



FACILITIES PLAN – 2020 to 2030

Submitted to the Bowls NZ Board, November 2019

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Background

In December 2012, Bowls New Zealand adopted a facilities strategy document titled “**Bowls 2020 – Securing Our Future**”, prepared by Gryphon Management Consultants. This document outlined the 2010 status of all bowling club facilities available within New Zealand, the management systems of those facilities and the membership models that operated within them.

The **Bowls 2020** paper highlighted the following:

- the club subscription-based membership model that had traditionally provided access and funding to the game, was being outnumbered by the rise in involvement of casual players whose engagement with the game was generally limited to more social and corporate type events.
- the unsustainability of the high total number of bowling clubs throughout New Zealand and recommended a concerted effort be made to encourage neighbouring clubs to consider partnerships.

At the time of production (December 2010) there were 583 bowling clubs in New Zealand. Nine years on from the 2010 report there are 98 less bowling clubs (485). In most cases, these now defunct clubs, have closed their doors through a lack of membership growth in provincial New Zealand clubs, or have merged the men’s and women’s clubs into the one entity.

	Clubs	Members	Casual Participation
2010	583	44,923	53,352
2011	582	42,222	46,379
2012	561	41,219	50,617
2013	546	39,875	53,548
2014	537	39,149	57,915
2015	524	38,550	66,694
2016	511	37,825	81,556
2017	497	39,375	83,621
2018	485	40,031	102,699

The **Bowls 2020** paper established four key recommendations for the Bowls New Zealand community to consider:

1. The use of population figures to establish an optimal number of venues / facilities at which bowls is offered to players and supporters. Figures proposed were one venue per 20,000 population (Auckland) and one venue per 18,000 (Rest of NZ).
2. The rationalisation of existing venues to create efficiencies in operational, financial and facility management for the benefit of end users.
3. The importance of conveying Bowls New Zealand’s strategic direction to external stakeholders such as government agencies, local councils / community boards, charitable trusts, commercial partners, etc.
4. The development of plans to create a “Home of Bowls” location in each of the three major cities in New Zealand – Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch (in that order).

These recommendations and their progress have been considered in the strategy discussion and recommendations that follow.

This report is written for the bowls community within New Zealand, and whilst we acknowledge the various stakeholders that support our community bowling clubs, this report has been written to guide the local clubs’ own strategy and the place they hold in their local community. EVERY bowling club is different, and EVERY club therefore has varying aspirations for the role they play in providing an inclusive facility and sport to their local community.

Community Facilities

The future of Bowling Clubs is directly related to the provision of good quality off-green facilities that will provide for lawn bowlers and other sports and community activities / groups. Whilst most existing clubs and their members are generally being serviced at the level to which they have become

accustomed, the future of the game relies on facilities and club management solutions being provided to a standard that will attract and retain new compatible user groups and activities.

As we look back over the past nine years, it has been evident that many of our clubs have diversified what they offer the local community. This is perhaps best reflected in the growth of the bowling clubs' casual participation numbers, which have grown from 53352 in 2010 to 102699 in 2018. More (albeit largely anecdotal) evidence is the number and variety of community groups that now use bowling clubs as a 'home base'; e.g. Bingo, Housie, Darts, Croquet, Snooker, RSA, Dance, Fishing and Petanque.

As we look towards the Year 2030, the future of our bowling clubs could perhaps be best described as **'community facilities FIRST and bowling facilities SECOND'**.

In order to encourage and assist bowling clubs that wish to work towards creating partnerships and shared facilities with other community activities, thereby realising a more diverse use of their facilities, the bowls community needs to:

1. Identify and develop current and new initiatives and partnerships;
2. Move towards a paid facility administration over the volunteer club committee;
3. Promote a 'change conversation' within the club and local community; and
4. Communicate and share what they are doing to embrace a more diverse future.

The role of Bowls New Zealand is to encourage and support a community targeted facilities strategy. Our ability to dictate and control the decisions of clubs at the community level is limited, acknowledging that a national body like Bowls New Zealand does not know and understand all the dynamics within our local communities.

Through data validated by the December 2018 Bowling Club Census, partnerships are already being promoted between bowling clubs and local community groups. Bowls New Zealand, Council and RST's are aware of these discussions and may therefore be able to play a leadership role to ensure progress is made on these partnerships.

The Facilities Plan of 2010 talked of rationalising the number of bowling clubs based upon population and creating 'super clubs' within key metropolitan areas. This is NOT the intent of this current strategy. Instead Bowls New Zealand supports the future of the small bowling club that adopts a plan to become a local facility that delivers a diverse range of activities (including lawn bowls) into its community.

The WELLBEING of our communities and their measures of physical and mental health mean we need more not less community facilities that are diverse and inclusive in operation.

Modern Facilities

New and/or upgraded facilities enhance the ability of the club to attract new members, participants and community groups. The reality is that the 1980's furniture and theming of the majority of bowling clubs is no longer attractive to the 21st century consumer who expects a 'MacDonalds®' experience every time they spend their entertainment dollar. Faced with a tired club and equally tired volunteer workforce, it is difficult for the bowling club to compete on anything more than price, when it comes to community facility hire.



ACTION:

Community Bowling Clubs to GROW and DEVELOP partnerships with those community activities and groups, that enhance the clubs' worth to the local community.

Acknowledging the matter of funding, bowling clubs might consider the following amenities and services, in order to enhance their offering to the local community:

- New 'see-through' fences to replace the 'corrugated iron wall'
- Modern signage promoting the clubs' community offering
- An all-year-round covered (enclosed) bowls playing surface
- Additional club equipment, for the likes of indoor bowls, petanque, snooker, darts, etc.
- Modernising the bar and lounge
- Subleasing the commercial kitchen to a café or contractor
- Separate 'hire' function room
- Modern technology (TVs, AV system)
- Children's area
- Shuttle transport
- Ease of access and parking



ACTION:

Community Bowling Clubs to review the attractiveness of their facility to new customer.

Facility Management

The traditional (member) volunteer of the sports club is a recruitment challenge that will not disappear in 21st century New Zealand. Many consumers now have an expectation that they can 'turn up and play/pay' for their sport and not volunteer time to the running of the local club.

Depending upon the scale of the operation, paid roles will need to be considered by most bowling clubs. A professional facility management solution (be that full-time or part-time) will provide the club with a person who can act as the face of the facility in the eyes of new customers. Meaning new and existing members (and casual participants) can enjoy the clubs' facilities without being burdened with the operational requirements of running the facility.

A professional Facilities Manager might (depending on hours) fulfil the following roles within the club:

- Delivery of the Annual Business Plan
- Management of volunteers and contractors
- Promotion and delivery of facility usage

An effective facility manager will quickly recover their financial cost, should they be permitted to explore new revenues streams and customers for the bowling club facility. If the role is to be successful, the facility manager role should be separate to the bowls match committee role.

An effective facility management solution should also move the club committee from an entirely operational role to one of governance and accountability.



ACTION:

Community Bowling Clubs to consider a business case for the recruitment of a Facility Manager.

Bowls New Zealand's Support and Leadership

Several clubs have either recently completed, or are presently undertaking, major changes to their facilities and / or operational model in order to provide modern, relevant playing and management

solutions. Bowls New Zealand should ensure that a database of information, including case studies, is established, maintained and PROMOTED for the benefit of all future projects.

When completing a major building project and / or instigating a new management structure, the following matters might be considered:

Building Projects

- Suppliers and selection of materials
- Building process
- Future proofing of the building
- Funding process
- Project management

Professional Management and Governance

- The Governance model and constitution
- Skills identification and position descriptions
- Workplace Health and Safety / Legislation
- Communication solutions



ACTION:

Bowls NZ to SHARE the experiences and learnings of bowling clubs.

Bowls New Zealand, through the learnings of bowling clubs around the country, is in a position to share information that will be of assistance to any club considering developing its facility or reshaping its management solution.

In certain circumstances, with the support and encouragement of the local clubs and community, Bowls New Zealand should also consider leading the change conversation.

Councils, Centres and RST's

There is a wealth of external resource available to bowling clubs looking to redevelop their facility or management solution. In the case of some regions the bowls centre may have capability and resource to shape a strategy and this is especially so in the Auckland region with Auckland Bowls having a dedicated fund (and strategy) to develop bowling clubs in central, east, west and south Auckland.

Equally the local Regional Sports Trust (RST) has resources available for bowling clubs, should they be looking to produce reports on the feasibility of capital investment, along with resource should the club be looking to review its management and governance structure. The RST generally playing the critical role of facilitator for change.

For most bowling clubs, the local council (and/or local board) provides not only a facilitation resource but also a source of funding for facility development. Acknowledging that 70% of bowling clubs sit on council land; the council has an existing commitment to the maintenance and development of these facilities, for the benefit of the wider community.

@ 2020 Projects

There are a number of capital improvement projects already underway throughout New Zealand. A summary of these is included below, to simply evidence the current rate of change within the bowling

community. It is by no means a definitive listing and will require constant monitoring to ensure its relevance.

Indoor or Covered Greens

Bowls New Zealand's encourages bowling clubs to create covered playing facilities as a growth opportunity. The following locations have or are building a full sized covered playing facility:

- Invercargill (Waverley)
- Dunedin Stadium
- Wellington (Naenae)
- Hawkes Bay (Hastings)
- Waikato (Hamilton)
- Auckland (Papatoetoe)
- Auckland (New Lynn)
- Auckland (Remuera) – *Completed August-2019*
- North Harbour (Orewa) – *Estimated completion date: End-2019*

In addition, the following regions are at various stages of discussion regarding the million dollar investment in a covered facility within their community:

- Northland
- North Harbour
- Auckland x 6 clubs
- Bay of Plenty
- Taranaki
- Wanganui
- Manawatu
- Wairarapa
- Kapiti
- Marlborough
- Nelson
- Canterbury x2 clubs

Conversion to Artificial Greens

There are eight clubs around the country presently converting their natural green to an all-year-round artificial green at a cost of \$300k per club. This is on top of the 173 existing artificial greens (representing 23% of bowling clubs surfaces). The move to an artificial green has been motivated by a range of factors including:

- lack of suitably skilled greenkeepers to maintain the existing surface to an acceptable standard
- the need to provide for the increasing number of casual participants
- annual cost of maintaining natural greens
- cost of purchase and maintenance of specialist greenkeeping equipment.

Building Upgrades

A number of bowling clubs have identified areas within their facilities requiring attention and have plans to complete these projects in the next 12-24 months. These projects include the installation of solar heating, new 'see-through' fences, new kitchen and bathrooms, new furnishings, a new roof, new carpark, the addition of a Petanque court, and the repainting of the clubhouse exterior.

Management Solutions

According to the 2018 census there were 21 clubs that employed a full or part-time (>30 hours) facility manager. This number is increasing on a yearly basis as more clubs move key aspects of their facility management to a paid resource.

Towards the year 2030

The large percentage of lawn bowlers in the future are very likely to be consumers who play the game casually, and in shorter formats. The establishment of community clubs throughout the country that provide high quality, all-weather playing and social facilities; alongside other compatible sports and activities, will ensure that our bowling clubs remain an important part of New Zealand communities. Strong community facilities in turn providing for the physical and mental wellbeing of ALL New Zealanders

There are presently 485 bowling clubs affiliated to Bowls New Zealand. The majority of these clubs:

- provide positive social interaction opportunities for the community, many of them aged 65+, that may otherwise be lonely and / or depressed and / or lacking physical exercise.
- are well positioned to deliver to their community a professionally managed facility that provides a safe and welcoming environment for the community.
- are well resourced to upgrade to modern facilities.
- are open to discussing the opportunity to rationalise their facilities through partnership or amalgamation with other clubs and/or community entities.

The opportunity for our bowling clubs and the game itself to not only exist but flourish, is one that is both very real and very exciting. Leading this opportunity are our bowling clubs and their growing acceptance that change is already happening.

Bowls New Zealand, November 2019