

Revise committee structures to empower more women into leadership positions

STRATHMERTON GOLF CLUB, VICTORIA

The amalgamation of committees - a natural progression

The Club:

Strathmerton Golf Club (GC) is a small, volunteer-based club located three hours' drive north of Melbourne. With no watering system, the club has sandscape greens and is only open during the winter months. Its membership comprises many shift workers from the local Bega Cheese factory, transport/trucking company and nurses, along with retirees. Membership is 35 with 37% being female.

Local Demographic:

- Population: 1,052
- Median age: 38 (national average 38)
- Children aged 0-14 years: 23.4% of the population (average 18.7%)
- People aged 65+ years: 12% (average 15.8%)
- People born in Australia: 81.4% (average 66.7%)
- Full-time workers: 61% of the population (average 57.7%)
- Part-time workers: 26.4% (average 30.4%)
- Median household weekly income: \$1,219 (average \$1,438)

Background:

Golf has historically been a sport played by men. As a result, many clubs have been established and managed using a main club committee (usually comprised of men) that manages men's golf affairs, and a women's committee (often a sub-committee) that takes care of women's golf affairs.

In many cases, women are therefore reluctant to sit on the main club committee as they feel



Male and female members enjoying a round together (with a near hole in one!).

it is not their space. This has resulted in a lack of women in positions of leadership.

As clubs begin to modernise and address gender inequality, it is recommended that a club committee manages men's, women's and juniors' golf business.

There are many benefits that come along with the amalgamation of committees, some which are outlined in this case study.

The Story:

In 2018, Strathmerton GC operated as separate men's and women's clubs. The club however soon became aware of the benefits of amalgamating its committees and worked with their Golf Australia Regional Development Officer (RDO) to achieve this.

Challenges and Solutions:

Like many regional clubs, Strathmerton GC's men's and women's membership was small (about 15 members each). As there were two committees managing two separate groups of members, both were struggling to fulfil committee positions and keep up with their workload.



The amalgamation of our two committees was somewhat a natural progression

"The amalgamation of our two committees was somewhat a natural progression," said Kay, a committee member. "The men were struggling to attract a secretary, so one of our female members put her hand up to help. From that, it was just a common sense move to amalgamate and share resources.

"We did not experience any resistance from either side towards merging - both parties wanted it which was good."



It is important to get committees working together as one club

Upon agreement, the two committees worked with local RDO Megan Carr to:

- Establish a working party that comprised a combination of men's and women's committee members.
- Identify what the sticking points were and work through these.
- Develop a new constitution and bylaws using a template supplied by Golf Australia.
- Ensure there were numerous opportunities for club members to provide their thoughts and feedback towards the new constitution and bylaws.
- Run a special general meeting to vote in new committee members and pass the new constitution.

"It is important to get committees working together as one club," Megan said. "We need to get men and women supporting each other to grow the game.

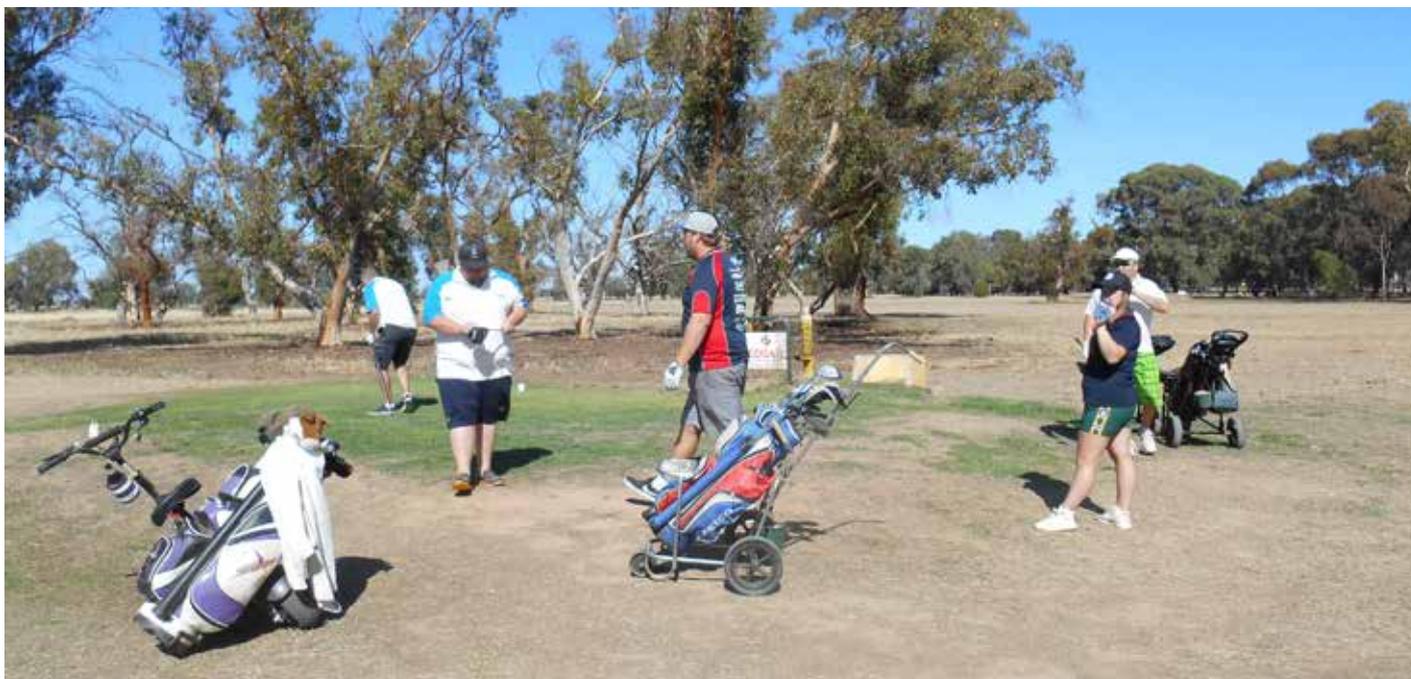
"For clubs looking at amalgamating their committees, there are templates available through Golf Australia to help you do so. They will help you work through various items such as the merging of competitions, committee structures, sponsorships, bank accounts, etc."

Now, six months on, Megan was thrilled with the feedback from the club about their amalgamation experience.

"I can only speak positively about the amalgamation," Kay said. "The club has not looked back."

The benefits experienced include:

- Shared responsibilities and resources ("We now have a bigger base of people to recruit committee members from and more hands making lighter work.")
- Coming together has given the opportunity to learn from each other.
- With a unified leadership group, the club now has a louder voice and has already been more successful in obtaining grants.
- Competitions are stronger as they are now open to both men and women so more people can play.
- A greater capacity to concentrate on new initiatives such as attracting more juniors and beginners to the game to further grow the club.



First day of play following amalgamation

Learning:

Megan suggests:

- Make sure the process of amalgamation is transparent.
- Ensure there are opportunities for everyone (men and women) to have a say. Share your new constitution with members and allow them to provide feedback.
- It is very important to communicate with your members, so they fully understand what you are doing and why you are doing it.
- Contact Golf Australia to access templates and assistance if you want to amalgamate your committees.

Kay suggests:

- It is worth looking at amalgamating your men's and women's committees as the benefits are immense.
- Keep your constitution broad initially so you can address issues that arise which are difficult to foresee in initial stages.

- Ensure both parties (men and women) are very welcoming and accepting of each other. It helps to promote the benefits that each group will enjoy.
- Your local Regional Development Officer (RDO) or State Development Officer is a terrific resource to help you through the process of amalgamation.
- When combining men's and women's competitions, you may need to revise your sponsorship and prizes that have historically been awarded. In our case the men had been awarding free pots at the local pub which did not appease our women so much!

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