

# APRIL MEMBER FORUMS

## PRESIDENTS FEEDBACK TO MEMBERS

Recently we held two Member Forums which were well attended by 40 interested members. I would like to thank those members for taking the time to attend.

The forums were arranged to give golfing members the opportunity to meet with me, board members Club Captain Sean Carson, Directors Pauline Wilson, and Peter Bull and Hilltop Venue and Golf Manager Barry West to discuss any matters which were concerning them and seek clarification on a number of issues.

A wide range of issues were raised, all of which will prove invaluable in terms of improving your membership experience and meeting the commitments stated in our Strategic Golf Strategy, ie:

- Investing in the long-term future of golf facilities and the golf experience at Hilltop and Beachside.
- Providing a benchmark golfing experience for all types and standard of players.
- Preserving a well-known and much loved, local community asset.

What follows is a summary of the questions and issues raised together with responses and details of the action which will be undertaken.

### HILLTOP COURSE MAINTENANCE

The current condition of our Hilltop course was the most common matter raised by attendees. Issues included, inter alia, areas of GUR left unrepaired, cart paths, how leaves are handled, logs and sticks not removed, green surrounds, bunkers, watering, tee boxes, pitch marks and divots.

#### **Response:**

Members would be aware that the demand for tee times has increased significantly since the COVID



pandemic and especially in recent months. This together with excessive rainfall and maintenance staff shortages has contributed to a deterioration of areas of the course. I raise this as an explanation not an excuse.

#### **Proposed Action:**

1. A detailed Additional Maintenance Program covering the matters raised, together with some not raised at the forums can be found [HERE](#).

The tasks indicated in the Program will be prioritised in the next couple of weeks. Members will have noticed that some of the work has already commenced.

Each month in his report to members, Barry will detail the work completed during that month and the work proposed for the following month.

Steps will also be taken to remind members that we all have a responsibility to each other to repair pitch marks and divots and rake bunkers. Visitors will also be reminded that this is just part of golf etiquette and an expectation when playing at Mollymook. Barry will also include 'how to' advice in his reports covering how to repair a pitch mark, a divot, and rake a bunker.

2. We will be establishing a Course Maintenance Team comprising, Club Captain, Course

Superintendent, General Manager Turnpoint, Agronomy Consultant, Hilltop Venue & Golf Manager, and two member representatives. The team will operate according to well defined terms of reference and operating procedures.

We will shortly call for expressions of interest from members who are interested in joining the Course Maintenance Team. The Board will select the member representatives based on a set of criteria setting out the personal qualities, knowledge, skills and experience we are seeking.

## HILLTOP MASTERPLAN PROJECT

Questions were raised around the timing and cost of the Project.

### **Response:**

The proposed Masterplan Plan can be found [HERE](#). As previously advised, we are currently awaiting a report on the environment (Flora and Fauna) conditions we are required to meet in order for work to commence on Stage 1 (spare hole). We anticipate that this will be in September.

The project is programmed to take six years to complete, with \$1M a year budgeted in the Capital Works Program. We are currently exploring options for the management and construction of the project elements.

### **Proposed Action:**

1. Once approved by the Board we will engage a suitably qualified golf course architect/ constructor to construct the spare hole and manage the stage. If this arrangement meets our requirements in terms of project management and quality of work, we will proceed with the remainder of the Project on the same basis.

2. We will be establishing a Hilltop Masterplan Project Team comprising, Course Architect/ constructor, Club Captain, Agronomy Consultant, Hilltop Venue & Golf Manager, and two member representatives. The team will operate according to well defined terms of reference and operating procedures.

We will shortly call for expressions of interest from members who are interested in joining the Hilltop Masterplan Project Team. The Board will select the member representatives based on a set of criteria setting out the personal qualities, knowledge, skills

and experience we are seeking.

Each month in his report to members, Barry will detail the work completed during that month and the work proposed for the following month.

## TREE MANAGEMENT

Questions were raised concerning the way trees are managed on course.

### **Response:**

The club currently invests around \$100,000 per year in tree maintenance which includes a lot of work along residential boundaries. We abide by council regulations by way of engaging Arborist's to do reports and also arrange Shoalhaven Council Environmental Health Officers to make inspections on any trees we are not sure about.

We currently have eight full tree maintenance days a year on top of any emergency work that needs to be carried out. It is estimated that Hilltop has somewhere between 4,000 – 5,000 trees on property.

With respect to any development work, Ecologists are engaged to provide Flora and Fauna reports before any work is undertaken. These reports normally indicate how many trees need to be planted on the course to replace those that are removed.

## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Questions were asked concerning why the past program was abandoned and what is happening now.

### **Response:**

The efforts of all the past volunteers are very much appreciated and your work was very beneficial to the Club. The use of volunteer resources was put on hold due to changes in insurance liability and workplace health and safety requirements.

A new program has been established and has been advertised. Sue Rayner is the Volunteer Co-ordinator, and we currently have over 60 volunteers registered to assist with large tournaments as well as assisting with course works. All volunteers are now required to go through an induction process and be registered in our ePar system which records,

inter alia, assets, and on course activities and workplace safety information.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Sue, at [volunteers@mollymookgolf.com.au](mailto:volunteers@mollymookgolf.com.au)

**Proposed Action:**

We will continue to advertise the volunteer's program to members.

## HILLTOP CLUBHOUSE

Questions were raised concerning the need to upgrade areas of the Hilltop Clubhouse.

**Response:**

Over the years, there have been plans for major redevelopment of the Hilltop Clubhouse, however, funds were not available to conduct any significant renovations.

We are currently looking at plans to upgrade the Food & Beverage facilities. The upgrade of the men's locker room area is also planned.

**Proposed Action:**

Funds to upgrade food and beverage facilities as well as the men's locker room will be reflected in the 2024/25 Budget.

## WOMEN IN GOLF

The question asked was related to the progress made with regard to the Women in Golf Charter.

**Response:**

We have been through the early stages of becoming a signatory club for the Women in Golf Charter. Representatives from Golf Australia have already had meetings with golf management and some Board members, and we have ticked a number of boxes, in particular we are proud to have equal fees, equal access, equal major event prizemoney and equal playing rights for all our members.

Another meeting is set down for next month to discuss what we still need to do to attain accreditation as a signatory to the Charter.

**Proposed Action:**

We will advise members of progress towards

accreditation.

## CAR PARKING

A question was asked concerning the number of car spaces available for people with mobility issues.

**Response:**

With the exception of two recently upgraded spaces at Beachside all of the spaces we have at Hilltop and Beachside are no longer compliant. Compliant spaces need to be considerably wider than in the past and this will create pressure on car parking generally as we upgrade spaces.

The question of parking (in particular at Beachside) is becoming a major issue with the excessive demand on limited spaces as well as increasing usage by patrons at nearby businesses and beachgoers.

**Proposed Action:**

1. Options for increasing parking spaces, including disabled spaces, are being reviewed and discussed with Council.
2. We will keep members informed of developments.

## BEACHSIDE COURSE

Questions were raised with respect Beachside course and surrounding precincts. In particular, progress with new toilet block, tree maintenance, and fences.

**Response:**

We are currently awaiting the construction certificate for the new on-course toilet and new maintenance/storage facility. Hopefully work will get underway soon.

The bottom of the Beachside fence (at the lowest point along Golf Avenue) was built slightly higher to allow any debris from severe rain events flooding across Golf Avenue to get through without getting stuck in the fence. To date the fence has coped with heavy rain without any issues.

Work will also commence shortly to address drainage, safety issues and cart parking area around the administration/proshop precinct.



### **Proposed Action:**

1. We will advise members when work is due to commence on toilet block. Tree maintenance will be undertaken prior to building commencing.
2. We will continue to monitor the fence efficacy during future rain events.
3. We will keep members abreast of progress of planned works around the administration/proshop precinct.

## COMPETITION PRIZES

The question of increasing winning prize money and reducing the amount of run-down places was raised.

### **Response:**

The club trialled this concept in early 2018 and the overwhelming player feedback from that trial period was negative. No changes to the current format are planned at this stage.

## MINI GOLF

The question raised was what is happening with Mini Golf.

### **Response:**

The construction of an 18-hole Mini Golf Course has been on our agenda for a couple of years. We have conducted a visit to a number of different venues in Queensland as well as the course at Shell Harbour. Financial projections (cost, revenue and return on investment) indicate that this has the potential to make a considerable contribution to our income stream.

Following our site visits it is clear that there are a number of different layouts construction methods etc. The major lesson was that the course needs to be located with easy direct access to food and beverage facilities. Accordingly, we are currently having concept drawings prepared to link the course with the Beachside clubhouse and the proshop facilities as well as providing for the additional carparking which will be required.

The timing of this project will be subject to our capacity to fit the course in, member feedback, council approvals, and our capacity to fund.

### **Proposed Action:**

Once concepts plans have been completed, we will be engaging in a process of member consultation similar to the process we adopted for the redesign/upgrade of the beachside course.

## BOARD STRUCTURE AND APPOINTMENTS

The question asked was why members vote for Board members, but the Board also appoints directors.

Response. The Clubs Constitution (Rule 99) and Registered Clubs Legislation allows for a Board of nine Directors. Seven of the Directors are elected by the members (including social members) for a three-year term.

The other two positions are Board Appointed Directors. These positions are filled on the basis of need, for example, if a project requires particular skills, experience or knowledge which is currently not available on the Board. These positions are filled for the period that the skills etc are required by for no longer than three years.

Currently, prior to a call for nominations for a forthcoming election for the Board, we hold an information session explaining the role and responsibilities of a Board Director in accordance with the various Acts, Regulations, Club Constitution, Board Charter, and Operating Procedures. The session also covers what the Board is seeking in terms of skills, knowledge, experience, and personal qualities. The skills being sought are assisted by a Skills Matrix against which current and potential Directors can be assessed.

### **Proposed Action:**

Before and following each election or appointment the Skills Matrix is updated. The pre nomination process and information session will be more widely promoted and attendance encouraged.

## WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS

The question asked related to the process of welcoming new members.

Response. We currently have a member induction process where new members meet with a staff member who shows them around the facility and shows them how to use the online booking system.

During this process, the new member is introduced to key members of the golf team at Hilltop.

## JUNIOR GOLF

The question related to what we are doing for juniors.

### **Response:**

Our PGA Professional staff have visited local schools over the last year with Golf NSW conducting “Get into Golf” programs providing lessons to juniors of all ages. We have hosted a golf day for Ulladulla High students at our Beachside course with our PGA staff providing instruction to students around the course.

There is a Junior Golf Academy Program run every Tuesday during school terms. This is run by our PGA Golf Professionals in conjunction with Luke Grinham from Golf NSW. We have had two juniors go through this program and go on to represent Australia in international tournaments. For more information, please speak to our Head Golf Professional.

Our Junior Membership continues to grow with unlimited golf access available all year round to juniors at just \$95 per year. The club’s policy is there is no waitlist or joining fee for juniors.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

The quality of customer service at the Beachside venue was raised.

### **Response:**

As with all hospitality businesses, the club has experienced significant turnover of employees in the last couple of years. It has been difficult to recruit skilled workers from the local pool of talent and in particular, chef, supervisor, and middle management roles. Prior to COVID, most of our leaders were developed through Traineeships and we had access to international workers.

Over the last 12 months the situation has eased, and the level of skill is slowly re-building. We have a long way to go however over the next year or two, as skill levels improve and our post-COVID traineeship program starts to yield, we expect customer service to continue improving.

## MEMBERS CLUB V'S A BUSINESS OPERATION

The issue raised was that there is a view that the Board and management care more about running a business than looking after members.

### **Response:**

Mollymook Golf Club Limited operates in accordance with, in particular, the legislative requirements of the Corporations Act 2001, and Registered Clubs Act 1976. There are several other pieces of legislation which dictate how the various elements of the Club, (i.e. gaming, food and beverage, human resources) are required to operate.

Our Club is unlike most other golf clubs in that we operate two golf courses and two clubhouses, and we also have over 11,000 social members. So, although we are a golf club with a Charter focused on golf, in order to carry out that Charter and secure the ongoing growth and success of the Club generally, as well as meet all the legislative requirements, it is necessary to ensure that the Club is operated as a successful business and cater for the needs of all members. By doing so we are able to generate funds to invest in golf and keep the membership fees within the reach of members. Until recently our golf operations were subsidised from operations at Beachside, and we had an historical debt which has now been extinguished.

Like any business we are faced with the need to continually review and prioritise a long list of competing demands as well as plan and finance other projected needs, which in our case include, substantial increases to our parking facilities and contributing to the construction of the new seawall.

The long-term financial plan for our Club is to reduce our reliance on gaming revenue and sustain and grow our operations by maintaining and developing existing food, beverage, and golf facilities. Additional sources of revenue such as Mini Golf, and the development of seniors living facilities are among the options being considered.

*David Hume*

**PRESIDENT**