

## **Bowls in NSW – Q&A on Unification – Last Updated 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

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 bringing together the two bowls organisations at state level only into a single entity to govern the sport in NSW.

Unification is **not** about mandating:

- The merging of men's and women's sub-clubs.
- The merging of districts and zones.
- Any changes to boundaries or existing competition structures.

#### **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?**

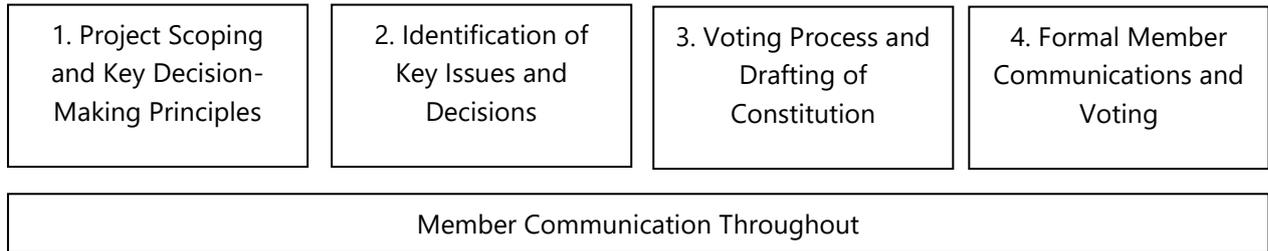
A3: We are in the early stages of this project and will develop and communicate specific timeframes over the next few weeks.

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
- Matt Goodwin - Bowls NSW President
- Dilys Kindleysides - Women's Bowls NSW Board of Directors
- Brett Duprez - Bowls NSW Board of Directors
- 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.

**Q4b: Why have attempts to unify failed in the past?**

A4b: Attempts to merge organisations are not easy to implement within any industry and can fail for many reasons. The collaboration demonstrated by the current Unification Working Group, and the goodwill shown by both organisations suggests that now is the right time for bowls in NSW.

**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.)

**The Voting Process**

**Q6a: How does the vote work? Will every club have a vote? Will each club member from WBNSW and BNSW have an individual vote for/against unification?**

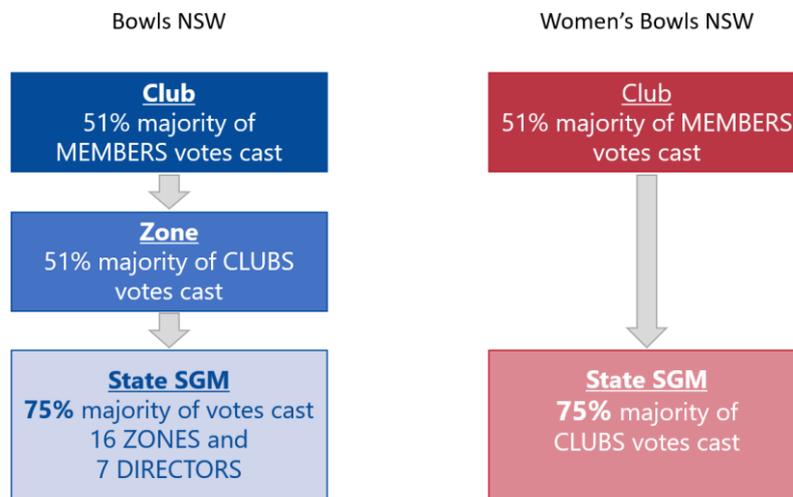
A6a: The voting members of each entity are defined in the respective Constitutions.

- For BNSW, the voting members are the zone representatives. There are 16 zone representatives as well as 7 State Directors. A 75% majority vote for or against unification from these 23 representatives at the State SGM will determine the result for BNSW.

- For WBNSW, the voting members are the member clubs. A 75% majority vote of clubs at the State SGM determine the result for WBNSW.

Each club member will be able to contribute to the overall vote/decision as per the rules of their individual club's constitution. The following diagram provides an overview of the voting process will work. Please note, this is applicable to the majority of clubs and members, however, there may be some instances where club constitutions differ.

The ultimate vote will be put forward at respective Special General Meetings as per the requirements of each organisation's constitution.



With regards to members of both entities, affiliated bowlers will get a vote a club level, as determined by the processes outlined in the club constitutions.

**Q6b: With the voting, and a 51% majority vote of club members, is that 51% of club members that attend or is there proxy votes as well?**

A6b: This will depend on each club's constitution. Each club member will be able to contribute to the overall vote/decision as per the rules of their individual club's constitution.

**Q6c: Will the new Constitution be sent to all members for feedback?**

Q6c: Yes, the draft Constitution for the new entity will be sent to all members prior to the vote, as well as a comprehensive member information pack. The member information pack will contain detailed information regarding the structure of the new entity and the financial implications of unifying the two entities, so that members are able to make a considered decision when casting their vote.

**Structural Implications**

**Q7a: If the unification does go through, what will be the composition of the new Board?**

A7a: We have looked 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 have also utilised 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>

For the first two years, a Transitional Board will be in place. This will comprise of 10 appointed directors from existing Boards, with 5 men and 5 women. This will include all representatives from the UWG plus two other members selected by their respected Boards.

The Chair will be elected by the Board for the first year, and again for the second year, with a deputy from each of the existing Boards.

After a two-year period, the view would be to streamline the new Board to a minimum of 8 elected directors and up to 10 directors in total, maintaining the 40:40:20 principle.

There is discretion to have up to two independent Board members within the 8 or 10 based on skill-set. After the interim period, a rolling three-year rotational structure will be established to ensure equity is maintained.

**Q7b (new): If the unification does go through, what will the structure of the new organisation look like?**

A7b: There will be Co-CEO's for the first 18 months and operations will be maintained for the first 12 months. After this, all roles will be reviewed with some streamlining anticipated.

**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.

**Zones, Districts and Regions**

**Q10a: How will unification affect the structure of competition with regards to district, region and zone boundaries?**

A9d: The unification process is not about changing competition structures, and all event and competition structures will remain until December 2022. It is intended that a full competition review 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 at a local level.

**Q10b: 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 has been put on hold until unification is complete.

Any improvements recommended from the separate competition review (mentioned above) and a thorough consultation process with all zones, districts and regions will be clearly communicated and agreed upon well in advance of implementation.

**Q10c (new). In the future you say that men will still have zones and ladies will keep their districts. Can these two structures work in one organisation?**

A10c. The existing district and zone structures will continue to administer events in the same manner as they currently do.

**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 the unification process is finalised, so that each club has the ability to submit their own vote.

We anticipate that over the coming years, as has been seen over the last 2-3 years, there will be clubs seeking to merge, 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? Will there be one affiliation fee or two? How does it affect us financially? Will there be discounts for regional areas within the fee structure?**

A23: Following unification, every club will pay a discounted affiliation fee for 2021/22 season. The 2019 fees invoiced to BNSW Clubs and WBNSW Clubs will be added to form a total amount. A 6% discount will then be applied to this total amount. Clubs that are currently affiliated with only one entity will be invoiced the 2019 fee with the 6% discount applied.

We will be communicating formally with clubs, districts, regions, zones and bowling members in March/April about how this fee policy will be implemented, and the financial implications moving forward.

**Q24 (new). What about men's Zone and women's District fees, will that become one fee or will we still pay both?**

A24: As there are no changes to Zone, District and Region structures, men's Zone and women's District fees will continue to be paid as they are currently. These fees are currently set by the individual Districts and Zones and not by the State bodies.

**Q25 (new): Will every member at every club pay the same fees to their clubs?**

A25: How the club charges each individual member for the use of facilities and services is decided by the club, not the state body.

As stated previously, following unification, the 2019 fees invoiced to BNSW Clubs and WBNSW Clubs will be added to form a total amount. A 6% discount will then be applied to this total amount. One invoice will be sent to each club.

**Q26 (new): Will we require new identity numbers in a combined male/female system?**

A26: We anticipate that under the unified the body, each bowler will have one National identity number. This will provide the opportunity for each bowler to have one number for entering competitions and events, as well as all officiating roles (i.e. coaching, umpiring).

**Q27 (new): What is the alternative if unification doesn't progress?**

A27: Both Boards strongly believe that unification is the best opportunity to grow the sport. There is no better time than now to make this happen.

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