

## **Anniversary Dinner Speech**

Thank you for that generous introduction (MC)

What a wonderful sight this is, all of the ladies looking fantastic in their evening gowns and bling and the gentlemen in dress suits. The tables are a picture, sparkling lights, and beautiful floral arrangements. There are also several large vases of flowers strategically placed around the Clubhouse. I thank Helen Chadwick and Carol Humphreys, my dear wife, who prepared and arranged the flowers; it is a brilliant contribution to the ambience of the evening.

Patron and Honorary member Brian Lamb, Honorary member Ian McKenzie, ladies and gentlemen, guests and members, good evening and welcome to this anniversary dinner. Honorary members Pamela Tallents and Kevin Burke are unable to attend this evening. Kevin and Wendy Burke have sent their apologies. I hope that you all survived the disastrous fires and the resulting smoky atmosphere in good shape and that the recent rains have not inundated you. Let's hope that there are more gentle times ahead.

This dinner marks the 119th anniversary since the establishment of Bowral Golf Club and I am extremely pleased, although somewhat surprised, to be the current President of this august organisation. I am conscious of the many people who have borne this responsibility in the past, and on whose legacy we now try to build. My elevation commenced last year when I responded to a memo from the previous President, Mr Kevin Burke, seeking those willing to put themselves forward for Board membership. He later told me that he wanted to retire and for me to become President. Such was the will of Kevin that these things came to pass, and here I am! I was delighted that

the members rewarded him with honorary membership to mark his extensive services to the Club over many years.

I would personally like to thank Kevin for all the information and assistance he provided to me in my attempts to come to grips with the Presidency. The job was made easier by the Governance principles and the Strategic Plan that were already established. There were financial budgets in place and a sound system for recording the decisions made at Board meetings. Progress on all of these continues to be monitored monthly. The strategy from my perspective has been to “make no waves”!

I also had the assistance of the continuing members of the Board who were, and are, generous with their assistance and encouragement. Since the General Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> February last year, at which amendments were made to the Club’s Constitution, and confirmed at the Annual General Meeting, there are now only seven Directors, down from nine in previous years. Although they may well be familiar to you, I would like to introduce them, perhaps they will stand as I call them: Helen Chadwick Vice President, Dick Hiser, the Captain, Warren Ryan the Treasurer, and Directors Carole Turpie and Linden Toll. David Stanley, the other Director, could not attend this evening. These volunteers have all completed the training requirements of the Registered Clubs Regulations and provide their time in the service of the Club. Their talents are diverse and, in combination, ensure a considered approach to all of the matters raised for discussion by the Board. To date, all of the Board’s decisions have been unanimous.

I also acknowledge the considerable assistance of the Women’s Committee, again all volunteers, who organise the ladies golf competitions and ensure that Bowral Golf

Club is well represented at local and regional ladies events, often with great success. Thanks to Barbara Clayton, the ladies President and to Jane Clifford, their Captain. I thank the spouses and partners who give their support to all of the volunteers so they can benefit the Club as they do.

Notwithstanding the above, the greatest assistance to me was provided by Kevin Kenny, our excellent Secretary Manager, all throughout the past year and still continuing. He has a wealth of experience and knowledge that enables him to pilot the Board around the controversial matters and to deal easily with the day to day management of the Club. He has a lot of handy contacts and his friendly style is appreciated and respected by the members and staff. Thank you, Kevin, your efforts are greatly appreciated by us all.

Well, what occurred during this last year?

Those of you with long memories will remember that Kevin Burke mentioned last year that extensions to the cart shed were to be undertaken and plans for a short-game practice area drawn up. I am pleased to say that the shed extension is almost in progress, look for changes next month after approval of the DA. The practice area has been planned but any activity has been delayed by the drought.

For a number of reasons, including the increase in subscriptions for 2019/20, the membership numbers fell in June/July last year to around 575. I am pleased to advise that at the end of January 2020 it was back to 612, just short of the 622 at December 2018. It is imperative that we all continue to bring in new members as the Club must have replacements for the losses that inevitably occur.

In November 2019, the Wingecarribee Shire Council wrote to advise that a valuer would call to assess compensation that might be due to the Club for a 3.5 hectare easement over our land on the first and second fairways. It was part of the Council's requirements to provide a Floodplain Risk Management Plan, legislated in 2016, and involved the construction of three Detention Pools, built to slow the flow of flood waters across our land. Based on the information available, the Easement will not affect our development proposal. The first Pool is apparently located where the pond is on the third fairway, the second in front of the machinery shed and the third where the stream leaves our property on the eighteenth fairway. The valuer duly arrived and, escorted by Kevin and myself reviewed the supposedly affected parts. He advised he couldn't perform any valuation because there were no survey pegs or other indicators to act as references. The Club wrote to the Council listing all of our concerns, including the lack of prior notice or explanation of the need for the Easement, and Council arranged a meeting to discuss the matters raised. In early December a more senior member of the Council advised that there would be no meeting. We have heard nothing more, however, we doubt that this has gone away, so watch this space.

Some of you observant members may have noticed a sleek new five-head mower streaking up and down the fairways. It is a used machine that we have acquired this month following a review of all of the existing machines. We are also to purchase a used roughs mower, to be delivered next month. The old machines were constantly breaking down, at great cost in terms of dollars and time delays. These machines will reduce the time taken to mow the course and to ensure the continuation of the great course presentation that we are used to, in spite of the speed with which the grass is

now growing after the rains. There will, hopefully, be more time available to do some of those jobs that have languished so far.

From the end of January this year we have had the “World-wide Handicapping System” in place, amending the “Slope System” that we had all got used to. It seems as if some people don’t have enough to do! I want to thank the Captain, Dick Hiser, for his work in explaining the changes and, with Kevin Kenny, making all the necessary changes for the system’s implementation. It is now possible to be handicapped when playing 9-hole competitions so we now have a separately designated 9-hole course and scorecard, recently drawn up by Kevin and Dick. This will allow for official 9-hole competitions during the winter months when there is less daylight. I also thank Dick for all his work in the preparation of the monthly Blogs, which must number about 45 since his appointment. It is not an easy task to make them as informative and entertaining as they are and I know many of the male members vie with each other to get the correct answers to the Rules quiz. The tie-breakers are novel too, with putting competitions in the Members’ Room. Congratulations Dick.

On 16<sup>th</sup> of this month, we held a charity day to raise funds for the local RFS Stations. Because of the torrential rains, the course was closed for golf but several activities were available to keep the lively crowd entertained. There was a sausage sizzle prepared by Anton Sangar and the Dad’s Army volunteers, a Raffle, organised by the “500 Ladies”, led by Helen Chadwick and a fantasy golf game with many prizes contributed by many very generous donors. There was also a silent auction of magnums of wine generously donated by Dick’s brother-in-law. Participants paid \$45 per head to join the fantasy golf game. This was hugely enjoyable, overseen by Kevin

Kenny and Dick Hiser, as you have probably never seen them before, playing “Bob and the Barrel Boy”, and was followed by a chip and putt competition on the practice green. The result was that \$6,000 was raised, which is to be divided between the three local RFS Stations, Canyonleigh, Hill Top and Wingello. The Captains of each of these Stations will be here on Tuesday next at about 5.45 pm for a short presentation. Many thanks and congratulations go to all of the sponsors and donors for their great generosity and to those who ran the various activities on the day. A job well done!

The Strategic Plan had as a goal the accumulation of cash reserves of \$500,000 to mitigate the risks associated with low cash reserves. I report that, to date, our accumulated reserves are minimal. The Club’s financial result for 2019 shows a profit before tax, interest, depreciation and amortisation of \$77,000, down from \$119,000 for last year. The costs associated with management of a golf club are different from those that are included in the Cost of Living Index and do not increase in the same proportion. We have found that our revenue streams are constrained to CPI level increases but increasing costs rapidly diminish our profitability. In 2020, we will receive additional income from Optus for rental of space on the telephone tower.

The Board is currently considering a Benefactors’ Board to acknowledge material gifts and bequests made to the Club by its members. We have some very generous, and anonymous, members who assist the Club by making funds available or committed for particular projects, one such being the short game practice area. We thank and acknowledge them for their assistance. The Benefactors’ Board will be a permanent record of the Club’s gratitude. We do not have any final details for publication as yet.

As part of a review of the Club's assets and liabilities, the Board obtained an overview by an Architect of the current condition of the Clubhouse. The result was a report that indicated there were several deficiencies in the structure and in the facilities. (Hard hat) The Architect did not estimate when the roof would fall in but I believe in being prepared. Notwithstanding the brief attempt at humour, this is a serious matter. Since receipt of that report, we have noted that the Clubhouse is showing further evidence of vulnerability. There are additional cracks in the walls and part of the sewerage system has collapsed. Generally, the facilities of the Clubhouse are outdated and in some cases, are unattractive. We presently have no reserves from which major capital expenditure could be funded.

The Board has received notice from Oakstand Pty Limited and Bendooley Estates Berrima Pty Limited, Developers, of their desire to present a proposal to BGC to develop the land around and including the Clubhouse and two meetings have been held. The Developers were reticent to incur major costs preparing detailed plans and specifications until the reactions of the Club's members had been established. To respond to this question, the Board produced the document titled "Future-Proofing Bowral Golf Club", which was distributed to voting members together with Notice of a meeting to be held on 26 March 2020. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposition that the Members agree that the Board should continue to negotiate with the Developers and to pass a relevant Motion. Copies of that document have now been sent to all other members for information. A copy is also available on the Notice Board, together with a map of the Golf Course showing the areas affected by the proposed sale and construction. The document details the Board's requirements from any deal involving the sale of the Club's land, a summary of the major findings of the

Architect's report and the options available for rectification and their estimated costings. It provides the details of the deal as it currently stands but members should recognise that negotiations are only in the early stages and there are many details to be discussed and agreed. I recommend that all members closely consider the benefits and implications of the proposal. I am pleased to report that, to date, the reaction to the Board's proposal has generally been positive. It is the Board's belief that the Club should continue to prosecute this opportunity as it promises to provide rewards that will "future-proof" the Club's finances, replacing the Clubhouse at no cost to Bowral Golf Club, and including a regular stream of future income from a source other than that generated from golf activities per se, namely a share of the profits of the proposed hotel. It is this factor that is most important to the future of Bowral Golf club, removing the current annual process of "hand to mouth" financial performance that has prevented the building of material reserves in an increasingly risky environment. Additionally, it will provide the opportunity to make changes to the course to increase its difficulty without materially affecting the par. I look forward to the meeting on March 26 at which I hope the members will confirm this positive course of action.

During 2019, the income from functions increased due to the Jazz program and the monthly 1<sup>st</sup> Friday themed dinners held at the Clubhouse. Indeed, almost all of these functions were sold out. We also now provide provisions for wakes. It is a tribute to Regina and her kitchen staff and to Mr Functions, Tim Davis and his Bar and Function staff, that these occasions have proved so successful. We thank them for their great efforts and note that the popularity of these functions continues in 2020.

In October, Damian Gair, the Course Superintendent resigned and we appointed Matt Morris to take his place. Matt has proven more than equal to the task and is ably assisted by three greenkeepers, namely Adam, Colin and Tom. The course was kept in good condition despite the drought conditions during summer and we thank them for their skill and application. The Dad's Army volunteers have also provided great service, led by Anton Sanger, and their efforts are acknowledged and greatly appreciated.

Today, the men played for the President's Cup. The winner will be crowned at the trophy ceremony later this evening, along with other worthy winners of Trophies and Championships played for during the past year. I wish to congratulate all of the winners and applaud their skill and determination.

In conclusion, I hope that you are enjoying this evening celebrating the spirit generated by you, the members of Bowral Golf Club. It is your character, actions and loyalty that enable the Club to hold its position as the premier golf club in the Southern Highlands. I ask that you charge your glasses, stand and I will propose a toast.

**A toast 'Bowral Golf Club'**

**Rob Humphreys**  
**President**