

Implement gender neutral membership and competitions

KAPUNDA GOLF CLUB, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

*How to be adaptable and cater for what young people and women need from golf***The Club:**

Kapunda Golf Club (GC) is located 80km north of Adelaide. With a membership of 256, 15% being female, it is a 9-hole public course, run by volunteers.

Local Demographic:

- Population: 2,917
- Median age: 45 (national average 38)
- Children aged 0-14 years: 18.1% of the population (average 18.7%)
- People aged 65+ years: 21.3% (average 15.8%)
- People born in Australia: 82% (average 66.7%)
- Full-time workers: 51% of the population (average 57.7%)
- Part-time workers: 36% (average 30.4%)
- Median household weekly income: \$1,009 (average \$1,438)

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 Guidelines include information to help golf clubs evaluate their current course access and competition structures, including premium times such as Saturdays, for both men and women.



Glennis Warrior is the first female winner of the C grade championship - now open to men and women

The Story:

Peter Morrison, club President at Kapunda GC, had always believed it wasn't fair that women who played on a Saturday (traditionally men's day) were never able to be a part of the main competition. This was despite them paying the same membership and competition fees as men, who were eligible to win prizes and the monthly medal.

So, Peter took the initiative to change all gender-specific competitions – excluding women's day – to member competitions, open to both men and women.

The resistance he faced, however, was not what he expected

Challenges and Solutions:

As he began the push for change, Peter was surprised that the group of people he thought he was advocating for turned out to be the group that was initially most resistant.

“Surprisingly it was the female members who were reluctant to adopt this notion,” Peter said.

“I believe their initial reaction was because of intimidation. And I don’t blame them; it would be confronting to play golf in a male-dominated environment when you are one of few females. The women believed they could not compete with the men, despite the handicap system and women’s tees being in place.”

“Persistence was the key to change”

A few women had been playing Saturdays in an unofficial sense, so despite the hesitation, the concept was passed, and the Saturday competition opened to all members.

“Persistence was the key to change,” Peter said. “Along with the reassurance that it was simply an option for women to play on a Saturday and that they were indeed good enough to play alongside the men. We recently had our first female win the monthly medal and another take out the C Grade club championship which is open to both men and women. These wins have been fantastic and has helped this agenda immensely.”

To help integrate women into Saturday competition and get them feeling more part of the day, the club organised two mixed-sex fun ambrose events.

“We had 12 women (a mixture of those who play midweek and those who play largely at the weekend) playing together on a Saturday. However, for two weeks, we drew out names (ensuring one female and one male A grade

player were in each team) to create teams. We hoped that by mixing up the sexes and getting members playing with others that both men and women would better integrate.

“We want to ensure more women, especially those who cannot play during the week, know about the opportunity to play on a weekend,”

“While there was a little resistance from some of the members (who played golf elsewhere for those two weeks), most members were happy to enjoy a fun ambrose game and get to know others in the club.”

Peter said the outcomes from this have been:

- A friendly club environment. While most of the women have gone back to playing with each other, you can see more chat and banter between the sexes each Saturday.
- An increase in confidence and knowledge by women that they can compete on an equal basis with the men.
- No animosity if a woman wins the weekly Saturday competition. Relationships have been formed and people are genuinely happy for whoever wins.

“We want to ensure more women, especially those who cannot play during the week, know about the opportunity to play on a weekend,” Peter said.

“We encourage the pre-existing players to ask their friends along. We are also starting a summer twilight night. This has a very social and non-competitive atmosphere and is a good way to attract and introduce working women to our club (with a view that they may someday extend to our weekend competition play.)”

The club has been pleasantly surprised at the uptake, by both men and women, on a Saturday including the ambrose events. "It forms part of our club and committee's ethos to create a culture that is friendly and a place where everyone can come to enjoy their golf," Peter said.

Learning:

- If you want to improve golf for women, it is not just on women or an individual to make change, it needs to be a group effort. You need the club to get behind your initiatives. Change does not happen overnight, and it may take some persistence.

FF *You are either a golf course or a golf club. To be successful, you need to be a golf club – that is be a place that is friendly and where people enjoy spending time."*

- Clubs need to be flexible to adapt to the needs of players. We need to be adaptable and cater for what young people and women need from us.
- Running a fun ambrose event to launch your 'open Saturday' competition is a good way to integrate women into the day. If women feel too intimidated to be the sole female player in an ambrose team, pair them with another female to make a team of two women and two men.
- You are either a golf course or a golf club. To be successful, you need to be a golf club – that is be a place that is friendly and where people enjoy spending time.

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