



Weekly Bulletin

Peter Hanlon - Chief Executive

bowls victoria

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE NEWS – Peter Hanlon

TWO KEY MATTERS:

- 1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT**
- 2. METRO PENNANT**

Introduction

One of the lessons for Bowls Victoria of the past two weeks is to avoid releasing any information without rationale and detailed explanation. The Board will be discussing this on 11 May in relation to our internal procedures, subsequently with Committee Chairmen.

We (bowlers) are all passionate about our sport. Some of us, however, have a propensity to read into such limited information certain rash conclusions which, in the light of a more informed position, simply do not hold water. And yet, such rash conclusions at the time can then inflame the passion - and controversy exists where it need not to. "A little information is a dangerous thing", and Bowls Victoria needs to address its communications with Clubs and bowlers to minimize such impacts.

Regarding the **Equal Opportunity Act** news from yesterday, for instance, some people have inferred from the Herald Sun and from our Special Bulletin that "Ladies' Pennant" will now be mandatory across Victoria and that therefore all of those clubs who could not enter sides unless comprised of men in addition to the available women will now languish and those clubs will die. Wrong conclusion based on limited information.

As promised yesterday, a more detailed account of the Equal Opportunity Act amendments that have only become public overnight follows in this Bulletin as **1.** (below).

Regarding the matter of **Metropolitan Pennant Changes**, the News Item which was posted nearly two weeks ago should not have been aired without a full set of details of what was referred to, including further guidelines surrounding the changes. Refer to **2.** (below).



Attorney-General, Robert Clark, delivers a bowl on the green at Parliament House watched by State Player Lee Schraner, Kate McLauchlan & Jane McMenaman (Development Staff), Minister for Sport Hugh Delahunty, Board Director Pat Calabresi and State Player Neville Rodda.

1. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT

In brief, given certain other considerations, Bowls Victoria will have the ability to facilitate participation by girls and women (the greatest area of declining numbers in our sport) through the **exclusion of** the participation of men in women's competitions, or through the **restriction of** the participation of men in women's competitions (including pennant).

The task for Bowls Victoria is, in seeking to address declining participation by women, to best conduct our pennant competitions for **all bowlers** within the powers of the new Act.

The following is taken directly from the Attorney-General's second reading speech:

The Attorney-General:

*"Clause 17 introduces two new categories of exception for competitive sport activities. The first exception **permits single sex competitions** in competitive sporting activities if such competitions are necessary to allow participants to **progress to elite level** national or international competitions."*

Bowls Victoria Note: The impact of this exception: BV no longer will need to apply for exemptions via VCAT to be able to conduct such events as State Championships. Previously, we have returned to VCAT each three years to seek to have such exemptions renewed.

*"The second exemption permits **single sex competitions or restrictions on the participation of one sex**, where such competitions are intended to facilitate participation in the sport and are otherwise reasonable, with regard paid to the nature of the sport, the consequences of the exclusion on the excluded or restricted sex and whether there are other opportunities for persons of the excluded or restricted sex to participate in the activity."*

Bowls Victoria Note: Fundamental to this exemption in relation to bowls, is the recognition that the **decline in participation by women** is in need of direct attention, and that the capacity to conduct women's-only events (not just pennant) or to restrict the participation of men in certain competitions (perhaps in the conduct of pennant where clubs cannot field women-only sides) will assist in retaining/attracting women participants, and not detrimentally impact upon opportunities to participate by men.

Part of the Attorney-General's speech then addressed the following:

"While mixed participation opportunities may in some competitive sports be the most equitable and appropriate form of competition or play, in other competitive sports there is evidence of instances where a requirement to play mixed gender competitions has been detrimental to participation, specifically in relation to females, and has resulted in a loss of female participants. It has been recognised that, in addition to physical differences, there are a range of other psychological and emotional factors that affect participation in open access competitions, such as concern over body image, religious beliefs, personal confidence and self-esteem issues, lifestyle choices or simply a person's preference to participate with members of their own gender."

Bowls Victoria Note: This statement is for Bowls Victoria, Netball Victoria and Vicsport, a confirmation of our arguments to the Department of Justice in 2008 in which we submitted that the focus of the Act on the physical attributes only (and the consequences on how competitions could be structured) was causing major problems for female participants in our sport/s.

I will not detail the first exception in relation to elite pathway competitions as it is simply enabling us to do what we have always done in running gender specific championships.

However, the actual wording of the **second exception to the Equal Opportunity Act 2010** is in part (where "person" can be read as Bowls Victoria):

17 Exception – competitive sporting activity

(1B) A person may exclude people of one sex from participating in a competitive sporting activity or restrict participation in a competitive sporting activity to people of one sex if –

- (a) the exclusion or restriction is intended to facilitate participation in the activity by people of a particular sex; and**
- (b) the exclusion or restriction is reasonable having regard to –**
 - i. the nature and purpose of the activity;**
 - ii. the consequences of the exclusion or restriction for people of the sex excluded or restricted sex; and**
 - iii. whether there are other opportunities for people of the excluded sex or restricted sex to participate in the activity.**

At the core of this change for us is the need to better facilitate the **participation of women** in our sport. This is a major issue and is also the basis of our application for funding from Vic Health for the next three years. We have argued that:

(1) the female membership in Victoria is only half that of males and as such needs action to address the retention and recruitment of girls and women in all areas of bowls, including as bowlers; and

(2) there has been a greater decline in female participation this season (our first year as Bowls Victoria when pennant has been open to all affiliated bowlers, as distinct from when in previous years there was a need to pay two affiliation fees to access both pennant competitions) which can be attributed in part at least to an inability by Bowls Victoria to conduct Women's Pennant on a single gender (or restricted gender) basis.

The Attorney-General states in his explanatory memorandum to the Bill:

“The new exception is intended to be only available where it is designed to work in favour of participation by the non-excluded or non-restricted sex. Hence, the exception would **not be available** to allow, for example, **male-only** competitions in sports where a continuing male participation has not been an issue.”

IN SUMMARY

Bowls Victoria, planning for when the new Equal Opportunity Act will come into effect on 1 August 2011, now needs to identify how best to use the new powers of **exclusion** and/or **restriction** of men in ladies' competitions in relation to the structure of pennant competitions throughout the state.

This will involve consulting and meeting with new Bowls Region and Bowls Division personnel responsible for the conduct of pennant competitions. It will involve the Bowls Victoria Laws and Rules Committee, the Metropolitan Match Committee and many others.

The planning needs to commence immediately, commencing with the Board Meeting on Wednesday 11 May.

My thoughts (personal not Bowls Victoria policy): For those small clubs that are unable to enter female-only sides, there is scope to accommodate that under the new Act; for those who want to enter sides in “Mixed Pennant” competitions (as a preference), that will need to be considered in the offerings of pennant competitions; for the traditional Saturday Pennant competitions, predominantly played by men but with women selected on merit or where needed, perhaps there is no need to change that in any way. For the Saturday Metropolitan Pennant A & B, there will be scope to review this as part of the balance of pennant competitions.

Please read and digest the above.

NO DECISIONS HAVE BEEN MADE

WE ARE ONLY NOW ABLE TO PLAN HOW BEST TO OFFER COMPETITIONS UNDER THE NEW ACT

2. METRO PENNANT

The following aims to present a complete picture of the changes arising from recommendations from the Metropolitan Pennant Committee and subsequent approval by the Board. The Board has continued to develop guidelines as part of the recommendations.

The processes between the new Committees and the Board are in their early stages and, in time, the procedures of research, consultation, review, formulation and recommendations leading to a final adoption by the Board are consequently incomplete at this stage.

The rationale for the changes is presented toward the end of this Bulletin, after the recommendations and guidelines being provided to the committees:

The recommendations agreed are:

1. (a) That BV Saturday Metropolitan Pennant 2011/12 commence on Sunday 2nd October 2011 (AFL Grand Final is on Saturday 1 October);
1. (b) That BV Saturday A&B Pennant commence on Saturday 8th October 2011;
1. (c) That BV Tuesday Metropolitan Pennant commence on Tuesday 4th October 2011.
2. (a) That the number of ends in all forms of BV Metropolitan Pennant be reduced to 21 ends.
2. (b) That the 21 ends be played in BV Saturday Metropolitan Pennant (guidelines below).
2. (c) That a lunch-break continues as part of BV Tuesday Metropolitan Pennant where starting times are pre-meal.
3. (a) That the current finals schedule of determining Section Winners and Division Winners be maintained in BV Saturday Metropolitan Pennant;
3. (b) That the BV Saturday A&B Pennant and BV Tuesday Metropolitan Pennant adopt the same finals format as used in Div 1-8 in BV Saturday Metropolitan Pennant.

These recommendations were approved by the Board and will now be communicated to the **BV Laws and Rules Committee** for incorporation into the Bowls Victoria Rules of Competition document for 2011-2012.

Further advice to accompany Pennant Recommendations as approved by the Board.

Breaks in Play - General

The previous news item indicated that the 21 ends would be played "straight through" and that guidelines would follow. This may have been a poor choice of terminology as the intent was never to say "no breaks allowed". The following guidelines are to apply for 2011-2012.

Breaks in Play – Team and Comfort

We recommend that for comfort reasons and for team communication reasons, a break in play of up to 15 minutes should be taken after the 40th completed end. This break would enable bowlers to have toilet breaks, or other necessities. It would also enable brief team or side meetings to occur.

Breaks in Play - Health and Safety

All Team Manager need to be aware and ensure accommodation of the needs of their side members to ensure that adequate provision for breaks (for insulin injections, etc.) is made and that those competing on the relevant rink are fully aware of any impact upon their play.

The Laws and Rules Committee, in consultation with the Metropolitan Pennant Committee and the Operations Manager will shortly make recommendations to the Board in relation to "Heat Policy". However, any guidelines emanating from these committees will take account of the need to provide additional breaks on hot (and cold) days.

Breaks - Afternoon Tea

The practice of conducting afternoon tea is not something that has been prescribed under pennant guidelines, but has been a custom continued by many and discontinued by some. The move to 21 ends, given the requirement to conduct breaks for reasons outlined earlier (after 40 ends, more regularly if required due to heat, for health reasons), the conduct of afternoon tea is at the complete discretion of the host club."

Speeches and Welcomes

It is the recommendation of Bowls Victoria, that all host clubs adopt the practice of formally welcoming visiting sides immediately prior to the commencement of roll-ups (and if necessary indicate such things as any restrictions in relation to smoking/drinking on or around the greens, any fund-raiser or special efforts being conducted during the day).

For those Clubs not hosting afternoon tea, the mid-game break would necessitate no formalities (although raffles or special efforts might still occur). For those hosting afternoon tea, the break should easily occur within the (up to) 15 minutes.

RATIONALE FOR 21 ENDS

1. Health and Safety

Bowls is a summer sport traditionally played during the hottest part of the day. Matches conducted over 25 completed ends, even with an afternoon tea break, are often extremely taxing on older bowlers in particular, and may not conclude until after 6.00 pm on faster surfaces (many synthetic surfaces – which themselves generate great heat).

Sports Medicine Australia and other agencies dealing with the welfare of sport participants have raised concerns over such matters with many summer sports: playing in the hottest part of the day; duration of matches being excessively taxing on participants; general occupational health and safety factors arising in such environments.

Consequently, many sports have abbreviated their matches, moved indoors wherever possible (refer to Shepparton park and Brighton), scheduled matches at times other than in the heat of the afternoon, or enabled teams by agreement to compete at times other than in the hottest part of the day (afternoon). In Mildura, for instance, the pennant bowls competitions already move to evening play when hot weather is forecast.

With the reduction from 25 to 21 ends, matches can be completed in a shorter time frame, reflecting the same length of pennant match in most other states (with SA and Tasmania also looking to move to 21 ends).

Although there is provision for competing clubs/sides to agree to play matches at alternative times (e.g. Friday evening, Saturday or Sunday morning/twilight/evening), the time taken to complete 25 ends has been raised as an inhibitor to such moves. For some clubs, lights must be turned off by 10.00pm making a 6.30 pm start somewhat impracticable. With the reduction to 21 ends, such arrangements may be more achievable, and bowlers subsequently better catered for. (Bowls Victoria will require limited advance warning of such arrangements – to be advised shortly).

Bowls Victoria itself has a duty of care in this regard, as do all clubs.

2. Sport/Social Balance

Due to factors influenced by the late finishing times experienced in many games, clubs have informed Bowls Victoria that their members are reluctant to commit themselves to regular pennant duties when the time taken to complete matches is sometimes in excess of five hours. Many members are voicing their concerns that the length of time to conduct matches imposes on their commitment to social activities outside of their sporting pursuits and the pressures that this places on their family situations.

3. Afternoon Tea

Many clubs have notified Bowls Victoria that they are experiencing difficulties in facilitating afternoon tea due to a lack of capable or in some cases qualified volunteers to prepare and clean-up after afternoon tea. With many women supporting clubs in their endeavours to field sides in Saturday Pennant in particular, there are in many cases insufficient members available to volunteer for this role.

Hence, whilst also looking to ensure that the time demands of participating in Saturday Metropolitan Pennant are decreased by the reduction to 21 ends, the decision to conduct afternoon tea during the (up to) 15 minute break after 40 completed ends is a decision for the host club.

The argument that bowlers have not had lunch and need a filling afternoon tea is not a responsibility of the host club. Bowlers should ensure that they take responsibility for their own meals and refreshments.

4. Travel

Each year Bowls Victoria receives complaints about the time required to travel between venues in Saturday Metropolitan Pennant and the consequent length of the day required to participate. In the circumstances where pennant sides do need to travel varying distances, sometimes not insignificant, the move to 21 ends can alleviate the required time demands on bowlers.

5. Social Interaction on Game Day

In other states the concept of 21 ends played with minimal breaks is accepted as the norm. This doesn't automatically mean that it is the best format, but given the other factors above, we can recognise the merit of a shorter game affording an opportunity to provide a snack over a drink at the end of the day's activities without meaning an exceptionally late departure from the venue. No matter what the length of match, there will always be those who don't wish to stay for the social interaction and this won't change. But, there is the opportunity to foster an increase in numbers who stay at a club at the end of play.

Any comments/questions: please email to Peter Hanlon c/o kareng@bowlsvic.org.au
For further information on Bowls Victoria, please regularly go to
www.bowlvic.org.au