

How will the dissolution of divisions affect me

Will I be forced to play and travel further than I do presently?

A. 99.9% of players won't have any change in bowling activities of who or where they play. It's worth noting that a Playing Area is a group of Clubs in a common geographical area as defined by the Region Board.

When will the move to dissolve Divisions and the transfer to Region occur?

A. The transfer of divisions into one Region will be effective from July 1st 2021, all existing divisions in Regions will need to meet with each other to confirm an agreed way forward, this meeting should be co-ordinated through the existing Region structure.

How will this move of divisions to a Region affect me?

A. The majority of members in your division will see no effect of the streamlining of governance in the Region. Playing areas may be different, however the basic pennant structure will not alter. It is not relevant where a Board operates from as the underlying matter is that bowls will be still be conducted.

The overall factor in making this change is to counter the ongoing loss of volunteers and to lessen the burden on existing office bearers for the existing divisions.

Why haven't I heard about the proposed changes from my Division or Region?

A. The Region and Boundary Review Committee met with every Region during March this year as well as September 2019(with BVRR'S) to discuss the change and the dissolution of Divisions. Unfortunately, with the Pandemic Covid-19 Divisions and Regions have found it difficult to meet to discuss the implementation of this change.

Won't we need more volunteers than less now our Region is bigger?

A. The move to one Region will see duplication of roles disappear. We will not need three or even four Presidents/Vice-Presidents, Secretaries or Treasurers to manage the affairs of the Region along with more boards of directors.

Each of the playing areas will now be represented on the Region Board along with representatives on the various Region Committees to manage the affairs of the playing area.

Your current Region Board is comprised of the current divisions and becomes no bigger than it currently is in size with the exception of a Goldfields, Bendigo and Campaspe who are moving to a larger Region by size.

I feel that the change is being bull dozed through and not enough consultation is being done?

A. BV has discussed this change with your Regions Bowls Victoria Regional Representatives as far back as a Region Conference in Bendigo in 2018. It was discussed again in September 2019 and all Regions had meetings with BV in March 2020 about the implementation of change. Ultimately a decision was made that July 1st 2021 was to be the revised date for completion. BV believe that 15 months' notice is acceptable for this change to occur.

As it is not possible to meet individually with clubs, the consultative process has been co-ordinated through Regions and Divisions. BV have supplied adequate information for these two groups to allow them to disseminate to club members.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY

How is dissolving Divisions going to future proof our Sport?

A. The traditional Sport of bowls is in decline in both participation and volunteers. There are very few younger members (30-50) coming through divisions to take up the responsibility of administering the sport and some are actively discouraged when they do put their hand up to take on a role. We are relying on members who are in their 70's and 80's who may not be here for one reason or another in 5-10 years' time. Consequently, clubs and divisions may fold or suffer adversely due to lack of experienced administrators. Regions will be comprised of less volunteers than required at Division level under this new model.

Most bowlers and clubs will not notice a difference in the playing of the game. We are laying a foundation to future proof our sport. Having 16 direct points of contact around the state for the different functions required will greatly improve the administration of our sport and to communicate effectively.

Teleconference meetings for example can be arranged with Chairs of the different committees in each of the 16 Regions and the BV Staff or Committee Chairs applicable to openly discuss new ideas and concerns that each Region has. Clear examples are umpiring and new participation initiatives.

Being able to share ideas, problems and concerns state-wide on a more regular basis will only enhance our sport.

In identifying the issue of falling levels of volunteers and the current format of pennant not attracting new bowlers, BV have several programs available to Regions for their uptake. Having 16 direct points of contact will make it easier and more efficient to communicate around the state.

A review of our own (BV) office has identified the need to segregate day to day operations with strategic planning for the future. We are bringing that advice to the Regions to assist in making bowls a better and

more accessible sport for all. It is simply good business practice to move to 16 Regions moving forward. Companies are always reviewing how they operate, and we are no different.

What has been the driver for introducing this change?

A. We have been asked by many Divisions, individual clubs and bowlers over time to review the structure in light of growing and declining populations relevant to their current areas. It is also a requirement of the BV constitution that BV review the region structure from time to time and part of our Strategic Plan.

In your preliminary documentation to Regions you mention urban sprawl, how does urban sprawl effect country clubs?

A. The urban sprawl is only reflective of what is happening to country regions that border metropolitan regions. It is acknowledged that for the majority of outer country regions, urban sprawl has no significant impact. The documents were provided for all our members' information, not just individual areas.

Why do you state that positions on Boards and committees are not being filled?

A. Society is changing at a more rapid pace than ever before. Things are not the same as were in the past. People will look at how busy a volunteer is and say to themselves "I don't want to be that busy in my down time".

The old adage, if you want something done, give it to a busy person demonstrates itself in everyday life.

There will be people who work in their club, volunteer at Division level and then possibly also at Region level. But a lot of people will have time to do one level of volunteering so long as it is in small doses. Unfortunately, there are those amongst us who are called upon to do much more.

With one regional administration body it creates an opportunity to "give remuneration" to a volunteer who could do the majority of the administration work!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In your document you mention best practice, what is this and how was it arrived at?

A. BV is part of the Sports Network that meets regularly with all major sporting bodies at various times through the year to discuss innovation in sport, sponsorship, grants and what is effectively called best practice. The Region model is used by AFL Victoria, Basketball, Netball, Hockey, Athletics, Football (Soccer) and is seen by all sports to be the most effective in governing sport no matter what the discipline.

BV would be derelict in their duty not to examine opportunities to improve their sport not only to improve competition but improve management of their sport. BV have for some time now had this implementation on its Strategic Plan for our Sport.

Best practice is about achieving a higher standard of results than what is currently experienced under the current methods.

Competition Playing Conditions and Regulations

Does this mean we have 16 Regions and 16 different regulations on how to play the game of Bowls in Victoria?

A. The state of Victoria is no different to the remainder of Australia. Whilst the basics of bowls are elementary, there will always be a slight difference mainly weather related to each region in the state. For example, Goldfields do not play on days of total fire ban because they have many CFA volunteers. Playing bowls is the simplest of games. Pennant Conditions of Play may differ in Playing areas within a Region and across regions.

We all must strive to facilitate participation. The conditions governing how the game is played can be adapted to a Region and playing areas where appropriate and when required.

BV issues standard CoP each year which can simply be adopted which then aligns every region across the state.

What about the standard of competition in our Region?

A. Some Regions may consider introducing a 'premier' type competition. An elite level of competition would be an option if there were possibly eight clubs that had sufficient depth in their club to participate. The thing those clubs would most likely have in common is, that they are large clubs with depth of talent.

Those eight clubs may come from any playing area in the Region.

Generally, players at elite levels are more prepared for further travel, however one idea to overcome the tyranny of distance, was that clubs competing could meet half way to accomplish this. For pennant within the playing areas, the second level team from those large clubs would most likely be at a similar level with the top team from mid- sized clubs.

No one has said you must have a Premier Division. Some Regions may want it, others won't, but the option is there. The Region and clubs within would make that decision. We all must be aware and protective of smaller clubs as without them there would be no competition.

What the new structure offers is opportunity however, that does not mean when you make a change that it has to be locked in forever.

Who will be responsible for organising the playing areas in my Region?

A. The Region Board will determine what the playing areas are upon consultation with the various stakeholders. Generally playing areas will consist of existing divisions with an opportunity to tweak clubs on the borders of the divisions.

How will State events be conducted in my Region?

A. Essentially the same as they currently are. If needed, the Region Board can decide to have all players within the region compete or use the 'Playing Areas' to eliminate excessive travel. Finals of state events could be conducted in alternate playing areas as a guide.

How will representatives be chosen to represent my Region at Representative events?

A. The region committee responsible for representative selection will determine selection criteria with all bowlers in a Region eligible for selection.

New Constitutions

Does this mean new constitutions will need to be introduced at Region level?

A. New Region constitutions may need to be introduced, depending on the individual Region. BV will assist all Regions in completing this task and have created a template to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

Who will pay for Region Constitutions?

A. Bowls Victoria will assist in the change of constitutions providing the template and covering the costs of lodging the new constitutions through Consumer Affairs Victoria.

Does my club need a new constitution?

A. Individual clubs should not require any changes to their constitutions

Region Boards and Committees

How will a new Board be elected?

A. BV will assist in providing information as to how to go about creating a new Board. Of course, all the existing Divisions will have additional input into determining how many members will sit on the board or any other committee required to be appointed to manage the Regions responsibilities. It's worth noting that best-practice governance suggests a Board of not more than 9 persons.

Boards will consist of equal representation from all the playing areas in that Region to avoid any conflict of interests.

Who will comprise the new board?

A. As per the template constitution, it is important that all current divisions have representation on the new Region Board to ensure best practice. This is particularly important in the initial years. Region Board members can be nominated by clubs in existing Divisions (and an election may be required in each of the proposed playing areas to determine who will represent them if the number of nominations exceed the positions available). It is important that gender balance is also taken into consideration and every effort should be made to ensure this occurs.

How will the various committees work?

A. The committees required to manage bowls in a Region will be agreed upon by the Region Board and should reflect best practice. It is the best interests of all Region members to actively contribute to the running of the Region. Regions have been provided with Committee Terms of Reference to assist them

How many persons will we be required to be on the various committees?

A. The number of persons to be on committees will very much revolve around their roles and purpose for the Region. Media/Public Relations may involve having only one from each Playing Area. Pennant committee may require three from each Playing Area. The Region Board can determine the composition of each committee.

Who will do fixtures for the competition?

A. The Region Pennant Committee will determine the Pennant/Competition calendar for all clubs in the Region.

How will we manage the temperature rules in our playing area?

A. In each of the playing areas there will be representatives of the Region pennant committee. These persons will have the responsibility of advising clubs if a game of bowls is to proceed with regard to the temperature.

Will the Region Board have regular meetings?

A. When the Region Board is established the Board will determine the frequency of meetings and where they are proposed to be held. Meetings could be conducted electronically or face-to-face if required.

What format will they take?

A. All Region meetings will be conducted similarly how current Regions are managed with the primary focus of running a bowls competition effectively in their Region.

What will happen to existing life members of the Divisions?

A. Existing life members of Divisions will be noted as life members of the Region. Future recognition will be determined by the Region Board under agreed conditions.

What will happen to the Honour Boards in my division?

A. The existing honour boards should be held in existing premises, new honour boards should be erected at a mutually agreed venue. If agreed by the Region Board electronic honour boards could be used to recognise the contributions made by members and event/pennant champions

Finance

What will happen to the current bank accounts where there are divisions within Regions?

A. Constitutions generally advise on what is to happen to existing funds should a division be no longer operating, as a rule it should say that funds will be transferred to a similar organisation with like purposes. In this case we would envisage that all existing divisions will close their bank accounts and the funds be transferred into a Region account where all the activities of the Region are administered from.

It will be important that a preliminary budget be set for the Region so that affiliation fees are adequate to manage the operations of the Region taking into account proposed funds transferred.

Sponsorship and Grants

How will the change affect our sponsorship arrangements?

A. Where clubs have individual sponsorships there should be no changes, where a Region has contractual arrangements in place it may be an opportunity to re-negotiate current arrangements given the proposed changes. Playing areas could still be used where required.

We are seeking Grants from local and state governments how does the change effect this process?

A. We are not changing local government areas or boundaries you will still be able to seek grants in the usual manner. There will be no name changes to clubs or Regions unless the club or Region requests to do so.

Club Information

Can we still have Club tournaments?

A. All clubs will be able to conduct individual tournaments as they currently do.

What will be the additional costs to my club?

A. Club members should not see any increases in affiliation fees as a result of dissolving divisions into Regions. Fixed costs such as honorariums and state event prize monies will now not need to be duplicated.

Typically, clubs pay an affiliation fee to their Division and within this amount a fee is payable to the Region for the purpose of managing State Event finals and managing representative Region championships.

How will a club get their concerns to the Region Board?

A. In most cases a club in a playing area that has any questions or concerns on how bowls is being played in their area can take their query to the representatives that sit on the Region Board who can answer that query or if it is felt that it needs to be taken to the Region Board will do so.

Miscellaneous

My division wants to stay as a division.

A. Unfortunately, this is not sustainable in the long run. The sport is faced with reduction in the number of volunteers putting their hands up to run the competitions and it is also obvious that there is a high degree of over-governance across the regions that have divisions.

The establishment of this improved governance structure will reduce the level of volunteers required to run the sport, it will save members monies through economies of scale and create better competitions in areas geographically located.

Do we have a legal right to challenge Bowls Victoria over the changes?

A. No. Bowls Victoria have a legal right through its constitution to determine divisions/regions and club location.