

Update On The Great Debate

Over the last few months progress toward the vote on the Unification of the VLBA and the RVBA has continued to be made on a number of fronts.

Additional Funding

The Associations are pleased to have secured additional funding from the Victorian Government to continue the unification process. This will allow for professional help in the drafting of a new constitution, computer modelling assistance with regional boundaries and a new round of consultations (Town Hall meetings). It is anticipated that these meetings will be held late in 2008 or early in 2009, once the constitution and regional boundaries have been circulated to clubs.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Joint Working Party has met monthly and drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which will be tabled at the Board Meetings of both Associations in August. The MOU is a short document which commits the Associations to continue working toward unification in good faith.

New Constitution

A new constitution is now into its third draft, but with some detailed work still to go. At this stage the Joint Working Party are using the terms Board, Victorian Regional Advisory Group, Region, Division and Club to define operating levels in the sport. It is anticipated that the final draft will be ready by October/November. The Joint Working Party has made a commitment to circulate the draft to clubs for comment.

Regional Boundaries

Street Ryan Consultants (appointed to develop options) will present their thinking to the Joint Working Party in August.

Challenging the VCAT Ruling

Initial approaches to a Queens Council have elicited the opinion that the Associations would not be successful in challenging the VCAT ruling. Early opinion suggests that it would be a very expensive exercise with no positive outcome. The Joint Working Party continues to seek views through legal and government avenues.

Voting

When clubs are called to vote on whether unification should go ahead they will need to abide by their own constitutions in deciding how the club will cast its vote. Closer to the event the Joint Working Party will be issuing a memorandum to guide clubs on using inclusive processes so that all affiliated bowlers have the opportunity to have their say.

Transition

If there is a YES vote for unification (more than 75% of votes cast) then there will need to be a period of transition from the existing Associations to Bowls Victoria. If the vote occurs in early April 2009 it is anticipated that transition will be completed by October 2009. Transition will be a complex process involving the creation of an Interim Board. Planning for transition will need to begin soon, as waiting for a 'yes' vote before beginning work would result in a overly long transition period stretching well into 2010.



Frequently Asked Questions Updated

The following issues/comments were raised during the consultation phase around regional Victoria.

Q: What will be the effect on overall income for 'Bowls Victoria' when those people currently doubly affiliated pay one fee?

A: Work is currently being undertaken to determine the precise impact but it is estimated that a reduction in fees of \$125K would be more than offset by gains made through administrative savings.

Q: In a newly unified organisation what impact, if any, will the Associations Incorporation Act have?

A: There will be no change.

Q: What will be the policy on paying players?

A: This will continue to be a club decision.

Q: Will there be paid experts on the Board?

A: The JWP is not in a position to determine this right now but will consider it as part of the drafting of a new constitution.

Q: There are significant boundary issues with smaller clubs and distances to be travelled.

A: A Regional Boundaries Reference Group is being put together to consider the boundary issues and members of the group will be aware of this situation.

Q: How will the Board be appointed?

A: The JWP is not in a position to determine this right now but will consider it as part of the drafting of a new constitution.

Q: How will the Victorian Regional Advisory Group (VRAG) be appointed?

A: The JWP is not in a position to determine this right now but will consider it as part of the drafting of a new constitution.

Q: The new Board should meet around the state as the state cabinet does.

A: This currently happens in the RVBA and the JWP sees no reason for it not to continue in the new organisation.

Q: Will expenses be paid for Board members?

A: It is anticipated that basic travel and approved expenses will be paid to all Board members.

Q: Will board meetings be open for all who wish to attend?

A: No. As currently occurs, Board meetings will not be open due to the sometimes sensitive nature of discussions and decisions.

Q: Give women the option to play on Saturday?

A: There are Saturday Pennant competitions

currently offered by the VLBA and Gippsland DLBA, so women are able to play. Women must be affiliated with the RVBA to play in RVBA Saturday pennant.

Q: Will you talk to individual clubs re boundary changes before going ahead with them?

A: We may need to consult with some individual clubs, but the Regional Boundaries Reference Group will be more involved in consulting with regions as appropriate.

Q: What is the status of coaches and umpires under the new organisation?

A: There is no change (all are recognised under the Australian Sports Commission's NCAS and NOAS).

Q: Who pays the costs of legal fees to change the constitutions at club levels?

A: Clubs will be responsible for any costs for change to constitutions at a local level.

Q: Affiliation fees are different in metro/country for RVBA?

A: It is acknowledged there is a small difference at the moment between RVBA metro and country affiliation fees. No recommended scale of fees has been discussed as yet.

Q: Regions need to be evenly distributed if we are to seriously change the country/metro divide?

A: The Regional Boundaries Reference Group will be aware of this and take this into account when determining proposed boundary changes. The JWP has made a commitment to addressing as many inequalities as it can and moving away from the terminology of metropolitan and country.

Q: Will a video go out to clubs?

A: Work will begin immediately to examine the feasibility of this idea as part of the overall communication strategy.

Q: The Associations may not be able to specify 50/50 gender breakdown because of Equal Opportunity regulations?

A: Advice has been sought on this matter. Legal opinion is that specifying gender breakdown is not a problem if defined within the constitution.

Q: Districts/Regions may have to be incorporated to protect decision makers?

A: Advice is being sought regarding the advantages of being under the Incorporations Act.

Q: What will happen to the assets of both organisations if unification goes ahead?

A: It is proposed that the assets and liabilities of both organisations will be folded into the new organisation "Bowls Victoria" to continue to support bowlers and the sport of bowls in Victoria.

Q: What's happened since the Town Hall Meetings?

A: A report on the meetings has been published in *Bowls in Focus* and placed on the websites. A summary appeared in E-News. The Joint Working Party (JWP) has redrafted a Memorandum of Understanding for consideration by the Councils and is currently drafting a new Constitution. Principles for drawing new regional boundaries have been discussed and a consultant appointed to assist with the process. Additional Government funding has been secured to continue towards a vote.