

Ensure your club's policies and procedures are consistent with the AHRC Guidelines

HUNTINGDALE GOLF CLUB, VICTORIA

A member is a member – everyone is equal

The Club:

Huntingdale Golf Club (GC) is located in the heart of Melbourne's world famous 'sandbelt' region, just 20km south-east of Melbourne's CBD. One of Australia's most prestigious private golf courses, it has 1,239 members, 20% being female and a General Manager and PGA Professional onsite.

Local Demographic:

In the 2016 Census, there were 9,261 residents in Oakleigh South where Huntingdale GC is situated, however most club members come from other suburbs around Melbourne.

Background:

As a part of the Vision 2025 Strategy, Golf Australia engaged the Australian Human Rights Commission to develop Guidelines for the Promotion of Equal Opportunity for Women and Girls in Golf (AHRC Guidelines). These have been endorsed by the R&A.

They have been developed to ensure golf clubs are informed about the equal opportunity rights of members, and that they're not held liable under the Sex Discrimination Act.

The AHRC Guidelines acknowledge that the experiences of women and girls in golf have been very different from those of men and boys. This has limited women and girls' access to the game in different ways, including access to weekend play. A remnant of this historical experience is that many women still play only during the week or only have memberships that do not give them Saturday playing rights. As such, in many clubs, women's Honour Board events are traditionally scheduled midweek to accommodate the

women and girls in this situation because this cohort often make up the majority of women in community golf clubs. (Refer to AHRC Guidelines. (2019). p. 27)

The Story:

Huntingdale GC prides itself as an equal opportunity club. "A member is a member – everyone is equal," said Alex McGillivray, the club's General Manager.

"It is also great to see a very positive, progressive and inclusive culture at our club. We have been proactive for some time having advocated for the women's pennant to move to a Sunday, having all our competitions open to women and men and enabling our women to be full members since the mid-1980s.



*A member is a member
– everyone is equal"*

"Also, on a Saturday competition day, men and women can put their name down in any time slot, no reserved times for any gender. While we are proud of what we have achieved, it has been valuable working with Golf Australia on Vision 2025 to identify further areas for improvement."

Management, a very supportive club committee, and membership and women's sub-committees have been leading their club forward with Vision 2025 strategies to grow female participation by making changes reflective of the AHRC Guidelines to provide equal opportunity for women and girls.

"The club's strategic direction is to seek and attract female members, so we have introduced some special measures to achieve this," Alex said.



Enjoying pennant on a weekend – Huntingdale’s Division 1, 2019 women’s pennant team winners

These special measures are:

- Changing the constitution to give the club committee the power to change membership processes to encourage more women into golf and full membership
- Revising women’s B & C grade championship rules of competition to enable women to participate either on a weekday or weekend, depending on their needs

This case study demonstrates the work Huntingdale GC has done to achieve equal opportunity along with challenges and learnings along the way.

Challenges and Solutions:

“We knew how important it was to allow all female members (studying, working and non-working) the opportunity to participate in our club championships. This needed to happen to achieve equal opportunity and to further grow our female membership base,” Alex said.

“Upon revising our championship terms and conditions, we did face some complications but have worked collaboratively to overcome these. For example, we needed to identify how to fairly run quarter and semi-finals where a participant who plays on a weekend may need to compete

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against a participant who plays on a weekday. Our decision has been a “play by” rather than a “play on” format – that being a pair may choose to conduct their match on any day within the week. If the mutually agreed day is a day that a 5- or 6-day member cannot usually access, an exception will be made.

“In terms of making our women’s club championships a multi-day format, the biggest task was the need to sell the concept to our female members. Women were concerned it was unfair to run the event on different days that bring different conditions. We used examples of how conditions can change between morning and afternoon tee times in major tournaments around the world (e.g. The Open Championship) and events such as the Australian Amateur and World Amateur have qualifying rounds on different days on different courses.

"We were eventually successful in obtaining a consensus, have been lenient with membership playing rights and are now looking forward to hosting the club's first multiday championship in November! To date, the members who have entered to play on the weekend are working women and are over the moon they can now participate in the event.

 *Without discounting our product too much, we believe we have managed to find a good balance to provide a steppingstone for women to become full members.*

"Rather than coming from a top-down approach (like we initially did), it has been very promising and reassuring to now have our women's committee initiating conversations about our other board events held midweek. I think Vision 2025 has been a good tool to educate and empower our members and committees to make positive changes"

At the club's 2019 AGM held in July, members voted in favour of changing the club's constitution to give the committee power to create categories of membership. One such category put forward as an example was one that would attract and nurture female golfers on a pathway to full membership.

The club has since introduced a women's introductory membership. This membership enables women to play up to 25 rounds of golf per year with a reduced entrance fee and an annual payment equivalent to 77% of a full membership fee.

"Without discounting our product too much, we believe we have managed to find a good balance to provide a steppingstone for women to become full members. This has only very recently been implemented but our male members are already expressing an interest in signing up their

partners. We are very happy with this outcome as we strive to create a family atmosphere at our club. Our next challenge is to create an easily understood pathway for women from beginner to full membership.

"Long term, we are working to eradicate our 5- and 6-day membership categories. In the future, we want both men and women to simply be full members with equal and full-time access to the course and our competitions."

Learning:

- Bring your members along on the Vision 2025 journey by educating and inspiring them about the opportunities it will create. If they understand the bigger picture and how it can benefit the club long term, they will be more likely to support your proposals.
- Clubs can create their own Vision 2025 strategy to review policy, practices and pricing to encourage more women and girls to play golf.
- Greater access to playing, introductory programs and introductory memberships, more weekend board events and more leadership positions in the club are just a few areas a club can include in its strategy.
- Golf Australia can assist with your club's Vision 2025 strategy and now has templates to help clubs modernise their constitutions.

For further assistance or to request templates and resources, contact your Regional Development or Club Support Officer via www.golf.org.au/clubsupport or email clubsupport@golf.org.au

Download the AHRC Guidelines – www.humanrights.gov.au