

Kitty whispers

February 2017

NARRE WARREN BOWLS CLUB

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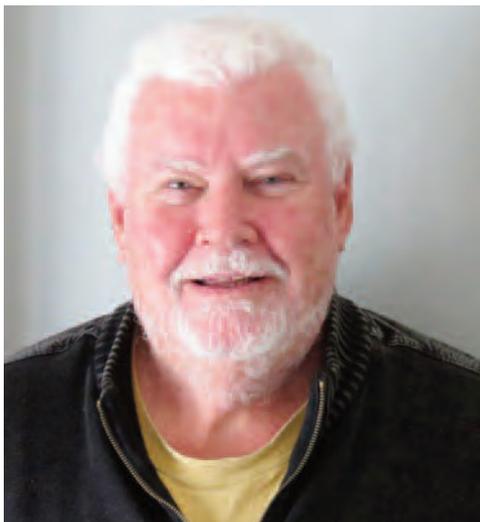
The flood on 29 December last year put paid to our beautiful synthetic green. - Page 2

Len O'Brien was presented with an Australia Day honour - Page 5



Bowls Vic has nominated NWBC a 'Lighthouse' club. - Page 3

President's Report



It's amazing how time slips by. We are now only three weeks away from the end of the Pennant season and seven weeks away from the Club Annual General Meeting.

A lot has happened since 1st May 2016 when our last AGM was held and, undoubtedly, the highlight was our inclusion by Bowls Victoria as a Lighthouse Club. We are the 18th club in the State out of more than 520 clubs to be recognised and honoured this way. I am very proud to be the president of a club which has been included in this special group.

It has been a 10-month period of highs and lows for the club. One of the most significant "highs" was the growth in membership following a large loss of members at the end of the 2016 season. The most disappointing two "lows" have been our under-performance on the greens compared to last season and the loss of "A" green due to the catastrophic weather event we suffered on 29th December. Progress is being made as rapidly as possible regarding the replacement of "A" green and we are about to enter into negotiations with the City of Casey to have a "needle punch" surface installed instead of a sand-filled synthetic. This will result in greater longevity of the playing surface and much less maintenance and associated costs. The new surface will also be far less susceptible to the type of damage a sand-filled green suffers when it is immersed with contaminated water.

Another recent "high" in our year was the cabaret held on 3rd February which featured such outstanding talent as **Elvis, Roy Orbison, Buddy Hollie, Richie Valens, Dion and the Belmonts** and many more!!! All these superstars were brought to us by Joe Piastrino - a great performer who we will be inviting back again next year. A crowd of more than 100 attended the night and those present all agreed it was the best show we have had at the club.

There is another cabaret scheduled for 17th March and this will feature **Marceau Camille** who plays eight different instruments and sings in multiple languages (not all at once!!). He embraces most genres of music and has performed widely in Australia and overseas. We already have three tables booked and I would recommend this night to everyone. Why not organise some friends and come along? There will be a supper provided and, at only \$15 per person, it represents exceptional value. This is St Patrick's Day, so we will be celebrating the patron saint of Ireland and all drinkers!!!

The Annual General Meeting of the Club will be held on Sunday 9th April 2017 in conjunction with the presentation of trophies for the 2016-17 season. Please mark this date in your diaries and come along for one of our most important days of the year. A sheet will be placed on the notice board shortly calling for nominations to fill the various committee positions in the club.

Also, congratulations to **Wilma Stevenson** and **Sue Hudson** on being selected for the Regional side to compete at Swan Hill in April.

Regards

Good Bowling

Eric Sydenham, President



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Cover story

The following is reprinted from *Heads Up* by kind permission of *Guy Hand*, Communications and Marketing Manager of Bowls Vic

Nine months ago, Narre Warren Bowls Club changed its board, its vision, and almost certainly the course of its future.

Based in Melbourne's booming south-east corridor, Narre Warren BC sits right next door to the giant and growing Westfield shopping mall Fountain Gate, and the imposing City of Casey Cultural Precinct, which is under construction.

The bowls club is as ambitious as its upwardly mobile neighbours.

Realising when they took over that something had to be done to address membership declining at a rate of 25 per cent, president Eric Sydenham and his newly appointed board wasted no time laying out an ambitious game-plan, then backing it up with hard work.

"Our charter is to become the premier small club in Victoria. I guess to do that we have to become the premier small club in Melbourne first," Mr Sydenham says.

"We want Narre Warren Bowls Club to be the first club people in our community think of when they want to have a function, join a bowling club, or attend a bowling club.

"We want to become a community hub and we're working towards that in various ways."

What is most amazing about Narre Warren Bowls Club's transformation is the speed of achievement.

Since the current Board took over in May 2016, it's been forward motion at a dizzying rate. They've earned deserved status as a Bowls Victoria Lighthouse Club for clubs seen as leading the way statewide with their initiatives.

The club now has local council, State and Federal Members on the same page – all seeing the value the well located, well run, welcoming club can provide to the community.

The membership slide has been reversed. Astonishingly, they have increased their number of Pennant-playing ladies by 50 per cent, which bucks all trends nationally.

Hosting functions has become a key focus, both now and going forward. Plans are now underway for major renovations of clubhouse, club precinct and greens, including two roofed greens and a semi-commercial kitchen. Importantly, so too are plans to fund them, thanks to building relationships with all levels of government.

On the green, the club is a reigning Pennant champion, and there's a weekly Corporate Challenge going well.

Disability bowls is a key focus – with member and recent Bowls Victoria Volunteer of the Year region winner Len O'Brien one of the State's leading vision-impaired bowlers. There're also plans for a junior academy, and active involvement in Bowls Victoria's burgeoning schools programs.

And there's not a pokie in sight. The club says it's proud to provide a facility for all sections of the community, independent of gambling revenue.

Retired senior bankers, engineers, small business owners and former government administrators are among the club's decision-makers. Smart, focused, experienced people with plenty of ambition and vision driving the club forward. It's a recipe for success.

It hasn't all been smooth sailing. A torrential downpour just prior to Christmas – 65mm of rain in an hour

- wrecked the club's synthetic green, which is out of action most likely until the start of next season. Two burglaries of the club premises not long after the new board took over were also a concern – far less so now CCTV has been installed.

But the positivity and ambition around the club remains undented.

“We've probably achieved in raw terms 30 to 40 per cent of what we wanted, but we're only in the early stages,” Mr Sydenham says.

“The profile of what we've been able to create for Narre Warren Bowls Club as a board is far beyond what I hoped for. We've still got a lot to do but we can be immensely proud of what we've achieved so far.

“What's been engendered in terms of pride in the club from our members ... has been one of the most important achievements we've had. And that's helping us to drive the things we want to do. I think people can see that what we're doing is the right way to go.”

Some key moments and achievements

City of Casey Mayor Sam Aziz, State MP *Luke Donnellan* and Federal MP *Anthony Byrne* were invited to the club for a morning tea, made honorary members of the club, and walked through the club's three- and five-year plans by the Board. All have been impressed enough with what Narre Warren Bowls Club has proposed to help with its funding efforts for various important projects

- ❑ Increased number of Pennant-playing ladies by 50 per cent for 2016-17
- ❑ Introduced a variety of membership types – most notably an \$89 introductory membership pack
- ❑ A weekend of demonstrating the sport at next-door Fountain Gate shopping centre was pivotal. With some help from Bowls Victoria, and Regional Bowls Manager Barrie Lester, it led to 100 families signing up for more information to be sent to them about the club. Thirty families took part in a recent Come and Try Day. An estimated 50 to 60 new members was the result of the Fountain Gate experiment
- ❑ Taking names and contact details at both their Fountain Gate demonstration, and functions held by the club to allow for follow-up contact
- ❑ An approach to Narre Warren BC to become a Federal Government Work for the Dole host organisation means dole recipients have been working at the club to learn new skills and experience. It's been a huge success. The Work for the Dole Scheme team work in the club kitchen, in maintenance, and as cleaners
- ❑ Sprucing up the current clubhouse. While big renovation plans are underway and will take time, new furniture and a coat of paint in the clubhouse, an existing outdoor pergola changing from carport to barbecue area, plus the removal of dated pink vertical blinds were cost-effective, short-term ways to sharpen up the facility for existing members, plus sell the club as a perfect function venue. “You can't keep on hitting members in the pocket for paying their fees and green fees. We chose to market the club ...a venue for people to have work functions, social functions, barefoot bowls, Christmas functions. We've had an exceptional six months as far as bookings went. The more people we can get in spending their money, the less we've got to spend to keep people happy and maintain the place.” – Eric Sydenham

Our Len

The 2017 **Holt Australia Day Awards** are presented to recognise unsung heroes in our midst who contribute their time and energy to do valuable volunteer work. As NWBC members know, without volunteers we would not exist, and also as we know, **Len O'Brien** is one of our most prolific volunteers. There is rarely a day goes by that Len is not at the club offering his help in any way it is required.

At the club AGM he received the club-nominated '**Volunteer of the Year**', and went on to make the final 16 in the Bowls Australia presentation.

Len does not limit his volunteer work to NWBC; as well as being a member – and the volunteering involved there – he has also been president of the Blind Bowls for 10 years. He is also involved with Vision Australia.

In his own words, "I learned to bowl 19 years ago, and am still practising. I do what I see needs doing, and am humbled by the whole experience."

It would be difficult at Narre Warren Bowls Club to find a more popular member than Len, and one more deserving of his awards. He is the member all clubs hope they will attract. Len is pictured below receiving his plaque from **Anthony Byrne MP**



CABARET

Friday 3 February was the first cabaret night for a couple of years, and what a great turn-out it was. It was so good to see so many of our new members as well as all the familiar faces. There were also tables of people from Cranbourne Bowls Club, Pakenham Bowls Club and Einseidels Legals which has sponsored our club for many years.

Joe Piastrino started off the night with a bracket of songs from **Roy Orbison**, which got the feet tapping and had us all singing. After a short break he went on to do songs from **Dion** (and with the help of **Stan Robinson, Ralph Devonshire, Graham Dodd** and **Graham Peterson** we also had the **Belmonts**), **Buddy Holly** and Del Shannon.

This got people up onto the dance floor and it is quite a few years since the floor was so crowded. Another short break and then **Elvis** was on stage. This had people singing and dancing and generally having a great night. We were also very happy to welcome the many friends of members who attended.

Thanks to **Stan Robinson** for being our Social Committee and arranging things. Thanks also to the small group of members who helped set up in the morning, the ladies who cut sandwiches and the kitchen crew who made the sausage rolls and cakes for supper, **Iain** and **Wilma** for manning the bar and to anybody else who helped in any way to make the night the great success that it was. *Judy Naughton*



Rod Lane and Stan Robinson (aka one of the Belmonts) enjoying some refreshment



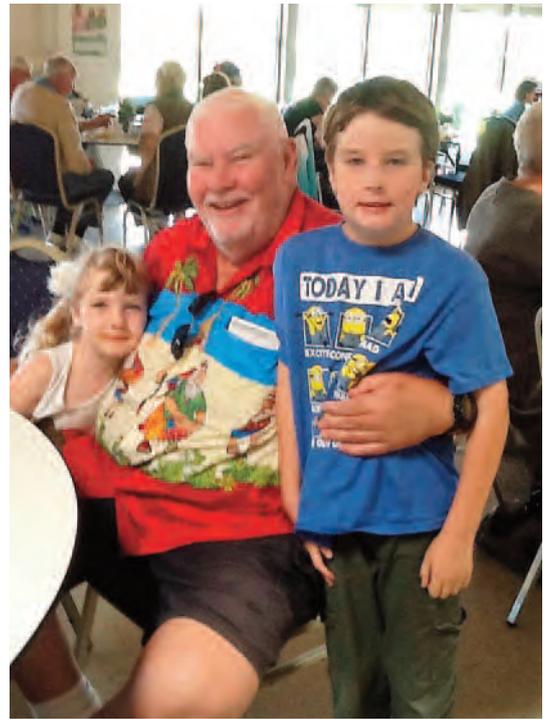
Some of the revellers, from top: Jeanette and Phil Cox; top right: sponsor, Elizabeth Einseidel; above: Janis and Joji Dukats, with Graham and Sandy Dodd; right: our star, Joe Piastrino, in his Elvis incarnation; below, 'the Sues', Sue Harding and Sue Maxwell and one of their friends,



Christmas Dinner 2016

To celebrate Christmas - and her last day as team leader at NWBC, Buffy and her staff put on a traditional Christmas feast. Pictured are the revellers.







Champion of Champions

It was a very hot day at Pakenham on 8 January, with our two club champions vying for the Champion of Champions. We had a small cheer squad, but not nearly as many turned up as we anticipated for such an important day.

Pam Uren played **Lynne Wood** from Cranbourne, and started two ends down, but rallied to take the next two. After the fourth end, the score was 2/5, and Pam had to endure losses on the next three ends before scoring again. Once again, she took two ends in a row, but they were only single scores on each end, to make it 4/9. Lynne won the 10th, and Pam took the next three, but they were to be her last until she scored a one on the 19th, giving a finishing score of 9/24. Well done, Pam, on your first CofC, especially in such heat.

In his first game, **Graeme Dodd** played? from? He allowed his opponent three in the first end, and one in the third, then shut him down until the 12th, by which time the score was 13/6. Graeme won the next three, ceded one, won the next two, then took a rest on the 19th, 20th and 21st, for a score of 19/11. He won four of the next five, to win comfortably 25/12. After lunch, game number two didn't go Graeme's way, unfortunately. Playing **Daniel Byrne** from? He won only seven of the 22 ends, but scored three threes and a two in those ends.

That was the finish for NWBC in the *CofC*, but, both players contesting this important game for the first time, I was very proud of our club. Congratulations to both of you.

A big thank you to **Sandra Lapham** and **Peter Bowman** for organising the day, and for expatriate **Ray Pigdon** for umpiring.



CASEY DIVISION

Wilma Stevenson v Lynne Wood

Wilma knew she had a game on her hands when she played Cranbourne's **Lynne Wood** in the Casey Division Singles game.

She lost the first two ends, won one, then lost the next. Then, getting into her stride on the difficult Pakenham green, Wilma won five out of the next six, then took a rest while Lynne took the next four, lost one, then took the next three.

By this time, Wilma won the 19th end, to level the scores. Twenty and 21 were two nice threes to Wilma, leaving her 18-12 on the 21st. Lynne won the next three, then, at the 25th with the scores 19/17 Wilma consolidated with a two, three and one, to take the game 25/17 on the 28th end.

It was a ripper of a game, with both players showing their experience, and neither giving up.

Congratulations, Wilma, well played. We look forward to you playing in the State challenge.



Our newest **UMPIRE**



She's a mean, keen bowling machine, and also the latest addition to Narre's (and BowlsVic) umpiring fraternity.

Sitting her exam at the end of last year, **Janice Moran** has already utilised her new knowledge by marking in the **Divisional** and **Champion of Champions** games.