

AGM 2023. THE PRESIDENTS STATEMENT

It is very pleasing to report that our club remains a robust and financial stable one. The course continued to be very well maintained and further developed . Much was done to assist with this. Our fleet was upgraded and improved. Better green staff facilities, due to unfortunate circumstances, were built. As well as improvements to the greens shed and its surrounds. Improvements were also made within the clubhouse. Making an even more pleasant environment for golfers and visitors to sit and enjoy the products of Links 19 and our bar. There has been a steady upgrading of our IT and communication platforms. To ensure the well-being of all our members and guests, plus complying with the ever changing government and corporate requirements, several policies and guidelines have been introduced during the year. We have also ensured any necessary staff training is provided. Any necessary inspections of premises and equipment were undertaken. All up a solid year, one of consolidation. None of this would have been possible without the ongoing support, dedication and hard work of your Board, its working committees, the Ladies', and the Vets' committees, all our staff, the Club Professional and his staff, and all the volunteers. Truly, we are a great club.

For the first time in four years, 2023 was a relatively uneventful year for the club. No longer did we rely on government financial handouts to survive, nor be able to take advantage of the increase in revenues from an escalation in playing numbers due to the devastating effect the heavy rains and floods had on so many of our region's golf courses. One benefit from more players visiting here in 2022, was that they came back to play, and some even joined. The challenge for 2023 was to continue to provide a value for money membership. This has been achieved in a variety of ways. Some easily seen. Some not so.

The major contributor to golf members' satisfaction is the course! And what a course we have! It is second to none in our region. A true challenge most days, it is a course for all players of levels and abilities. Our Supervisor and his team have been simply magnificent, working like trojans maintaining and improving the course, despite being a person down for most of the year. The search goes on to fill the vacancies. Having got the course to its current status, Will is working to take the course up to the next level and constantly looks at ways to do so in the most efficient way. He has already rebuilt the 8th hole, and upgraded the 3rd hole. Both are outstanding improvements to our course. Rather than have the improvised spare green used when 8th was rebuilt , he has now been busy on a "proper" spare green on the 9th fairway. In time the club will be looking to improve the 2nd green, the 9th green and the 18th fairway, probably during the next twelve to eighteen months. Both those greens suffer from a lack of a variety of pin positions particularly on the left hand side. There were programs implemented maintaining our bunkers and next will be our paths. To support these efforts and for the Green Team to work as efficiently as it can, its fleet of machinery has been renewed, upgraded, and expanded. Of course the Green Team has the support of a number of volunteers, who have made significant contributions maintain the course.

One major expense in 2023 was repairing the damage done by borer activity in the greens staff room in the sheds. So severe was it that it took one of our sponsors, DNA Pest Control, many months to eradicate the pests, not only from the sheds but also from some of the safety net support poles. The staff room required a complete renovation as very little was left undamaged or useable. Other high costs incurred in the sheds were upgraded diesel tanks with cover and sump drainage. The carport has been extended, one garage door needed replacing, and a better safety cage was built for the stored chemicals.

Links 19 continued to be innovative in supporting members' and visitors' requirements. Opening 7 days a week for breakfast was not only popular with all golfers but also with our locals. Social membership numbers have increased as a consequence.

Ensuring we complied with Shoalhaven's health regulations required new or renewed equipment to be bought, while the new outstanding service counter is easily visible, we bought a new large horizontal fridge, replaced the dishwasher, new steel shelving and splash backs, fire blankets and extinguishers. And in the bar area, there is now an upgraded electricity box, and very importantly, refurbished beer lines. There is still work to be done with a kitchen wash up area planned, along with improved storage and in time we hope to install a large cool/cold room.

We continue to spruce up the clubhouse where and when we can. Flooring in the garden room, new score entry tables, relocated noticeboards, even an improved speaker system, plus a music license! There are now protection screens at both ends of the deck and an upgraded system of security cameras.

A club card was introduced that ensures we are able to offer lowest prices to golf members, lower prices to social members, while providing competitive prices for visitors.

Credit to the staff, the numerous volunteers, and the House Committee for producing a great in-house experience. It is a great team effort.

Not so visible has been the ongoing improvement in our IT platform, the new server is in place with daily off-site back up, improved routers, and a variety of other equipment, all hard wired in for improved reliability. There has been a change to a better email host following restrictions on items sent out. We continue to improve our POS system. And we have upgraded our communication software, MailChimp. This upgrade has meant that we can send emails out, individually addressed, as well as the usual newsletters. We also are also able to segment our total membership into a number of groups, to allow specific information to go to a particular audience and not necessarily to all. There has also been considerable improvement in how we process memberships and membership records. Early in 2024 will see the launch of a new and much improved website.

Many of our members will have noticed that a number of policies and guidelines have been introduced or existing ones updated. Some have been introduced to either protect the club and its members from unforeseen or unfortunate events. Some for compliance purposes. We now have a Members Protection Policy, a Code of Conduct Policy, and a Severe Weather Policy (plus storm warning software to augment it). Other policies assist with the smooth running of the club, like the Group Booking Policy, Use of Private Carts, the Local Rules have been amended, there is the Leave of Absence Policy, and Life Membership guidelines. Next year we are looking at a Pace of Play Policy along with a simple and realistic Dress Code. On the practical side the club has regular fire and safety inspections, adheres to a number of legal requirements, and provides training and refresher courses, such as CPR refresher course for our certified first aid providers. There is now a second defibrillator courtesy of the Berry International Golf Group, and sunscreen dispenser units are back on the course again. Thanks goes to the WHS Committee which oversees these compliance requirements of the club.

The club continued its support of charities and the local community, yet again holding the Cancer Care Centre Charity Golf Day that raised \$25,000, and the Longest Day that raised over \$38,000. Both magnificent efforts, and a big thanks to all involved. The club also supported, in a variety of ways, many organisations on or off the course. In 2023 we saw the inaugural Col Waller Memorial Charity Golf Day. During the year Fortem Australia (which support the mental health and wellbeing of first responders and their families) held its golf

day here. We have supported the Glen McPherson Memorial Golf Day, the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Services golf days, Nowra Relay for Life, HMAS Albatross Golf Day, our Primary School Charity golf day, the Great Cycle Challenge and Heads Hotel Fishing Club Charity Day and the list goes on.

We are also fortunate to have had the continued backing of our sponsors. Their support is critical to the ongoing success of the club. Many provide their services as well as financial support. We intend to display them on our new website.

Utilisation of the course continued to increase. Membership and played rounds both increased throughout the year. We saw many visits from returning social groups and from other club's golf trips. Our members continued to support the various inter-club competitions. Our own competitions continued to attract visitors. And the Summer Comp remains very popular. Maybe, we are not quite the hidden gem anymore! A downside to this increase has meant that members cannot always book into preferred times. The Greens & Match Committee, which does a great job overseeing course maintenance and the club's golfing schedule, will be addressing this to find a generally acceptable solution.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the sad passing of one of our long term and distinguished member, David Lamb, in 2023.

"Dave proudly owned Membership number 1 and had Life Membership of our beautiful Shoalhaven Heads Golf Club. He was instrumental in the establishment and development of our great club for over 40 years, holding every position on the Board and still doing volunteer work to the very end.

A founding member to be remembered and sadly missed."

David Cawthorn August 2023

A lovely wake was held in the clubhouse with family members and many members attending. A commemorative plaque will be placed at the 1st tee box and a memorial golf day is planned for 2024.

Without doubt 2023 was a year of consolidation and continuing improvement. The club is in a very sound position. We have a course that is the envy of many and compares, indeed exceeds, the quality of most, even, dare I say, some of the top clubs. We continue to look for ways to increase members' benefits improving facilities and support functions. There is much more I could have written about what was achieved last year, and while lengthy the above is a good indication of what was achieved. None of this could have been accomplished without all those that work so hard for our club. The Board works tirelessly, is similarly supported by all the committees and their members. We have great staff, and a passionate club professional and his team. Last, but not least, a fantastic number of volunteers who work all hours on numerous jobs and tasks. I haven't named names, there are just too many, and I am sure to forget someone! I thank all of them on your behalf. Truly, we are a great club.

John Clawley
President
March 2024