

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NSW BOWLING GREENKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION



# THE BOWLING GREENKEEPER

JUNE 2020

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**The fallout from Covid-19 hits NSW bowling clubs**



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## President's Report with Mick Woods



Where to start? What a year 2020 is turning out to be. I will endeavor to touch on all matters and some of the impact on our industry.

As we all know the year commenced with the continuation of one of the worst recorded and prolonged droughts the country has encountered, this culminated with WaterNSW imparting strict water restrictions across metropolitan areas. While many regional areas were already under strict water regulations access to bore water is much more prolific so while water quality may be poor there has generally been some availability.

What we found across metropolitan areas is that there was a much greater reliance on town supply and that there seemed to be no parity in the permits being allocated with vast differences seen in these permits in small geographical spaces. Together with Golf representatives we have been lobbying to attain industry specific uniform permits linked specifically to

the level of water restrictions in place, these are continuing and hopefully we will soon have our recommendations accepted. I must thank Simon Cooper and Matt Keough for the time they have invested into attended meetings and preparing documents.

Summer then threw at us catastrophic bush fires ravaging many regions of the state with one club lost to fire - Malua Bay - and many clubs also offered their premises as safe havens to residents displaced during the threat of bush fire highlighting one of the many benefits clubs provide to our communities.

While February saw rain to ease the threat of bushfire and replenish supplies to many of the states dams, as the saying goes "when it rains it pours" so this led to flooding and a severe Fungi threat for bowling green turf managers to contend with. With already stressed greens and often poor rooted turf as a result of drought management practices these outbreaks have been increasingly difficult to manage.

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### Covid 19 Pandemic

Finally and most severely the COVID-19 Pandemic that forced the closure of the club industry from March 24th 2020. The way this has affected us as Bowling Greenkeepers has been vast and varied. Clubs and their management have had to make many difficult decisions through this and the same can be said for us Greenkeepers. Obviously income for club's ceased from the above date and the approach to greens maintenance a hot topic, the difficulty for us is that the needs of turf do not stop because the club is not operating. Thankfully it seems that many greenkeepers have been permitted enough time to manage to their turf's needs in these harsh times. The pandemic has also quite obviously thrown a spanner to the calendar of events from Bowls NSW, as an association we have been in contact with trying to attain what events will go ahead and at what time they plan on running such events. To this stage they have been unable to give a definitive answer due to the ever-changing restriction linked to this pandemic.

To assist with their planning and decision making we ran a number of polls on social media and via email to ascertain what work restrictions and green's conditions were like and what sort of time would be required prior to holding events. Greg at BowlsNSW has acknowledged and thanked us for this input. To all those that contributed to the polls, thank you.

### Other matters related to the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Bowling Greenkeeper of the Year** has been cancelled for 2020 due the varied working conditions imposed and the inability of inspections to be carried out. **Living Turf** must be acknowledged and

thanked as they have been supportive of this difficult decision and assured us of their support into the future. The popular **Legends Day**, including Peter Mobbs' Shield match between the Bowls NSW Legends and the Greenkeepers has also been cancelled this year.

### Cancellation of Federation Week (Gold Coast 2020)

This to my knowledge is the first time this has occurred and one of the most difficult to come too. Many meetings were had and all points considered before the decision to cancel was decided upon. While in time the decision has been vindicated by the restrictions imposed and legislation put in place by the government. State delegates have unanimously decided to run this event in 2021 and then fall back to the normal cycle meaning South Australia will host in 2024. I hope that as a state we can get support from our membership base and flood this great week with unprecedented support in 2021. It would be great to see some new faces and old one's alike turn up for Gold Coast 2021.

### Memberships

On a more positive note Rod Crean who is overseeing memberships (now due) has set us up on Team App where membership renewals can be paid. This will also allow information to be more readily available to all, with event listings and updates to be featured into the future.

Finally wishing everyone the best during these difficult times and may the grass be greener on the other side.

Stay safe Legends.

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# Around the Associations

## Northern Rivers with Duncan Elphick

Well it's been a while between drinks for everyone.

I trust everyone is social distancing and Isolation practices are as polished as Parra's wooden spoon collection.

Up here on the North Coast we know how lucky we are to live in one of the best parts of the world. When the Autumn weather turns it on like this year, it's just unreal.

The unprecedented times has made it impossible to get around or host our usual Bowls days and catch up with the local Greenkeeping fraternity. So, a few of the lads sent in some brief comments about how their clubs are traveling and the conditions of their greens and individual working schedules.

### Alstonville

Ian Wright is only doing 10 hrs a week. The club let the casual help go a few months ago. No expenditure on greens apart from fuel. 8 bowlers per green for initial rollups post Covid.

Sounds like tough times ahead for the red soilers up on the plateau. I sincerely hope the proud club with rich history can survive the COVID crisis of 2020.

### Evans Head

Dave Turner's greens are always top notch, surrounds flawless. His hours have been cut by around 50% and his Assistant and casual staff are not getting any hours. This scenario is unfortunately going to be replicated across the industry. Sad times indeed.

### Byron Bay

Elfco Greenkeeping are in full swing. Thanks to Scotty from marketing and the generous support of the Federal Government's JobKeeper scheme we have saved all our staff from the dole queues even though the value of our clients contracts have been reduced by more than 55%.

A number of site improvements and infrastructure modifications are occupying our time. The greens are looking great, a few unsightly clusters of Mullumbimby couch but no damage from the backpacker/social bowls element that make up a big percentage of the revenue Club Byron rely upon to keep their business afloat. A welcome relief, all that is bad is good for the greens at this particular venue. Usually a merry-go-round of prep and repair is common practice at Club Byron.

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### Cherry Street

Ballina's only bowling club and our staff are also taking advantage of the site being free of bowlers. Usually bustling with bowlers six days a week, the situation has allowed for a broad brush of cultural routines that are usually truncated because of the hectic play programme.

ERI type lesions have been active since the end of the big dry in February. A season-long rigorous fertility programme, based around soil health and root development, continued to show little to no results throughout March. April bought a change of tack. We started to introduce very heavy apps of humic acid-based liquids, molasses and carbon along with different source of Ca though Gypsum not Dolomite. Minor recovery of the affected plant in areas but noticeably a halt in the severity of the infection on the surface of the green however I'm not sure what was happening below the surface of the green.

These results came around the same time we were able to modify other practices as we had no play due to Covid 19. Modifications such as scarification, height of cut, no rolling, no play and an earlier cold snap could all have had beneficial results to the symptoms halting as patches and not forming fully formed irregular rings.

Club staff have also been co-existing with Greenstaff, taking on all manner of club maintenance tasks

### Yamba

Graham Brown NSWBGA GREENKEEPER OF THE YEAR is suffering a small outbreak of ERI in one green, treating the symptom with consistent apps of liquid organic fertiliser and molasses every three weeks.

Looking forward to seeing life get back to our new normal asap. Also, those who are suffering with the insecurity of their club's future, all the best of mental health and strength to you!

Stay healthy  
Dunc.



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## Blue Mountains with Rod Crean

My first report from the beautiful Blue Mountains. And wow, what a wild couple of months it's been. From being surrounded by bushfires and renovations in choking smoke to torrential rain straight onto COVID isolation and a 14 week undefeated streak on top of the ladder for the mighty Eels - it's safe to say the world's gone crazy.



Nick Hancott at Hazelbrook and myself at Lawson are like most of you out there and jump in and help each other out every year with renovations. Like the Canberra boys our season can be quite short with the cooler conditions. Some years go to plan while some years there's snowy conditions in October and dormancy setting in March.

I'm guessing it's probably too cold for that ground pearl thing you all talk about but the weather can drive a man to drink.

Both of us have been lucky enough to work pretty much as normal during this pandemic and also once government health orders allowed we got roll ups straight on. I also had enough time to turn my shed into a bowler's lounge with a themed decor (*pictured*).

This has been greatly appreciated by our members and has lead to our little mountains bubble being as normal as possible and quite peaceful.

The only real disappointment was missing Federation this year on the Gold Coast. Now to wait for Club, Zone and State calendars to be finalised so we can plan our attack on this year's renos and pray to the weather gods.

I was lucky enough to do my time under the farmer David Hukins, a brilliant Greenkeeper and I just want to wish him the best of luck now he's back in the trade at St Georges Basin.

### Membership update

Our Association is slowly moving with the times and we now have Team app. iPhone and android users just search 'Team app' in your App Store, download and create an account and search for NSW Bowling Greenkeepers. This app allows all event info direct to your phone.



Memberships can be paid (go to the Store Icon in the app), you can contact each other and have private discussions on all issues within our industry. Facebook is great but it's more public. It can now be used to promote events and championships publicly inviting club members etc to watch live streaming of championships.

Looking forward to report some work from the top of the mountains in the future and wish you all the very best in the coming months coming out of these strange times.







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## Water Restrictions & Water Use for Bowling Greens with Matt Keough

The last few years have been very challenging, in particular the last 12 months. Severe drought followed by the worst bushfire season in living memory then the icing on the Turd Pie Covid-19 and the shut down of the country.

Thankfully, some much needed rain washed out the fires, and hopefully the Corona is also under control. But in the background the drought is still lurking in the shadows.

Not all of the state has had drought relieving rain, some areas are still in drought, and I believe the long-range forecast is still below average, too average rainfall in most of the state.

Which brings me to water restrictions. A lot of the state negotiate with different entities, be that the local councils, or state water authority such as Sydney water or Hunter water, for use of potable water in times of restrictions.



We as an Association are trying to format a basic list of guidelines that can be taken to any water body to help with the negotiations for your water use. With most areas still in restrictions of some sort, unless we get a really wet winter, these restrictions will be here for next summer and will be tighter again.

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In conjunction with NSW Golf Course Supers, we started negotiating with Sydney Water last year (2019) for use of potable water for the greater Sydney and Wollongong areas. They virtually had no idea on what we use the water for, how much and how often and over winter period virtually zero. All they knew is that we had high-end turf and watered it, they charged us for it so we must be wasting it. That was evident by the many varied water exemptions we have received.

So we have engaged a consultant, Peter from Water Wise, who has had dealings with water authorities in the past and is well respected by them. The idea was to gather some data and formulate a water consumption guideline, for level by level restrictions, that can be used not just in the Sydney region but also statewide. You might have seen the email sent out at the end of last year, the response wasn't the greatest, but gave us some information to start with. At the moment water restrictions and exemptions are all ad hoc across the state and we get very little input.

In reality we understand that if there is no water then we can not water our greens, that is a given, but we need to address the misconception that Bowling greens are water hogs and are wasting water. After some investigation we calculated that in just the Sydney region the TOTAL Bowling greens space was equivalent to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of your average 18 hole golf

course and total consumption of say your standard 2-3 green club per annum. was estimated at 1.2-1.8 megalitres. Some golf courses are pumping this out per night.

The end goal of this will be, to get a better understanding at State Government level of the amount of water we use, when we use it, what we are actually doing to be better with the water that we use and have a blue print that can be taken from region to region with a basic list of restrictions, level by level, that give us access to water and show we are doing our part to also reduce water use. In a nutshell some flexibility of when we use water.

Perhaps even get some Government funding to improve water systems, better tanks and pumps, automatic systems with moisture sensors and rainfall sensors, perhaps even some resources to help individuals improve their water usage.

If anyone has had discussions with their local water authority and has any further input fell free to send either to Simon Cooper ([simon@turfcareaus.com.au](mailto:simon@turfcareaus.com.au)) or myself ([matt.keough@engadinebowling.com.au](mailto:matt.keough@engadinebowling.com.au)).

The more information we gather across the state the better we can negotiate our position.

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# Rep's Report

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What a time we are living in, at the moment! The most important thing is that all greenkeepers and their families stay safe. The working situation of most greenies has changed dramatically with very

reduced hours leading to, in a lot of cases, wages being supplemented with annual leave, long service leave or both and 'job keeper'. I know of only a handful of greenkeepers still working normal hours, but that could change in the future if the current situation continues for a longer period. I am hoping when things return to some normality that all bowling clubs can continue operating, but unfortunately, I have a feeling that some may not reopen. I hope I am proven wrong.

On actual greenkeeping issues, Adam Troth has left Birrong Bowling Club after many years and is now at Cabra Vale Diggers after Adam Moffit left there and moved down to Malua Bay Bowling Club near Batemans Bay. Adam arrived to start work down there just after the clubhouse burnt down in the bushfires, over Christmas and New Year. The

temporary clubhouse in place is actually very good. An enclosed large marquis with flooring, solid windows and doors.

On the bushfires, two greenkeepers down south, Scott from Nowra Bowling Club and Jason from Lake Conjola Bowling Club both lost their homes at Lake Conjola. As you can imagine, it was a traumatic time for both families, but they are all safe, which is the main thing. The response to all those affected down there was incredible. An interesting outcome of these times, at Bondi Golf Club, with Bondi Beach closed, Darren the greenkeeper had the added task of ridding the greens of a girl sunbathing on one and a chap using a skipping rope exercising on another. Oh, the joys!

Presenting Graeme Brown with the Living Turf Greenkeeper of the Year Award gave me great pleasure, as I have known Graeme for many years calling on him when he was at Panania Memorial. From what I have been told, it is very well deserved, and I am sure the Bear would be nodding in agreement.

Stay safe everyone and I hope things get back to normal sooner rather than later.

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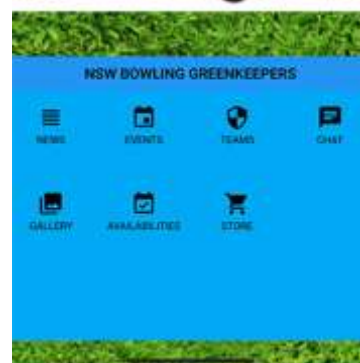
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