



BOWLS
AUSTRALIA

Inclusive & Accessible Club Toolkit

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Bowls Australia would like to thank and acknowledge the material used in this toolkit which was developed by Central Coast Council, Disability Sports Australia, and Inclusive Sport Design.

Bowls Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders, past and present.



SERENA BONNELL PARA JACKAROO

Our sport can create positive environments and experiences for all participants.

This toolkit encourages our Clubs/Associations and members to embrace diversity in all its forms and proactively include all members within our community in our clubs, programs and activities.

Inclusion is dependent on the positive attitudes and effective communication from our members and the inclusive policies and practices and appropriate access provided by our clubs/associations.

This toolkit paves the way for increased participation for players with disability and endeavours to promote our clubs/associations and members to make choices that proactively support inclusive practices.



ELLEN FALKNER MBE PARA BOWLS HIGH PERFORMANCE MANAGER

One of the things I love about Bowls is its inclusive nature. It has the ability to connect and bring together people from all walks of life; all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

And whilst our sport lends itself to being inclusive, there are some things that we need to collectively consider. Clubs being inclusive and accessible means removing barriers to participation; empowering people to take part; leaving no one behind.

To do this we need to be proactive in the way we plan, lead and control the delivery of our sport so that everyone in our diverse community, has the opportunity to participate. It might seem difficult or scary but its really not.

We always jump straight to the practical side of things, is there a ramp, a lift, clear walkways, accessible toilets, hearing loops. Whilst this is important, its not the only things we need to consider.

How we communicate, what we communicate, the language we use, along with the people we have delivering sessions being suitably trained and other club members making the environment a safe and welcoming space where people feel comfortable to participate is equally as important.

This toolkit is designed to give some simple hints and tips to help your Club in becoming more inclusive and accessible. Ultimately, it comes down to building relationships; treating everyone as an individual, not making assumptions and understanding people's needs.

We hope you find it useful.





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PERSON FIRST, FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

Making interactions with prospective and existing members of your club
or association more accessible and inclusive.

STAFF TRAINING

Train staff and volunteers to be disability confident.

- Use person first language e.g. 'person who is blind', 'person who uses a wheelchair'. Do not use terms like 'wheelchair bound' or 'has a development issue'. Use the diagnosis e.g. 'has Autism', 'is blind', 'has low vision', 'is Deaf'. Do not use descriptors such as 'the blind man'. A person is not defined by their disability
- Be patient, listen and respond appropriately and respectfully
- Sit at the same level as someone in a wheelchair
- Interact with the person not with their interpreter or carer and don't assume they speak on behalf of them
- Don't pat or distract a Guide Dog or Assistance Animal
- Speak normally
- Don't assume the person has other disabilities
- Ask what adjustments you may provide so they can fully participate

Learn basic Auslan signs and use the translation service provided by the Deaf Society

A person delivers a bowl while using a support stick



FACILITIES

Make your physical premises accessible and compliant with the Disability Access to Premises Standards:

- Provide information to participants in advance suggesting places where safe and convenient passenger drop off is possible
- Provision of parking - this could be accessible parking or reserving multiple spaces
- Ensure you have a ramp available for players who have mobility issues to get on and off the green as well as into the club rooms
- Have continuous paths of travel in and around the club
- Clear, colour contrasted accessible signage
- Accessible toilets
- Wide doorways
- Remove obstructions in and around Club and greens – bowls bags in particular can be troublesome
- Where possible, have a range of equipment types on hand such as walkers, wheelchairs, sticks and lifters for participants to access when required

A person delivers a bowl while using a support stick



- ☉ Ensure walkways are well lit
- ☉ Have appropriate counter and table heights for users of mobility equipment
- ☉ Ensure that signage are at an appropriate height for all participants
- ☉ Install a Hearing Loop system
- ☉ Ensure a public address system works when hosting events
- ☉ Provide shade and seating at the back of the green and permit umbrellas to be used on the green for players who find it challenging to move onto the bank
- ☉ Remove or minimise things that can trigger people with sensory sensitivities and consider reduced lighting, a sensory retreat space and keeping ambient noise to a minimum
- ☉ Be assistance animal friendly, promote that they are welcome and put water bowls out
- ☉ Host an information session and present the accessible features of the club and registration process
- ☉ If hosting a BBQ or providing catering, consider the dietary needs and preferences of attendees e.g. food allergies and intolerances, people with limited mobility, cultural appropriateness of food served





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ACCESSIBLE MARKETING & PROMOTION

Making interactions with prospective and existing members of your club or association more accessible and inclusive.

- Widely promote the accessible and inclusive features of your programs and premises
- Ensure the content on your website is accessible with information that is easy to locate and view, layout is simple e.g. left justified, good use of colour contrast, text direction is horizontal
- Make sure that any website text is easily distinguishable. Using sans serif font types and a minimum font size of 14 will help. Avoid italicised or underlined text. Use sentence case where possible also to optimise readability
- Use succinct, descriptive URL link descriptions that clearly indicate the destination of the link to the website
- Ensure graphics are clear and legible and all pictures and images have an image description for assistive technologies to pick up to describe to a person with a vision impairment what is in the picture
- Ensure that presentation of information does not rely solely on text and contains symbols and pictures to support. Avoid capitalizing words including in headers as screen reading technology may not recognise it is a word and read out every single letter
- Ensure documents are well structured and that content is organised through the use of clear descriptive headings. Use tables and list orders to improve this also where applicable



- Ensure documents are bound so they can be opened flat
- Use image descriptions for non-text content – see the instructions for using the Alt Text function later in this document
- Where possible, distribute your information in alternative formats e.g. Easy English document version, captioning or Auslan interpreted video content, Braille versions, audio. Easy English versions of documents convey information that is easy to understand using everyday words, simple sentences, images and symbols to enable people who have lower levels of literacy or where English is not the first language understand the information
- Include an accessibility statement on your recruitment, induction and pre-season registration material that encourages people of all abilities and backgrounds to join and what adjustments/modifications you may offer
- Actively extend your marketing to hard to reach, marginalised and isolated groups through community and advocacy groups, not for profit organisations, service providers, sector interagencies and local government
- Make your organic search marketing more accessible by including:
 - Use Alt-Text fields to describe images and videos
 - Optimize and create friendly URLs and image name
- Avoid acronyms and abbreviations without definitions
- Ensure that text contrasts sufficiently with background colours



For more tips on accessible marketing and promotion
check out Inclusive Sport Design blog articles:



REGISTRATION

The following tips will ensure an inclusive and accessible registration and joining experience for everyone of all abilities:

- Ensure forms are in an accessible format and include form prompts
- Do not replace form labels with placeholder text
- Provide an Easy English version of the registration form
- Provide trained staff or volunteers to offer assistance with the registration process
- Seek out assistance of an Auslan interpreter

- Group players or participants according to their skill levels rather than segregating participants with disabled and non-disabled participants
- Focus on what participants can do, their ability
- Don't make assumptions about a person's capability and always seek to understand by asking what they can do and their aspirations for their chosen sport
- Where appropriate, tailor the experience of participant based on needs. Focus on inclusion, having fun and a supportive environment
- Remember that disclosure of a person's disability is at the individual's discretion

For more tips on registering new members check out [Inclusive Sport Design blog articles](#):

A person delivering a bowl while using a mobility walker



MEMBER RETENTION

Considerations to build loyalty, create value and provide an engaging and inclusive relationship with your members, which will in turn encourage them to stay:

- Recognise and reward members who demonstrate and promote inclusive practice as well as for effort and achievement
- Keep communication open and check in to see if further modifications can be made or changed to maintain inclusive and equitable participation
- Network with local disability advocacy groups and service providers
- Develop and promote an accessible and inclusive policy and promote fair and inclusive play
- Seek feedback and ideas from all people engaged with your club
- Continue to check and track member satisfaction levels
- The club should familiarise themselves with their role in how the sport's complaints system works. This is outlined in Bowls Australia's National Integrity Framework
- Finally, ensure that your club has a trained Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO). A free MPIO training course can be completed online through Play by the Rules

See relevant links to resources from Play By The Rules and the National Integrity Framework on the next page.



You may wish to include self-guided learning options for you club members.
Below are links to training resources you may find helpful:

PROVIDING A SMOOTH EXIT

Leaving a Good Impression

- Make the exiting process smooth and easy, by being easy to contact and responsive to changes in membership status. This should include cancellations, suspensions as well as accommodating bookings. Try to obtain any reasons for leaving as part of your commitment to continuously improving your club
- Let an exiting member know you valued their contribution, thank them and let them know you are sorry to see them leave
- Seek to find out why they are leaving and attempt to remedy any issues
- Try to see what else you can do in a sincere and gracious way to retain their membership
- Develop a member feedback form to survey exiting members and use the insights from data collected to improve processes and systems or staff training gaps

Important information on your form to collect and analyse could include:

- Length of membership
- Reason for cancelling/suspending
- Moving to another club Y/N
- Number of members in family
- Overall how do you rate your experience with us?














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CONSIDERATIONS FOR USER GROUPS

The table below show some different elements to consider based on the different user groups.

| | | USER GROUPS | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| CHARACTERISTICS TO CONSIDER |  USER OF A WHEELCHAIR |  OLDER PEOPLE |  BLIND OR LOW VISION |  DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING |  INJURED/TEMPORARY DISABILITY |  YOUNG FAMILIES |  EXPECTANT MOTHERS |  PEOPLE WITH AUTISM & SENSORY SENSITIVITIES |  CULTURAL & LINGUISTIC DIVERSE | |
| Uses assistive technology (eg. text-to-speech) to perceive information | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | |
| Uses mobility equipment | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| Require a quiet space to retreat from noise, bright lights, stimulation & crowds | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Visual difficulty with depth perception and distinguishing objects and features | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | |
| Requires information to plan in advance before going out | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| At risk of social isolation due to barriers to access in the community | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Other specific examples/ considerations | Ramps, lifts, parking nearby, clear access ways and accessible toilets Access to an on-green wheelchair if personal wheelchair does not meet on-green requirements. | Regular toilet visits. Special dietary requirements | Cater for Guide Dogs (eg. bowls of water) | Hearing loop system | Spare wheelchairs, walking frames, portable ramps and bowling arms on hand. | Baby change table, high chair | Regular toilet visits | Noise canceling headphones, fidget toys, weighted blanket | Being mindful of customs, etiquette and language by removing alcohol and gaming access; Offering special dietary options when appropriate | |

Questions you may consider asking to support user needs may include:

- What are your goals in sport?
- What is the best way for us to communicate?
- What can I do to help you fully participate?
- What specific or modified equipment do you need to fully participate?
- What support do you have in general life that could be used to assist your participation?
- Does anything impact your ability to perform the sport skills and activities?
- What do I need to know to ensure you can participate safely?
- Who else can I speak with to better understand you and your support needs?
- What else do I need to know to help you participate fully and achieve your goals?

The following table could be used to consider the participation choices available at your club:

| | Support requirements – on-green | Support requirements – off-green | Resources available – equipment | Resources available – people | Resources required – not available (gaps) | Grant funding opportunities available (if known) | Key club contact – who is responsible for inclusion |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Para specific participation | | | | | | | |
| Open/Integrated participation | | | | | | | |

**Collaboration with key club stakeholders should be undertaken to complete the above table*



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RESPECTFUL & INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

Your choice of language is incredibly powerful and can impact how people feel and are perceived, including people with disability.

We can use language to reshape outdated stereotypes and attitudes.

Remember, how we speak to and about each other influences how we treat each other.

General Principles

- 1 Reference a person's disability only when it's relevant and required
- 2 Focus on the person, not the disability
- 3 Focus on what people can do and not what they can't
- 4 Respect a person's individuality and rights
- 5 Avoid using excessively emotive language – disability is part of human diversity, not something to be sensationalised or sentimentalised.

✘ Outdated

Disabled person, Handicapped, Cripple
Able-bodied, Normal
Suffering from... Afflicted by...
Wheelchair bound
Mentally disabled, Mentally retarded,
Mentally handicapped, Simple, Special
Paraplegic, Quadriplegic
Person with quadriplegia
Dwarf, Midget
Insane, Lunatic, Crazy Psycho

✔ Favoured

People with disability
Person without disability
Mary has autism
Person who uses a wheelchair

Person with intellectual disability
Use person with paraplegia

Short-statured person
Person with a mental illness

The best approach to inclusive language is to always ask the person their preferred language.

For more tips on using inclusive language in sport check out [Inclusive Sport Design blog articles](#)



EQUIPMENT & GROUPS

Rookie Rollers All Abilities Kit

The new Rookie Rollers All Abilities kit has been designed to ensure people of all abilities can have access to play bowls.

Bowls Gr8 for Brains

Bowls Gr8 for Brains is “A Lawn Bowling Peer Supported Initiative” founded in Albury, NSW. Veterans of the Armed Services and Former First Responders came together to find a different type of community-based activity to respond to the ever-increasing rates of suicide and self-harm in Australia.

Invictus Australia

Bowls Australia has partnered with Invictus Australia (formerly Veteran Sport Australia) to create opportunities for defence force personnel, veterans and their families to get involved in bowls across the country.

To find out what is on in your area, contact your Club Support Manager (CSM)

A person delivers a bowl while using a support stick



NEXT STEPS

This document has been based on Disability Sport Australia's Accessibility Champion course.

To receive your certification, click the button below to complete a quiz

You can also check your knowledge and download more helpful information by completing Play by the Rules Interactive Scenario – Inclusion of People with Disability.

You can download your own template Disability Policy as part of the module



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