANTS:** -those who enter into a 'one off' event such as Get on the Green, Forty/40, barefoot bowls advanced, and other similar events;
3. **MEMBERS:** -those who play regularly in either a competitive or social setting and are include in the club's register of members.

be adopted for use in recruiting programmes.

The club must recognise that in its attempts to get potential members to attend a 'try out' event they will only do so if there is some benefit in it for them - the potential customer. Samplers are not interested in joining the club for the club's reasons but for their own- 'what's in it for me?'

This does not mean a sausage sizzle will attract more Samplers but it does mean that the staging of such events demand highly organised planning to ensure that the prospect is greeted, encouraged and treated with respect right through their initial experience with the club and that there is some positive feedback to the participant after the event such as a letter of thanks for attending. The 'sausage sizzle' provides some end bonus benefit to reinforce the main activities of the day.

Try out events must be taken to where the people are and when they want to attend such as shopping centres, retirement villages, community days, events connected to other events such as Christmas, Easter, Spring racing, caravan show, Croydon Festival, Royal Melbourne Show at BV level and so on.

Having an event at a specific time once per year can only cater for a very limited potential number of samplers.

There must be some opportunity to come when they want-within reason. What would be the impact if the club were to advertise a try out day every week of the year and have somebody on tap to introduce the sampler to the game and the club, say, every Wednesday night from 6:30 or 7:00 pm for an hour? It may be considered that this is the purpose of the TBAT programme – but how is it promoted? Or a try out day on the second Sunday of each month from September to April?

A membership application form in the usual style, which is primarily designed to place the emphasis on competitive bowls, is not appropriate at Samplers events.

The club must develop an Introduction to the club form which asks for the Samplers personal name, address and contact details and provides a check list of what the sampler is seeking - social, a 'new sport', friendship, health etc. in a check the box format .It does not address age or experience or the commitment required to play competitive bowls, which is, in the main, pennant competition, but ensures that the new prospect can come softly, softly into the club and become accustomed to the comings and goings as soon as possible.

And, of most important it must be made to impress- not the poorly copied 1950's form that is currently in use. With an up dated club P.C and a colour printer these could be available at a moments notice without having to carry a large stock.

Certainly if the club is, lucky enough to attract someone who is experienced and knows about lawn bowls then the standard application should be used. But, again, the club must move away from using poor image forms and put them on line so that each one is as good as the last.

### **UPGRADING THE BRAND**

As the opening comment in this Marketing strategy we emphatically recommend that the club update its appalling web site as a matter of extreme urgency and that Sporting Pulse be invited to present to the Board the scope of the Club Management programme, including web site management, which is endorsed by BA , BV and many other sporting associations.

The second point we make is the image the club presents to the sampler.

The on green issues are relatively easy to address but it is essential that the club recognise the importance of electronic communication and social media in attracting or influencing someone who might be thinking about bowls at Ringwood.

At the moment the club's website is an absolute disgrace and the club should be ashamed of and embarrassed by the image it presents!

- The little data that is included is incomplete and is, at least, two years out of date.
- The images on the site are both ugly and benign and certainly do not inspire confidence in the club.
- There is no information to assist anyone to get to know the club other than in a negative and uninspiring image.
- It looks like the remnants of a club that has expired and closed rather than one that wants to get ahead.

We would suggest that those who are responsible for managing this non-asset take a look at the neighbouring clubs' sites, particularly Croydon Bowls Club's, and compare the information provided on line with RBC's.

There is no comparison that could be documented in this publication and in the pursuit of maintaining acceptable language.

We have often heard comments about copyright and the restrictions which these allegedly place on any alterations of the content on the club website.

All this does is highlight a lack of knowledge of the Copyright Act and brings the bush lawyers into play. There are initiatives that can be taken to improve the site and, if any member has any doubt about the legality of those alterations we suggest the BoM obtain an opinion from the club's solicitors and not rely on the so called expert knowledge of the club's bush lawyers without any experience in the field.

The copyright Act does not force the club to use the present site. The club can start afresh with a new site designed to provide all relevant information required and expected by members and other supporters.

### **EVENTS TO ATTRACT SAMPLERS**

Throughout the course of this research programme we have had occasion to enter discussions, informally, with members of other clubs'.

It is very clear that few clubs rely on the BA Open Day in October as their primary source of recruitment. Many clubs are now conducting come and try events at every opportunity- some conduct on one Sunday each month e.g the second Sunday or whatever, others have evening events similar to the October Try Bowls day, every week at the same time, some invite groups to visit on a regular basis e.g. it might be a retirement village, or a club, schools, some allow social events on a green not required for pennant on a Saturday afternoon, and there other arrangements in place at different clubs.

It is not part of our brief to endeavour to advise the Membership Director on how the role is discharged but we do suggest that there is a need to expand the club's thinking outside the square and to be more creative in staging events. And have included a recommendation to this effect. In saying this we recognise the continuity of TBAT but suggest the format might need to be up dated and as part of the introduction to the club invite people to participate in Thursday 2-4-2 events.

Whatever the initiatives are they all rely on effective and properly based funding to ensure that publicity reaches the right targets and 'sticks in the mind'. We recommend that a properly drafted expense based budget be drawn up and that the club finances adequately the costs of mounting an extensive year round recruiting programme.

### **RECRUITING EXPERIENCED BOWLERS**

We say very little about this other than the identification and recruitment of experienced bowlers should be totally and exclusively managed by the SPC in conjunction with the senior coaches and selectors of the club.

The development of such planning should be under the direct responsibilities of the Chairperson of the SPC.



It has been apparent in the past that when too many people get involved in this 'touchy' exercise it is doomed to failure. This is a specialist role that can only be discharged by people who are perceived to bowl at an equivalent level to the target person and should not be interfered with by others.

Our recommendation is that the recruitment of experienced bowlers be one of the primary responsibilities of the chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

An essential part of any strategic plan is the summing up and progress reporting against the objectives of the plan. The SP must have actual numbers by way of targets and time lines that are not an airy fairy pipe dream that members would like to see sometime in the future. If it is to happen it must happen NOW!

As an example we refer the reader to the Strategic Plan 2007-2011 of the RVBA and VLBA. As far as we can see this SP does not carry any tangible goals or target dates. It seems to be a recital of some activities that make interesting reading but are extremely vague when an action test is applied to each or any of them. This Strategy Plan is included at Appendix 16

The other part of the SP that, in our opinion, is lacking is the definition of a follow up procedure or how progress will be reported to clubs- the members and the reason for the very existence of the central organisation.

An introductory statement in the plan states quote  
*"Strategic directions identified in this plan have been established to help lay the foundation for the future growth and development of lawn bowls in Victoria and to provide on going support for the game at all levels."*

Whilst this is a nice motherhood statement it does not address the issues of how any of the elements contained in that paragraph will be tested in the future. In one par in Strategy 2 on page 5 it goes part of the way by stating quote

*"Annually assess the training, education and development needs of clubs."*

The questions in consequence of this statement are

- How have these needs been assessed?
- When were they assessed?
- How were they assessed?
- What initiatives have been introduced because of the application of this element?

Equally the Annual Report of Bowls Victoria 2010-11 makes no mention of the growth in numbers nor the other 20 points of the Strategy Plan 2007-2011- surely this would have been an appropriate document in which to include some comment.

We make these comments not to be 'picky' about the role of BV/BA in the development of the game but to highlight the need for **ACCOUNTABILITY and TRANSPARENCY** in assessing the outcomes of any initiative including in the forecasting of the future of the club.

In the club's SP it is essential that target dates are included and the SPC must report progress on a regular and continuing basis. The role of the SP is not to write it once and expect it all to fall into place. Some things that are tried will work and others wont. Unless the club keep tabs on these the club can continue to do what it does so well- continue to repeat the errors of the past.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER FOUR**

No	Recommendation
1	<p>The research group recommends that the terms  <b>SAMPLERS</b>- those who attend Try Bowls days, TBAT, schools programmes, barefoot bowls and other introductory events;  <b>PARTICIPANTS</b>: -those who enter into a 'one off' event such as Get on the Green, Forty/40, barefoot bowls advanced, and other similar events;  <b>MEMBERS</b>: -those who play regularly in either a competitive or social setting and are include in the club's register of members.                      be adopted for use in recruiting programmes.</p>
2	<p><i>THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE research group is that the BoM invite 'selected volunteers' with appropriate background experience to sit on a Strategic Planning Committee with the objective of developing a Strategic Plan for the club including on going management strategies.</i></p>
3	<p>The research group recommends that the areas defined in the preceding table be adopted as the club's main catchment area.</p>
4	<p>The research group recommends that the club expand its try bowls events to provide weekly and/or monthly opportunities to this effect.</p>
5	<p>That the club update its appalling web site as a matter of extreme urgency and that Sporting Pulse be invited to present to the Board the scope of the Club Management programme, including web site management, which is endorsed by BA , BV and many other sporting associations.</p>
6	<p>The research group recommends that a properly drafted expense based budget be drawn up and that the club finances, adequately from its reserves, the costs of mounting an extensive year round recruiting programme.</p>
7	<p>The research groups recommendation is that the club conduct a properly financed advertising campaign over an extended period to increase awareness of the club in its catchment area and to enhance recruitment drives as appropriate</p>
8	<p>The research group recommends that the recruitment of experienced bowlers be one of the primary responsibilities of the chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.</p>

## **Section 5 THE BIG PICTURE**

### **Section 5.1 Bowls Australia and Bowls Victoria**

### **Section 5.2 Active Australia**

### **Section 5.3 The Sweeney Report**

### **Section 5.4 The Independent Sports Panel Report**

## **Section 1 BOWLS AUSTRALIA and BOWLS VICTORIA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a central part of the research project we have had discussions with Bowls Australia (BA) and with Barrie Lester who is one of 5 Development Officers employed by BA to work with community clubs. State Associations are being supported by Development Officers employed by BA under a grant from the Commonwealth of \$1.6 over 4 or 5 years.

There is an unclear separation between the roles, duties and expectations of BA and BV. It seems to us as relative outsiders to the central bodies that BV is responsible for managing the administration of the sport in some parts of Victoria in some matters and across the entire State in others. BA, on the other hand, is now directly involved in advising clubs' right across Australia about development and other related matters.

From our view it appears that BA is taking more responsibility for the marketing role and the States seem to be concentrating more on the day-to-day operation management.

Consequently we have dealt with BA & BV conjointly wherever we can in this review.

BA has, on staff, five Development Officers in Victoria each of whom is responsible to service clubs' in a defined area

To some extent the separation of these physical 'territories' has a relationship to the boundaries of regions in Victoria.

However Ringwood is in a cross over point that has resulted in the club being 'serviced' by two D/O's – Barrie Lester & Paul Herschi (?).

This can be both an advantage and an impediment in coordination and whenever D/O's are consulted the club must be certain of with whom it is dealing and the input of the 'other' D/O. We are sure this will be 'adjusted' in time but the club should perhaps take some initiative in sorting out the issue before it becomes a challenge.

It is very difficult now, and probably non-productive, to endeavour to comment separately on BA/ BV as they stand in Victoria. We are fortunate that, as BA has it headquarters at Darebin Bowls Centre, we have a two-pronged access to development data- from BA and BV.

BA, through their Manager Participation Tony Sherwill, are very concerned with the state of lawn bowls participation across the nation and have, in fact, formed a select committee, to investigate and advise on the current situation.

The chairman of this sub-committee is Mr. Graham Howard of Donvale Bowls Club.

We have received a copy of the "Bowls Australia National Bowls Census Report 2010" with which we have some concerns and these are outlined below. We have also discussed these with TS and they too share the following concerns.

The document was produced as the result of a research census undertaken by the census facilitator Street Ryan and Associates (SRA). Refer appendix 18 letter from Neil Dalrymple CEO of BA.

A major problem is how the researchers have gone about measuring 'participation' in the sport and this may lead back to the brief they were given by BA.

The first and major concern is that all people who, in the period of the report, have tried lawn bowls are characterised as 'participants'. We have a totally different view to this and that has been defined earlier in this report.

At page 3 Executive Summary the footnote is quote

"Participants are defined as people who played in one or more structured bowls competition or program of at least 4 weeks/matches/sessions duration during 2009/10"

And at page 4 the footnote is: -

"Participation figures include the counting of a participant each time they compete in a bowls competition or program of at least 4 weeks duration."

Extracts of the census are included at Appendices 19 & 20.

Relating this definition to RBC would mean that every child who attended 4 school sessions, or a TBAT person who attended 4 times would be classed as a participant. The total number of participants state-wide derived from this definition is 514,486- even if this was 50% (257,243) correct we would not have a problem of such critical impact as the sport has now.

These people are not in the normal course of events considered by club managements' as 'participants' - they are more likely classified, as in our three-point member classification as 'Samplers' - people who come along and try something new often more out of curiosity than out of a desire to join.

The research group recommends that the club express to Bowls Australia and Bowls Victoria its disappointment in the footnotes on pages 3 & 4 of the BA Annual Report 2009/10 and suggests that a more appropriate method of measuring try bowls samplers be used.

The challenge that this classification does not address is the conversion of these 'casual' participants to membership of a club at a level that suits each individual whether it is as a social member or a potential club champion.

The second level membership issue that needs to be addressed is 'how can we convert the casual sampler to a more consistent social user who does not necessarily want to join the club at 'this' time but will include lawn bowls as part of their personal social agenda.

This is probably the most important, but neglected, phase of the recruitment process and, to a major extent describes the broad attitude to recruiting across many clubs'.

Clubs' seem to have an attitude that once the newcomer tries bowls he/she is hooked and the next step will follow more or less automatically in time.

From our experience and observation getting a prospect to a try bowls event is just the first step- there is a process that must be followed to convert 'samplers' to 'participants' to members.

We suggest that this is an area in which the mentor programme could come into play.

By linking a sampler to a mentor the follow up steps become more personal and the club becomes a person – the mentor on the 'phone or in person is someone who, by their presence, demands a reaction.

The club cannot expect that there will be a 100% take up of sampling to participation but by having a 'phone call to 'set up the next appointment' will very quickly sort that out and enable the mentor and the club to focus on those who are interested rather than waste time on those who are not. It will also give the club some real data about why people don't progress from 'sampling' to 'participating'.

We often get the impression from speaking with people from other clubs' about recruitment in the course of a match and from our own observations of our club's practices that people are 'recruited' primarily 'to play pennant' and a lot of pressure is placed on the new recruit to be available for selection sooner rather than later.

One local club offers a free club shirt on the proviso that the new member is available to play pennant as soon as possible,

The Research group recommendation is that 'samplers' who have attended a try bowls event be allocated to a mentor who has the responsibility to follow up the newcomer with the primary aim of arranging introductory coaching sessions of upto 3 weeks duration on an individual or small group basis prior to the person being asked to join the club. This should all be set out in a simple and attractive brochure that is provided to each sampler as they attend.

We also refer to the articles that appeared in the Bowls in Focus magazine August/ September 2011 and October 2011 issue in Peter Hanlon's "Lawn Order" page which are included at Appendices 21 & 22

These articles set out to reverse the 'management pyramid' by placing the consumer i.e. member of a club at the top of the inverse pyramid and the ultimate decision makers at the lower levels.

This is derived from a management tool that was developed in the 1990's to emphasise the importance of Customer Service in an organization (now long since forgotten in this age of electronic telephone answering systems and remote call centres).

The model accurately defines that the 'sampler' will be influenced by those he/she meets first at the club when visiting or attending some come and try event. The ordinary rank and file members are the 'meet and greet' team and will strongly influence the samplers' first and probably lasting impressions of the club.

The major problem then, as it is with this model, is that the power of the tiers is not reversed-nor can it be. The decision makers are still at the 'pointy end' with the only difference being that the pointy end now purports to be the lower level of the pyramid. This is the place where decisions are made, the finance controlled and the strategic direction of the organization defined.

And with all due respect to the philosophy of lawn bowls this 'pointy end' is also the end that has to change most whether at club, region, state or national level.

The model simple sets out to place responsibility for the growth of the game clearly on the customer service deliverers i.e. the clubs members'. It makes no allowance nor gives any recognition to the fact that clubs' are struggling to keep up in an ever-changing world of governance, finance, and promotion as well as loss of members.

The purse strings of the organisation are kept under the strict control and authority of the state and national arms of the sport and the local, state and federal governments who provide the majority of the financial support, as are the policy development functions. The local community based club has little or no real influence on how priorities are ordered or how money is allocated except in relation to its own (council owned) property. From our research it appears that if a club is not 'on council land' it is very difficult for that club to receive support from governments'.

If clubs' are to continue to take the front line responsibility for the growth of the game, as they are best placed to, then they must have a greater say in how funds are distributed or, at least, have access to funding from the central body to support local promotion. This may come as the role of the D/O's develops – but that is up to the clubs' to influence and agitate towards.

It appears that there is very little opportunity for the clubs to have a direct say in the management of their association, BV, as there is no effective two communication system in place.

This situation is even more difficult for individual members of the clubs' who have a beef to air or a suggestion to make which might be of interest to the management of the game or simply to other members.

The cost of replying to communications is, as we all know, expensive, but within BV there seems to be some opportunities to delegate some responsibilities to line management to handle on behalf of the Association.

There is no 'Readers Comments' or letters to the Editor section in the Bowls in Focus magazine. The only issues that are 'in focus' are top of the tree championship matches and other events that, we would suggest, are of only marginal interest to rank and file members.

If discussion could be generated through a Letters page we suggest interest in the magazine would be more significant and return a greater dividend to members in terms of interest than presently.

There seems to be recognition of, at least, some of these issues by BV with the publication of "The Shot"- the BV (now) official publication in March 2012 plus more access to bowls news on the web site.

Whilst this issue of The Shot is more 'newsy' we will need to see a few articles and issues to be able to identify any trend in policy.

In the meantime the SPC should be looking at ways to exploit these and other opportunities that arise.

The research group recommends that the club contact BV with a view to raising concerns about non-responded communications and to including in Bowls In Focus a Letters to the Editor page or pages.

Initiatives such as GoTG, Forty/40, and others emanate from the central office to clubs who are then required to promote and manage them.

Whilst these programmes are all excellent in their own right, there are some problems attached to their acceptance in different areas and it is an expensive exercise for clubs to discover this.

A club may pick up a programme and allocate some funds for promotion from an already stretched cash flow budget only to find that the community to which they have targeted does not respond in sufficient numbers to render the exercise viable. The result is the club becomes very cautious of taking on the next programme whatever that may be or how good it looks.

As we all well know demographics is an uncertain science and the outcomes that appear attractive on paper can often produce very different results in practice. Some way to support clubs and the development of their programmes, including the financing of publicity and promotion, is essential to manage the increasing demands of recruiting, conversion and retention.

The research group recommends that the club approach BV to discuss the infrastructure and financing required to promote try bowls programmes.

This then opens the question of governance within the BV structure and the role of Regions and Regional management.

In 2011 Victoria (claim to) had...
79 Associations
503 bowls clubs
70,650 playing and non playing members
129,961 regular participants (>4 weeks games) in all forms of bowls
106,558 players in all forms of bowls

(refer National Bowls Census Report Victoria Snapshot 2011 at Appendix 23)

And, in our opinion, these numbers do not make any sense without some narrative to support them.

In the metropolitan area regions are almost superfluous to the management of the game and, to some degree, it appears that metro regions are in place simply to 'balance' the apparent management of the game between regional and metropolitan regions.

It all too often happens that the same personnel who lead regions as 'Office Bearers' take a place on the various committees etc. of the central BV. This is a situation that appears to lead to redundant representation and ineffective information transferral.

One has cause to wonder about the scope of authority and independence of both BV and country regions. Whilst it seems that metro regions are more or less compliant to the decision making at BV this does not appear to be the case in Country regions.

A prime, current and highlight example of this is the decision taken to reduce pennant to 21 ends from 25.

Whilst this has been seen as a reduction of 20% of their leisure activity by some members we have been advised, anecdotally, that some country regions have elected not to follow this decision and retain their local competitions at 25 ends.

If this is the case it raises the question of the authority of BV and the manner in which this particular decision was made. There was very little opportunity for clubs to have input to the decision and yet we find that major sections of the BV network simply ignore it and do not comply.

This is a ludicrous situation when we have a state body that purports to speak for all yet clearly does not. One could hypothesise the pandemonium if, say, the Melbourne East Region decided to take a similar stance to those country regions!

The recommendation of the research group is that the club raise with BV the issues of different decision-making processes within the various regions and the authority and capacity of BV to manage the game across the state in light of this current situation.

In the modern vernacular BV and Regions both lack transparency in their decision-making including those relating to the promotion of the game and we suggest that the SPC consider this as part of its overall brief.



It may well be that a more productive role for metropolitan regions would be, with some change in personnel, to change their focus to Marketing the game across their region instead of being a pseudo, and largely ineffective, part of the management structure.

Overall the communication model of BV needs to be clarified. It seems that most issues are transmitted direct to clubs either electronically or in hard copy format and very little 'new' data comes through regions.

BV itself must become more transparent in its communication model and its responses to members. We have experienced, in the past, difficulty in getting responses to ideas that have been directed to BV .It almost seems that lawn bowls suffers the 'black hole' syndrome when it comes to two way communication with club's.

To reiterate, our approach to the course a person might take to join a lawn bowls club is:

- i. **SAMPLERS-** Try Bowls days, TBAT, schools programmes, barefoot bowls introductory, shopping centre demonstration;
- ii. **PARTICIPANTS:** -those who enter into a 'one off' event such as Get on the Green, Forty/40, barefoot bowls advanced, the club's 2-4-2 and other similar events;
- iii. **MEMBERS:** -those who play regularly in either a competitive or social setting and are include in the club's register of members.

We will continue to use this model of entrance despite others preferring to use the word 'participation/participants' to define those who become involved at any level.

## **FINANCING GROWTH**

A major issue is that of access to funds by local clubs for the promotion of the sport and recruitment of members.

This becomes relevant at two levels: -

1. The financial support available to clubs and development generally at the local level;
2. The priority of BA/BV in relation to support of 'community level' bowls and that of the high performance sector of the bowls community.

If for example each Club was to receive a modest grant to put towards funding promotion via brochures, newspaper advertisements and other appropriate media and the clubs' remain responsible for the planning and implementation of the event/s we suggest we might get a bigger uptake.

Rather than run one Try Bowls day in October each year a club might be inclined to conduct a monthly Try Bowls event, and to change the profile from Try Bowls to the new event of "Social Bowls", that, when supported by media exposure over a protracted time span, would go some way to change the image of bowls and the take up rate of the community.

The club also needs to keep in mind that, with local newspapers, the more advertising one uses the better the editorial cover the paper includes.

There seems little doubt that the most important and vital item on the bowls agenda at every level today is, or should be, the declining level of membership and the development of strategies at the local level to reverse that trend.

Samplers should be given a trouble free pathway into a club if clubs' are to reverse the negative images of age and dowdiness often associated with the sport.

However these things all cost and in many cases the small local club is just not financially sound enough to mount a solid campaign off their own bat.

### **RESEARCH**

BA is currently conducting three significant pieces of research that could have a bearing on the development of the game and these are

1. "BA created a membership taskforce in 2009/10 which was charged with identifying strategies to rectify the 28 years decline in membership. Their first recommendation is essentially that the isolated scatter gun approach that has been used by STA's and BA's historically is of little use. Therefore a concerted approach is necessary, which commences with a research plan." This membership task force is chaired by Graham Howard of Donvale BC  
  
"...The first priority is the participation area. This broadly involves why people play, why they don't play, why they stopped playing, and why they play but refuse to become a member."
2. "...Almost all strategic decisions in our sport are made on anecdotal evidence.... and with results we're seeing something had to change."  
This study is currently in progress and is being undertaken by Latrobe University.
3. "...Undertaking a governance research project through Deakin University. ....A necessary step in ensuring our sport is ready for all future challenges.'

(Note these comments 1,2 &3 are extracted from an email from TS of BA dated 17<sup>th</sup> October 2011 and a copy of which is included as Appendix 24)

A core element of the continued success of the RBC is to commit to ongoing research in which the contact with members, departing members, try bowlers, et al are coordinated in a common research thread and we would expect that the brief of the SPC would include some provision for this.

## **THE SWEENEY REPORT**

In 2005 quote "*Bowls Australia commissioned a market research study to assist in determining the 'best customer' segments or groups to consider for recruitment in order to grow the game: another key requirement was to retain current club members and grow active participation in the sport.*" End quote.

*See Appendix No. 25 Background Sweeney Sports Bowls Australia-Building Participation in Lawn Bowl- Final Report February 2006.*

The brief, as published, included a range of sub-objectives that could be considered as atypical to this type of exercise.

As is common, with many research projects in the sport, the entire findings were based on a very small sample. Four hundred and seventy five telephone interviews were conducted with Australians aged 20 years and over. Interviews were conducted in five areas Bendigo 75, Sydney 125, Central Coast NSW 75, Brisbane 100, and Adelaide 100. How these targets were chosen and why numerically significant areas were not included is not known.

Given that there were in the vicinity of 260,000 members enrolled in lawn bowls at that time the target numbers represent something like 173% of the registered bowls population in Australia. We realise that these 475 were selected from the general community not from the bowls community.

The level of interest in the game revealed that 35% of those interviewed showed a little interest, 40% were unlikely to ever play the game, 3% were current members and upto 17% would 'think about joining a club in the future'. Lawn bowls ranked 24<sup>th</sup> out of 29 having an interest in the sport.

When one considers the findings of this report there are a number of items that, although being clearly identified, have not been acted upon in any sense to change the image of the game or any action taken to broaden the attraction of the game outside its current drawing capacity in a defined market.

There does not appear at either club or state level, any concerted effort to clearly define the market or markets that may be the ones to produce the members of the future.

It seems that reading these reports there is a mood of satisfaction with the way the game is/was placed in the community rather than a recognition that

- Lawn bowls, in its present form, is losing members world wide,
- The image of lawn bowls is still that it is an old person's game,
- That once people try the game they will like it because those who play do, and
- The lawn bowls' central managements' focuses on championship events rather than the day-to-day club issues.

We have decided to include in the Appendix 26 pages 77 through 96 of the report that deal with the pros and cons of development of the game. The senior researcher has obtained a copy of the document and this is available for reference if required.

1. Sect 9 Page 77 Weaknesses of the sport
2. Sect 9 Pages 78-79 Barriers to membership
3. Sect 9 Page 80 The Ideal Club
4. Sect 10 Page 82-83 Get on the Green
5. Sect 10 Page 84 Mod Bowls
6. Sect 10 Page 85 Competition/Team Mates
7. Sect 11 Pages 87-94 Occasional Player/ Potential Member segments
8. Sect 11 Pages 95-96 Conclusions and Key recommendations

We strongly recommend that all members of the BoM and SPC reading this report study the content of these 20 pages as a very relevant base model for action within the club particularly when linked with the findings of the club's own Member Satisfaction Survey.

**THE FUTURE OF SPORT IN AUSTRALIA**  
**(Common title THE CRAWFORD REPORT)**

In 2008 the Australian Government announced the membership and Terms of Reference for the Independent Sports Panel to investigate reforms required to ensure that the Australian sporting system remains prepared for future challenges at both the community and elite levels.

Mr. David Crawford who is Chairman of the Fosters Group, Lend Lease, a Director of Billiton and has experience in major reform work with the AFL, Soccer in Australia and other organisations was appointed Chairman.

Other members of the panel were Ms Sam Moyston, Ms Pamela Tye, Mr. Colin Carter and Mr. Mark Bouris.

The report was delivered in October 2009 and comprises some 350 pages and we have not yet had the time or the facility to study the report and extract any data that may be useful to include in this report. We anticipate that this exercise will be undertaken over the next few months.

We have included Chapter 1.1 "Defining our National Sports Vision in the appendix no 27

Bowls Australia has published a "Response to the Independent Sports Panels review of sport" and we include this as appendix no. 28

A submission by BA to the ISP is included at appendix no. 29.

A copy of the report is held by the senior researcher and is available for reference by members of the BoM and the SPC.

**BOWLS AUSTRALIA RESEARCH WORKSHOP**

In March 2011 this workshop was conducted by BA and attended a group of various State associations and of BA staff to consider a number of topical items.

A copy of the report from this workshop is included at appendix no 30

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS CHAPTER FIVE**

No.	Recommendation
1	The research group recommends that the club express to Bowls Australia and Bowls Victoria its disappointment in the footnotes on pages 3 & 4 of the BA Annual Report 2009/10 and suggests that a more appropriate method of measuring try bowls samplers be used
2	The research group recommends that 'samplers' who have attended a try bowls event be allocated to a mentor who has the responsibility to follow up the newcomer with the primary aim of arranging introductory coaching sessions of upto 3 weeks duration on an individual or small group basis prior to the person being asked to join the club.
3	The research group recommends that the club contact BV with a view to raising concerns about non-responded communications and to including in Bowls In Focus a Letters to the Editor page or pages.
4	The research group recommends that the club approach BV to discuss the infrastructure and financing required to promote try bowls programmes.
5	The recommendation of the research group is that the club raise with BV the issues of different decision making processes within the various regions and the authority of BV to manage the game across the state in light of this current and foundation situation.

## **Chapter 6 CURRENT AND POTENTIAL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES AT RINGWOOD BOWLS CLUB**

### **Purpose of this Chapter**

The purpose of this chapter is to present some suggestions for consideration by the SPC regarding the membership structure and listings of the club to which the research project was drawn in the process of investigating this project.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Our research has uncovered a trait apparently in people, resident of Maroondah, in what we consider to be the club's primary target group of the 55+ residents with the 'time poor' syndrome.

There appears to be a trend of clubs' to include a wider range of memberships by making specific provision for the inclusion of social members.

Exactly what social membership entails depends very much on the benefits that the club offers in all of its membership categories.

The research group suggests that a review of the membership structures of the club be undertaken and we will follow with some suggestions of how these might be developed later in this chapter.

The research group suggests that consideration be given to including two categories to replace two existing ones.

Whilst we do not go to the length of creating a recommendation our suggestion is that the membership reconsideration examine the ramifications and implications of restructuring the membership along the following lines: -

1. **Pennant Membership** – eligible for selection in a pennant side and to enter in all appropriate club championships and with full voting rights, includes playing Life members and juniors; Based on 2010/11 subscriptions \$230 (Junior Members No subscription)
2. **Non-Pennant member**-full access to greens but not eligible for selection neither in a pennant side nor to compete in any club championships and with full voting rights including non-pennant playing life members. \$180 subscription
3. **Non-Playing Member/Social**- not eligible to use the greens but eligible to use the clubhouse facilities. No voting rights. \$100 subscription
4. **Associate Members**- People who have rendered valuable service to the club such as sponsors and others. Eligible to use the clubhouse facilities. No voting rights. Nil subscription
5. **Membership on hold**- to replace Leave of Absence. Members who for either health or absence reasons are not able to be selected in a pennant side nor enter into club championships but who wish to retain their membership. Able to use clubhouse facilities and have occasional use of greens and have membership rights equal to the rights, with the exception of playing rights, they enjoyed prior to placing their Membership on hold. \$50 subscription. May only be Membership on Hold for two seasons.

The Research Group refers this matter to the BoM and the SPC for further consideration with a strong suggestion that the structure be adopted but without recommendation.

## **Chapter Seven WHAT ARE OTHER CLUB'S DOING?**

### **PURPOSE**

In the course of our research we have come across commentaries of what other clubs are doing to meet their challenges in the current environment. We are including some of these that have been documented as a matter of potential interest to BoM and SPC.

These commentaries have been compiled and published electronically by Henselite

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the course of our research we have come across some documented accounts of how other clubs' have faced contemporary challenges.

In presenting this section, as that may be of interest to the reader, we do so recognising that the club must run its own race and base its operation on a structure that it feels is best suited to meet its own needs.

In some cases there may be fees included in the detail and we do not intend for these to be interpreted in comparison with the fee structure of the club.

Whilst subscriptions may be identified in a marketing exercise as a 'competitive edge' one way or the other they are not included here in anything but a matter of interest.

In presenting these 'stories' we will précis the article sometimes without comment.

The only thing which we will stress is something we have mentioned earlier and that is the common factor of all these clubs is extensive use of modern, upto date and attractive web sites to convey information and the use of social media such as face book, blogs, twitter and so on to get a message across particularly to the younger generation.

The research group could not be stronger in our already documented recommendation that the club must make use of these devices as part of its wider communication model.

The full commentaries of each case mentioned will appear in the Appendix. In this section we are limiting the content to the introduction and the narration of "The Problem". You will need to go to the Appendix to get the full story.

***Engadine bowling club is a medium to large club and has just completed 2 million dollars worth of extensions. It has full club facilities including a first class restaurant/bistro, quiet lounge and a Platinum TAB. Bowling Membership is around 300 with social membership around 6500. NSW State Representative and member of Team Henselite, Shane Garvey, explain the club's recent rise in membership numbers and new bowlers.***

### ***What was the problem?***

With poker machine taxes and new smoking laws we noticed a considerable down turn in trade and profits which affected how much we were able to spend on bowls within our club e.g. tournaments, prize money, player retention for Premier League, club grants to the bowling club. See Appendix 31

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***Donvale Bowls Club is a small, friendly, suburban club in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, hidden in the surrounds of the Mullum Mullum reserve.***

***What was the problem?***

Our membership had fallen below 70, our artificial rink was not in good condition, we had problems getting our grass green to suitable condition, we were not financially sound and our future was very short.

***What was your solution?***

Over two years we instilled business management practices and processes into the management of the club including reviewing everything at the club. We focused on the following areas:

Establishing a strategy and way forward for Donvale Bowls Club and communicated this to all members.

See Appendix 32

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***St Kilda Bowls Club is an inner urban club in a trendy suburb of Melbourne.***

***What was the problem?***

From the late 80's into the 90's, the Club was going into serious decline. Members were leaving the Club and there was no influx of new members. This reflected a trend across the whole sport that had enjoyed huge patronage through the post-war years but was shrinking by about 4% per year.

This got so bad at St Kilda that by 1995 there were barely enough members to field one Saturday Pennant side, and certainly not the numbers for a Tuesday VLBA side.

***What was your solution?***

There was and is no single solution or grand plan that can bring about a major change in a Club, however by keeping to three principles we have steered the Club to great success.

See Appendix 33

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***Longreach Bowling Club is a small rural club in Central Queensland with 90% male membership and an average age of 50.***

***What was the problem?***

It was too hot and the older members at the time did not encourage younger people to join the club

***What was your solution?***

The older members gradually retired and a younger more energetic committee was put in. The Club erected a retractable shade cover at a cost of \$120,000. A Friday night Goose Club was introduced where the club sold tickets during the week, up to the time of the draw.

See Appendix 34

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***Somerton Bowling Club is medium to large by South Australian club size standards. The clubrooms and 19 bowling rinks are situated in a seaside residential area (on council lands) very close to Glenelg beach and approximately 15 minutes from the City of Adelaide. The Club has approximately 400 members, and 400 additional "Night Owl" bowlers who use our greens and facilities 3 nights a week during the summer season. The Club participates in the Bowls SA Pennant Bowling Competition. It also provides professional speakers, meals, dinners, dinners with entertainment and dinner dances for members and members of the community and employs professional bar and catering staff. The Club was recently described in the Adelaide "Advertiser" as the "prestigious Somerton Bowling Club"***

***What was the problem?***

Until two years ago the club was a men only club and there was a general resistance to change. Membership numbers were declining, pennant bowling results were at best average and the general age of members was escalating without any sign of change. Actual membership numbers had been in general decline for 7 years.

***What was your solution?***

1. The Board appointed a state bowling representative as a salaried Club Captain Coach with a clear mandate to recruit new and elite bowlers and in turn facilitate pennant bowling success.

See Appendix 35

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There are some other reports of a similar nature included in the Appendix

- Melbourne Bowling Club Appendix 36
- Fitzroy Victoria Bowling & Sports Club Appendix 37
- Inclusion is the Key Kate Benton BV Appendix 38
- Recruiting New Bowlers Peter Hanlon Appendix 39
- Mooroolbark Bowls Club Appendix 40
- Croydon Bowling Club Appendix 41
- Heathmont Bowls Club Appendix 42

## **CONCLUSION**

We thank the reader for the effort in reading this report  
As we stated in the preface to this report there are issues some of which are under attention and others that will vary in priority in the eyes of the reader.

Our major aim in developing this research into "Membership of a Lawn Bowls Club- Ringwood Bowls Club Inc." was to take as a wide an approach as the brief would support and to table issues which, we think, are at least of interest, and some contentious, to the ordinary member of the sport of lawn bowls as we know it today.

BA is undertaking a venture into an Australian Premier League that on the face of the descriptions we have read is introducing some new and extreme playing conditions.

We have chosen not to cover this in the report, as our primary focus has been the community bowls club not the elite level of the game.

However in our opinion and in the light of various discussions lawn bowls is on the cusp of some very radical changes that could come to play in the shorter rather than the longer term.

As an example the controversial condition of reducing the number of ends in a pennant game, which, at the anecdotal level, was not universally accepted and even denied in some areas, could well be a move towards the introduction of sets play in pennant. This would bring the local/ community competition into line with all championship matches that are targeted over a set number of ends or at a set points score.

Whilst these changes may or may not come to pass it is incumbent on the club to be aware of them and their impact on the bowls playing community at the grass roots.

No sport, not even the highest profile competitions in any discipline can survive at an elite level only. There must be in place a feeder bank of skilled players to replace members who become unavailable.

It is clearly part of the responsibility of community clubs to be aware of and even initiate changes which are visionary and which will cater for the grass roots member at the level they choose to play.

We trust that you have found these comments both challenging and evocative and, as the Principal Researcher, I remain available to discuss any issue arising with any member at any convenient time.

There is no place for secrets and recriminations lets get on with building the future for the Ringwood Bowls Club Inc

The Research Team

Stan Bannan  
May 2012

Graham McGrath

Bob Hedrick

Peter Bertie

**List of Appendices**

<b>App No</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1</b>	The proposal to the BoM is including the formal request and a power point package
<b>2</b>	Dated August 1998 Headed Bowls Strategy and Development Prepared by Messrs Doug Corrigan, Don Jolley and Neville Fuller –Chairman This was prepared for the Men’s Committee and referred to the Board of Management seeking approval.
<b>3</b>	Dated March 2001 Prepared by Greg Allen a ‘survey of the men’s section’
<b>4</b>	Dated January 2006.. Headed Bowls Strategy RVBA Section Prepared by Neville Fuller, Bruce Stephens and Graham Clements. This paper contained 32 recommendations for consideration by the Men’s Committee.
<b>5</b>	Strategic Planning Committee 2010 “Goals for the Club”.
<b>6</b>	List of members 221 members A second list shows 257 members The current 2011/12 members Handbook reveals that there are 239 members
<b>7</b>	“Lawn Order” article by Peter Hanlon Oct/Nov 2011
<b>8</b>	Number of members in Victoria
<b>9</b>	Number of clubs in Victoria
<b>10</b>	National Bowls Census 2010 and Victoria Snapshot 2011
<b>11</b>	Strategic Plan for Victoria and sectional extracts
<b>12</b>	Extracts from Sport England Strategy 2008-11 (IPSOS Mori)
<b>13</b>	Strategic Business Planning Tool Refer Appendix 11
<b>14</b>	Victorian Population Bulletin 2010
<b>15</b>	Maroondah City Council Community Atlas including maps as available
<b>16</b>	Email from Jackie Walker Maroondah City Council
<b>17</b>	RVBA Strategic Plan 2007-11
<b>18</b>	Letter from Neil Dalrymple CEO BA
<b>19</b>	Extract from National Census page 3
<b>20</b>	Extract from National Census page 4
<b>21</b>	BIF Magazine “Lawn Order” article Aug/Sept 2011
<b>22</b>	BIF Magazine “Lawn Order” article Oct 2011 Refer Appendix 7
<b>23</b>	National Bowls Census Report Victorian Snapshot 2011
<b>24</b>	Email from BA Tony Sherwill
<b>25</b>	Background Sweeney report
<b>26</b>	Pages 77-96 Sweeney Report
<b>27</b>	Chapter 1.1 “Defining our National Sports Vision ”
<b>28</b>	“ BA Response to the Independent Sports Panels review of sport”
<b>29</b>	A submission by BA to the ISP
<b>30</b>	A copy of the report from this workshop
<b>31</b>	Engadine Bowling Club
<b>32</b>	Donvale Bowls Club
<b>33</b>	St.Kilda Bowls Club
<b>34</b>	Longreach Bowling Club
<b>35</b>	Somerton Bowls Club
<b>36</b>	Melbourne Bowling Club
<b>37</b>	Fitzroy Victoria Bowling & Sports Club
<b>38</b>	Inclusion is the Key Kate Benton BV

<b>39</b>	Recruiting New Bowlers Peter Hanlon
<b>40</b>	Mooroolbark Bowls Club
<b>41</b>	Croydon Bowling Club
<b>42</b>	Heathmont Bowls Club
<b>43</b>	Bowls NSW Premier League detail

**NOTES**