



BOWLS
VICTORIA

Bowls Club Management

**10 Common
Management Issues
Clubs Encounter**

Introduction

Bowls Victoria is striving to develop strong viable Clubs, and part of being a strong viable Club means identifying issues and responding proactively. This list of 10 Common Issues aims to help Clubs identify with their current or looming challenges and offers guidance and links to resources to address them.

The list does not necessarily represent the issues that all Clubs are experiencing, and most Clubs will already know their biggest challenges or issues. Rather, the list identifies common issues that Bowls Victoria receive most queries on from its member Clubs.

Clubs are encouraged to consider if these issues are relevant to their Club and whether or not the processes and systems are in place to address them. If not, then what strategies, policies, practices and procedures need to be developed to overcome them.

This document offers a few key recommendations for each topic with links to external resources to provide more in-depth guidance freely available online.

Clubs are encouraged to use this list as a starting point for initiating discussions within the Club and setting priorities for improvement.

Bowls Victoria staff and the Bowls Australia Regional Bowls Managers are available to help as Clubs explore these issues and the actions to add value to their Club.

Club Health Check

Club committees may also start by conducting a Club Health Check through Sport Australia, which is an online assessment of how your Club operates. It's an excellent resource, free to use and provides a detailed report identifying improvements and growth areas for your Club.

www.sportaus.gov.au/club_development

Club Management

10 Issues

1. Disciplinary Processes – Following Procedure
2. Understanding Committee Roles & Responsibilities
3. Adherence to Club Rules/Constitution & Policies
4. Clubs without Strategic Direction
5. Financial Budgets, Management & Responsible Financial Reporting
6. Pennant Selection
7. Equal Opportunity
8. Succession Planning
9. Attracting New Volunteers & Retaining Them
10. Connecting with the Community

When a Club Member disciplinary process arises, the last outcome a Club needs is a messy dispute that distracts the Club from its core activities and negatively effects the Club's culture, reputation and its members.

The best way to ensure your Club is prepared for these situations is to ensure provisions for disciplining members are outlined in your Rules/Constitution and that you know the rights of the member being disciplined.

It's important that your Rules/Constitution sets out the types of complaints that the Board/Committee can consider and also what powers they have, such as whether they can suspend or expel a member and what process they need to follow.

It is also very important that any consideration of any complaint observes the rules of natural justice, which includes informing the member concerned of any charges against them, providing the member with the opportunity to be heard, and that any decision about the matter is made in good faith.

Clubs should ensure that their disciplinary procedure includes, but is not limited to:

- Who will constitute the disciplinary committee, or who has the right to appoint the disciplinary committee;
- The grounds upon which and by whom a disciplinary complaint can be brought against a member;
- The right of the member to receive adequate notice of the time, date and venue of the disciplinary hearing (this should be at least 14 days);
- The right of the member to receive detailed notice of the allegations made against them, and the grounds on which it is proposed to discipline the person;
- The right of the person to provide written and oral submissions to the disciplinary committee; and if provided for in the Rules/Constitution
- That a person has a right to appeal the decision of the disciplinary committee and has a right to receive written notice of that right to appeal, and the timeframes within which an appeal must be lodged.

Recommendation: The Board/Committee delegate the power to discipline Members to an independent unbiased committee or disciplinary panel set up for the purpose.

Recommendation: If there is a dispute within your Club, appoint someone to monitor it very closely to ensure the Club is following due legal processes so as to avoid it escalating to a court matter.

Recommendation: A Club does not have to initially take disciplinary action to address a troublesome member. Discussions with the member personally or through formal mediation may resolve a matter. Once again, refer to what can be applied through the Rules/Constitution of the Association.

Resource: Bowls Victoria lawyers Lander & Rogers have developed a pro forma Club Constitution which outlines a strong disciplinary process. This can be found on the Bowls Victoria [Club Assist](#) section of our website.

Issue 1

Disciplinary Processes - Following Procedure



Issue 2

Understanding Committee Roles & Responsibilities

The Board's/Committee's role is one of leadership, stewarding the Club on behalf of its members. Its task is to ensure that the Club remains viable and effective in the present and into the future by governing, directing and monitoring the Clubs business, affairs and operations through these key responsibilities:

- Strategic planning with a future focus - Setting a strategic plan for a period of years and reviewing it regularly;
- Formulation of policies that guide the management of the Club;
- Monitoring performance;
- Reporting to the members as to the Club's operations, functions and direction;
- Overseeing management of resources and finances;
- Managing risk responsibly which, if not dealt with effectively, may affect the continuity, financial viability or even lead to a decline in membership of the Club.

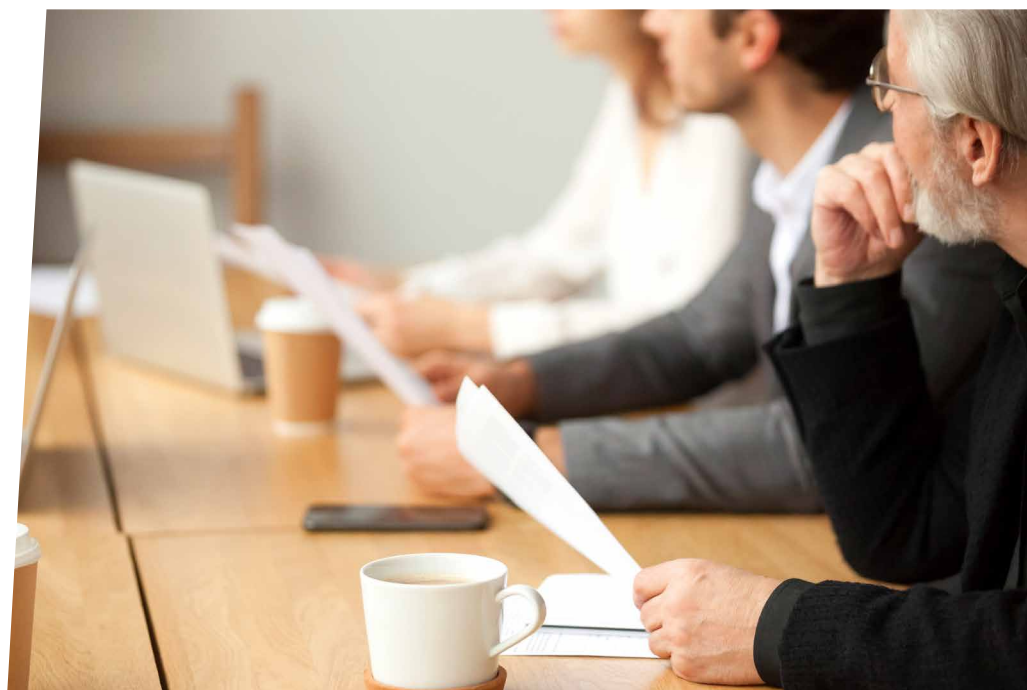
A common challenge for a small Club is how to distinguish between the strategy and policy work of a Board/Committee and the operational needs of the Club. Small Clubs may need to change the way Board/Committee meetings are run, with strategic and policy items appearing early on the agenda and any items for operational decisions appearing later on the agenda. Either way, efforts should be made to separate the Board's/Committee's work from operational work to allow a Club Board/Committee to be future focussed and better fulfil its stewardship obligations to the Club.

A Board/Committee speaks with "one voice". This means that if the Board/Committee has a position on a matter it is the Board's/Committee's position regardless of whether one or more members disagrees with it. It is the responsibility of each Board/Committee member to advance and promote the decision of the Board/Committee and not to publicly discuss his or her disagreement, which can often lead to a destabilising of the authority in which the Board/Committee is held by Club members.

Recommendation: Develop a Board/Committee Charter. This is a document that clearly defines the respective roles, responsibilities and authorities of the Board/Committee. The assigned roles and responsibilities of each committee member should be outlined in specific position descriptions.

Resource: [Sample Position Descriptions](#) from Sports Community and [Sample Position Descriptions](#) from Bowls Australia include committee roles such as the President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.

Resource: The [Secretary's Satchel – Guide for Secretaries](#) is designed to help the secretary of an incorporated association in Victoria. The Guide is in eight parts, many containing practical "tools" – such as sample documents, checklists, registers and flowcharts – to help you in your role.





Issue 3

Adherence to Duties, Club Rules/ Constitution & Policies

As a Board/Committee member of a Club, the vast majority of your functions are likely to be non-legal. However, in performing your main tasks as a Board/Committee member, there are some legal duties that you need to be aware of.

The main legal duties are:

- To act with Care and Diligence
- To act in Good Faith
- To not make improper Use of Information
- To avoid Conflict of Interests
- To act in the best interest of the Association
- To prevent Insolvent Trading

It is an offence under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 for a director to fail to comply with any of their legal duties and a court may order them to pay a penalty or if trading while insolvent hold them personally and financially responsible.

It is also a legal requirement that a Bowls Club and its members follow the rules of the Association. Your Club Rules/Constitution will dictate the powers of the committee, its size, how often it should meet, how the committee members are elected, etc.

Along with the Rules/Constitution, Clubs should also have a set of policy documents covering issues such as Privacy, Occupational Health and Safety, Smoking, Child Safety, etc. Having these policies sets clear expectations for your members, helps prepare the Club to react appropriately if an incident arises, reduces the Club's liability if an incident occurs, sends a clear message that you care about the safety of your members, etc.

If a member acts outside these, Clubs need to take immediate action to enforce its rules and policies. Enforcing Club rules and policies means less issues, less conflict, creates a good culture, keeps members happy and leads to a good reputation while attracting more members.

Resource: Not for Profit Law Guide - [Guide to the legal duties of not-for-profit committee members, directors and office holders.](#)

Resource: Sample policies are available in [Club Assist](#) on the Bowls Victoria website and other online sources.

Resource: Launched in 2018, [Club Respect](#) provides Clubs with practical and strategic tools to navigate difficult issues and situations.

Issue 4

Clubs without Strategic Direction



Planning is crucial to the success of your Club and is one of the key responsibilities of the committee. It provides a 'road map' for where your Club wants to be and how it will get there.

A strategic plan lays out the overall mission and direction of the Club and how objectives will be achieved. It also takes into account the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the external opportunities and threats, and outlines some strategies to address these. In general, a strategic plan incorporates the following items:

- Vision and/or Mission Statement
- Goals/Objectives
- Strategies and/or Tasks to achieve the goals/objectives
- Timelines for the completion of the strategies/tasks
- Resource implications, that is, what will it cost
- Performance Indicators so you know the progress or when the strategy/task is completed
- Priorities for Action - what should be undertaken in years one, two and three etc.

There is no right or wrong way to prepare a strategic plan and they should reflect the relative size of your Club.

Recommendation: Try to involve as many people in the planning process as possible. The more people who are consulted in the development of the plan, the more it will reflect the true direction of your Club.

Recommendation: A strategic plan is a living document that should be monitored regularly and reviewed annually.

Resource: [Club Help – Strategic and Business Planning](#)

Example: [Wodonga Bowling Club Strategic Business Plan](#)



Issue 5

Financial Budgets, Management & Responsible Financial Reporting

Clubs, irrespective of size, need to conduct their operations as a business including strategic planning, budgets, financial controls, management and reporting.

The Incorporated Associations Reform Act 2012 (the Act) provides many powers as well as imposing many responsibilities as outlined elsewhere in this document.

Powers include the ability to invest the monies of the association, borrow money, use the Club's assets as security, enter into contracts etc. Cash and other resources must be managed in a responsible and equitable manner to benefit of ALL members alike.

With Fiduciary Duty being paramount, the Act does provide a level of protection to Club Board/Committee members who act in good faith in the best interests of their Club.

However, if a Club trades while insolvent ("unable to pay all its debts as and when they become payable"), any protection provided under the Incorporated Associations Reform Act 2012 no longer applies. Then the relevant provisions of the Corporations Act 2001 apply, where Board/Committee Members can be personally held liable for the Club's debts and are considered to have committed an offence for which the penalties can be significant.

Consequently, one of the major reasons for optimising financial reporting to Club Board/Committee Members is that the risk can be personal. A profit and loss statement, balance sheet and a regularly updated rolling cash forecast is essential.

It is recommended that Clubs move beyond basic "Club Accounting" to small business management accounting. Club members and others need to have a full understanding and appreciation for why best management practices need to be implemented. These practices need to be communicated; the Club members need to know why, why they should care and how it will directly affect them.

Through the Affiliation Fee Financial Relief process, Bowls Victoria has identified that while Clubs have basic accounting reports. Also, Clubs appear to be asset rich but cash poor.

There are issues around Goods for Own Use [ALL consumption of drinks, snacks, meals, etc. by Committee, Members, Employees, Volunteers] needing to be recorded, there is often a lack of physical controls or regular physical inventory counts, such that bar "Shrinkage!" occurs and there are no "Rainy Day" reserves for replacement or upgrading of facilities, greens and equipment.

Finally, the sport collectively is dealing with declining membership and struggling to recruit and retain members and with a lack of volunteers this all may lead some Clubs to consider a merger with another Club.

- Resources:**
- [Club/Association Financial Management Guide](#)
 - [Damn Good Advice for Board Members](#)
 - [Damn Good Advice for Treasurers](#)
 - [Damn Good Advice on Cyber-Safety and Fraud Prevention](#)
 - [Thinking Big - Mergers Guide](#)



Issue 6

Pennant Selection

Clubs should develop a selection policy that defines the selection process and clearly states the selection criteria for Pennant.

A selection policy that is clearly stated, widely understood, is (and seen to be) fair, transparent, and unbiased helps to minimise selection disputes.

Members clearly need to understand the basis for selection, so a selection policy should include procedures such as: composition of the selection committee; a timeline for selection; selection criteria and standards to be maintained; replacement of players due to injury or personal commitments, appeals process, etc.

Selection must be based on a bowler's ability.

The selection policy should be communicated to all members at the beginning of each Pennant season and available on the Club website and in the Clubrooms.

The most critical people in the selection process (besides the players) is the selectors. They are the people that should follow and/or implement the selection policy and selection criteria. The role of the selection committee is to select the teams based on the Club's playing philosophy. Most Clubs start the season aiming to win the premiership. Often, Clubs will promote promising players to higher grades to give them experience.

In general, the following qualities should be sought in selectors: respect for the policy, fairness, independence, knowledge, respect for persons, diligence and efficiency, integrity, and accountability and transparency.

Resource: Bowls Victoria organise [Selection Module](#) workshops as part of the Bowls Australia National Coaching Accreditation Scheme. Anyone can attend the workshops (cost of \$50) and the [Selection Module Handbook](#) is also available to purchase for \$20.

Resource: [Bowls Australia Sample Selection Policy](#)



Issue 7

Equal Opportunity

All bowls competitions are required to comply with the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act (the Act) and that selection on ability meets the objectives the Act.

It is the responsibility of the individual Club to apply for exception or exemption to VCAT.

For further information regarding determining application for exceptions or exemptions to the provisions of the Act, please refer to the links below:

Resource: [Equal opportunity in bowls - What you need to know about holding single-sex competitions](#)

Resource: [How to conduct Single-Sex bowls events](#)

With more compliance requirements, potential legal penalties and time required to commit to the role, it is no surprise that volunteer Board/Committee positions across the state are becoming increasingly difficult to retain and fill.

Having a high turnover on a Board/Committee can be an issue for a Board's/Committee's effectiveness, so failing to undertake succession planning may be a lost opportunity to gain talent for your Board/Committee, leaving a vacuum that may allow the not quite right type of person to be elected at an AGM.

Key steps in succession planning is to (1) identify the key roles, responsibilities and required knowledge for the Board/Committee, (2) to devise a position description for each key role (as noted in Issue 2) so potential successors know exactly what is required of them, what time commitment is required and what the position is all about, and (3) to identify potential successors and discuss the role with them.

It is critical that newly appointed Board/Committee members are appropriately inducted to the Board/Committee and that they understand their roles within the Club. An induction program will allow them to ease in and participate in the Board's/Committee's work as soon as possible. This usually entails a meeting with the Chair who provides copies of Board/Committee minutes, policies, financial statements, etc.

If the role is linked to a portfolio, then the departing director should also find time to meet with the new director and provide a detailed handover and manual of what the position requires.

Recommendation: To ensure continuity on the Board/Committee, execution of the strategic plan and to ease the pressure of succession planning, Board/Committee elections should be rotated to ensure that not everyone is up for election at the same time.

Recommendation: Diversity on a Board/Committee has many advantages, so developing a culture that exposes as many suitable people as possible to what the Board/Committee does is important. For example, look to and encourage younger members with new ideas seeking experience to further develop their skills.

Recommendation: Conduct a governance review and consider reducing the number of committees and positions to be filled. Many Clubs with a Board/Committee and a separate Men's and Women's committee struggle to fill their positions and should look to eliminate and/or reduce the number of positions that their Rules/Constitution require (note that this would require a Constitutional change).

Resource: Read more on [Succession Planning](#) from the Institute of Community Directors including a checklist when developing your succession plan.



To be continued...

Issue 9

Attracting New Volunteers & Retaining Them

Volunteers are integral to the success of bowls Clubs bringing valuable skills, energy, experience and new ideas to the running of the Club.

However, what is common practice in Clubs is the over reliance of the same few volunteers to cover a large range of duties. There is always a chance that good Club volunteers are taken for granted and over volunteer. Clubs should therefore make it a standard Club practice that jobs and duties are shared and rotated to ensure volunteers are not overloaded.

Your Club needs to build a good connection with its volunteers by identifying the different types of jobs you have available and skills required and match your volunteers' skills and interests to these roles.

The values that motivate people to volunteer in sporting Clubs are things like generosity, love of sport, social connections and appreciation. When you're recruiting members for your Club, it's crucial to make people feel welcome, provide training for roles and to find out about the things that motivate them.

Recommendation: Appoint a volunteer coordinator: A key factor in maintaining volunteer satisfaction is the appointment of a volunteer coordinator for your Club. Duties may include selection and placement of volunteers, recognition program, etc. Ensure a position description is developed.

Recommendation: Screen volunteers prior to placement. Clubs need to provide safe environments, so conduct police checks, Working with Children checks, etc.

Recommendation: Recognise and reward volunteers. This doesn't need to be complex to establish or manage but is essential so everyone feels valued for their efforts and, as a result, volunteers will be more inclined to contribute their time again.

Resource: Volunteering Victoria has a comprehensive [Volunteer Management in Sport Toolkit](#) as well as their general [Volunteer Management Toolkit](#).





Issue 10

Connecting with the Community

Bowls Clubs play a key role in society by providing an opportunity for people to socially connect, engage, contribute, keep healthy and active.

Yet many Clubs are not embracing this responsibility by not opening their doors, inviting the community in and capitalising on the benefits (including financial).

Make it easy to get involved - expand the Club offerings outside of Pennant by organising regular come and try days, barefoot bowls, attracting the future bowler through school programs, hiring out their Club rooms for functions, etc.

Flexibility and enjoyment will drive participation, so where possible create a range of Club activities and opportunities for people to participate at times convenient to potential new members. Creating opportunities focused more on participation, enjoyment and socialisation rather than competition and winning is proven as a great way to break down barriers to entering the Club.

Clubs are encouraged to make it clear that the Club welcomes a diverse membership, in age, gender, culture, ethnicity etc. and creates a family friendly environment.

Recommendation: Clubs must have a website in today's age, because this is how many people search for information. But your website must be visually appealing, easy to navigate, up to date and have an open invitation to come and get involved in the Club. Check out the [Alphington Bowls Club website](#).

Recommendation: Develop and implement a marketing plan. Develop relationships with the local newspaper, embrace social media, put posters and flyers up in shop windows, utilise Council communications, etc.

Resource: [Marketing and Promoting Your Club](#)

Further Advice: Contact Bowls Victoria's [Participation Manager Neil Gray](#) now on (03) 9861 7100 to discuss the participation offerings available through Bowls Victoria such as Bowling with Babies and Girls on the Green or seek advice on attracting schools, disability groups, etc. to your Club.



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