

# A year in review - 2023

## Preamble

I am very pleased to share this summary of activities and achievements for World Bowls in 2023.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the first 12 months in my role as CEO, and I have been fortunate to have the support of President Darryl and the World Bowls Board, Irene Attard and Bronwyn White (WB staff), key volunteers in Alan Thornhill and his laws advisory group and more recently Graeme Rees and his coaching advisory group. I wish to thank all MNAs – President's, Secretaries and CEOs - for their support throughout the year.

I wish to make special mention of Mark Cowan, who was the Chief Technical Officer at the 2023 World Championships but who has also been of great assistance to me in the preparation of the various Conditions of Play we use at World Bowls events.

To the team at Solucio – Martin Hirons, Iggy Jovanovic, Rob Savage and Ben Manning – many thanks for their support and strategic advice and their commitment and vision in helping to establish the soon to be launched World Bowls Series and World Rankings.

I would like to acknowledge former CEO and COO Gary Smith together with assistant Roger Black for their contribution to World Bowls over very many years. They both completed their service earlier this year and Roger continues to serve as a member of the World Bowls Laws Advisory Group.

I encourage you to please contact me if you have any queries or comments about any of the information herein.

**Neil Dalrymple**

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My report is divided up into the four (4) Strategic Priority areas of the World Bowls Strategic Plan 2023 – 2025.

## Leadership and Collaboration

- The Board approved the adoption and publication of a new World Bowls Strategic Plan for the period 2023 - 2025; you will be able to find a copy here: <https://www.worldbowls.com/strategic-plan/>
- World Bowls is now a registered company by guarantee operating in Australia with our financial management system (Xero), banking and insurances in place.,,
- I have visited several member countries during the year: Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, England, Scotland, Wales, Switzerland, and Hong Kong China. These visits have enabled me to attend many meetings with our members, their committees and officers. In 2024, I plan to visit other parts of the World and meet up with as many MNAs as possible.
- During my travels, I have been able to meet with many key stakeholders such as the Commonwealth Games Federation (in London), our Licensed Bowls Manufacturers - Aero, Henselite, Drakes Pride and Taylors, several of our licensed synthetic surface manufacturers, some of the International Bowls for a Disabled (IBD) board members and also representatives of the World Short Mat Bowls Council.

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- A new Constitution has been worked on throughout the year. The main areas of focus and change revolve around the composition of the board (the number of elected and appointed directors), the voting format, structure for members and the membership structure and categories – full, development etc.
- The Board agreed on an increase in membership fees for 2024. The fees have not increased during the last 3 years and indeed considerable fee relief has been offered during the period of the COVID Pandemic.
- A Council Meeting and MNA Forum were held to coincide with the 2023 World Championships on the Gold Coast in Australia and this was a great opportunity for over 40 delegates to meet and discuss many issues of mutual interest.
- New Terms of Reference were prepared for the World Bowls Laws Advisory Group and some changes to the personnel have occurred with Jeanette Williams from South Africa joining recently. All under the leadership of Chair, Alan Thornhill, from England.
- In June, the Board approved the Terms of Reference for a new World Bowls Coaching Advisory Group. The Group has been convened and Graham Rees from New Zealand appointed as Chair with two new members - Rita Shek (Hong Kong China) and Simon Botha (South Africa) - recently joining this Group.
- Committee's – new WB committees are being considered for the following areas: Athletes, Growth & Development, Finance, Audit & Risk, Nominations and Awards.

## Building Value

- World Bowls partnered with sports management consulting group Solucio with the purpose of building the brand and profile of bowls globally and to create new revenue streams to assist in growing the sport. As a result of this partnership, a jointly owned entity has been created – World Bowls Series - to organize and coordinate a calendar of International Bowls events where each event that is sanctioned will offer World Rankings points. Building a world tour for Bowls is the goal - modeled somewhat on sports such as Golf and Tennis. A World Bowls Super League is proposed, and work is continuing to attract teams to participate.
- Sponsorship has been a focus in 2023 and it was pleasing to formalize partnerships with Aceit, Niagara, Bowls International, Tourism Events Queensland and Major Events Gold Coast. The continued support of our licensed Bowls manufacturers – Taylor Bowls, Aero Bowls, Drakes Pride and Henselite – and the licensed surface manufacturers has been very important to World Bowls. Strong support has been expressed by a number MNAs to find a Global Airline sponsor and whilst some interest was expressed by Qatar, this didn't eventuate, and so further contacts will be sourced.
- A World Event schedule and plan for 2024 – 2029 is being prepared and an update on specific events follows:
  - Future World Bowls Championships – discussions ongoing regarding timing, format, and other, complimentary events.
  - Champion of Champions – the 2024 event is now contracted with Bowls New Zealand (in Auckland) with 2025 to be confirmed.
  - Preparations for World Indoors (April 2024 in Guernsey) is progressing well.

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- Australia successfully hosted three (3) World Bowls events in 2023 - the World Bowls Championships were staged on the Gold Coast. A survey was circulated post event and received a strong response and provided some good insights for future events. Special thanks to WB officials Mark Cowan (Technical Delegate), John Roberts (CTO) and Alan Thornhill (Chair – Laws Committee). The World Indoors was held at Warilla, New South Wales and the Champion of Champions took place at Club Robina on the Gold Coast immediately following the World Bowls Championships.
- Commonwealth Games 2026 and 2030 – President Darryl Clout and I have attended regular briefings from the CGF and whilst there is concern about finding hosts for the 2026 and 2030 Games, we remain optimistic that a host (s) will be found. We can assure MNAs that we will continue to advocate strongly for the inclusion of all disciplines for Bowls.
- Bowls Olympics Advisory Group (BOAG) – This group has continued to operate in 2023 with the focus being to seek recognition as an Olympic and Paralympic sport. Application for membership has been submitted to the International Paralympic Committee (IPC). Discussions have occurred with the World Pétanque and Bowls Federation about some form of alignment or association which may give Bowls IOC recognition – this is work in progress. Veronia Sum (President, Bowls USA) and Kareena Cuthbert (Head of High Performance, Bowls Scotland) have joined this group. Thank you to our group members (Matthew Kennedy (BA), Mark Cameron (BNZ), Narelle Henderson (Independent), Paul Brown (IBD), Martin Hirons (Solucio) and WB President Darryl Clout. Thanks also to our retiring member Anna Mees from Bowls Canada.



## Telling our Story

- A new World Bowls corporate logo was created earlier in 2023 and new branded corporate apparel has been supplied by our partner, ACEIT, for Directors, WB staff, and key volunteers.
- A new World Bowls website was launched and the relevant content from the old site transferred across together with a range of new items and tabs being created.
- Our social media platforms continue to grow:
  - Facebook followers have increased from 3,600 in Dec '22 to 8,342 in Nov '23
  - Instagram followers have increased from 1,398 in Dec '22 to 1,672 in Nov '23
  - X (Twitter) followers have increased from 2,631 in Dec '22 to 2,723 in Nov '23
  - YouTube subscribers have increased from 0 in Dec '22 to 202 in Nov '23
  - eDM subscribers have increased from 0 in Dec '22 to 202 in Nov '23
- World Bowls Match Center is a bowls specific competition management system that has been used for many of the World Bowls events in 2023 - <https://results.mc.worldbowls.com/> This system has created much interest from around the world and if any MNA is interested in using the platform, please contact me.

## Grow the Sport

- During the year, I have met with several organizations administering their discipline of Bowls and positive discussions are underway with:

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- World Short Mat Bowls Council (WSMBC)
- Internal Bowls for a Disability (IBD)
- International Blind Bowls Association (IBBA)
- International Deaf Bowls Federation (IBDF)

It is very pleasing to report that excellent progress has been made with each organization and most importantly, IBBA and IBDF recently became formally affiliated with World Bowls. Merger discussions have commenced with the IBD and a timeline for this process is being worked on.

- Attracting new MNAs to be members of World Bowls has been another key focus in 2023. In consultation with Bowls Asia, the West Asia & Central Asia development centre was created with prospective member countries being Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Oman, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Qatar, and Palestine. Other countries have expressed interest and we have received enquiries from: Italy, Poland, Dubai, Russia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Belgium, Denmark and Norway. Some of these countries are already playing some of form of Bowls. A new membership application form has been prepared and is available here: <https://www.worldbowls.com/becoming-a-member/>
- A World Bowls Census is being created to collect participation statistics from around the World. Whilst our current membership numbers are limited to just our MNAs there are a great many more people actually playing the sport whether it be Short Mat, Indoors or Crown Green. Having numbers that better reflect actual participation rates will be very important for a range of reasons – including Olympic/Para recognition and commercial.
- An MNA buddy system and an equipment support program has commenced. The allocation of buddies has been based on feedback to date will be announced soon. Equipment is also being organised for the smaller MNAs with Ghana being the first to receive some equipment.
- Construction of a CRM for World Bowls use to better track engagement with stakeholders; work is underway to build a robust and accurate database of MNAs and other stakeholders (a single source of truth). The CRM system being trialled is HubSpot <https://www.hubspot.com/>