



LIGHTHOUSE CLUBS CASE STUDY



Torquay Bowls Club

Criteria

Although Torquay Bowls Club excels in a number of areas like Community Engagement; it is the club's Club Administration & Membership initiatives that have led it to be recognised as a Lighthouse Club.

Club Administration

In 2007, Torquay had a declining membership, declining female membership and increasing average age of members. The facilities were ageing, there was low community engagement and the club found it difficult to attract sponsors, meaning finances were also on the decline.

It was recognised that the club lacked the committee, policies and procedures to drive the club forward. A change was required and consequently five new members were elected to the Board of Management. These people brought a raft of different skills and experience to the board that were previously absent. After identifying their demographic in Torquay of young families and retirees, the club felt that the best way to tap into this market was to introduce a Twilight Bowls Competition aiming to develop stronger links between the club and its community.

The board moved to create a new section in the club, aptly named the Twilight Section. Club regulations and new policy were written to accommodate the introduction of Twilight Bowls. The club embraced an adaptive and innovative leadership model. The Twilight competition has now changed the dynamic of original club members with each new member extending the reach of the club into the local community.

The new Torquay bowling club board has also seen changes in club culture and developed a strong relationship with the local Surf-Coast Council that sees Torquay as the new hub of the community.

Membership

The board also created a new membership structure (\$80 twilight package). This package allowed bowls access to the greens from 6pm. By engaging with the local community and allowing them to participate and belong, the clubs membership strategy has achieved incredible results. Torquay has bowlers (27) that started in the twilight section that are now valuable members of their pennant bowls teams, meaning they needed to enter new teams in both Saturday and Tuesday competitions to cater for the increase.

One of the major benefits regarding the membership of the twilight bowlers for the Torquay Bowling Club has been the addition of five members to the Board of Management. These new Board members have since made a significant impact on the club and have been greatly beneficial. Twilight bowlers are now contributing skills and sponsorship that were previously absent from the club and would be sorely missed now. The group are of different dynamics to original members and practice multiple professions such as medicine, trades

people, lawyers, university academics, industrial relations negotiators, real-estate owners, teachers, public servants; all of whom have extended the reach of the club into the local community.

In 2011-2012 it became the largest affiliated club in Victoria due to the Twilight bowls. Currently, the club membership stands at 330 affiliated members, which is double the amount of members since the commencement of twilight bowls. As more teams wanted to participate, twilight bowls has evolved into two nights and therefore has recruited a further 80 bowlers. As a result, it now has 200 twilight bowlers.

The enthusiasm, the diversity of demographic groups and weight of numbers attracts sponsors; a number of whom are players. This has increased revenue. The two nights are approximately worth \$2,000 per week to the club, which is of secondary importance to the life and zest now evident in the club.

Bowls Victoria says:

Torquay were very smart in the way it went about transforming the club. It found out who its target market was and developed its strategy accordingly. Knowing your community is important when developing any initiative and through the development of its Twilight Bowls program Torquay were able to provide an alternative competition to suit the needs of its community.

Learnings:

- It is important to know the community you're trying to engage, once you know your market a club can then develop a program or initiative to suit the community's needs.
- Developing programs like Barefoot or Twilight Bowls at your club will not only increase revenue & numbers around the club, but having new people involved can bring new skills and experiences to club administration and extend the clubs reach into the community.