

# Minutes from a meeting of Zone A golf clubs

**Avondale Golf Club**  
**Tuesday 12 March 2013 at 7.30pm**

## **Present**

44 attendees representing 21 Zone A golf clubs as per the attendance record.

## **1 Welcome and Introduction**

Mr Les Browne welcomed attendees and thanked them for their Zone support. He also thanked Avondale Golf Club for hosting the evening. Welcome extended to special guests Mr Chris Allen, Chairman GNSW and Mr Stuart Fraser, CEO GNSW.

Mr Browne highlighted certain affiliated golf programs commencing in the near future. The Eric Apperly Shield will commence in July. Clubs were encouraged to enter a team if they'd not already done so. Junior Pennants will be promoting participation from girls who will compete on either handicap or scratch competition with the boys. The State Foursomes Championship will be held at Magenta Shores. Interstate series will be held in Perth and Hobart while the Mid-Amateur Championship for men and women will be staged at Nelson Bay.

## **2 Challenges and Opportunities for 2013 and beyond**

Mr Stuart Fraser outlined a range of initiatives for GNSW noting the stronger working relationship being forged among all golf stakeholders.

### **a) Club Support and Development Program**

A new combined golf initiative will support clubs experiencing operational and financial challenges through a range of management, benchmarking, club health programs including the planned introduction of a club development officer support to assist clubs seeking operational support. Strategic planning workshops will be conducted noting the potential to secure government funding for an 'all of sport' development program. Questions were raised concerning the development officer role which Mr Fraser said would be clearly defined in the near future by GNSW in conjunction with Golf Australia. A proposed club benchmarking website was being developed in conjunction with club general managers, noting the limitations of a UK-styled website which sought to provide comparative information on club operations, efficiencies, cost structures, etc.

### **b) Re-launch of My Golf Program**

GNSW will work with the PGA and Golf Australian to undertake a national junior golf development program focusing on 5-12 year old new golfers. The program is planned for launch in August 2013 and could include gift packs, close liaison with school authorities and involvement with golf professionals at club level. The overall promotion seeks to provide a defined pathway for junior golf development over the long term. Mr Fraser answered questions on timing and implementation issues associated with the program including the re-launch cost. A further question was raised regarding the loss of quality younger players to more prestigious golf clubs. Noted that certain measures have been implemented this year by the GNSW Match Committee to prevent player poaching for pennants. A new scheme will be announced to tighten player eligibility for Major Pennant representation to include only those players who have been club members for the preceding 12 months prior to the 2014 pennant commencement. A questionnaire to clubs regarding player privileges would be circulated from GNSW to ensure quality golfers adhered to published amateur status requirements. Noted that player 'poaching' had been a constant challenge to GNSW over many years.

### **c) Governance and structural review**

Noted the need for continued rationalisation within the golf industry as shown by the merging of Golf NZ and the NZ PGA. A governance review is being undertaken for GNSW by Sport Business Partners over a four month review process. This follows similar reviews conducted by GA and Golf Victoria. Strategic issues associated with governance, the GolfLink data base (which contains around 400,000 active amateur golfers across Australia) and affiliations within the industry are being reviewed.

A workshop for Council members is planned for the 23 April Council meeting. It will address such topics as governance and delivery, databases and member channels, issues associated with growing the game, club viability, golf investment and the marketing and visibility of golf.

Mr Fraser briefly outlined GNSW Board roles and functions, noting the sub-committee structure had been reduced to nine members. An online rules accreditation process was being formulated to supplement the rules presentation seminar program and facilitate easier rules accreditation participation.

d) **Mandatory director training**

Mr Fraser briefly commented on the proposed Registered Clubs Amendment (Training) Regulation 2013 legislation being implemented by the NSW Government. 'Smaller' clubs with poker machine turnover less than \$1 million would not be directly affected by this legislation, noting that at least two club directors will need to complete the required training/accreditation by 1 July 2016 with all existing members/directors completing the required training by 30 June 2018.

**3 DSR, slope and handicap changes**

Mrs Jann Pearson advised the new systems will commence in September 2013 following notification of changes to clubs in June 2012. Apart from one Zone A club all other Sydney clubs have been rated. Some country clubs still to be rated noting the difficulty of applying the sand greens formulae to all clubs. A Certificate of Rating will be forwarded to all clubs, noting the need for clubs to advise competition players which course rating was being played on a particular day. The Professional and the course superintendent need to closely liaise to determine the rating allocated. Clubs could apply a temporary rating change in the event of either continuing very wet or very dry playing conditions, following consultation with GNSW. Noted issues concerning bunkers in play needed to be followed by all clubs to determine rating and scratch criteria for a particular event. Rating anomalies raised by individual clubs would be reviewed in receipt order once all initial course rating requirements had been completed.

**4 EPA – NSW legislation**

Mr Fraser and Mr Allen commented on recent ongoing action by the state EPA to prosecute certain golf clubs regarding the inappropriate use of chemicals and pesticides on golf courses. One Sydney club is known to be significantly impacted by an EPA prosecution. Noted that harsher penalties would apply to any club that knowingly concealed any inappropriate use of chemicals in the past considering the EPA has wide legislative powers to examine historic sales records from supply companies to clubs and review club's chemical usage procedures if banned materials have been purchased.

Apparently around 50 clubs are to receive EPA notices of breach with penalties ranging from fines of \$400 - \$1,500 per club. All clubs must observe EPA chemical requirements noting that director's liability insurance will not cover breaches of non-compliance. Furthermore back-dating of chemical misuse can attract serious fines to former club directors who may now not have any board responsibility.

**5 Open forum – club cost and operational pressures**

Mr Fraser advised that some clubs charged disproportionate green fees for 9-hole play, a procedure which diminished the value for money outcome for this shortened game. He urged clubs to maintain green fee relativity compared to their 18-hole charge to ensure casual players received equivalent value for money from playing only 9 rather than 18 holes.

Comments were made regarding club entrance fees. Noted that not charging a new member entry fee would probably increase annual membership turnover/churn, a factor which all clubs needed to consider in terms of member affiliation processes and costs associated with member recruitment.

Noted some clubs were examining the possibility of implementing a 'drop down stableford' competition in stroke rounds for players who could nominate reverting to a stableford event to maintain player participation/enjoyment. Noted management difficulties to process two concurrent competitions. Agreed any decision on dual competitions was the responsibility of individual club's match committees. Noted certain instances where possible amalgamations were occurring between NSW regional men and women's committees to facilitate closer co-operation and integration. Noted that another Zone A club gathering would be planned later in the year.

## **6 Closure**

Mr Browne thanked all attendees, presenters and the staff and management of Avondale Golf Club for their hospitality. The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Mr Les Browne  
Meeting Chair

12 March 2013