

Ensure your honour board events are accessible for all

KEW GOLF CLUB, VICTORIA

Persistence pays off – how Kew Golf Club implemented the multiday club championship

The Club:

The Kew Golf Club (GC), located 10km north-east of Melbourne CBD is a private course open to members and their guests. With a membership base of 1,525 people, 28% being female, the club has an onsite General Manager and PGA Professional. There are 77 female members aged between 18 -59 (18% of the club's female membership)

Local Demographic:

- Population: 24,725
- Median age: 39 (national average 38)
- Children aged 0-14 years: 16.1% of the population (average 18.7%)
- People aged 65+ years: 17% (average 15.8%)
- People born in Australia: 64.9% (average 66.7%)
- Full-time workers: 58% of the population (average 57.7%)
- Part-time workers: 30.4% (average 30.4%)
- Median household weekly income: \$2,205 (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.



Women's and men's club champions

The AHRC Guidelines acknowledge that the experiences of women and girls in golf have been very different from those of men and boys. (Refer to AHRC Guidelines. (2019). p. 27). 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 this cohort who often make up the majority of women in community golf clubs.

The Story:

"Flexibility and opportunity to play golf on days that fit in around your life." This is the mantra that Andrea Moore, the Captain at Kew GC adopts. "Times have changed, women now work, and girls study, so we need to provide them with an opportunity to participate on weekends."

As at many other clubs, Kew GC has experienced a slow decline in weekday women's competitions and club championships, traditionally conducted over five midweek days.

Andrea is left to ponder these questions: “How can we attract the next generation of female members if we limit their opportunity to participate in club events? How can we ask them to pay the same fees for less access to club competitions and expect them to take five days of leave or skip school to play in our club championships?”

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Kew GC ran its first multi-day club championship (A, B and C grade) in October 2019. The format comprised:

- Two weeks of qualifying rounds where women could participate on a weekday (Tuesday, Thursday) or weekend (Saturday, Sunday);
- Followed by match play finals conducted over two weekends – Sunday, Saturday, Sunday;
- The finals for all three grades run in conjunction with the men’s club championship final round on the Sunday.



Crowds come to watch the final days play

“We are extremely excited to make the final day a totally inclusive club event and engage with all playing groups (men, women and juniors). We are planning a sausage sizzle, drinks and quite simply a celebration of our club,” Andrea said.

The excitement of the multi-day club championship was not without its trials and tribulations. To date, it has been 10 years since Andrea and others first started advocating that their women’s club championship be conducted on a weekend.

Challenges and Solutions:

In many situations, majority rules. This belief created a challenge when attempting to change the women’s championship to the weekend at Kew GC. “It is a natural instinct for humans to be resistant to change, especially when the current situation favours the majority,” explains Andrea.

“A key strategy was getting our board to commit to the AHRC Guidelines and asking the golf committee to review golf events and work out how to make them more accessible for all.”

“In the beginning, our committee members resisted change, because most women members play midweek. Success can be achieved by communicating to members that there is an opportunity for growth of potential new members, if competition play is also offered on days that are not preferred by current members.

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Andrea’s persistence eventually paid off and the flexible multi-day championship was approved.

“It is important to get committees involved and make them part of the solution. To get to the end point, you may need to find a compromise. For us it was finding the balance between ensuring our current mid-week players could still participate, while at the same time getting to where we want to be in the future.”

Another challenge is many women at the club are only “intermediate” members – that is, they only have access to the course six days per week. Luckily, Kew GC has an extremely supportive General Manager and flexibility has been granted for these women to participate in the club championship qualifying rounds on the weekend and for the quarterfinals to be played on a Saturday.

The event is now in the club syllabus. “We are mindful however that board and committee members come and go, so we are working hard to ensure the event is sustainable into future years,” Andrea said. “The key is to ensure our first weekend championship is a success and to develop clear and solid guidelines. Once our guidelines are implemented, we hope to see an increase in championship participation numbers, creating sustainable future growth for the club.”

Learning:

- There will often be resistance to change. The key is to think of different ways to compromise while having the end goal in mind.
- A common concern regarding dual qualifying is that competitors will play on different days and in different conditions. The answer to that – the British Open holds qualifying rounds at different venues in different conditions in different countries. Golf accepts that differences in playing and weather conditions can occur within a single day of play and affect competitors’ results depending on when they play their round. Accepting that we might have differences in playing conditions between days is consistent with this philosophy.
- Consider tee times of women on Saturdays. Keep in mind that some women (especially higher handicappers) can feel anxious and nervous playing among a full field of men.
- Persistence pays off. Campaigns for change can be a slow burn, but stick to your guns, slowly build up your allies, and, in many cases, change is inevitable.

Request Golf Australia’s multiday club championship guidelines via clubsupport@golf.org.au



Presentations of the women’s and men’s club champions on the 18th green