



# Weekly Bulletin

Peter Hanlon - Chief Executive

**bowls victoria**

**Bulletin No. 37 Thursday 5 May 2011**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE NEWS – Peter Hanlon**

## **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Board of Bowls Victoria is delighted to finally indicate to our membership that after years of solid negotiation, the Equal Opportunity Act in Victoria is in the process of being amended to enable sports such as ours to have greater control over the management of competitions for men and women, separately and together.



*Attorney-General, Robert Clark, and Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hugh Delahunty, symbolically **hand the bowl back** to Bowls Victoria Director and bowler Pat Calabresi. Bowls Victoria once again will be able to conduct single-gender competitions under an amended, new Equal Opportunity Act in Victoria.*

There will be many bowlers who will take great pleasure in recognizing that they have played a key role in assisting in this outcome. The lobbying of local politicians, in particular, has been a contributing factor in helping to bring this to the attention of the new government. Thank you.

But, to those bowlers who through their public accusations that the failure to address this matter was evidence of Bowls Victoria's inaction or ineptitude, those arguments are fully understood for what they are by those with whom we have worked in recent years.

**Equal Opportunity Act** – The new Equal Opportunity Act by the Baillieu Government, especially through Attorney-General, Robert Clark, and Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hugh Delahunty, will go to the Second Reading stage later today.

The wording of new Equal Opportunity Act, providing it survives the course of passing through parliament, will become public in Hansard tomorrow. As such, a more detailed explanation will follow in tomorrow's Bulletin.

The new Act will also remove the requirement of Bowls Victoria to go to VCAT every three years to seek renewal of current exemptions (for elite pathway events). As pathway programs, they will automatically be allowed.

In brief, the Act will be amended to enable Bowls Victoria, and any other sports that may have been caught up in the "strength, stamina, physique" provision, to have greater control over the conduct of single gender events in the interests of participation in their sport.

## **BACKGROUND**

In April 2008, the then RVBA and VLBA sent a submission to the Department of Justice as part of *A Review of the exceptions and exemptions for the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)* in which the findings by VCAT were described as having negative impacts on participation, especially by women, due to the Act's reliance on the factors of strength, stamina and physique only. We argued that such reliance did not take account of other factors, including the need for emotional, psychological and social satisfaction when competing. We argued that the strength, stamina and physique decision was effectively having the effect of "reverse discrimination" insofar as many (women in particular) were finding the "mixed" pennant unsatisfying. This submission was made public to clubs at the time. But it was hardly bed-time reading.

Under the new Baillieu Government, and arising from various factors (the submissions under the *Exceptions Review* above by bowls, by Netball Victoria and by *Vicsport*; concerns expressed by other sports that they could become caught in the same predicament as bowls – darts, snooker, ten pin bowling, etc; direct discussions with Minister Delahunty (including those dating back to before being elected into government); discussions with the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; assistance from Lander & Rogers; well argued often passionate presentations from dissatisfied bowlers to their local Members, etc), the exceptions to the Act were developed within the Department of Justice/Attorney-General's Department.

I was invited to meet with senior staff in the Department of Justice in relation to the proposed changes to the Act. Subsequently, President Graeme Hosken, Deputy President Betty Collins and Director Rosemary Varty were able to join me in such meetings. Rosemary's previous life as the Hon Member of the Legislative Council 1985-99, and as Parliamentary Secretary to Cabinet from 1992-99, proved invaluable.

Yesterday, we were able to meet with Minister Delahunty and Attorney-General Clark prior to the announcement in the Herald-Sun today. The mutual cooperation between Government and Bowls Victoria was recognised and appreciated.

This is a terrific, common sense outcome being delivered via the new Act. It will see Bowls Victoria, our Bowls Regions, Bowls Divisions and Clubs far better able to control our own destiny when it comes to the conduct of competitions.

***Peter Hanlon - Chief Executive***

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"This is the culmination of a joint effort between Bowls Victoria and the Victorian Government, supported by many of our members. We are extremely proud of the role played by Bowls Victoria and particularly that of our Chief Executive, Peter Hanlon."

***Graeme Hosken – President***

**To Region and Division Transition Committees/Interim Boards  
DO NOTHING – ASSUME NOTHING  
YOU WILL BE BRIEFED IN FULL AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE**