

Hexham Bowling Club Limited

Chairman's Report 2016

This year sees the end of an era for your club which is sad in many ways with the announced retirements of a number of our outstanding staff. The retirement of our long-serving CEO, Jon Chin, our ever popular and efficient office staff of Dot Shakespeare and Coralie Sykes, our ever-present duty manager, Gabe Batista as well our behind-the-scenes handyman, Trevor, brings about a loss to the club of over a century and a half of experience in the clubs industry and service to this club. Whilst it is sad to see the departure of those who have contributed in so many ways to your club it must also be viewed as an opportunity to change direction, breathe new life and gain from the input of new staff with new ideas and aspirations. I do, however, sincerely wish each and every one of those departing the happiest and healthiest of retirements as they do all indeed deserve exactly that. I must also add that it is sad to see the departure of Matthew Peel who moved on from his duty manager position here to further his career at Maitland City BC. We also wish him every success in the future.

The year 2015/2016 has been a difficult year for your Club. The economic climate of the Hunter Region has witnessed an increased unemployment situation which results in a general reduction in people's expenditure in leisure and entertainment areas as they become uncertain of their future. Many clubs throughout our region have suffered from this malaise to varying degrees. However after several years of declining fortunes we are able to report that our financial report shows a small profit for the year. This is a most gratifying situation for members as it shows that plans are coming to fruition with this turn around in the club's finances.

We have undertaken no major capital expenditure this past twelve months in an effort to halt the drain on our finances opting to maintain our current financial status to ride out the situation. Our biggest concern, as it has been almost for the past decade, has remained our waste water treatment system which has proven to be a massive drain on our finances for far too long. Thankfully we now have a system in place that is operating to the EPA's satisfaction and so the threat of adverse action from them has been alleviated. However the whole project has been bogged down through the inaction of government departments to grant permission for us to extend the outlet pipe into the centre of river as prescribed by the EPA. Application for this project was made early in 2014 and we have awaited approval despite repeated requests and lobbying to have it expedited. As the situation sits at present we are able to see a degree of light at the end of the tunnel and expect to be able to discontinue the regular expensive pump-outs that have been draining your club's finances in the foreseeable future.

The club retains healthy assets in the Harrington cottages properties which have increased marginally in value. The Board has taken steps to increase income from the facility at Harrington by recently renovating and undertaking the leasing of Units 5 and 6 to permanent tenants. This will bring in a steady income from the two units which have been poorly booked by members for holiday accommodation. Another fact that should allay concerns of members is that we are debt-free. We have been debt-free for the past eight months now when all previous borrowings were finalised.

The Board and management have undertaken a general tightening of belts to become more frugal. We are also examining ways in which we can diversify our business as no bowling club will continue to exist successfully if they continue to rely on the business that they have pursued for the last few decades – That is if they wish to survive. I can assure you all that we wish not only to survive but your Board is

seeking avenues for the business to grow. We do not intend to follow the path of several bowling clubs in the Hunter who have closed their doors in recent years.

With that thought in mind we continue to look for ways to diversify our business. Within our immediate area of Hexham there are very limited opportunities. Within your club's property boundaries the restrictions of space and position are a further constrictive consideration. However we continue to explore possibilities.

Your Board endorsed the major promotion around our renewal of membership in the form of the draw for the boat and trailer. This we believed would encourage renewal and new membership alike. It proved to be most successful and was well received by the membership – one only had to see the attendance in the club on the night of the draw - as was the introduction of our tray service of Friday and Sunday evenings. Both of these innovations are aimed at enhancing the club's reputation and patronage. Further promotions are being pursued for members.

We have investigated the costs involved in converting one of our greens to a synthetic surface. The prices quoted whilst restrictive are quite appealing. This issue will be given careful consideration following consultation with our bowling fraternity. It will not be rushed. However it could result in considerable savings over a length of time. This is what we have to look at primarily along with the effects upon bowls within the club.

Your club's name in the broader community continues to be enhanced by several major factors. The first is obviously the wonderful Riverside Bistro whose reputation is known far and wide. Thank you Ricky and Lilly along with your staff who maintain the fine standards of cuisine for which Hexham BC has become known.

Another factor in the club's "Happy Hexham" reputation is our staff. I sincerely believe that we have by far the most efficient and friendly staff of any of our immediate local clubs. Our experienced, recently retired, Secretary Manager, Jon Chin, can be very proud of the staff that he has built and of the ethic that has been established within your club. It should be noted here that Jon was recognised by Clubs NSW for his contributions to this club and the club industry throughout NSW in general by bestowing upon him Life Membership of their organisation. I must say here that Jon is a most worthy receiver of that honour. I sincerely thank all of our great staff for your contributions over the past twelve months.

Whilst on the subject of our wonderful staff I wish to acknowledge the efforts of our long-serving duty manager, Denise Diver, whose brainchild it was to conduct the carpark market day. Along with her many assistants and committee members we experienced a great club and community day. The efforts of all that day have been recognised by Clubs NSW making your club a finalist in the Clubs NSW Community Awards Program. This is the second time that we have been recognised in the past four years. I look upon this as a feather in our cap and proof that your club indeed is a club that serves its community.

Finally I wish to express my gratitude to your Board for their input into their duties and direction over the past year. Whilst we have had our individual differences and opinions – some, I must say, leading to heated discussion and debate – we have made significant progress as a Board this year. I sincerely thank all directors for their contribution and look forward to the year ahead, 2016/2017

Les Carter
Chairman