

Bowls in NSW – Q&A on Unification – Last Updated 6th November 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide transparent communication between Women's Bowls NSW (WBNSW), Bowls NSW (BNSW) and the NSW bowls community throughout the unification process.

The following questions were recently provided by members through their written submissions to the unification email and have been answered below. These questions and answers are likely to be very important considerations for members leading up to the anticipated vote to be taken in a few months' time.

It should be noted that as more information comes to hand and decisions are made on the future of the game, this document will be updated frequently.

The Unification Process

Q1: What is unification?

A1: Unification is the bringing together of the two bowls organisations in NSW into a single entity.

Q2: Why do we want to unify? What are the benefits of unification?

A2: By unifying we will deliver a modern organisation and governance structure that:

- Ensures a collaborative approach working as one
- Promotes ongoing sustainability, growth, and success
- Is inclusive of all bowlers in NSW

The primary benefit will be improved member and club services including a focus on club health and development, and growing the game to ensure the sustainability of our sport in NSW.

In addition, below are some of the broader benefits of unification:

- Increased investment in game and club development
- Aligned, cohesive and inclusive strategy
- Greater opportunities for Government funding and recognition
- Improved ability to negotiate better commercial and supplier agreements
- Uniformity of marketing and opportunities to grow sponsorship
- Reductions in duplication

Q3: What is the process and the timeframe to reach the end result?

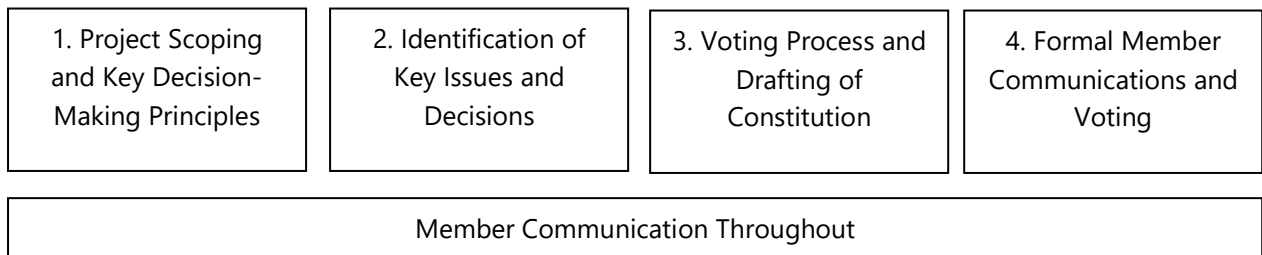
A3: We are in the early stages of this project and will develop and communicate specific timeframes over the next few weeks.

A Unification Working Group has been established with representatives from both organisations to oversee and drive this process. This group is meeting on a fortnightly basis and will be seeking expert advice on specific subject areas where required.

The members of the Unification Working Group are:

- Anne Johns - Women's Bowls NSW CEO
- Greg Helm - Bowls NSW CEO
- Pam Andrich - Women's Bowls NSW President
- Brett Duprez - Bowls NSW Board of Directors
- Dilys Kindleysides - Women's Bowls NSW Board of Directors
- Matt Goodwin - Bowls NSW Deputy President
- Sue O'Keefe - Women's Bowls NSW Board of Directors
- Mike Skeggs - Bowls NSW Board of Directors

The anticipated timeframe of the project to reach amalgamation is around 9-12 months. We have provided a high-level outline of the process below.



The Unification Working Group has developed the following key principles which outline how we have agreed to work together throughout the unification process and will be used to objectively assess the key decisions made throughout this project.

Key Principles

- **Focus on the Vision:** We keep the end goal in mind and make our decisions in the best interest of Bowls in NSW and to grow the game.
- **Respectful:** We listen to each other, respect each other's view and acknowledge that we may be coming from different perspectives. We actively work to develop common understandings.
- **Collaborative:** This is a merger of equals, it is not about wins and losses. If we can't decide on something, we do some more work on it together and assist each association in working through challenges as they arise.
- **Open and honest:** We have the hard conversations in the room and are open, honest and transparent around the table. We don't leave the room with different messages.
- **Progress not perfection:** We acknowledge and reflect on our past but move forward and recognise this is about progress. Not everything will be perfect.
- **Clarity and transparency:** We keep members, staff and association committees informed of our progress and bring everyone on the journey as best we can.

Both Boards are working very closely together throughout this process, with goodwill and great intent to achieve a successful unification for the benefit of the sport throughout NSW.

Q4: Why has an independent organisation been engaged to facilitate the unification process?

A4: These projects are complex and difficult to deliver successfully without external help. An independent facilitator assists in providing unbiased advice in the best interests of the future of the sport in NSW. We have unsuccessfully attempted to unify many times in the last 41 years. In making important decisions such as this, it is wise to use external counsel where required.

Q5. Will the pros and cons of amalgamation, including the financial standing of both associations be presented to all members of both organisations prior to any decision being finally made?

A5. Yes, a formal process is being planned including a member roadshow, engagement and a formal voting process. A dedicated consultation and member engagement plan has been established which includes:

- Q&A sheet developed, published and regularly updated on both websites
- Regular written updates from both organisations
- Dedicated unification email inbox
- Workshops and information/feedback sessions (Conducted face-to-face and/or digitally via Zoom, Teams, WebEx etc.)

Q6. Will each Club member from WBNSW and BNSW have an individual vote for/against unification?

A6. There will be a comprehensive member engagement and consultation process prior to any vote being put forward. The ultimate vote will be put forward via a special resolution and be voted on at a General Meeting as per the requirements of each organisation's constitution. For BNSW, the voting members are the zone representatives, while for WBNSW, the voting members are the member clubs.

Structural Implications

Q7: If the unification does go through, what will be the composition of the new Board?

A7: We will look to best-practice governance principles in determining the future composition of the Board.

Modern governance and legal advice suggests that the composition of a Board should have a target of 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men and 20 per cent discretionary.

We are utilising Sport Australia's new Governance Principles to guide the structure of the new organisation. The principles suggest that a diverse board is required to enable considered decision-making.

A link to the full document can be found here: <http://bit.ly/SportAusGovernancePrinciples>

Q8: How will unification affect me in my role as a Club delegate to the District/Zone?

A8: Club Delegates attending meetings will still be an essential part of the communication process to and from the new entity. Clubs will still have representation and active involvement at the District/Zone level. More specific detail on how this will be implemented will be developed.

Competitions and Events

Q9: Will we have the same competitions/events? Will we play on the same day? What benefit to our competitions will amalgamation bring, with respect to improving the standard of competition in state run events? Will there be additional combined State Championships in amalgamation?

A9: We envisage greater alignment between competitions and timing. Once the unification is complete, a full competition review will be conducted with significant consultation and engagement with the bowls community, zones, districts and clubs.

Q9a: Will unification mean that men and women are mandated to compete against each other when playing at competitions and events?

A9a: It is not the intention to mandate men and/or women playing together in events primarily established for one particular gender. Unification does however provide the opportunity for mixed and open gender events to be established and administered more efficiently at a state level.

It will be up to each individual to determine where they play. It is hoped over time that a range of formats and competitions will allow players greater flexibility to play a mix of social and competitive bowls with whom they wish to play.

Q9b: Will there still be mid-week and Saturday pennant competitions for men and women, or will these all be mixed gender? Will all pennant games be open? Or will there be a transition to that format?

A9b: We don't anticipate any specific changes to pennant competitions. This will be the subject of a full competition review that will be conducted once the unification process is complete, with significant consultation and engagement with the bowls community, zones, regions, districts and clubs.

Q9c: Will all zone, district, and state championships be open events? Or will there be a transitional period?

A9c: As mentioned above, it is not the intention to mandate men and/or women playing together in events primarily established for one particular gender. There will be men's, women's, mixed and open events.

Q10: Will districts or zones change? Will there be new boundaries? What will happen to my Zone/District/Region/Association? What will be the role of volunteers within these structures?

A10: We are aware that there are inconsistencies in the alignment of boundaries, and the WBNSW districts/regions are structured differently to the BNSW districts/zones. Both organisations were in the process of a boundary review prior to the commencement of the unification process. This will be put on hold until unification is complete.

As the unification process is not about changing competition structures, we do not anticipate any changes to district, zone, region and association competition boundaries in the short-medium term as a result of unification.

This will be the subject of a full competition review that will be conducted once the unification process is complete, with significant consultation and engagement with the bowls community, zones, regions, districts and clubs. There will still be districts and zones, which will form the basis of the administrative structure.

Q11: How will unification affect coaching and officiating administration?

A11: We expect through the unification process to see continued alignment in the coaching and officiating of the sport.

Q12. As Bowls Australia and International Bowls only play separate Australian and World Championships for women and men and not combined, what benefit does unification bring to us in this area?

A12: Unification does not affect these competitions. The unified body will still have an obligation to provide a men's and women's competitor to the National event.

Implications for Clubs and Members

Q13: What are the current member numbers for both associations?

A13: At the end of the 2019/20 financial year WBNSW had 14,966 members and BNSW had 37,794 members.

Q14: Will the clubs have to unify as well? Will it be mandatory to become one club with a mixed committee? And how will this process happen?

A14: At this stage, WBNSW and BNSW are not asking or requiring clubs to merge. Clubs are encouraged to maintain existing affiliation with the respective organisations until the unification process is finalised. However, we anticipate that over the coming years, as has been seen over the last 2-3 years, there will be clubs seeking to undertake this, and we will provide support where we can. All clubs will be able to affiliate with the new entity as they are.

Q15: Will we lose (or gain) any clubs as part of the unification process?

A15: Club sustainability is a key issue within the sport across Australia. We do envisage that over time some clubs will unify as a result of this process. While some clubs may struggle to survive this current economic climate, pooling the resources of both organisations at a state level will enable greater assistance for clubs in duress.

Q16: Will we still have official visits from WBNSW and BNSW representatives?

A16: Yes. Official visits by Directors and their representatives will still occur for special events.

Q17: How does it impact me as a bowler, coach, umpire, volunteer, and/or office bearer?

A17: The intention is to minimise any impact on the local delivery of the sport throughout the duration of this project, other than to provide more support for bowlers, coaches, umpires, volunteers and clubs, where we can. Any changes to the experience at a local level will be considered in a full competition review, which will be conducted after unification is complete with significant consultation from the bowls community.

Q18: Will I still get my badge for recognition of service? Will there be any new badges?

A18: All past service will be recognised appropriately, and we anticipate continuing to recognise long-serving volunteers. Every effort will be made to preserve and recognise the strong history of our sport in NSW.

Q19: Will club uniforms change? What is the timeframe for a new uniform to be introduced so all players wear similar clothing?

A19: At this stage, we do not see any need for clubs to change their uniforms as a result of unification. Each club will be responsible for its own uniforms, and any changes would continue to be approved in accordance with the National Merchandising Scheme.

Q20: How will unification affect the culture of our club? What will the Code of Conduct look like?

A20: Club culture is driven by the clubs themselves. A revised Code of Conduct would be developed with significant consultation and input from the NSW bowls community after the unification is approved by voting members.

Members and Financial

Q21: How will the financial break up of assets work between the two organisations?

A21: There will be no financial break-up, as we will be bringing both organisations assets together. For the record, the assets of both organisations are similar.

Q22. How will unification affect our ability to receive funding from Federal and State Governments?

A22: We would expect federal and state government funding opportunities to be improved through this process, as has been found with other leading sports in NSW that have been through a similar unification process.

Q23. Will yearly fees remain the same or less?

A23: The Unification Working Group is currently working on the annual fees and will provide an update once this has been finalised.

Additional Questions

The following questions have been noted and are currently being addressed by the Unification Working Group throughout the work that is being completed. Each question will be answered as soon as possible, and you will be kept informed of any progress.

Q: What will the structure of the new organisation look like?

Q: Where will the main office be situated?

Q: Will affiliation fees be different? Will there be one affiliation fee or two? What will clubs get in return for these fees?

Q: How does it affect us financially? Will there be discounts for regional areas within the fee structure?

Q: Will we require new identity numbers in a combined male/female system?

Q: If this option fails how do you plan to get new members and change the way in which the public view the sport?

**As a reminder, we welcome any questions you may have throughout this process.
Questions can be submitted to unification@bowlsnsw.com.au.**