



MORNINGTON PENINSULA BOWLS INC.

A division of
Peninsula Casey Region

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THE TIME FOR CHANGE HAS COME

The Board of the Mornington Peninsula Bowls Inc would like all clubs in the Division to carefully consider the content in this document.

The Board acknowledges that there is a decline in player participation in the traditionally structured competitions in the **sport of lawn bowls** in the Division and has recommended some changes which may assist in not only stopping the decline but also have the possibility of providing a vehicle for growth.

The Board would like the clubs to be involved and engaged in making the changes for the Division and would like every club to independently respond to its recommendations by making a submission back to the Board via their CCO, outlining the club's considered judgement of the recommendations and adding its own suggestions as it sees fit.

The Board requests that your club consults widely within its membership and seeks the views from those that don't currently participate in Pennant, as well as the current Pennant players.

Only submissions by a club will be considered by the Board.

The responses are to be submitted by email to the MPB Administrator – Gabe Shepperd (penbowls2018@gmail.com) – **by COB Friday 15th March 2019.**

THE TIME FOR CHANGE HAS COME

Bowls on the Mornington Peninsula is going through a long period of decline with both club and team numbers in contraction, especially Pennant.

In recent years five clubs have gone out of existence in our area, and most clubs have a lot fewer members than they had 20 years ago.

To continue organizing the sport of lawn bowls in the same way as we have been is not conducive to the health of the competitive arm of the sport.

When decisions are made on the future of the competition, clubs need to consider the views of those who are not taking up the sport, as well as their own members.

The Mornington Peninsula Bowls Inc Board has observed the changes currently being made across Australia and New Zealand in an attempt to increase participation in the competitive side of our sport and would like the clubs to carefully consider the following for season 2019-20, and beyond.

A - Pennant structure

Saturday

The season will start on the first Saturday in November and aim to play six Saturdays (09NOV – 14DEC 2019) before Christmas and eight games after the break retaining the two Reserve days.

Pennant will start in the better weather and the grass greens will be in better condition than some of the slow greens that are currently offered in October.

Metropolitan Pennant has decided to go this way from 2020/21, and Geelong Region have already made a decision to put the start of the season forward three weeks.

Bowls Australia has indicated that from 2020, they will be running the National Championships in October. It will be a protected event and Pennant will not be permitted to take place in this period.

Bowls Victoria will be running the Victorian Open from around 30 October until 6 November 2020.

Divisional structure

Run Divisions 1-8 as a combined competition and leave the two rinker competitions (9,10...) split geographically.

The advantages are a more even competition and less chance of two teams from the same club finishing in the same grade.

Some of the current huge winning margins, particularly in the South Section, indicate very uneven competitions.

Promotion and Relegation

Two sides to be promoted and two relegated with every attempt made for clubs to not have more than one side in a grade.

Keeps more interest in the grades, and sides find their own level more readily.

Times of play

Play Division 1, first round in January on the Friday night, and Division 2, the following Friday night.

This will increase attendances and interest in the games.

Clubs with lights be encouraged to play some matches regularly on Friday evenings in consultation with visiting clubs.

Encourage clubs with lights to play other rounds in different divisions on Friday nights during the season in agreement with opposition clubs.

Div. 1 clubs to be given permission, and encouraged, to play games starting at 4 pm, when members returning from other venues that finish earlier will provide an audience for the games.

On days of temperatures forecast to be over 35 degrees, matches begin at 10 am.

Travel times will in some instances be longer than the current system but travelling across the MPB division compares favorably with longest trips in the Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Latrobe Valley competitions.

MPB Inc. The Time for Change has come!

Midweek (Tuesday)

There has been a sharp decline in the Restricted Pennant, and indications are that a number of clubs are going to switch sides to the open competition next season.

As well as the dwindling number of sides, the competition has been very lop sided with some huge winning scores, which only discourages the losers.

As the competition gets smaller it will get more uncompetitive

The Southern area (before Restricted) Tuesday competition has declined from 40 teams in 1992 to just 19 this season.

It is recommended that the competition change to open, and be set up similar to Saturday.

As there are quite a number of women that would like to play single gender pennant it is recommended that a Women's Only 2 bowl triples competition be run on Thursdays. This will allow Women to have the options of playing on any, or all, of the three days.

It is recommended that sides be made up of six players. Smaller numbers are easier to manage.

It's a unique opportunity to market Thursday as Women's Day.

Length of games and format

For many years the MPB Saturday Pennant game has traditionally been played over 25 ends.

Most sports are running shorter games, even Test cricket is moving towards four day matches.

Cricket is waning at grass roots level, as many consider the traditional playing day too long.

T20 cricket is rapidly overhauling the traditional game.

Golf is having major challenges, even more than our sport, as the length of the game is not attractive to those looking to take it up, and many club memberships have gone into free fall.

About ten years ago Metropolitan Saturday pennant moved to 21 ends. At the time there was some backlash against the decision, but within two years at least 85% of Metropolitan bowlers were strongly supportive of the new format.

We believe that the traditional format of playing fours is outdated but concede to the higher graded Divisions retaining this format.

Players participate for 12.5% of the game (2 bowls out of 16 each end), and we believe that 2 bowl triples is a better format for the majority of the competition, with a higher participation rate (16.6%).

It is recommended that from next season that Saturday Divisions 1 & 2 remain in the current fours format but playing 21 ends, and that Division 3 and below be run as triples, played as four rinks of three players, bar the last divisions (9,10....) which will be two rinks of three players.

It is recommended that Midweek Division 1 remain in the current fours format and keep it aligned with the State Pennant Region Championships and that lower divisions be run as two bowl triples.

Metropolitan pennant run their bottom divisions in this format and from all reports it works well.

It is recommended that all Pennant matches be 21 ends.

Recording of scores and team information

This season has shown up a weakness in the lack of information provided to the recording officials, and the subsequent late publication of scores and ladders.

The current systems used are out of date, and far superior technology is being used by many other Sporting Associations in Victoria.

In many competitions scores are published as soon as they are entered after matches, and ladders automatically update.

The best system in operation is that used by the Ovens and Murray Region, as it includes player registrations in the online form lodged with the scores.

Getting scores in real time enhances the playing and social experience on the day, and leads to a far

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more enjoyable after match social time as players look up the scores and chat about the completed matches.

Many other major sports in the area uses up to date technology and we should provide that for our member clubs.

B - MPB Constitution

Alteration to constitution to hear disciplinary cases and disputes

That an additional clause be added to the constitution after clause 25.

The Association has the right to hear any disciplinary matter between players or clubs, and can instigate an inquiry into any matter that is referred to the Board or comes to the attention of the Board, in reference to a match played between players or clubs.

The Board will initially appoint a three person subcommittee to hear the matter, with an appeal process available to an aggrieved member/club.

C - Night Pennant

A number of very successful night pennant competitions are run on Tuesday or Wednesday nights in Melbourne.

These cater for a combination of regular players and others including non-members, coming into the sport.

Many people are involved in other activities on the weekends, and it widens the scope of clubs to be able to accommodate these members on the weekdays.

Clubs who focus entirely on Saturdays and Tuesday's are generally facing a declining number of members wishing to play and are finding the recruiting of new players difficult.

This option opens providing a competitive and social environment for members to play in.

A member of the Board has had extensive experience in running Night Pennant and believes that in the first phase a competition over about 10 weeks in December, January and February among the northern clubs in the Region is the best starting point.

Consideration will be given to approaching clubs from the Casey Region - Carrum and Cranbourne.

The most important thing with Night Pennant is that travelling times need to be kept low.

Amongst the northern clubs City of Frankston, Mt Eliza, Karingal already have lights and Belvedere are believed to have them installed for next season.

As moves are being made for further lighting, predominantly in the southern section of the competition for Sorrento, Rosebud and Mornington Civic, they would be well matched with Dromana, Mt Martha and Rye to form a competition in that area.

The competition should look to a two bowl triples with a playing time from 7pm to 9 pm, allowing some social time after the game and still be home by 10 pm.

We are confident this will work and need the cooperation of clubs with suitable venues.

D - Media presence

Compared to other similar competitions we receive very poor media coverage.

The media is evolving quickly into other forms and we need to see how other sports and Bowls Regions are tackling the decreasing traditional newspaper coverage.

In many regional areas, newspaper coverage remains strong across the state of Victoria.

Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong - all competitions of similar size to us, have the advantage of a well-established daily local newspaper along with a local commercial radio station.

E - Installation of lights at clubs.

Currently City of Frankston, Karingal, Mt Eliza, Mt Martha, Koo Wee Rup, Dromana and Rye have lights. It is recommended that MPB Inc work with clubs in prominent locations, to access grants to install lights.

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Lights can transform clubs enabling them to run a much wider variety of 'on-green' activities and sharply increase revenue and participation.

Clubs having a recruitment policy based on potential players that play other sports, and having community cups amongst businesses and sporting groups taking place on an evening after work, has great potential for increasing club membership and bows participation.

This has successfully worked in many other areas throughout Australia.

F - Regional Cup

As a prelude to the season it recommended that an FA Cup style open and women's knock out competition be held among the clubs.

The round involving all Peninsula Casey Region clubs will be held four weeks out from the start of the season, with each successive round played on Saturdays or by other arrangement between the competing clubs.

It will be a prestigious event and the chance for some of the smaller clubs to notch a possible victory over a more fancied opponent.

The women's competition, having sides with smaller sized teams, could also be considered, with both finals played at the same venue, close to the start of the Pennant season.

This is an opportunity to attract a sponsor for naming rights to this event.

G – MPB Rules for Competition

The MPB Rules for Competition need a revamp and will be addressed **later** and along a similar process to this strategic document.