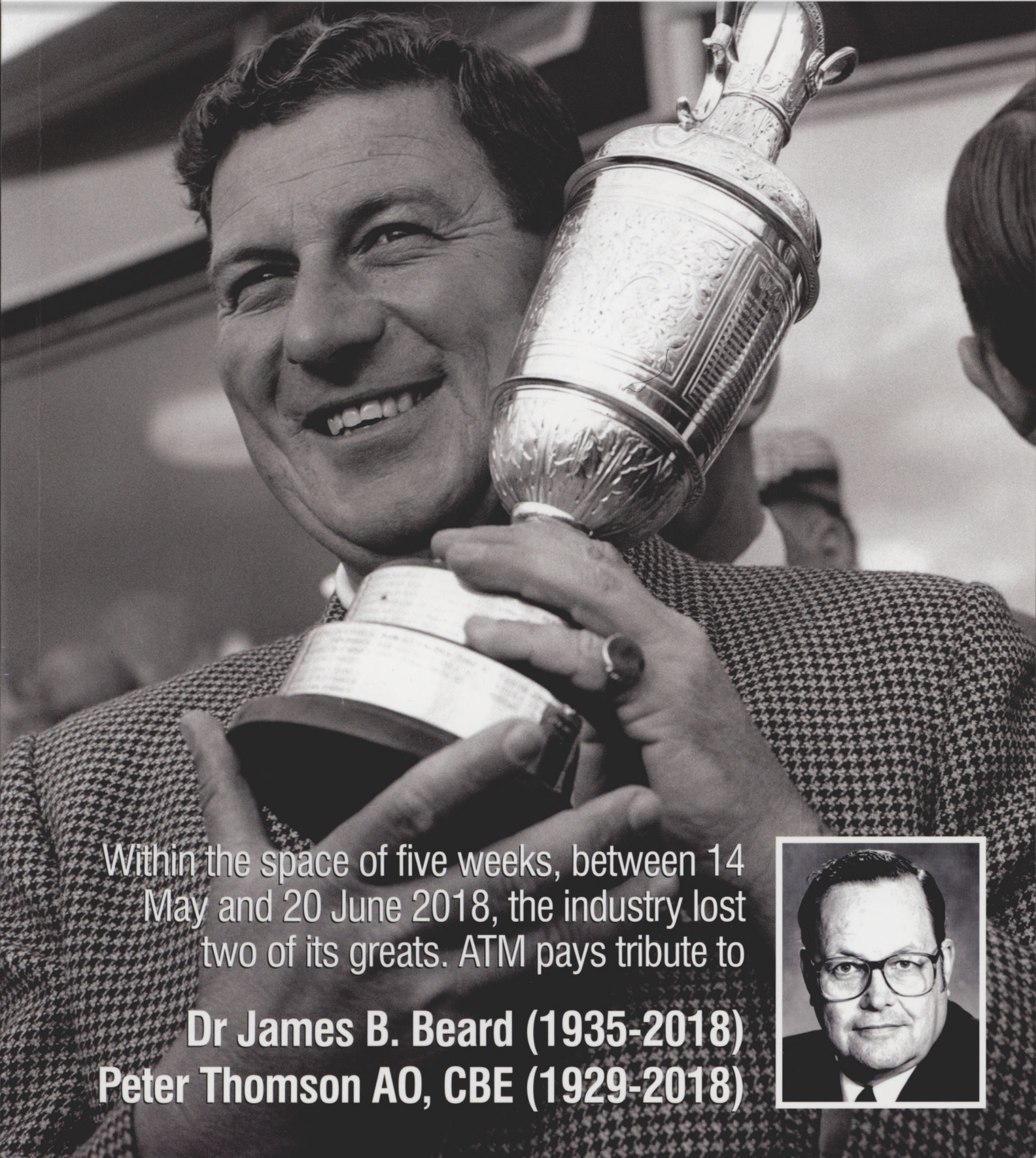


# Turfgrass



VOLUME 20.4 JUL-AUG 2018

MANAGEMENT JOURNAL



Within the space of five weeks, between 14 May and 20 June 2018, the industry lost two of its greats. ATM pays tribute to

**Dr James B. Beard (1935-2018)**

**Peter Thomson AO, CBE (1929-2018)**



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**Editorial**  
Brett Robinson  
Office: (03) 9548 8600  
Mobile: 0434 144 779  
Email: [brett@agcsa.com.au](mailto:brett@agcsa.com.au)

**Advertising**  
Mark Unwin  
Office: (03) 9548 8600  
Mobile: 0438 320 919  
Email: [mark@agcsa.com.au](mailto:mark@agcsa.com.au)

**Art Direction & Design**  
Jo Corne  
Office: (03) 9548 8600  
Email: [jo@agcsa.com.au](mailto:jo@agcsa.com.au)



**AGCSA**  
Suite 1, Monash Corporate Centre  
752 Blackburn Road, Clayton, VIC 3168  
P: (03) 9548 8600 F: (03) 9548 8622  
E: [admin@agcsa.com.au](mailto:admin@agcsa.com.au)  
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**Membership Coordinator**  
Allison Jenkins  
E: [admin@agcsa.com.au](mailto:admin@agcsa.com.au)

**Accounts**  
Philip Horsburgh  
E: [philip@agcsa.com.au](mailto:philip@agcsa.com.au)

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E: [bruce@agcsa.com.au](mailto:bruce@agcsa.com.au)  
Tim Fankhauser (Agronomist)  
E: [tim@agcsa.com.au](mailto:tim@agcsa.com.au)



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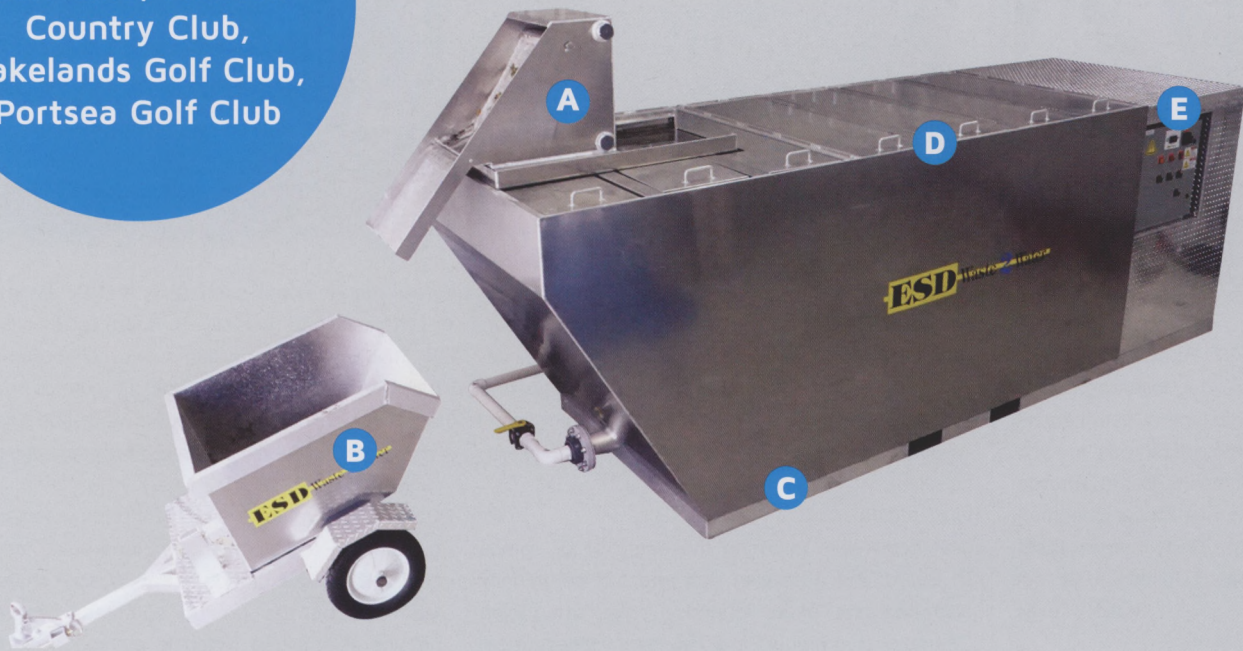
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#### **B CLIPPING TRAILER**

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#### **C INCLINE PLATE CLARIFIER**

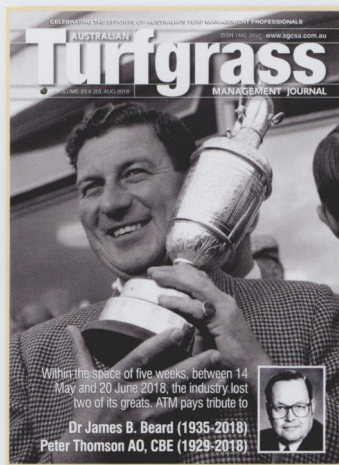
The wash water slurry is directed into the Inclined Plate Clarifier allowing the suspended solids to drop to the bottom, while skimming the water and hydrocarbons off to travel into the Biological Treatment Chamber.

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COVER

Legends lost: Peter Thomson with the Claret Jug following his fifth and final Open Championship victory at Royal Birkdale in 1965.

Inset: Dr James B. Beard. **Photos:** Main image Ernest Chapman/Mirrorpix/Getty Images; **Inset:** James B. Beard Collection, College Station, Texas.



LEAD STORY: Vale Dr James B. Beard (1935-2018)

8

On 14 May 2018 news filtered around the global turfgrass management community that Dr James B. Beard had died at the age of 82. A giant of a man both physically and mentally, Dr Beard totally altered the face of turfgrass research during his lifetime. Peter McMaugh, a close friend and collaborator of Beard's for more than four decades, leads Australian Turfgrass Management Journal's tribute to one of turf's most brilliant minds and whose contribution to the profession will likely never be witnessed again.

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Just five weeks following the death of Dr James B. Beard, the Australian golf and turf community also lost one of its legends – five time Open Championship winner Peter Thomson. Harley Kruse, Ross Perrett, Leigh Yanner, Richard Forsyth and Doug Robinson pay tribute to a man who was a steadfast supporter of golf course superintendents.

Three decades of excellence 22

Long-serving Roseville Golf Club superintendent Mark O'Sullivan joined fellow greats of his profession when he was bestowed the 2018 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award in June.

Riverlakes rejuvenation 28

Despite having to contend with four major floods in six years, 2018 AGCSA Claude Crockford Environment Award winner Jason Lavender's commitment to environmental excellence is unwavering.

Rallying the troops 34

Do you have volunteers keen for deployment but are too gun shy to pull the trigger? Pambula Merimbula Golf Club superintendent Pat Wilson shares his learnings on the unique volunteer programme he has established which is making a significant difference to his operations.

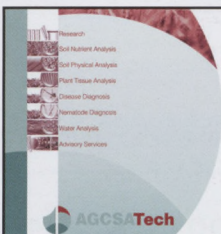
Wellington wows 48

For the first time in the event's history, the annual conference headed overseas as the AGCSA teamed up with the NZGCSA for the inaugural Australasian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition. ATM looks back at the week that was in Wellington, New Zealand and asks delegates what they took away from this year's unique gathering.



No passing Fads 54

Nedlands GC superintendent Tony McFadyean looks set for a long tenure in the Red Jacket after collecting his maiden Toro AGCSA Golf Championship at Royal Wellington Golf Club.



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Optimising hours of ground usage 42  
Following on from last edition, ATM's agronomic guru John Neylan continues his look at the results from an STA Victoria-funded project comparing hours of use for different sportsfield construction types and maintenance inputs.



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**HR MANAGEMENT**  
Under investigation 60  
So, you've received either a formal or informal complaint from an aggrieved employee or someone has witnessed an incident that may warrant further investigation. ATM's HR expert Vicki Crowe provides advice on how you should manage it.



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Contributors to Australian Turfgrass Management Journal  
Volume 20.4 (July-August 2018)

Gary Beehag; Nathan Bennett (SAGCSA); Will Bowden (STANZ); Bill Casimaty (StrathAyr); Vicki Crowe (PGA of Australia); Richard Forsyth (Royal Melbourne GC); GCSAA/GCM; Steve Hodson (NZGCSA); Harley Kruse (SAGCA); Jason Lavender (Riverlakes G&CC); Bruce Macphee (AGCSATech); Peter McMaugh (Turfgrass Scientific Services); Terry Muir (epar); John Neylan (Turfgrass Consulting and Research); Mark O'Sullivan (Roseville GC); Ross Perrett (SAGCA); Matthew Plunkett (Turf NSW); Barry Proctor (VGCSEA); Eva Ricci (STA WAITGA WA); Doug Robinson; Mark Schroder (Liverpool GC); Albert Sherry (TAFE NSW); Ryan Swanbury (Berri GC); Kate Torgersen (Environmental Golf Solutions); Mark Unwin (AGCSA); USGA Green Section; Jim Vaughan (Turf Queensland); Pat Wilson (Pambula Merimbula GC); Leigh Yanner (The National GC).

# Always learning

The recent Australasian Turfgrass Conference in Wellington was a fantastic event and it was great to see both the Australian and New Zealand industries truly come together for the first time. In the weeks after the event, I fired off an email to delegates asking if they could send through one key 'take home' message from the week in Wellington. The many responses received are presented as part of our conference review starting on page 48, but there was one I thought which warranted special mention for its topicality and lucidity.

Many will know Tony Jonas who is currently course superintendent at the 27-hole North Shore Golf Club in Auckland, New Zealand. Over a 30-year turf management career, Tony has successfully plied his trade on both sides of the Tasman in a variety of roles. Few can question Tony's passion for our industry and below is what his take home message was...

*"I am still coming to terms with what was the best conference I have been to. Many conferences I have attended all feel pretty much the same, with the same message but on a slightly different tangent. I am always able to pick up something new, but this time the message in its entirety resonated so strongly with me.*

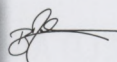
*"In the 1990s a superintendent I knew well enough in country New South Wales took his own life. He was found hanging in his shed. I have thought about the feeling I had at the time for years after, but in recent times I had forgotten. It wasn't until the Wellington conference that that feeling was revisited due to the material that was shared with us through (inspirational speaker) Rob Hamill and followed up by other speakers that mental health is a huge issue that we all seem to readily sweep under the carpet.*

*"My thinking has changed so much after those presentations. I came back to work and assessed our health and safety policy and there is nothing to suggest that we as an organisation are prepared for, are educated enough and are willing to accept that mental health is a large contributor to why we have a such a policy. As a manager I try my best to ensure my team have support from myself and the other managers when they need that time for themselves or for their families. But I don't do enough to follow up on whether all is good with them and to ask whether they need more help.*

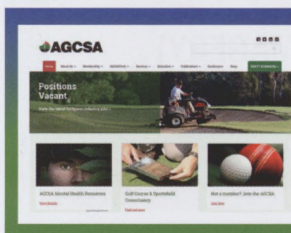
*"For me, I am responsible for all of that, as well as for my own mental health, but as a male I always come last in the pecking order. That has changed. I realise now that I cannot operate well enough for my staff and my family if I am not in a good place myself. Now 'myself' is the most important thing for me to deal with first and foremost, which means I can then ensure I have the mental capacity to deal with everything else. I have never ever placed myself ahead of anything, but do now and my message to my team is that they do as well."*

Pretty powerful isn't it. Tony's response really captures the essence of what the annual conference is all about and what makes it a must-attend event. The conference aims to get delegates to challenge themselves and question their approaches and attitudes towards things, whether on or off the course, and start a discussion to hopefully affect positive change. Here's hoping the great vibe generated in Wellington carries across to Brisbane in 2019 and more revelations, like Tony's, are forthcoming for those who attend.

In addition to reviewing this year's conference, this edition sees ATM pay special tribute to Dr James B. Beard and Peter Thomson, two legends who we sadly lost within the space of a few weeks before the Wellington conference. To steal from Rob Hamill's amazing address at the conference, these two gents unquestionably 'seized the day' and their passion for what they did influenced and benefited generations. Enjoy the read...



Brett Robinson, Editor



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# Big thanks for a wonderful week in Wellington



**W**ith the Australasian Turfgrass Conference completed, it's a prime time to reflect on how much has been delivered over the past few months and also a chance to get back into the planning and preparation for the next 6-12 months.

Looking back on the conference and having spoken with a number of members, trade partners and attendees, the consensus is that the conference and trade exhibition was a resounding success. With some 850-plus people through the TSB Arena doors over the course of the week, combined with over 120 hours of education across 45 sessions, feedback has been that the topics covered and presenters were first-class, with attendees able to take away a number of ideas and information that will benefit their operations.

Reviewing internally, there were a couple of areas around the programme we can sharpen up for next year and areas to improve, but overwhelmingly it was a positive result for such a significant undertaking for our industry.

Congratulations go to **Jason Lavender** on collecting the coveted AGCSA Claude Crockford Environment Award, presented in partnership with Syngenta, for his extensive work and stewardship at Riverlakes Golf & Country Club. And to **Mark O'Sullivan** from Roseville Golf Club in Sydney on taking home the 2018 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, presented in partnership with new sponsor Bayer.

The future of the industry is also looking bright, with 2018 hosting perhaps the most highly contested AGCSA Graduate of the Year Award finals in many years. Congratulations go to **Bryce Walsh** (Royal Hobart Golf Club, Tas) and **Daniel Hendrie** (Morisset Country Club/Toronto Country Club, NSW)

who could not be separated and were announced as joint winners of the Toro Australia sponsored award. Congratulations also to Nedlands Golf Club superintendent **Tony McFadyean** on taking home his first Toro AGCSA Golf Championship title.

If I may indulge somewhat, I'd like to express my acknowledgement to the entire AGCSA team for their time, effort and energy put in over the last few months to pull the event together. To Philip, Allison and Jo for the seemingly never-ending behind the scenes and logistics work required for an international event this size; to Brett (Kiwi) who looked right at home on native soil with camera in hand and pulling myriad articles and images together; to Bruce and Tim for their material reviews prior, preparation and presentations throughout the week; and of course Simone – a considerable thank you for the co-ordination, long hours and stoic approach to developing and delivering a world-class turf conference and exhibition.

Thanks must also go to yourselves – the delegates and visitors for attending, for sharing and participating in the sessions and for making the effort to continue to support the industry and, for the first time, the joint venture with our New Zealand association counterparts. A big thank you also to each of our trade partners and exhibitors – for many it was an extensive exercise and a challenge logistically to have equipment and personnel on the ground in New Zealand, but your continued support of the AGCSA and turf industry is certainly appreciated and not unnoticed by our members.

And finally, thanks must also go to the AGCSA Board, not only for their time and effort throughout the week, but for also having a vision to put a combined AGCSA/NZGCSA conference on the table and then having the resolve to see it delivered.



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## LOOKING AHEAD

Planning and preparations are already well underway for the 2019 conference which will be held in Brisbane from 23-28 June. This conference is already shaping up to be a great event and discussions are well progressed with a range of international and local speakers. There will be an increased number of education sessions and some new education offerings that we're currently working on which should make for a great return to Brisbane, our first since 2006.

As mentioned in the last edition, the AGCSA has delivered a new website and membership management portal in May. A large number of members have already taken the opportunity to look at the new site, and for those who haven't yet we encourage you to do so. Membership renewals can now be completed online, with payment options and add-ons able to be tailored to your requirements. This includes our new bundle package for superintendents and their assistants, delivering great value for new or existing members.

In a significant win for the turf industry, the next few months also sees the AGCSA undertaking major work with the National Turf Education Working Group. In May, we received approval to review the current sports turf management qualifications at the Certificate III and Diploma levels. The task will be to identify where gaps have appeared due to new technology and where changes may need to be made to content. Industry experts will meet in August to commence the review with Skills Impact.

And finally, in July the AGCSA provided evidence relating to the proposed amendment to industry employment Awards at the Fair Work Commission. Across the two-week hearing, a range of views both for and against were heard from clubs and industry bodies on the proposed revocation of the Registered & Licensed Clubs Award and creation of a Hospitality and Clubs Award.

The AGCSA presented on behalf of a collective of turf management industry bodies and outlined our concerns with potential impacts to penalty rates and conditions under the proposed changes. As this edition was going to print there has been no decision handed down, with an extension of time requested by some parties in order to further review adjustments and the revised proposal to September. At this stage there is no change to the Award, and no changes are possible to the Awards until a final determination has been handed down by the Commission. The AGCSA expects to receive further information late August or early September. 🍷



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Dr James Beard (left) with Paul Rieke, Dick Schmidt, Joe Vargas and Peter McMaugh at last year's 13th International Turfgrass Research Conference in New Jersey. Over 400 years of turf knowledge between them...



# Vale Dr James B. Beard (1935-2018)

On 14 May 2018, news filtered around the global turfgrass management community that Dr James B. Beard had died at the age of 82. Peter McMaugh, a close friend and collaborator of Beard's for more than four decades, leads Australian Turfgrass Management's tribute to one of turf's most brilliant minds and whose contribution to the profession will likely never be witnessed again.

**J**im Beard was a giant of a man, both physically and mentally. By the time I first met him at Michigan State University (MSU) in 1973, he had just published his first and perhaps most important book – 'Turfgrass: Science and Culture'. This work alone would have earned him a place in the pantheon of the greats of turf.

'Turfgrass: Science and Culture' was a groundbreaking foray into the physiology of the grass plant and lifted the industry to a higher scientific plane than its previous agronomic image had achieved. This resonated with me as a practicing physiologist; we were on the same plane going the same places and we became firm friends and colleagues for the rest of our lives.

While at MSU, Jim was the prime mover and shaker along with his student Bjarne Langvad (Sweden) in the foundation of the International Turfgrass Society (ITS) in 1969, with much of the success of the society's longevity due to the careful husbanding by Jim and fellow turf luminary of the time Jim Watson.

Jim B. was the inaugural ITS president and organised the very first International Turfgrass Research Conference (ITRC) in Harrogate, England, expending some \$700 of his own money to get it off the ground. For more than 30 years he was the society's historian, a role he only relinquished at the 2009 conference in Chile.

When you look at his academic record, from his undergraduate years in 1957 at Ohio State

University through to his final year at Texas A&M University in 1992, you see a litany of excellence. Certainly the crowning glory of this was the degree he was most proud of – the honorary 'Doctorate of Agriculture' bestowed on him by Purdue University in 2004.

## STUPENDOUS CONTRIBUTION

Born in Ohio to a farming family, Jim took his first degree at Ohio State University where his giant physique also saw him star on the college football team. His incredible research career was, like most other achievements, built on the shoulders of others, not the least of whom was Dr Bill Daniel, whose guidance was crucial during his PhD studies at Purdue University, from where he went to Michigan State University in 1961.

Within 10 years of starting at MSU he rose to be full professor, by which time he was attracting the cream of the country's PhD students to his study programme. Among those I met in 1973 when I visited Michigan were Bob Carrow, Jeff Krans, John Kaufmann, Martin Petrovic and many others who went on to make considerable contributions to the turf industry's knowledge base. On the score of the number of truly outstanding students he mentored, Jim's contribution to turf was stupendous.

During this 1973 visit, John Kaufmann engaged me with a question about the accuracy of a statement in 'Turfgrass Science and Culture'. It was about the relative photosynthetic efficiency of C<sub>3</sub> and

C<sub>4</sub> photo systems. In the book, Jim had stated that C<sub>3</sub> systems were more efficient, which was wrong, but he wasn't having one of his students pull him up. John dragged me in and I had to tell Jim that I had studied in the same labs as the CSIRO teams in Australia which validated the C<sub>4</sub> system and that it was the more efficient. It wasn't the last difference of opinion we had.

Jim loved eating and during this visit he very graciously hosted a dinner for me and his PhD students in his favourite famous 'multiple gold plate' restaurant. The piece de resistance was a roast loin of beef carved on a trolley at the table. During the meal Jim asked me how I liked the beef. My reply was, 'Jim it's great. You can carve it with a fork. I just wish it had some taste.' Needless to say that did not go down well.

Two other great and distinguished scientists in turf were also on the professorial staff at MSU at that time – Dr Joe Vargas in plant pathology and Dr Paul Rieke in soils. They were great collaborators with Jim and both are still among our mutual friends. Dr Jim Watson was also ever-present on the sidelines as a mentor to all.

## SOUTHERN EXPOSURES

In 1975, Texas A&M University made Jim an offer he could not refuse and he moved there to take on the role of Professor of Turfgrass Science, a position he would hold through until 1992. Previously at MSU his focus had been on cool-season grasses, but the move south meant a shift to warm-season turf types and it was here that he produced some of his most ground-breaking work.

## THE MAN, THE LEGACY – DR JAMES B. BEARD

**Born:** 24 September 1935 in Piqua, Ohio.

**Died:** 14 May 2018 in Bryan, Texas (aged 82).

**Family:** Married Harriet Jean Coon in 1955. Sons James and John.

**Education:** Graduated from Ohio State University in 1957 with a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy. Went on to complete a Master of Science in Crop Ecology and Statistics (1959) and PhD in Plant Physiology and Biochemistry (1961) from Purdue University. Was bestowed an Honorary Doctorate of Agriculture from Purdue in 2004.

**Teaching and research:** Dr Beard spent most of his career in the field of soil and crop sciences where he blazed trails of critical research that would later develop into new fields of study. From the start of his career as a professor, first at Michigan State University and later at Texas A&M University, he touched the lives of every student that passed through his classes.

- **Michigan State University:** Assistant Professor (1961-1967), Associate Professor (1967-1971), Professor of Turfgrass Physiology, Ecology and Culture (1971-1975).

- **Texas A&M University:** Professor of Turfgrass Science (1975-1992). In 1993 was elected Professor Emeritus of Turfgrass Science.

**Publications:** During his career Dr Beard published dozens of manuals and in excess of 700 scientific research papers and technical articles. He authored nine published books, among them two of the most acclaimed turfgrass texts – 'Turfgrass: Science and Culture' (1973) and 'Turf Management for Golf Courses' (1982 and 2002). Other notable books included;

- 'Turfgrass Bibliography – From 1672 to 1972' (1977)

- 'Beard's Turfgrass Encyclopaedia – For Golf Courses, Grounds, Lawns, Sports Fields' (2005).

- 'Turfgrass History and Literature – Lawn, Sports, and Golf' (2014), co-authored with wife Harriet and son James.

**Awards and honours:** From the start of his career in 1953, Dr Beard's research set new standards in the world of soil and crop sciences, where he received numerous distinguished awards. Among those were;

- Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and Crop Science Society of America (1971);

- Service Recognition and Honorary Member Award of the American Sod Producers Association (1975);

- American Library Association Oberly Award (1979);

- Green Section Award of the USGA (1989);

- Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1990);

- Distinguished Alumni Award from The Ohio State University (1995);

- Founders Award of the Sports Turf Managers Association (1998);

- Donald Rossi Award of the Golf Course Builders Association (1999);

- James B. Beard Turfgrass Collection dedicated at Michigan State University Library (2003);

- Doctorate of Agriculture *honoris causa* from Purdue University (2004);

- Veitch Honour Medal of the Royal Horticultural Society (2008).

### Other notable achievements:

- Founder of the International Turfgrass Society (ITS) in 1969 in conjunction with Bjarne Langvad and was its inaugural president. Was on the ITS Board of Directors from 1969 to 2007 and was ITS historian between 1977 and 2009;

- Elected to the Crop Science Society of America board of directors from 1964-1966 and 1985-1987. Was president in 1986 and chaired the Turfgrass Management Division in 1966;

- Elected to the American Society of Agronomy board of directors (1969-1971 and 1984-1987);

- Elected to the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (1989-1991);

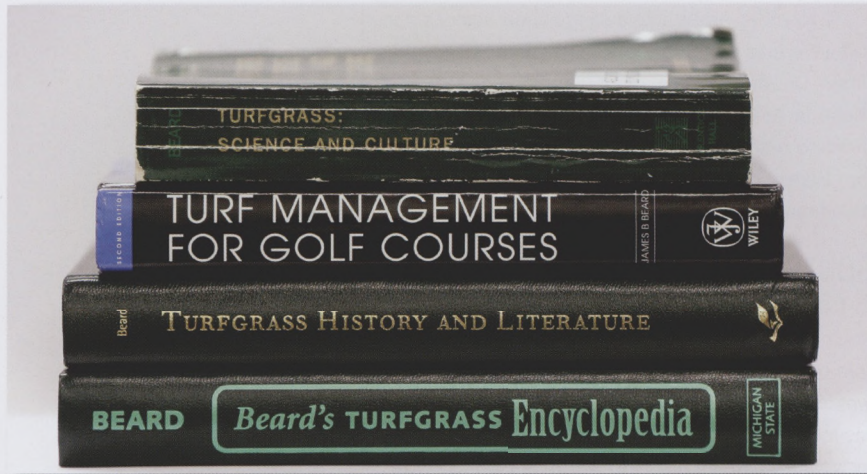
- Served on the board of directors of the Scotts Company (1987-1999);

- Founded the International Sports Turf Institute in 1992 to further turfgrass education worldwide, going on to lecture in more than 30 countries.



PHOTO: TURFGRASS HISTORY AND LITERATURE (2014)

**James and Harriet Beard**



Forrest who at that time was making and selling the Ron Kaye-designed bowling green roller. Jim went back to the US as the 'knight in white armour' for greens rolling and Frank developed a smaller model more suited to golf than the standard bowling green size. Another first for Australia!

Jim stayed at Texas A&M as professor of the Soils and Crop Science Department until his retirement in 1992 at the very early age of 57. This was precipitated by his unhappiness about the funding situation for his work at the university. He and his wife Harriet continued to live at College Station for the rest of his life as their main residence. They escaped from the summer heat there with a residence in 'The Thumb' on Lake Michigan.

Harriet, his lifelong partner, was also a huge contributor to the success of his career, typing all his manuscripts and being the general manager of both his personal and professional life. She not only typed, edited and arranged publishing of all his manuscripts, but also co-authored his more recent historical works. When he retired in 1992, Jim set up his own private turf foundation, the International Sports Turf Institute, through which he continued his research and writing.

While Jim was at MSU he became enamoured with a product called Netlon. It was a plastic mesh developed by the Mercer family in the UK (of mercerised cotton fame) which in small pieces was being used for the reinforcing of free form concrete and in sheet form for reinforcing concrete road surfaces instead of steel which corroded with the use of salt for ice removal. It was considered a big breakthrough for the growers of cool-season turfgrass sod in the northern USA because by using it on top of the ground at reseeded they could get two crops in 18 months instead of one.

Jim wanted my opinions as a commercial sod grower. I told him that I thought it would create a lot of litigation problems if it was used in high traffic areas. Jim didn't think this was going to be a problem, but history has proved me correct and its use has dropped off very much today.

Dr Beard was responsible for some of turf's most seminal texts, among them the ground-breaking 1973 *Turfgrass: Science and Culture* (top)

After the 1973 ITRC I realised that there was a desperate need to get Jim out to Australia to reinforce the message that science was the future for golf course superintendents. In 1976, a year after he started at Texas A&M, I persuaded Jim to come to Australia for the first time to present at the Fourth National Turfgrass Conference on the Gold Coast.

This was a resounding success and the superintendents in Australia were presented with the conference quality available in the USA without having to travel to get it. This was not a one way street, for although Jim had huge budgets for his programmes, first at MSU and then at Texas A&M College Station, he found that in Australia we were doing remarkable work on very, very slim budgets.

During his first visit Down Under, Jim asked me a leading question. The new generation of ride-on triplex greens mowers had been in use for some time in the USA and had been in Australia only a short time. Jim asked, 'Peter, what do you think of the quality of the putting green surfaces provided by the triplex compared to the walk-behind greens mowers?' My reply, 'Jim, I agree with you that the walk behind provides a better putting finish'. 'Why do you think that is, Peter?' 'It's very simple Jim – there is no rolling factor involved in a triplex'.

Jim's face said it all – he had a light bulb moment. I subsequently introduced him to Frank

Dr Beard (seated front row, eighth from right) was the prime mover and shaker in the foundation of the International Turfgrass Society (ITS) in 1969 and organised the very first International Turfgrass Research Conference in Harrogate. Pictured to Dr Beard's immediate right are Jim Watson (ITS secretary) and Bjarne Langvad (ITS vice-president). To his left is John Escritt (ITS treasurer) who was then director of the STRI



PHOTO: TURFGRASS HISTORY AND LITERATURE (2014)

When he got to Texas, he espoused Netlon further and did a lot of work with Jim Siefers using it in chopped up form as a soil reinforcer for sports fields and race tracks. On a visit to Texas A&M in 1987 I was down on the ground looking at and poking about Jim's plots. Standing on high, Jim commented, 'Peter you are awfully quiet down there, and when you are quiet I get worried. What are you thinking?' I replied, 'Jim I think I might be looking at the ultimate in useless experiments'. I can't say he was pleased, but that rather much continues to be my opinion today. It was yet another example of the open frankness we always had in exchanging opinions.

During his 1986 visit to Australia for the 9th National Turf Conference on the Gold Coast, Jim presented what for me is one of the greatest pieces of research of his whole career. It was about the dieback of the root systems of warm-season turfgrasses in spring and their need for producing a whole new root system from their stored energy reserves.

This spring root dieback syndrome made sense of the many renovations of bowling greens especially, but also of other larger turf areas that had gone wrong when the weather was much colder than anticipated in spring. With the increase of global warming, especially in Australia, this research is possibly less relevant than it was then 30 years ago, but especially in the southern areas of Australia it should not be forgotten or ignored, as it largely is.

The other personal highlight of this visit was when he told the audience on the Gold Coast that 'Peter McMaugh is the only other turfgrass scientist in the world that knows the literature as well as me'. This was a huge compliment that I treasure, but I might have fallen behind a little today.

Another extremely valuable seminal paper was one he produced with his student Robert Green titled 'The Role of Turfgrasses in Environmental Protection and their Benefits to Humans'. This was a ground-breaking study which was stimulated into production by the then increasingly strident xerophytic landscape push. While it has not gone away (some US authorities today still pay a bounty



PHOTO: USGA GREEN SECTION

**Dr Beard undertaking wear trials at Texas A&M University in 1978. Dr Beard was Professor of Turfgrass Science there between 1975 and 1992**

for grass removal) it is far less influential than it was then. I was able, with Dr Ross Higginson, to review and add significantly to this paper's message in a Horticulture Australia Limited funded project conducted in 2008, especially on the health aspects of green space (see ATM Volume 11.1 – Jan-Feb 2009 for more on this paper).

## A WELL-RESPECTED FAVOURITE

**T**he organising committee for the Fourth National Turf Conference held in Surfers Paradise in 1976 had the programme set and all was in readiness. However, come conference time we had to do some major reshuffling of the programme because there was a 'worthy presenter' from the USA who needed to be included.

Come the opening day, Dr James B. Beard was introduced to the gathered audience and I think the subject of turfgrass management for those in attendance that year – which included the likes of industry luminaries at the time such as Vince Church, Rube Walkerden, George Rub, Dene Goldsack, Billy Powell and Ray Keane – was turned on its ear.

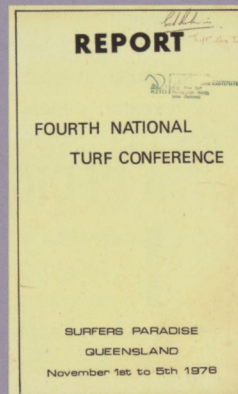
This gentle giant of a man enthralled all before him and, regardless of where

you were from, his passion for the science of turfgrass management had the room in a buzz. Question time was like nothing we had seen before. Dr Beard had endeared himself to all and the fact that he visited

our conference again in 1986 and 1988 is testimony to the fact that he was a well-respected 'favourite' of Australian turf managers.

His books 'Turfgrass: Science and Culture' and 'Turf Management for Golf Courses' have been major reference sources for myself and many turf managers throughout the country. We certainly owe Dr Beard a great debt of gratitude for his incredible and groundbreaking work in turfgrass science.

**DOUG ROBINSON**  
INAUGURAL AGCSA PRESIDENT





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PHOTO: TURFGRASS HISTORY AND LITERATURE (2014)

On the score of the number of truly outstanding students he mentored during his teaching days at Michigan State and Texas A&M, Dr Beard's contribution to turf was stupendous

### PRODIGIOUS

Jim always had a big presence and he was a generous person with his knowledge. Among his peers he was a demanding scientist and was eminently respected for this. He loved the occasion when Dr Glen Burton, who was pre-eminent in the field of plant breeding, crossed the floor of a ballroom to congratulate him on his root regeneration studies.

Jim's written output was prodigious and covered every aspect of the communication spectrum from popular magazine articles to highly technical research papers and books. My deepest regret

is that his original book 'Turfgrass: Science and Culture' was never reviewed and brought up to date. As he grew older his interests broadened into the historical and cultural aspects of turfgrasses, which had begun early in his life. His major works of recent years were labours of love looking at the 'big picture' of the world of turf.

Jim was always in big demand for conferences and for educational seminars all over the world. He worked over many years with the Italian Golf Federation and other entities in Europe and regularly visited Southeast Asia for seminars. What is perhaps less known was that many of the major commercial firms working in turf also had close connections with Jim as an advisor to their boards.

One example of this was his close connection with O.M. Scott and this was the stimulus for his recommending to the company that I did their screening trials in Australia before they entered the market here. Jim was also very close to the sod industry and for many years was the chief scientific advisor to Turf Producers International of which he was made an honorary member of in 1975.

Last year at the 13th ITRC conference in New Jersey, Jim gave the main address at the Memorial Meeting for Dr Jim Watson, his lifelong mentor and co-operator. While his health had deteriorated markedly in recent years following a burst brain aneurysm, I did not think I would be writing obituary notes about him so soon.

## A DEDICATED DISCIPLE TO THE 'POPE OF TURF'

I have trouble in accepting that the incredible life of Dr James B. Beard has ended. His impact cannot be measured because it exceeds any past comparisons and it most certainly exceeds any conceivable future achievements. He has inspired sports administrators and participants to become more scientific in their quest to improve the quality and safety of sports surfaces.

The legacy of his incredible leadership in 'putting science into practice' will continue to provide benefit to his client industries. For much of his long life he led the world of his sportsturf academic colleagues, but the sporting public are largely unaware of the background to their improved facilities.

Perhaps his greatest legacy is reflected by the benefits received by the athletes who subject their bodies to the vagaries of sports surfaces that support them. Ironically, millions of sports enthusiasts will continue to utilise his science without knowing what stimulated the ongoing improvement that Beard's science has made to their sport. The media frenzy that engulfs world leading sports achievements rarely mentions the work of the thousands of turfgrass practitioners who have been inspired by Jim.

Apparently his students referred to him to as the 'Pope of Turfgrass' and we are very proud to

be one of his dedicated disciples. Certainly he produced the bibles which now serve to document his science which provides a solid foundation for the future.

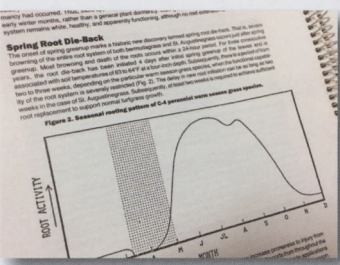
We were pleased to assist with some of his library collection. We learnt that some of his research had not been adopted by the industry that he served. Our commercialisation of some of his research pleased him, as at times he became frustrated when some industry members brought politics into debates which he felt needed to be partisan. However, he also learnt to play the political ball when necessary.

Perhaps his greatest strength was his communication skills. His ability to explain his science to hands on practitioners was outstanding. Yet, with all of his talent, awards and global endorsements, he still displayed great modesty.

I could only claim to beat him in one pursuit – fishing. My wife Janet and I spent a great weekend with Jim and Harriet at their Lake Michigan lodge and we topped the salmon catch rate on the first day of the season. I was delighted to exceed his catch.

Jim, thank you for your science, your friendship and your most productive life.

**BILL CASIMATY, STRATHAYR**



Beard's research on the dieback of warm-season turfgrass root systems, which he presented to Australian turf managers in 1986, is considered one of his most groundbreaking works



Left: Dr Beard was the first person to introduce then new concepts of plant physiology and biochemistry to the turfgrass industry

Above: Dr Beard's written output was prodigious and covered every aspect of the communication spectrum from popular magazine articles to highly technical research papers and books

PHOTOS: TURFGRASS HISTORY AND LITERATURE (2014)

This was a unique occasion at which we had a meeting of the old guard, the veterans of the ITS and the photo of myself, Jim, Joe Vargas, Paul Rieke and Dick Schmidt (see page 8) is one I will always treasure – there's some 400 years of turf experience in that photo!

Sadly, with Jim's untimely passing there will be no new scientists to say proudly I worked with him. There will be no new researchers or superintendents who can say proudly he was my mentor. There will be no more students who will be able to say I sat at his feet. But his gigantic contributions through his writings and publications will live on forever.

Vale my friend; we will certainly not see your like again, at least not in my lifetime.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ATM wishes to thank the USGA Green Section for supplying the photo on page 11. The black and white photos on pages 10, 12 and 13 are from the James B. Beard Collection, College Station, Texas, USA which were reproduced in Dr Beard's 2014 publication *Turfgrass History and Literature* (Michigan State University Press). 🌱

## A LEADER AND TRUE GENIUS

**O**n behalf of turf management educators in Australia and across the world, I wish to pay tribute to the genius and wisdom of Dr James Beard who continues to be a leading influence in turf education and my professional development.

As a young greenkeeper completing TAFE in the early 1980's at Ryde School of Horticulture, I soon realised just how much I didn't but needed to know about my trade. I was first introduced to the 'Green Book' – *Turfgrass: Science and Culture* – at The Lakes Golf Club by the then superintendent, but for the most part the book just gathered dust on his shelf. I did, however, learn a lot from his follow-up book *'Turf Management for Golf Courses'*.

It wasn't until some 10 years later when I successfully applied for a position into the turf management programme run at The University of Sydney by Professor

Peter Martin, that we studied *'Turfgrass: Science and Culture'* as the major text. It was then that I really began to explore the science behind the art of our trade.

Although printed in 1973, for most involved in the programme or in turf education, that text continues to be the blue print for our industry and the most in-depth discovery of turf plant science I have ever found. For any student of turfgrass management, this book contains the foundations of our ever-changing industry and is compulsory reading.

His research over many years was revolutionary and the cornerstone of many current practices we use to this day. I am, as all of the turf education community is, in mourning for the loss of a leader and true genius of our industry."

**ALBERT SHERRY – TAFE NSW AND CO-CHAIR, NTEWG**

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**After leaving Texas A&M University in 1992, Dr Beard established the International Sports Turf Institute**

## A TRULY INSPIRING INDIVIDUAL

**O**ccasionally an outstanding individual influences an entire industry and inspires numerous people over many decades. Without doubt, Dr. James B. Beard, or Jim as he was better known, was such a person to the worldwide turfgrass industry.

Throughout his professional career which spanned some 60 years, Jim earned an impressive repertoire of academic qualifications, industry honours, awards and professional memberships. Jim became an outstanding scientist and researcher, educator, consummate consultant and a prolific writer and accomplished book author. His knowledge of the worldwide turfgrass literature was unequalled.

I vividly remember meeting Dr. Beard for the first time in May 1980 in Canberra at a national conference at which he spoke with passion as guest speaker. This was the era of slide projectors to illustrate talks. Few people ever realised that the night before one of his presentations, Jim would methodically select slides from a collection he carried when travelling.

Outside the United States, in the 1970s most people in the turfgrass industry probably became aware of Jim through his best-selling textbook 'Turfgrass: Science and Culture'. First published in 1973, this book soon became the turfgrass bible still referenced as a treatise on all things turfgrass. His later book 'Turf Management for Golf Courses' (1982 and 2002) also became a best seller. Jim signed editions of both books I own.

Jim wrote a multitude of books, several of which were co-authored with wife Harriet and son James. The likes of 'Turfgrass Bibliography' (1977), 'Beard's Turfgrass Encyclopaedia' (2005) and 'Turfgrass History and Literature' (2014) are mammoth monographs and mandatory reading for anyone truly passionate and interested about turfgrass literature. Before his passing, Jim was in the process of writing yet another turfgrass book.

Jim was much more than an author of scientific and extension publications and outstanding books. His outstanding academic achievements are well documented and he was the first person to introduce the then new concepts of plant physiology and biochemistry to the turfgrass industry.

It was when Jim was at Michigan State University and not long after the publishing of *Turfgrass: Science and Culture*, that Jim made the first of many conference speaking visits to Australia in 1976 through the efforts of Peter McMaugh. During one of his Australian trips, Jim visited the now-defunct Australian Turfgrass Research Institute (ATRI) in Sydney. I recall Jim being very impressed when he closely observed a field plot of Greenlees Park couchgrass.

Jim's appointment at the world-renowned Texas A&M University ('A' for agricultural and 'M' for machinery) at College Station as Professor of Turfgrass Science (1975-1990) further strengthened his worldwide acclaim as an outstanding scientist and educator. In late 1980, as part of a NSW Churchill Fellowship, I had the privilege to spend almost three weeks at Texas A&M with Jim and staff members.

Jim and Harriet's Texas home at College Station had a very well-maintained tall fescue lawn under trees. Jim considered that because he taught turfgrass to students, his front lawn needed to be well managed.

Jim was an avid collector of turfgrass books, historical ones in particular. I remember being in awe in one room in their College Station home having an enormous book collection. In 2003, Jim donated much of this collection to the Michigan State University Turfgrass Collection. It represents the world's largest, single collection of turfgrass books, the value of which Jim estimated to be in excess of \$USD250,000.

Whilst at Texas A&M, Jim pioneered many new turfgrass research projects. Jim had a custom-built, environmentally-controlled chamber in his laboratory to study turfgrass growth. The outdoor turfgrass research facility had an underground chamber called a 'rhizotron' to study spring root-dieback of warm-season turfgrasses. Jim was extremely proud of the new spring root-dieback research project and invited me one day to inspect the rhizotron. After Jim opened the chamber's lid he said 'Now, you go first, but watch out for snakes!' Jim also had a humorous side.

Jim was a truly inspiring person. I had the privilege of meeting him on several occasions, the last time with wife Harriet and son James in 1994 at St Andrews (Scotland) at an international conference. The worldwide turfgrass industry will never be blessed by such a person ever again.

**Dr James Beard and Gary Beehag in St Andrews, Scotland in 1994**



**GARY BEEHAG**



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From his five Claret Jugs and prolific career as a course architect, through to his firm views on course presentation and set up, the mark that Peter Thomson left on the game of golf is profound. His passing on 20 June 2018, at the age of 88, was mourned the world over, with the industry losing a true gentleman whose passion for the game knew no bounds. Harley Kruse, Ross Perrett and Leigh Yanner pay tribute to one of the best links players the world has seen.

# Links legend

**W**ith the recent passing of Peter Thomson AO, CBE, the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects (SAGCA) lost a man and a true legend who had given so much to golf and, in our case, the profession of golf course architecture.

Perhaps no man has influenced the game of golf so much in Australia. As legendary golfer, golf administrator, golf writer, commentator, golf course designer and dear friend of many, Peter would open so many eyes and ears to the world of golf. He would touch so many lives in the golfing industry, both directly and indirectly, and all for the better.

For the SAGCA, Peter played a vital role. When formed some 26 years ago, there was simply only one person who could so aptly fit the mantle of Patron. Peter would graciously accept this role when approached by the then SAGCA president – his business partner Mike Wolveridge. Frankly, Peter was the closest thing to golfing royalty in this country and indeed all the way back to the very home of golf at St Andrews where his locker would sit pride of place in the foyer of The R&A, not far from the Claret Jug, a trophy with which he had such great familiarity.

Most fittingly, Peter, at the peak of his golfing career, became principal of his own golf course design firm. He would be able to take his astute knowledge and passion of both the game and golf courses into a new venture. Originally called South Pacific Golf, which he founded in Melbourne in 1965 with Wolveridge (an SAGCA founding member and

past president), the company would become known as Thomson Wolveridge and Associates. This was on the back of his fifth Open (at Royal Birkdale) and multiple other tournament wins around the globe including the Asia Pacific region where he helped pioneer the game with his best mate Kel Nagle.

Thomson Wolveridge and Associates would become a prolific design firm consulting to numerous clubs and designing new courses all over the globe. As the firm grew and the Southeast Asian economies burgeoned, the company became known as Thomson Wolveridge and Perrett (TWP) when Ross Perrett (SAGCA past president) was invited to join the firm. Peter would be principal of the design firm bearing his name for some 50 years.

Many careers in golf course design, greenkeeping and course construction would be forged on the projects created far and wide by Peter's design company. With every golf course project, be it consulting to an existing club or a brand new course in Asia, there was always a key role played by the golf course superintendent.

In the heady days of the 1990's in Southeast Asia, Peter's firm had projects in not only Australia but places such as Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, India and China. In most cases the construction superintendent would be an Aussie as well. It is difficult to name them all and apologies if I have left any out, but there were Doug Robinson's boys out of Sanctuary Cove like Paul Lierse, Danny Potter, and Scotty McKay. And others such as Chris Gray,



The Open Course at Moonah Links, or the Leviathan as Thomson called it, was his 'magnum opus'

Shane Templeton, Martin Rose, Paul Bevan, David Scaife and Andrew Purchase.

Peter would also work with golf course shapers as well who sculpt the land and render it into golf holes. Guys like Spider (Norm Hazeldine), Larry Smith and Pete Waddell would all forge their course shaping and course building careers on the designs of Peter's company.

TWP was a company which also helped establish the reputation of Australian golf course architects being skilled and practical leaders in the field of course design in the Asia Pacific region. Peter would pave the way for professional players as well to follow into golf design and many SAGCA members today owe their design careers to the wonderful opportunities availed by this great man.

As I write this, the SAGCA is also mourning the passing of another former member and true character of the game, Ian Stanley. He and his golfing mate Bob Shearer considered Peter as a golfing god and both forayed into golf course design with time working at Peter's golf course design business.

Of his own golf course design work, I spoke with Peter a couple of years ago after he announced his retirement from golf course design. He was most proud of his Leviathan course (Open course) at Moonah Links. He would call this his 'magnum opus'. It was designed, as the brief required, to be a tough test of golf and as a future tournament course that would host the Australian Open.

In Peter's terms, the windswept sandy dunes land on the Mornington Peninsula lent itself to the typology of golf which he knew and had mastered like no other golfer – links golf. Peter was aware this course wasn't overwhelmingly popular among Melbourne golfers who were spoilt for choice and more used to a style of game played on their world famous layouts of the sandbelt.

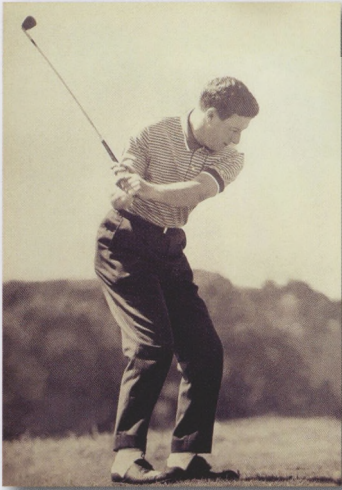
I believe he felt most yet didn't fully understand links golf and the test it asked of a golfer. Of course few could claim to understand the links game as well as Peter. The man most proud of Moonah Links was indeed most content that golfers would in the years to come learn to appreciate and enjoy the subtleties of links golf and the test he has given them.

I can share one personal story about Peter, a moment I will never forget. Away from all the big development layouts across Asia and Scotland that TWP was doing, Peter was asked in the mid-1990's to consult on the very humble public course where all those decades ago, as a young schoolboy, he would teach himself to play golf – Royal Park, Melbourne.

**Peter Thomson was arguably the best exponent of links golf the game has ever seen, with five Open Championship victories – Royal Birkdale (1954 and 1965), St Andrews (1955), Royal Liverpool (1956) and Royal Lytham and St Annes (1958). Remarkably, Thomson also finished runner-up at the 1952, 1953 and 1957 Opens**

PHOTO: GOLF AUSTRALIA





**Born in Brunswick, Melbourne, Thomson honed his skills early on at Royal Park Golf Club**



**Peter Thomson with Ross Perrett. At the peak of his golfing career, Thomson became principal of his own golf course design firm, a position he would hold for 50 years**

**Hope Island on the Gold Coast was one of a plethora of courses to have had Thomson's unique architectural touch**

I went there with him to make a site inspection and after looking at the proposed area of works Peter started to head away from the project at hand and to take in another view of it all, or so I thought. We got to the edge of a deep tramway cutting and he looked up and down the tracks as if looking for something.

"I used to find golf balls down there and then try to play a few holes," he said. For that very fleeting and precious moment, I saw the young boy in the older man. The man who would master playing the little white ball like no other Australian. The man who would spend the rest of his life giving so much to the game which he fell in love with as that Brunswick schoolboy.

Peter Thomson, true legend of Australian golf, you will be greatly missed.

*- Harley Kruse, SAGCA*

### A TRUE RENAISSANCE MAN

Since the passing of the great Peter Thomson, there has been much discussion about his incredible contribution to golf. The R&A appropriately paid tribute to him on the grandstand behind the 18th green at Carnoustie at the recent Open Championship, while fellow five-times Open winner Tom Watson suggested Thomson was the greatest ever links player.

But it is Peter's personal integrity, intelligence and humility that get most attention. A career in golf course architecture spanning 51 years fades in comparison to his feats on the links, but hundreds of courses that bear his name will form an exceptional lasting legacy.

A career in golf architecture was inevitable for Thomson, a true renaissance man who could lend his hand to almost anything he set his mind to. His reputation for course management and his ability 'to figure it out' allowed him win five Open tournaments and another for his great pal Kel Nagle in the Centenary Open in 1960.

After Peter won his fifth Open in 1965 he joined golf architect Commander John Harris and fellow professional tour player Michael Wolveridge to form Harris Thomson and Wolveridge. They enjoyed global success, particularly in Asia where Peter was instrumental in pioneering the Asian

Golf Tour. The company evolved over time through Thomson Wolveridge, Thomson Wolveridge and Perrett and Thomson Perrett, with Thomson always being the constant. For over a decade there was also Thomson Perrett and Lobb based in London to serve the European market.

Peter was always a student of course architecture and was particularly fond of the work of Harry Colt and James Braid. He later became president of The James Braid Society which was based at Brora in Scotland. Like Peter, Braid had won The Open five times and a recent book puts the total number of courses he touched at over 400, including over 100 new courses. While the research is not yet done, Thomson could comfortably claim 300 courses, including 150 new courses in over 30 countries. By any measure, this a significant lifetime of work.

When asked about his favourite projects, Peter had always said that courses were like your children ... you love them all dearly. There were many standout jobs that received special attention often because of people involved or the challenge involved. Some examples include:

- **Bali:** Bali Handara Golf Course was the company's first course in Indonesia built in the magical mountainous Bedugal area of Bali. It was built by the local village people between 1967 and 1972, ironically to encourage tourism on the island. Bali was relatively exotic and unknown at the time and the course, with bentgrass fairways, rated in the world's 50 world. Another iconic course, Jagorawi near Jakarta, quickly followed and Indonesia became a favourite destination for work and holidays.
- **India:** India was also a favourite destination where Peter won three Indian Opens – 1964, 1966 and 1976. The tournament was played at either Royal Calcutta (India's oldest course built in 1829) or Delhi (Peter's first two Indian Open victories were at Delhi). In the early 1970s he was asked to renovate both courses. At Royal Calcutta he turned 27 holes into a championship course, while at Delhi he added the nine-hole Peacock course to complement the championship Lodhi course. More projects followed including the world's highest course at Gulmarg (2650m altitude) in an alpine meadow.



PHOTO: GARY LISBON

- **Japan:** Golf was booming in the 1970s in Japan and Peter was again at the forefront. Generally the courses were in the mountains and massive fills were common as arable land was preserved for food production. Japanese ingenuity led to some incredible results being achieved. In the 1990s, Peter was honoured with the creation of Thomson National, a course he renovated, as a lasting legacy.
- **Scotland:** In early 1994, Thomson Wolveridge and Perrett was selected to design and build the Dukes Course in St Andrews, Scotland. The course had to be completed to open during The Open Championship scheduled for July 1995. Against a chorus of 'it can't be done', a fine result was achieved on time. Prince Andrew, the Captain of The R&A, opened the course and played a game of golf with Ian Baker-Finch and Gavin Hastings, captain of the Scottish national rugby team. Typical of Peter's modesty, he declined to play. Subsequently the course won numerous environmental awards.
- **Moonah Links:** Following the success of a dedicated venue for the Canadian Open, the Australian Golf Union decided to design and build a national home for golf. The Open Course at Moonah Links became the first course in Australia purpose built for tournament golf. It hosted two Australian Opens in 2003 and 2005, won by Peter Lonard and Robert Allenby respectively. Peter wanted to call it 'The Leviathan' which appropriately means 'a large sea monster'.
- **Rio:** In 2011 Thomson Perrett was a finalist in the golf design competition for the 2016 Rio Olympics which was a thrill for Peter. A trip to Rio De Janeiro provided the opportunity to meet with his great friend, Brazilian golfing legend Mario Gonzales, for the first time in 40 years.

Peter Thomson's legacy as a golf course architect is huge and his influence will continue well into the future. His knowledge of golf and status in golf was sound way back in 1965 when he started on his journey as an architect. For over 50 years he continued to embrace the challenges of the craft and the changes to the industry with passion, common sense and a sense of humour. He will be sadly missed but not forgotten.

- Ross Perrett, Thomson Perrett

## ROUNDS TO REMEMBER

During my time as course superintendent at both Moonah Links and The National Golf Club, I was fortunate to have many in-depth discussions about golf with the great Peter Thomson.

I will certainly never forget the first time that I met the five-time Open Championship winner on the 5th green of the new Open course at Moonah Links on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. A call came across the radio from one of my groundstaff telling me that Mr Thomson would like me to come out to the par



three 5th green. All excited, I quickly drove out to the 5th where Peter introduced himself along with his playing partners, Bob Shearer and Terry Gale

Following the formalities, Peter commented, "The greens are too quick. What did you do to them?" A little taken aback I replied, "I rolled them." Peter quickly remarked, "I thought we stuck that roller in the back of the shed to gather dust!" Being a young innocent superintendent I replied, "I found it!" Peter looked at me and instructed, "I want you to take that roller and throw it into the nearest creek." I looked across to Bob and Terry who had the biggest smiles on their faces as they walked off to the next tee. Peter had got his point of view across.

A couple of months later, Moonah Links played the very first Black Tee Challenge on the 'Leviathan' – Peter's preferred name for the Open course – and I was in the following group behind Peter. At the 15th hole there was a hold up and one of my playing partners mentioned to Peter that I was one under the card.

Peter came over and said, "I hear you're playing pretty well" to which I replied "So far so good." After that conversation I finished double bogey, bogey, bogey, par! Walking into the clubhouse Peter asked me how I went to which I replied "I did not finish too

Thomson was instrumental in encouraging and publishing Claude Crockford's wonderful book on the management of the courses at Royal Melbourne

Thomson, with Neil Crafter (left) and Greg Ramsey at the opening of the restored golf holes at Ratho, Australia's oldest golf course, in Tasmania



Peter Thomson's sweet swing is immortalised in bronze at Victoria Golf Club where he was a former pennant player and life member



PHOTO: GOLF AUSTRALIA

well." Peter succinctly replied, "It's a tough course." From that day Peter became a strong ally and whenever he was at Moonah Links he would give me a call to catch up.

The most memorable story I have of Peter came at St Andrews in Scotland. I was about to board a plane at Gatwick Airport outside of London when all of a sudden I hear someone call out my name. Turning around there was Peter who told me to give him a call when I arrived at St Andrews to catch up for a cup of tea.

Later that afternoon my wife and I met up with Peter and his lovely wife Mary at their house in St Andrews. While my wife got a guided tour of the house, Peter and I sat down to discuss the Open Championship just held at Royal St George's. After the conversation he said he wanted me to come around again after my round on the Old Course the following day.

As requested, after finishing my round of the Old Course having shot 76, I proceeded straight to Peter's house. I thought he was going to discuss the Old Course design, bunkering and course set up for

a tournament. To my surprise, Peter wanted me to go through every shot and where each pin was on every green. He knew the Old Course back to front.

On the 11th hole, the very famous and very large Shell Bunker guards the green and my ball had come to rest in it. I told Peter where the pin was and where in the bunker my ball was. Peter remarked, "You would not have got that up and down." I quickly responded, "I hit it to a foot!" Peter instantly said, "The only way to do that is to skip it up the revetted bunker face." He was 100 per cent correct. I didn't mean to skip it up the face, but I skinned the sand iron and it did just that. We both had a laugh. He laughed even harder when I told him my tee shot on the 17th Road Hole hit the hotel!

As a young golfer, my dream had always been to one day play the Old Course at St Andrews. I never imagined that I would be sitting down immediately after talking about my round with a five-time Open champion and one of the greatest links golf exponents the world has seen.

Peter regularly spoke about what he thought was the perfect tournament course. He regularly mentioned that each green would be different in speed determined by its location and exposure to the elements. Fairways didn't have to be perfect all year round. Peter loved how courses changed with the seasons and how this then required the golfer to change their game to suit the condition of the course on that particular day.

He told me a story of how he learnt to play off varying lies and how he knew how far every iron would travel off a particular lie. Peter would toss his practice balls randomly over the practice tee and he would send his caddie down the practice fairway to catch the balls in a bag. On a thin lie he would count how many steps the caddie would walk forward and then off a good lie how many steps the caddie would walk backwards. He did this to gain an understanding of how the lie affected the ball flight and the distance it would travel.

I clearly remember back to preparations for the 1997 Australian Open at Metropolitan where I was working at the time. Peter Thomson asked then superintendent Richard Forsyth to fabricate a steel-headed furrow rake. Peter wanted the bunkers to become real hazards for the professionals. The rake wasn't used, but a few years later Jack Nicklaus arranged for a similar rake to be used at the 2006 Memorial Tournament. Peter felt bunkers were a hazard and real skill was required to make par if the golfer found himself in one.

The championship courses that Peter designed were certainly very tough and required golfers to have a highly skilled short game and precision. I am very honoured to have worked closely with Peter preparing the Open Course at Moonah Links for two Australian Opens and I will forever remember fondly and reflect back on our many chats about course preparation and the game of golf.

- Leigh Yanner, *The National GC*

## A THOROUGH GENTLEMAN

I had the pleasure of working as a member of Peter Thomson's golf design team for almost 15 years and it was always enlightening to be with Peter, whether it was in the design office or on one of the many project sites the company developed.

Peter Thomson was a thorough gentleman who was generous with his time and his knowledge on the game of golf and matters associated with design.

We had many in-depth conversations on course maintenance and the aspects of design that would help or hinder

maintenance practices. He was ever mindful of the demands placed on the superintendent and had great respect for the skill of those who produced "golf courses equal to anywhere in the world". He had great respect for the Australian superintendent and their unique skill set.

I feel very fortunate to have known and worked with Peter Thomson; he was a wonderful person.

DOUG ROBINSON  
INAUGURAL PRESIDENT,  
AGCSA

## INSIGHTFUL, ENTERTAINING AND PASSIONATE

**M**y first connection with Peter Thomson was in 1986 during the construction of the Murray Course at Yarrowonga where I was the assistant super. Peter visited the course just prior to seeding of the greens and spent three days with the shaper adding contour and shape to a number of greens, many of the features inspired by his infinity with the links courses of Scotland.

I distinctly remember the 2nd green, a flattish green prior to Peter's hand, having a swale cut through the green to add interest and feature to the putting surface. Peter also provided commentary on the course on opening day during an exhibition match played to commemorate the opening.

Thomson Wolveridge was, for a period, the advising architect to the Australian Golf Union for tournament courses. Prior to the 1997 Australian Open at Metropolitan Golf Club where I was superintendent, Peter advised on some changes – adding bunkers, hollows and mounding, along with pushing tees back – to test the modern player given the length the ball was now travelling. While controversial at the time, many of those features remain as part of the course today.

Around the same time, Metropolitan was considering some course improvements and consulted Peter on a plan for the 17th hole. Clearly inspired by the Old Course at St Andrews, he presented a sketch with features resembling the famed Road Hole. When asked about the absence of a road in the strategy, he suggested a road could be added to the design!

Peter had very strong views and was passionate about bunker maintenance and design. He disliked the spaded, sharp edges that were the fashion on the sandbelt for a period. When playing at Metropolitan one time, he asked one of the ground staff to pose with a straight spade so he could include the photo in a publication he was doing on bunkers and the things we shouldn't do in maintaining them. He was also of the belief that bunkers were over maintained and now resembled groomed sand pits that were no longer feared.

Indeed, in the lead up to the 1997 Australian Open, Peter had asked us to produce some prototype saw-toothed rakes to produce furrows in the bunkers to make them more difficult. Inspired by the practice at Oakmont for the 1953 US Open, which led to players threatening to boycott the tournament, Peter strongly recommended we do similar to give the hazards more teeth. After an on-course meeting, where the raking was demonstrated, club and tournament officials decided it was a step too far, much to Peter's disappointment. It certainly would have been controversial but equally interesting.

As the only winning captain of an International Presidents Cup team in 1998, Peter was always a 'go to' for comment and opinion about the game. When Royal Melbourne hosted the Presidents Cup in 2011, I was part of a panel at a sponsor's dinner taking questions regarding the tournament.

Seated next to Peter, I was asked a question about the preparation of the greens for the week. After proudly giving my opinion on how well we had done presenting firm greens, I deferred to Peter for his input. As soon as he began, as I sank lower into my chair, I knew I should have done more homework as he eloquently explained to the audience that we had overdone it and conditions were unnecessarily extreme. It was a good lesson to learn and one I will never forget.

Peter, along with Michael Wolveridge and Harley Kruse, were instrumental in encouraging and publishing Claude Crockford's wonderful book on the management of the courses at Royal Melbourne. Peter's preface in the book concluded with, 'The Royal Melbourne turf will be his Shrine of Remembrance – a tribute to an uncommon genius'. Peter's articles were always insightful and just as he possessed one of the great links golf games, he also had a wonderful way with words.

**RICHARD FORSYTH**  
SUPERINTENDENT,  
ROYAL MELBOURNE GC

“Perhaps no man has influenced the game of golf so much in Australia. As legendary golfer, golf administrator, golf writer, commentator, golf course designer and dear friend of many, Peter would touch so many lives in the industry, both directly and indirectly, and all for the better.”

– Harley Kruse

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2018 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award winner Mark O'Sullivan from Roseville Golf Club with Bayer's Martin Ball



# Three decades of excellence

Long-serving Roseville Golf Club superintendent Mark O'Sullivan was rewarded for his many years of dedication to the Sydney club when he was bestowed the 2018 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award, presented in partnership with new sponsor Bayer.



It was a big day for Mark O'Sullivan. At the Orient Hotel in downtown Sydney just a few weeks before the Australasian Turfgrass Conference, he along with 50 long-time friends and industry colleagues were toasting and roasting their dear friend Gary Dempsey who was just a few days shy of retiring from NSW Golf Club. It was a wonderful afternoon filled with plenty of laughs and wonderful stories from years past and more than a few tears were shed in laughter.

For O'Sullivan, however, the day would get even better. As the festivities continued, the 34-year superintendent veteran from Roseville Golf Club was pulled aside and informed he had been chosen as the recipient of the 2018 AGCSA Excellence in Golf Course Management Award. The tears of laughter which had filled his eyes most of the afternoon quickly turned to tears of joy as it slowly sunk in that all those years of hard work were about to be recognised at the highest level.

## COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

O'Sullivan's career in greenkeeping started as a 16-year-old apprentice at Ryde Parramatta Golf Club. He graduated from the Ryde School of Horticulture in the class of 1978 and in 1980 moved to take on the assistant superintendent role at Roseville Golf Club. He spent his first four years there under superintendent Tony Brown before taking over the top job in 1984, a position he has held ever since.

During that time there isn't much that O'Sullivan hasn't done. In addition to presenting the course at its very best for the members, O'Sullivan has trained and mentored many current superintendents and assistant superintendents nationally and has overseen many major course improvement projects. These projects range from the installation of the first computerised irrigation system through to the construction of a 26 megalitre water storage dam and constructing/reconstructing numerous greens, tees and bunkers.

O'Sullivan's commitment to excellence throughout his career has been formally recognised at a number of levels. As a long-serving AGCSA and NSWGCSA member, including a number of years serving on the state committee, he has been awarded the NSW Claude Crockford Environmental Award, the Pride in Workmanship Award from Rotary International and most recently the NSWGCSA Excellence in Turf Management Award.

Anyone who has had the pleasure of playing at Roseville Golf Club has experienced O'Sullivan's commitment to excellence through the sheer quality of the course. Reviews from professionals and amateurs are overwhelmingly positive year round. The projects that he has implemented, including the water harvesting and storage project and irrigation system installation, are all evidence of his dedication to the sustainability and long-term viability of Roseville Golf Club.

O'Sullivan is a constant daily presence on the course and freely makes himself available to talk with all members. His commitment to excellence goes beyond just golf course management and includes fighting bush fires on the course, being available every day of the year (including Christmas Day) for daily course set up and greens monitoring. He has even been known to rescue members' dogs that have decided to take a dip in the new dam!



A key aspect of O'Sullivan's success is his ability to engage with all stakeholders, from members and volunteers through to his own staff and turf management students at TAFE. Roseville has an array of volunteers that O'Sullivan meets with fortnightly to discuss course beautification and their suggestions for the course. He also coordinates at the meetings what volunteer work is required and runs induction courses. The volunteers undertake jobs such as gardening, tree planting, under-pruning of trees, mulching, trimming of paths and many other tasks, all of which are crucial to the course and a great way to engage the members into the course community.

TAFE NSW is a regular visitor to the course, bringing along turf management students for course tours and to engage in discussions with O'Sullivan. The students have the opportunity to inspect the golf course and also discuss with O'Sullivan the maintenance and cultural practices that are integral to Roseville Golf Club. During his career as superintendent, O'Sullivan has also worked with and mentored numerous up and coming greenkeepers, many of whom have gone on to forge successful careers in their own right.

On course and O'Sullivan's knowledge of turfgrass management techniques has been a key skill in the development and progression of the course over his long tenure as superintendent. Over the past 34 years, there have been vast developments



and improvements in both the research of turfgrass management and the technology now available for superintendents to use.

O'Sullivan frequently attends the annual Australian Turfgrass Conference to keep abreast of new techniques and management of turfgrass. One of the current management tools O'Sullivan is using is Growing Degree Days modelling. This has been incorporated into his maintenance programme for the application of turf growth regulators and pesticides. The greens staff also use the Spectrum

**The construction of a 26 megalitre water storage dam was one of the most significant and important projects O'Sullivan has overseen during his tenure at Roseville**



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PHOTO: NEARMAP

◀ **Roseville Golf Club is located on the upper North Shore of Sydney and is surrounded by bushland, residential properties and a sporting field which resides in the middle of the course. Moore's Creek runs through the bottom of the course**

Fieldscout for monitoring soil moisture when hand watering. During the installation of the new irrigation system, soil moisture sensors were installed in different areas around the course to monitor water, pH and salinity. This allows O'Sullivan to monitor and adjust irrigation requirements as needed.

### A DAM SITE BETTER

The most significant project O'Sullivan has overseen, and indeed the largest project the club has ever undertaken, was the construction of a new 26 megalitre dam and subsequent installation of a new irrigation system.

Between 2001 to 2003 New South Wales experienced one of its worst droughts on record, with the State Government imposing tight water restrictions over the entire Sydney metropolitan area. At the time, Roseville was heavily reliant on Sydney Water and had used over 50 megalitres of potable water the previous year at a significant cost.

The club realised it was facing a catastrophic situation and convened a committee to resolve the problem. They had several objectives in mind;

- Implement a programme that would allow the course to increase its water supply;
- Construct a water storage area that would allow for long-term water storage and assist in protecting the course from future droughts;
- Ensure that the course would be able to be self-sufficient on its own water supply in the future; and
- Establish a sustainable course and irrigation programme for the future.

The committee investigated different options from stormwater harvesting and sewer mining to artesian water. At an Australian Turfgrass Conference in Melbourne, O'Sullivan visited a prototype sewer mining site at Flemington racetrack and presented a paper to the committee on the topic. The club already had a bore in operation, but the yield was insufficient. With all of these options for increasing the water supply, the need for a large water storage area was also obvious.

The committee employed a golf course architect to develop a master plan that incorporated the best location for water storage and the feasibility of extending the course. Roseville Golf Club is located on the upper North Shore of Sydney and is surrounded by bushland, residential properties and a sporting field (Roseville Chase oval) which resides in the middle of the course. Moore's Creek runs through the bottom of the course and is the last exit point before water empties into Middle Harbour.

After many meetings and research by the committee, the issues of water supply, water storage and ensuring the club had the ability to have a self-sufficient water supply were addressed. With Moore's Creek as a major stormwater drainage system discharging into Middle Harbour, stormwater harvesting was chosen as the most feasible option to increase Roseville's water access.

The committee was then required to get both the local council and Roseville members on board



**In total, seven greens, nine tee complexes, four fairways and over two kilometres of concrete pathways were constructed following the construction of the new dam**



The old 12th hole was the site for the new Roseville dam

with the proposal they had prepared. The committee approached the council to start negotiations as development approval would be required. During these discussions the council saw opportunities to filter the water with a gross pollutant trap (GPT) before debris entered Middle Harbour as well as provide water to the sports oval which was also under severe water restrictions.

With council in support of the plan, the golf course architect prepared a number of master plans that were displayed in the clubhouse to members. An extraordinary general meeting was organised with the members so that the board could give a presentation and address any questions. One of the commitments made to the members in this presentation was that O'Sullivan and his team would keep 18 holes of golf open for play with no temporary greens.

With overwhelming support from the members, the next task was to prepare all the necessary documents for the development application. The following two years were spent preparing environmental impact studies, flora and fauna studies, traffic management plans, dust and noise pollution mitigation strategies, landscape requirements and remediation work.

Although the project would mean that the club would save a significant amount of money by not having to purchase water, it still needed to have funds for the construction of the project. The club



applied for grants and received funding from both the State and Federal Governments for the project.

Seven years after the first meeting of the committee, the club called for tenders for the construction of the water storage and the redesign of the golf course. The first job was to build a new hole, as this would be required to uphold the commitment to the members that an 18-hole course would always be in operation. O'Sullivan and his greens staff constructed the new 125m par three hole in-house.

During the construction period, the committee was reduced to the greens chairman (who would

**Construction of the new dam started in mid-2008 and the club was able to start harvesting water in early 2009**

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◀ The dam and new irrigation system have been a wonderful success for Roseville. O'Sullivan (left) is pictured with former president Dennis Pople and former GM Jason Seagg at the project's completion



PHOTO: NSWGCSA

A new irrigation and pump system were installed following the completion of the dam and reconstruction of the back nine

Engagement with the members, local community, fellow NSWGCSA members and turf management students is an important aspect of O'Sullivan's operations



PHOTO: NSWGCSA

report to the board), O'Sullivan (as construction manager to organise daily operations) and the golf course architect. This committee met on a weekly basis to discuss progress with the contractors.

After tenders were received, a contractor was appointed and work started with the diversion of the water in Moore's Creek into a GPT. This would enable clean water to be pumped to the dam and debris to be filtered out before entering Middle Harbour. At this point the 3rd hole was closed and the new spare hole brought into play. A new access road was built to accommodate heavy vehicles and a wet well constructed to pump water to the dam downstream from the GPT. A 400m mainline as then installed to the dam site.

After this area was completed, the contractors then moved to the 12th hole, the site for the new dam. They excavated eight metres to bedrock, stockpiled the excess soil and imported 40,000 cubic metres of fill to create the dam wall. Construction work started in mid-2008 and the club was able to start harvesting the water in early 2009. There was very little rain during the construction period with less than two weeks lost due to wet weather. However, shortly after construction finished it rained for two weeks straight and the dam was nearly filled.

**NEW SURFACES, NEW INFRASTRUCTURE**

With the dam full and plenty of water available, the reconstruction of the back nine holes started. To allow the members to play 18 holes with no temporaries, this part of the project was staged over

18 months. Work was completed in December 2010 with the 16th green and 17th tee complex the final areas to come back into play.

In total, seven greens, nine tee complexes, four fairways and over two kilometres of concrete pathways were constructed. The project also involved the planting of over 10,000 plants around the course. The volunteer committee, led by O'Sullivan, was extraordinarily committed to this project and assisted with all of the planting. During the whole process, the Roseville Golf Club community was incredibly supportive and engaged in the project. Many retired and past members were given tours of the new dam and course, and it was widely appreciated by all the members.

Soon after the completion of the construction project, the old irrigation system, installed back in 1991, started showing signs of fatigue with pipes breaking on a weekly basis and pumps regularly failing. At the time, the club was triple-handling the water by pumping it from Moore's Creek into the dam, transferring the water to distribution tanks and then pumping the water onto the course.

Irrigation consultants were asked to tender a design for a new irrigation system. This included a pump station to extract water from the dam, a new power supply to the pump shed, a new control system, pipelines and sprinklers. The plan was for this to be carried out over three years in four stages. The first stage involved the supply and construction of a new pump shed and power supply at the dam. This was followed by new satellites and a central control system, before new pipework and sprinklers were installed. Due to wet weather and money constraints this was extended to four years.

The dam and the new irrigation system have been a wonderful success for Roseville. Over 470 megalitres have been harvested from Moore's Creek since the completion of this project and this has also had the benefit of saving the club around \$950,000 in water fees over the past eight years. There is now also an efficient irrigation system that can support the dam and water supply, allowing O'Sullivan to make the most of this precious resource.

O'Sullivan was the central and constant figure to the implementation and daily running of all of these projects. The success of this project was reliant upon the golf course management skills of O'Sullivan and the expertise he had garnered throughout his long career. His contribution has made an incredible impact at Roseville Golf Club and has helped to establish a sustainable golf course with a self-sufficient water supply that will safeguard it against many probable future issues. 🌱



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Jason Lavender had some pretty special company to help him celebrate the AGCSA Claude Crockford Environmental Award bestowed upon him at the recent Australasian Turfgrass Conference.

**Above: Riverlakes is a privately owned golf course located between Brisbane and Surfers Paradise.**

**Despite limited resources and battling major floods, the club is committed to enhancing its natural environment. Pictured is the 5th**

**T**here was little doubting the significance of the moment when Jason Lavender was named the 2018 winner of the AGCSA Claude Crockford Environmental Award. As Paul Jackson, from award sponsor Syngenta, read the Riverlakes Golf and Country Club superintendent's name out, there was an audible cheer of delight above all others from the table that he was seated at.

Ever since his first days in the industry as a 16-year-old apprentice, Lavender's partner in life Samantha has been on the same journey and experienced the many highs and lows that make greenkeeping one of the most challenging yet rewarding of professions. The opening night of the Australasian Turfgrass Conference in Wellington in June was a chance to celebrate one of those rare highs as she saw her partner bestowed one of the AGCSA's most coveted awards.

And to make the night even more special, Lavender's father Graham also made the journey across to witness his son gain recognition for his many years of dedication in front of more than 340 industry colleagues.

"It's a great honour to win this award and to sit alongside previous winners," Lavender told the audience during his acceptance speech. "It's very special to me, the highlight of my career, and to have my dad and lovely wife here tonight is a big thing for me. She has been there for me since I was an apprentice and to see me standing up here is unbelievable.

"Riverlakes is a small facility with limited resources but we try our very best with our environmental practices. I love my job and I have a great team that put endless hours into the course

day in, day out. It has been a challenge at times, but the support from the club, the members and the local community has been incredible."

### LIMITED BUDGETS, UNLIMITED DETERMINATION

Lavender's story, and that of Riverlakes, is one which goes to prove that you don't need massive resources to make a difference. All that is required is a personal commitment and desire to change, a team and club which buys into that vision, someone to drive it (in this case Lavender) and a tonne of hard work. Add to that the ability to overcome adversity which is in the DNA of almost every superintendent.

Riverlakes is a 5600-metre, 18-hole privately owned golf course located in Cornubia, halfway between Brisbane and Surfers Paradise. Designed by Tom Linskey, it opened in 1993 and was completed in 1999. Lavender and his small team manage a total area of 54 hectares, which comprises 14ha of Wintergreen couch fairways, 1ha of Wintergreen couch tees and 1ha of 328 couch greens.

Lavender started as superintendent at Riverlakes in 2012, having already been in the industry for some 25 years. When he arrived the course was in decline and with limited budgets it was an uphill battle to present the course to the level he wanted to.

In 2016 the club was bought by Kari-Ann and Otto Wilhelm who immediately realised that in order to attract new members and players and maintain the existing membership, improvements were needed. The limited budget component remained, but with five enthusiastic full-time staff led by Lavender, a project to improve the course, in particular the areas surrounding California Creek, started in 2015.

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Riverlakes is bounded by the Logan River with California Creek flowing through and around the edge of the course, feeding a series of large interconnected ponds and lakes that bisect the course. The golf course was developed from old pasture land, with fringes of paperbark forest and marshes. Much of the creek system remains unchanged from that time, but when the course was developed many of the lakes were expanded.

Since California Creek is so important to the natural structure of the course, it has become a major focal point of improvements. Prior to Lavender's arrival, the creek had been allowed to degrade and was left unmanaged. There were overgrown areas of non-native vegetation and areas of significant bank erosion. In some places this was deemed quite unsafe due to the degree of slope leading to the water edge.

At the same time, local bird and animal life had declined as there was no natural habitat. An environmental study from when the course was first designed had listed all the species of fauna and flora present in the area that was to later become the course. There were 50 species of birds, four species of mammals and 35 species of trees, shrubs and reeds present in the early 1990s.

With a desire to achieve a better outcome for the environment, major revegetation undertaken since has produced a significant natural asset under a 'land management plan', a commitment by both the Logan City Council and Riverlakes. It was of particular importance to the local area that the natural waterways were a focus of the management plan. The local creeks had long suffered from siltation and are susceptible to tidal backflows in times of high tide in the Logan River and periodic flooding from flows in California Creek.

Specifically, the club committed to a series of aims for the rejuvenation of California Creek, including;



- To stabilise creek banks against erosion by replanting of creek fringes;
- To enhance the aesthetics of the area by providing extensive connected areas of vegetation rather than isolated clumps; and
- Encourage the return of native wildlife.

To achieve these, landscape architect Donald Irving was engaged to plan the works and set timelines. Irving completed the original environmental management plan upon council's purchase of the site in 1997 and had extensive knowledge of the area. A time frame of five stages over five years was set, starting in 2015, with each stage targeting an area of high need for rejuvenation. For example, stage one targeted the area in front of the 4th green (see photo bottom page 30). Banks were stabilised and planted out with selected vegetation in line with the environmental study recommendations. Since then a further two stages have been completed.

Sections along the creek have also been designated as 'no-go environmentally sensitive zones'. No play is allowed in these areas, with

**Father Graham and wife Samantha were on hand in Wellington to help Lavender celebrate his AGCSA Claude Crockford Environmental Award, presented by Syngenta**

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In March 2017, Cyclone Debbie caused widespread flooding of Riverlakes, leaving behind massive silt and mud deposits. Pictured is the 5th hole (see photo page 28 for what the hole looked like six weeks later)



signage for a compulsory drop. Through signage and communication (on scorecards and local rule boards), Riverlakes informs golfers of the importance of these areas to the future sustainability of the environment. There are also pockets of existing natural phragmites that the club actively protects, promotes and replants which in turn is creating more areas of natural cover and nesting for wildlife.

### WHEN IT RAINS...

One of the most challenging aspects any superintendent faces in their line of work is the weather and Lavender can certainly attest to the challenges it presents and the impact it has on course works, such as the rejuvenation of California Creek. Since arriving at Riverlakes, Lavender and his team have had to bring the course back from four major flood events, the worst coming in 2017.

Despite the damage caused by the 2017 floods, areas of the course which had been revegetated, such as in front of the 4th green (pictured below), received far less damage than in previous events



Such weather events and their increasing frequency meant Riverlakes needed to pay strict attention to the way it sustained the natural environment and ensure it did nothing to increase the potential impacts of a natural disaster, such as floods. As Lavender readily admits, it was heartbreaking to witness all the hard work put into the California Creek project literally get washed away by these series of floods. However, these extreme weather events have also been the catalyst for the club, the local community and the Logan City Council to get further behind the project.

No more was this evident than in the aftermath of Cyclone Debbie. Riverlakes was one of the worst affected by flooding when the weather system slammed into the Queensland coast last March, copping 380mm in one day. Worse was to come, however, as further upstream the Logan River catchment recorded in excess of 1000mm, which arrived at Riverlakes three days later.

Inundating the course, 12 fairways, 12 greens and several tees went under, leaving behind widespread layers of thick mud and silt. Thankfully, local community engagement was high and with an army of volunteers from the club, local community and local businesses, the club was able to get the course back in play after six weeks.

"It was a huge undertaking, starting with the use of a posi-track and volunteers with squeegees removing mud off greens, and later fairways, and using town water to wash off greens," reflects Lavender. "There was a lot of debris, mostly organic, and quite a few large trees. There was also general waste like fridges, old drums, tyres and plastic."

"During the whole clean up and recovery we were very much aware of danger to staff and volunteers. The club supplied everyone with PPE, such as gumboots, gloves and waders, and we stopped for toolbox talks each day to make sure everyone worked safely."

"Unfortunately, a whole year of revegetation work, at a cost of about \$10,000, went down the creek, so we had to start again and revise a few aspects. There was also some infrastructure damage, the largest being a bridge which was completely moved from its position and ended up in the middle of the 5th fairway. This bridge connected the 6th tee to the 6th fairway and gave access to three holes, which meant for two weeks we had only 15 holes."

As mentioned, one of the positives to come out of the 2017 floods was that it galvanised the local community to get involved with the course and its future. The club built very good relationships with the local community and this has invigorated staff to get more enthused about the revegetation work.

Most pleasing though was that the previous year's revegetation work held the banks together and virtually eliminated erosion, which was in contrast to the three previous floods. This was especially evident in front of the 4th green. Past



events had scoured the green out and while the 2017 flood was far worse, this time it held together because of the native reeds (tassel sedge, sea rush, swamp lily and swamp oak) that had been planted. The reeds were also very effective in trapping silt. In previous floods the 4th green had been heavily layered with mud and silt, but in 2017 there was virtually none.

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

In addition to the California Creek project, Lavender and his team have also instituted a raft of other changes which are having major environmental benefits. These include;

- **Wildlife and habitat:** Planting and trialling of naturally occurring species in line with the rejuvenation plan. Some existing species weren't performing, so in consultation with council and a consultant, alternative species, such as *Hymenocallis littoralis*, *Juncus usitatis* and *Casurina glauca*, were identified for planting.
- **Fishing and water species management:** Some members of the public and local residents use the course's waterways for fishing. Bass and yellowbelly are the most abundant, however, there are also significant populations of eel and carp. Anglers are encouraged not to return these undesirable species, while the club also engages a professional eel fisherman to regularly cull them.



- **Fauna management:** The club engages a contractor to remove feral animals, in particular foxes, which attack native birds and mammals. For example, early one morning while doing a course inspection, Lavender had to save a wallaby that was being mauled by a fox!
- **Weed management:** Staff are aware of any declared weeds and remove them on sight. Spot spraying is the preferred method for weed control, limiting the amount of herbicides used and providing greater control in eradication from the playing surfaces. Water weeds, such as water lettuce, waterlilies and salvinia, continue to be a problem. A range of removal strategies, both biological and mechanical, have been

The course improvement works have been driven by a committed Riverlakes crew which comprises (from left) Luke Gramm (apprentice), John Horder (mechanic), Jason Lavender (superintendent), Glenn Benfield (assistant superintendent) and Chris Miller (groundsman)

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◀ Riverlakes' 13th green. Other areas where environment improvements have been made include more judicious use of chemicals and water



Since California Creek is so important to the natural structure of the Riverlakes course, it has become a major focal point of improvements. Pictured is reveg work on the 6th

Due to proximity to waterways, fertiliser and chemical usage on fairways is closely monitored



tried, but the club is now able to control these through targeted herbicide spraying. Since this has begun, there has been a noticeable return of many species of birds, in particular black swans, ducks, quails, spoonbills and other estuary birds. Their absence before and presence now reinforces that the course has returned to being a viable source for food and breeding due to the club's commitment towards sustainable practices.

- **Wash-down bay and fuel delivery:** Four years ago Riverlakes invested in a designated wash-down bay to help contain and reduce inorganic and organic waste. It is fully bunded with a sump and water/oil separator which runs to the sewer in an approved manner. The current fuel storage area is bunded, with strict policies in place for fuel delivery and dispensing.
- **Fuel use reduction:** One of the largest savings Riverlakes has made to the budget has been in fuel usage. In 2016 the club spent \$31,623 which was reduced to \$23,580 in 2017. This can be attributed in part to a change from petrol to electric machinery, but also a major change in mowing scheduling and efficiencies following an internal audit of practices. Ongoing machinery replacement will continue to utilise electric machinery where possible.
- **epar:** As part of the recognition for winning the GCSAQ Environmental Award earlier in the year, Riverlakes was provided a bursary by epar. The club has used this to embark on an environmental and safety management system for the course.

- **Chemical and fertiliser use:** Early on in his tenure as superintendent, Lavender strived to use less environmentally-damaging chemicals and fertilisers. Weeds, diseases and pests are treated on a needs-only basis, using observations from staff and outside representative consultation and testing. Fertiliser applications are a combination of slow-release and a lot of liquids/solubles to spoon-feed as dictated by soil tests. The club no longer sprays for insects on fairways given their proximity to California Creek.

- **Energy usage:** Over the last couple of years the club has reviewed its electricity needs, with the aim to reduce overall power usage by streamlining operations. There is a strong 'lights out when not needed' culture during daytime operations and a policy where the last person out ensures only the minimum power usage continues until the next day. Recently all lighting in the maintenance facility and clubhouse was converted to LEDs. Together with a change of irrigation practices (see below), savings of 21 per cent have been achieved over the past couple of years.

- **Irrigation and water management:** Irrigation is a lot more reactive, with syringing of localised hot spots preferred over regular irrigation. For some years now the club has also oversown the 328 couchgrass greens with cool-season grasses, which has resulted in less water use during winter. With all of Riverlakes' irrigation water coming from on course storages, water quality and consumption is monitored closely.

Riverlakes' commitment to land management is guided by the land management plan and its close relationship/engagement with Logan City Council, the owners, consultants, members and local community. This allows for review of the plan in line with events and changes to plans for the greater local environment. For example, the California Creek project also aligns with local feeder creeks/environment projects such as nearby Slacks Creek and Carbrook wetlands. The club keeps in mind the greater picture beyond Riverlakes at the same time as playing its part locally to support the environment.

From a personal standpoint, Lavender ensures he is adhering to environmental best practice by continually staying up to date with the latest information, whether that's through attending field days and conferences, hosting field days at the course or through regular research of what other clubs, both in Australia and overseas, are achieving. Lavender says that by learning from the journeys of others he can start to relate that to what he wants to achieve at Riverlakes. 🙌

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# Rallying the troops



Do you have volunteers keen for deployment but are too gun shy to pull the trigger? Pambula Merimbula Golf Club superintendent Pat Wilson shares his learnings from the unique volunteer programme he has established which is making a significant difference to his operations.

**Above: For the past year Pambula Merimbula Golf Club has instituted a structured volunteer programme to help maintain the exacting standards expected by members and visitors**

**P**ambula Merimbula Golf Club is situated on the Sapphire Coast of NSW, a leisurely six hour drive south of Sydney. It began its life as a nine-hole course in 1965 and has since grown into a 27-hole championship course. It consists of 1.5 hectares of *Poa annua*/bentgrass greens, 15ha of kikuyu fairway, 2ha of kikuyu tees, 4ha of surrounds and 20ha of rough and entertains about 55,000 rounds of golf each year.

To maintain the course to our high standards, my team includes five full-time staff and an apprentice, plus two seasonal casuals. We now also have a very healthy corps of volunteers thanks to a structured volunteer programme which has been in place since 2017. The programme boasts more than 100 volunteers and without their input the excellent standards we are able to present to golfers simply would not be achievable.

Utilising volunteers is important for many golf courses, especially in regional areas and it was something I highlighted shortly after arriving as superintendent in 2011. A programme was put in place, but after a few years it was evident that there were a number of issues, including;

- No structure – volunteers were coming in when they wanted and for how long;
- Volunteers going in their own direction and doing their own thing;
- No training resulting in incorrect techniques being used which meant staff had to spend time re-doing their work;

- Minimal communication – staff had no idea where they were on the course;
- No personal details were being recorded – staff were not aware of potential health issues or contact details;
- Machinery damage through incorrect operation;
- Safety and liability risk – some volunteers were bringing in and using their own equipment (e.g.: chainsaws); and
- Volunteers not seeing the bigger picture of what course staff were trying to achieve.

With current WHS requirements and the high demands that club golfers now expect, there was always the spectre that using volunteer labour would be too much of a risk. However, I soon came to realise that if managed correctly, volunteers could be and are an extremely valuable asset to any club. The programme we subsequently set about to institute is certainly a testament to that.

## VOLUNTEER VISION

As a superintendent, when I first started entertaining the idea of increasing the numbers of volunteers there were a few nagging doubts – 'I haven't got the time to manage them', 'I'll end up having to send one of our guys out to re-do their work', 'they'll come in and do whatever they want', 'I'll have no idea who is coming in and when'. They are all valid points, but as we have discovered, with a bit of planning, dedication and a structured approach, such issues are easily negated.

My aim behind introducing a volunteer programme at Pambula Merimbula was very simple – to utilise the skills of my team to full effect and to have them concentrate on core greenkeeping duties. By taking my crew away from jobs such as emptying rubbish bins, cleaning around sprinkler heads, raking up sticks and general gardening duties (such as weeding and mulching), I have been able to redirect their hours towards what they are most adept at doing – preparing and maintaining fine turf surfaces.

To embark upon a successful volunteer programme, the first and number one priority is always safety and, as is the case with groundstaff, that begins with training. You wouldn't send out a brand new apprentice with no experience on a greens mower, for example, and it's no different for a volunteer, whatever the task may be.

The trap that superintendents sometimes fall into is that because volunteers are often of a mature age or are retirees (we have a lot of younger retirees in our area for instance), they assume that they have experience. More often than not they don't have the experience in what we do.

In fact, volunteers are more at risk as they are often left alone to perform the task at hand, whereas with a new apprentice, for instance, they would be under the watchful eye of other members of your team. So at the end of the day, a solid training regime is vitally important to lay the foundations of any successful volunteer programme.

## INVALUABLE DOCUMENT

Our volunteer programme begins with an induction pack sent out to prospective volunteers. This pack includes;

- A welcome letter from the superintendent;
- Explanation of the course volunteer reporting structure;
- Task details;
- What is expected of volunteers;
- Training regime;
- Nomination and availability forms for the various volunteer tasks; and
- Personal details and medical information forms.



The opening paragraph of the welcome letter sets the tone of what the programme is about and gives the volunteer an idea of what we are trying to achieve: *"Thank you for joining the PMGC course volunteer programme. We are very excited to have you join the programme and appreciate your time and services that you are volunteering up. The volunteer programme consists of PMGC members and plays an integral role in maintaining the golf course to the exceptional standards that visitors and our members experience on a daily basis. This can only be achieved through a structured and well*

**Pambula Merimbula volunteers are split into a variety of groups, among which are the bin runners whose job it is to empty rubbish bins and refill sand bins**

**Pambula Merimbula's volunteer programme now boasts more than 100 participants. Wilson says that without their input the excellent standards they are able to achieve daily simply would not be possible**



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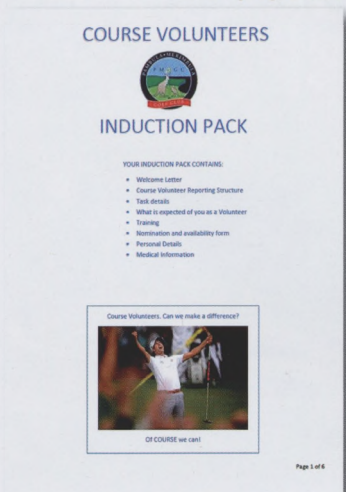
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Being able to take his crew away from jobs such as emptying bins, raking up sticks and general gardening duties, Wilson can now redirect their time into preparing and maintaining fine turf surfaces

A detailed induction pack and SOPs are integral to the successful running of the programme



VOLUNTEER	Category	Rating
RAKING BUNKERS – FULL RAKE	Last Updated	February 2018
	Version	1.0
Page		Page 3 of 4

Finishing Procedures:	
1. Return to greenskeeper shed	
2. Wash tools and vehicle if required	
3. Refuel vehicle if required	Refer to refuelling procedure
4. Refuel leaf blower	Refer to refuelling procedure
5. Return tools and vehicle to appropriate storage location	
6. Document any damaged equipment and place in isolation if required	Record damage in the observations box
7. Document any damage or issues on the course noticed during your round	Record damage / issues in the observations box

Photo Examples:	
<p>✓ Rake line on back of bunker</p>	<p>✗ Rake line too far up back of bunker</p>
<p>Rake positioned with handle in direction of play</p>	<p>Feet/legs left behind and rake in wrong position</p>

managed programme and your course volunteer induction pack will step you through what will be required of you as you assist us in building this great golf course even greater.”

Within the induction pack is a section for personal details, including next of kin and medical history in case of an emergency, which is a must to collect. Hopefully you'll never have to use this information, but even knowing that a volunteer has asthma means, for instance, you can steer them away from duties such as burning off.

Next on the agenda is to take the volunteer through an induction checklist, something that I didn't think I'd use but it keeps things structured and I now know that each volunteer has had the same induction experience.

Though it seems fairly simple, the checklist takes the volunteer on a tour of the workshop facilities, including the first aid kit location, emergency fuel shut off switch and evacuation point. It shows them where the bathroom and kitchen facilities are, where to wash down vehicles, where fire extinguishers are located and where tools are kept. It has become an invaluable document and if I am interrupted during an induction I can return to where I left, ensuring that nothing has been missed.

Once inducted, we take the volunteer through the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for each task they have nominated for. The role of the SOP is to ensure that each task is executed in the same way, no matter who completes it and regardless of whether they have performed the task elsewhere. Each SOP contains all the usual information;

- Purpose of the task;
- PPE required;
- Potential hazards;
- Location;
- Machinery to be used;
- Pre-task steps required;
- Finishing procedure; and
- Do's and don'ts.

The volunteers are asked to sign the SOP indicating that they understand the task requirements which achieves two things. First, people are more inclined to read something thoroughly if they are required to put their name to it; and second, we now have a register of who has been trained for what task which we can refer to when we need a particular job done around the course.

Reading the SOP is just a formality as the real training occurs when taking the volunteers out on the course and showing them the standard that you require for each task. You should never have to re-do volunteers' work if they are shown the expected standard from the start.

Occasionally you may receive a comment from your team that a volunteer hasn't quite performed the task correctly. All that is required in this instance is a brief conversation to put things right, just the same as you would do with your own team. If necessary, you can always revisit the SOP for clarification.

### SHORT TERM PAIN, LONG TERM GAIN

We certainly didn't build this programme overnight. There was a lot of work involved in getting a structured programme off the ground, especially creating the SOPs and training the volunteers. But the beauty is that once it is all set up, the benefits speak for themselves and the time invested is paid back tenfold down the line.

It did take time to put it all together, but I made the conscious decision to allocate time each week and set a goal of when I wanted the programme up and running by. I was fortunate to have one of my team take ownership of writing the foundations of the SOPs and induction pack and all I had to do was tweak a few things here and there. The key message here is to delegate – don't try to do it all yourself. If you don't have staff that are willing or able to create SOPs, you may have a volunteer that is happy to do so.

Delegation is also key to the successful ongoing running of the programme. Once set up, I barely have to spend time in organising the volunteers these days and I know exactly who is coming in, when they are coming in and what they will be doing once on site. In our case, the volunteers and their roles have been broken up into different groups;

- Gardeners;
- Bin-runners (rubbish bins and sand bins);
- Lumberjacks (we sell firewood collected from the course and so far in 2018 this has made the club a total of \$7700);
- Stick-rakers; and
- Other groups covering divotting tees, cleaning around sprinklers, mulching and rough cutting.

Within these groups, we have appointed a team leader to organise the volunteers within each team. This means that any issues or questions from the volunteers are vetted by the team leaders in the first instance who can then come to me if required. In

saying that, if any volunteers want a chat my door is always open, but by having team leaders in place it helps take a big chunk of emails and phone calls out of my day.

Another key aspect to a successful volunteer programme like this is communication. This can come in the form of emails, meetings, phone calls or something as simple as having a calendar board and job board set up for the volunteers in their own area of the workshop. If I'm not in on any day, then the rest of my team can refer to the calendar and job board and know who is coming in and what jobs are being performed. This has helped to negate past issues of volunteers coming in at their own leisure and doing jobs that were not necessarily a priority.

Another simple but effective communication device is a sign-in book that each volunteer must complete at the beginning and end of each shift, with a start and end time. This is particularly important in emergency situations or if we need to contact a volunteer at any time. Another benefit of the sign-in sheet is that we can quantify how many hours of volunteer labour we use over the year.

## MAJOR BENEFITS

As mentioned, the effort and time spent to set the programme up initially has more than been paid back. We can see over the past year that the hours performed by volunteers has averaged out to 70 hours per week, or close to 3500 hours for the year.



When converted to a dollar value, that equates to \$84,000 or nearly two full-time ground staff – you do the math!

Given such effort, it is extremely important to recognise the input of volunteers. One or two barbecues put on for the volunteers doesn't sound like much, but it goes a long way. Not that they expect any form of payment or compensation, but I believe it's a nice gesture and it also helps to form a bond, recognise them as belonging to a team and doing something good for the club.

With the correct training, volunteers are a huge asset at renovation time

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Bacillus amyloliquefaciens	7.5 x 10 <sup>9</sup> CFU per gram
Bacillus pumilus	7.5 x 10 <sup>9</sup> CFU per gram
Yeast (Saccharomyces cerevisiae)	4.5 x 10 <sup>10</sup> CFU per gram

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0.801%	Gibberellic Acid	1.46%	L-Isoleucine
35.7%	Total L-Amino Acid	0.87%	L-Isoleucine
		0.46%	L-Methionine
		1.19%	L-Tyrosine
		0.27%	L-Cystine
		0.21%	L-Asparagine

Net Contents: 2.25 grams



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Over the past year, Wilson estimates that the amount of hours performed by volunteers at Pambula Merimbula averaged out to 70 hours per week, or close to 3500 for the year



We are also looking at displaying images of the volunteers hard at work and the work they achieve through media points in the clubhouse. This, in turn, will hopefully advertise the programme throughout the membership and help increase numbers.

I am extremely proud and passionate of the volunteer programme we now have running. Like anything it has been hard work to get it up and functioning, but the benefits are well worth it and I can honestly say that the volunteers appreciate it as well.

Speaking with a number of the volunteers, many say that being part of the programme has given them a greater appreciation of the work that goes into maintaining a golf course. It has also provided them with new skills via proper training and has instilled a greater sense of ownership and pride in their course.

More importantly, the standard that the volunteers are at now means I can call on them with confidence to assist my team setting up for championships or major golfing events that we hold during the year. We can have volunteers raking bunkers before play

or blowing fairways the day before an event which is a huge help. They know exactly what needs to be done and to what standard.

Nowadays the programme virtually runs itself and only requires minimal supervision or my involvement on an occasional basis. I still lend my hand in training new recruits and taking them through the induction process, or helping existing volunteers that want to gain more experience in other areas on the golf course.

I would wholeheartedly recommend anyone that has volunteers keen to lend a hand to introduce a programme like ours at Pambula Merimbula. You'll quickly come to appreciate and enjoy the benefits that the volunteer army can provide at your club.

**Editor's Note:** Pat Wilson was part of the volunteer management workshop conducted at the recent Australasian Turfgrass Conference in Wellington. This article is derived from the presentation he gave as part of that panel discussion. If you would like to contact Wilson about his volunteer programme, email [course.super@merimbulagolf.com.au](mailto:course.super@merimbulagolf.com.au).

Below: With the standard of training brought about by the programme, Wilson has the confidence to call upon volunteers to assist his team with major event preparations

Right: Volunteers have played a major role in assisting with course projects such as drainage installation





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# Ticking the boxes

AGCSATech senior agronomist Bruce Macphee espouses the importance of doing your homework when it comes to product and turf variety selection.

**If you can't see a difference with the naked eye, you may be wasting your money. The turf on the right had a root stimulant applied over a five month period. Is there enough of a difference to warrant the expense?**



**A**s turf managers we are often charged with the task of making major decisions on behalf of our employer, sometimes with little or inadequate time to thoroughly investigate the best course of action. These decisions can range from basic product selection through to a major change in grass species. Much information is available via the internet to assist in making decisions, but this can confuse the situation further when trying to wade through the marketing hype associated with some products or turf varieties.

When looking at capital expenditure purchases such as machinery and equipment, we often have experience throughout our career with various brands, or can speak to other turf managers to discuss the pros and cons of their current fleet, used under similar conditions. As with purchasing anything, customer service, price, finance options, reliability, availability of spare parts and being fit for purpose all come into the equation when looking at equipment purchases. But that is the subject for another article.

Determining the most appropriate grass species or products, however, is somewhat less tangible, making it difficult to choose the right path to follow. You need to take into account your climate, soil types, water quality and availability when it comes to choosing the most appropriate product or variety for your unique set of circumstances.

## PRODUCT SELECTION

One of the many responsibilities a superintendent has is to make decisions on the most appropriate chemicals or fertilisers for use at their facility, as well as to procure these products at the most competitive price. This may mean shopping around or establishing an estimate of yearly chemical requirements and submitting this to various suppliers for prices.

There are many and varied fertilisers available on the market and the forms in which they are available can vary as much as the price. Various forms include soluble powders, organics, liquids, granular slow release and combination products. As with chemicals, one of the roles of the turf manager is to determine the most cost-efficient method of supplying your turf with adequate nutrition throughout the year.

To ensure you are getting bang for your buck, it is essential to take a critical look at the products you are applying and assess if you are getting real benefits for the cost. The cost of chemicals and fertilisers can be a significant portion of a budget, so it goes without saying that the more money that can be saved by choosing the most cost-effective products will free up additional finances for other areas within the budget.

As I have mentioned in previous articles, there are many and varied liquid amendments and bio-stimulant products available on the market with wide-ranging claims as to their benefits. The cost of

using these products can add up and can be quite expensive if used over large areas when compared to the cost of basic elemental equivalents.

Maintaining healthy turf growing in reasonable conditions (i.e.: adequate aeration, water, light and nutrients), may not see any benefit at all in using some of these products when compared to your current maintenance programme. Setting up of basic product trials to determine their effectiveness will ultimately show you if there is any benefit to using these products or potential savings to be made from your current programme.

Obviously you cannot be expected to run a full replicated trial on every product you are considering. However, there is an ever-increasing amount of money spent on products that contain very little active ingredient or cost a significant amount of money when applied over a large area with very little benefit, if any, shown for the cost.

Applying a product to one green or fairway and then comparing the result to others at the facility does not take into account specific microclimates or the myriad other factors that may influence the outcome. A trial can be as simple as applying a product to one section of a turf area and then a simple visual comparison with the same untreated turf directly beside it to determine if there have been any benefits. If you can't see a difference with your own eyes then you would have to question the benefit of the added expense.

One example I can give is the use of a root stimulant which was applied to the same 3m<sup>2</sup> area of a race track surface on a regular basis over a five month period (see photo bottom of page opposite). The turf on the right had a root stimulant product applied regularly over that period. Is there enough of a difference to warrant the additional expense? When you have good plant health and ideal growing conditions, you may not see any benefits.

## CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

Choosing a new turf species or variety can be a difficult task without the right information to assist you in the process. The following points below can help steer you in the right direction when making your decision.

Many of the seed companies will have data from comparative variety trials conducted mainly from the US National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) – [www.ntep.org](http://www.ntep.org). This is a great place to start. These trials are conducted at various sites across the US to compare the performance between varieties.

In years gone by, Australia had the Australian National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (ANTEP) where data was collected from comparative variety trials set up across Australia, which provided turf managers with local information on the performance of various species and varieties available. It would be great for the Australian turf industry to see this programme resurrected in the future, something which the AGCSA is currently investigating.

Another guide to what may be suitable is to look at what is currently growing successfully in your region; this can give you an indication as to the species to start looking at. In saying that, direct comparison is often difficult when looking at grass varieties between facilities, with differing soil types, maintenance budgets, staffing levels, available equipment, as well as water quality and availability all playing a major part in the final decision.

On golf courses in the last 25 years there has been a shift toward bentgrasses with increased shoot density. As a result there is an increased requirement for thatch control and dusting. Choosing one of the newer varieties without having the infrastructure and programmes in place to effectively manage these issues could lead to poor surface performance.

Setting up a trial to assess the suitability of particular turf varieties under your management regime and in real life conditions, is the most logical step to take. The practice putting green is generally subjected to the most wear of any green on a golf course and is a good place to establish a trial as this should sort the wheat from the chaff.

While it would be a hard sell to rip up a perfectly good putting green to most clubs, the process can also be used to determine the most suitable method of turf establishment. While establishing new greens from an onsite turf nursery may not be the most ideal method agronomically, it is often the most desirable method of resurfacing greens with the view of reducing the time a green is taken out of play for reconstruction.

Setting up a replicated trial on a practice putting green allows you to assess each variety in real life situations under real life pressures, as well as giving stakeholders a chance to provide feedback on playability and understand the decision making process.

While this may not be possible in all situations, the establishment of a small trial green maintained under your conditions is not an overly expensive option in the scheme of things, especially when compared to selecting the wrong species and the future management issues that could arise.

Variety trials should be assessed over a minimum of two growing seasons and consider the following parameters;

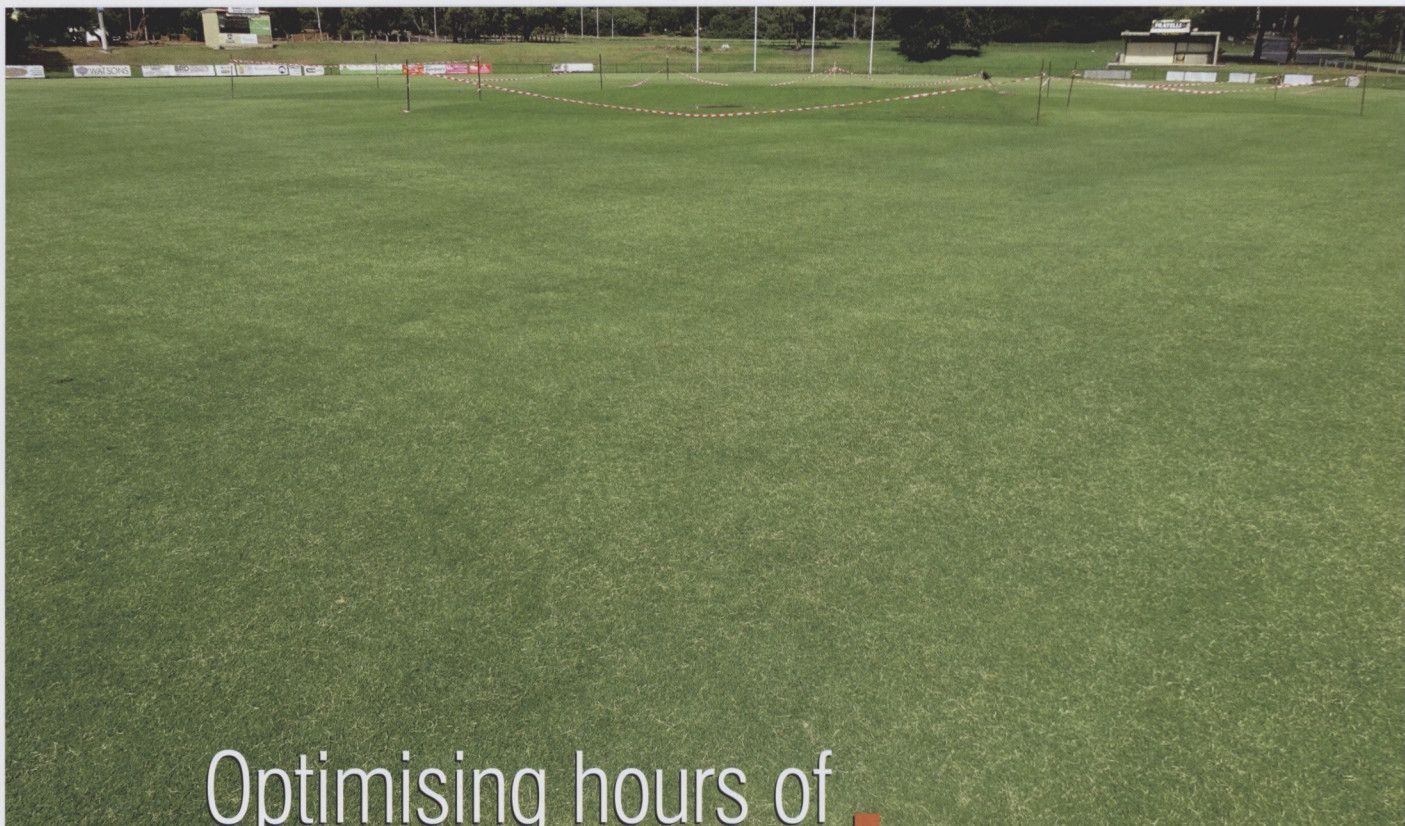
- Establishment or seedling vigour;
- Colour;
- Density;
- Quality as a putting surface;
- Pest and disease resistance;
- Drought tolerance;
- Wear tolerance; and
- Recovery from wear.

Comparing these qualities will assist you to fully understand how each variety will perform under your maintenance regime. Whether it is one of the many available products or a new turf variety, critical assessment under your unique conditions will help you to make the right decision. 🌱



**Opposite page: Choosing a new turf species or variety can be a difficult task without the right information to assist you in the process. Doing your research beforehand goes a long way to ensuring an optimal result**

**Above: Whether it is one of the many available products or a new turf variety, critical assessment across a variety of parameters under your unique conditions will help you to make the right decision**



# Optimising hours of ground usage



Following on from last edition, ATM's

agronomic expert John Neylan continues his look at the results from an STA Victoria-funded project comparing hours of use for different sportsfield construction types and maintenance inputs.

**Above: An excellent coverage of couchgrass, as pictured above on one of the fields being studied, plays a significant role in the performance of the surface through the winter**

In Volume 20.3 of Australian Turfgrass Management (May-June 2018), I presented an overview and initial results from a research project funded by the Victorian branch of the Sports Turf Association investigating the effects of hours of use on sportsfields of different construction types and levels of maintenance.

Undertaken by myself and David Nickson (Grand Prix Turf), the research project started in April 2017 and is being conducted over 18-24 months with seven detailed assessments, as well as collating maintenance information, hours of use and the level of sport (e.g.: junior vs senior). This information is then being compared to the turf quality parameters being measured. Over the research period the results are being provided as interim reports available on the STA Victoria website ([www.vicsportsturf.asn.au](http://www.vicsportsturf.asn.au)) and presented at STA Victoria seminars.

This second article presents the data collected on surface quality parameters including turf composition, wear, traction and turf health. The project objectives, sportsfield characteristics and soils data were presented in ATM Volume 20.3. To quickly summarise, the project is being undertaken on four local government sports fields in Melbourne's south east suburbs that are in play and maintained by the respective council maintenance team or their service provider.

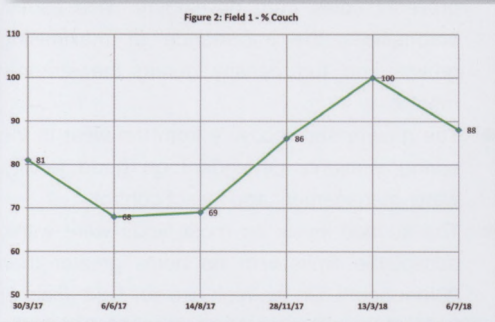
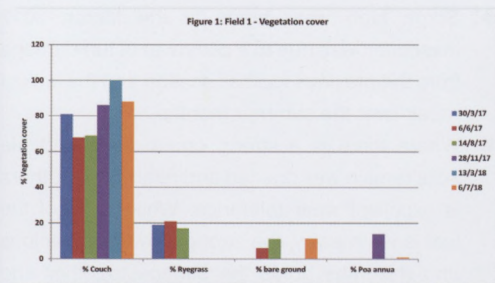
The fields being used include sand profiles with a subsoil drainage system and fields constructed with a native soil profile. All fields have an irrigation system. There are two Santa Ana couch sports fields (Fields 1 and 4) of which one is oversown each autumn/winter with ryegrass and two kikuyu sports fields (Fields 2 and 3). The project has selected both elite sports fields and community fields so that a good comparison can be made in terms of budget, resources and playing surface quality.

## TURF COMPOSITION AND TURF DENSITY

Turf composition changed throughout the year and depended on the base grass composition, wear, weed control, overseeding and fertility. Across the 12 month period there were several observations;

- The turf composition and density varied throughout the year (Figures 1 and 2).
- Where there was a strong warm-season grass base in the late summer/early autumn the surface held together very well irrespective of the level of wear. In particular, where there was a good couch base, even though losing most of its leaf, the surface remained intact throughout the winter. The stolons and rhizomes provided a strong and resilient surface.
- A ryegrass oversow must be given sufficient establishment time if it is to be successful.





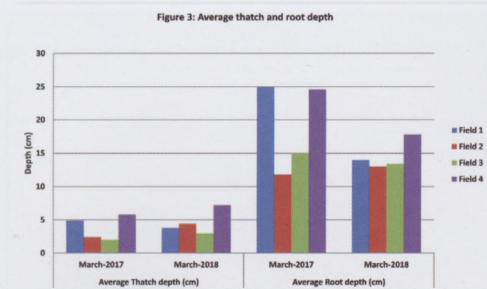
Consequently there was poor establishment in the high wear areas if training was allowed to proceed following seeding.

- Based on the data to date from the winter of 2018, the absence of a ryegrass overseed had no adverse effect on the surface other than a lack of green colour.
- The proportion of bare ground increased and the density declined through the winter and as use increased.
- Kikuyu on wet soils deteriorated quickly. The kikuyu recovery was relatively quick in the spring/summer providing there was adequate water and fertility.
- The warm-season grass base is crucial in providing good winter wear. Good fertility in the spring is essential in the recovery of the couch and kikuyu and it was noted at one site that the lack of spring fertility restricted the rate of recovery. Post-summer fertility is also important in developing a strong turf for the winter months.
- The weed population was relatively low across all fields with *Poa annua* and summergrass (*Digitaria sanguinalis*) being the most prominent weed species. The summergrass was most noticeable in the thin and high wear areas while the proportion of *Poa annua* appeared to be increasing across all sites.

## THATCH DEPTH AND ROOT GROWTH

Thatch depth (Figure 3) has not changed substantially over the period of the project and is related to the renovation programme, age of the profile and the high wear on three of the fields. The high wear in particular does reduce the amount of biomass, particularly in the high traffic areas of the field such as goal squares, centre bounce and the goal to goal line.

In addition to the thatch depth, there is also the accumulation of organic matter below the thatch layer. The organic matter layer is a function of age of



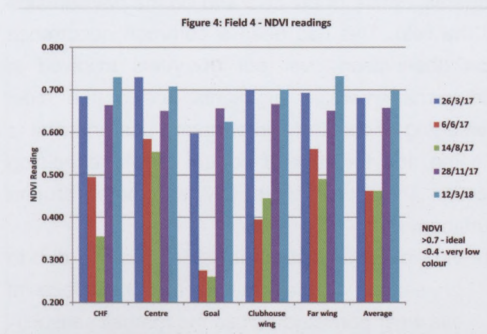
the profile and does influence the infiltration rate and the moisture retention. As a general premise, hollow coring of sportsfields every year would be highly beneficial in thatch and organic matter control and improving the infiltration rate.

At the initial assessment there was a considerable difference in the root depth between the couch and kikuyu fields (Figure 3). The couch fields had an average root depth that was about 10cm deeper than the kikuyu. This greater root depth in the couch in part reflects the better drought tolerance compared to the kikuyu.

At the March 2018 assessment there was a substantial reduction in the average root depth on both couch fields compared to the kikuyu fields where there was no obvious change. The reduction in root depth was due primarily to a low soil moisture content with both couch fields having a below-optimum soil moisture content. Field 1 was affected by poor water distribution uniformity and Field 4 was being kept dry as a means of reducing *Poa*.

## TURF HEALTH

Turf health or turf colour varied throughout the year with dormancy and wear in the warm-season grasses having the greatest effect on the NDVI readings. The NDVI readings for Field 4 (Figure 4) are provided as an example of the changes that occurred over the past 12 months.



Far left: Figure 1. Percentage of vegetation cover in Field 1 (Santa Ana) across six assessment dates between March 2017 and July 2018

Bottom left: Figure 2. Percentage of couchgrass in Field 1 across six assessment dates between March 2017 and July 2018

Left: Figure 3. Average thatch depth and root growth has not changed substantially over the period of the project

Left: Figure 4. NDVI readings for Field 4 showing the changes in turf health on various parts of the ground over a 12-month period

Below: Turf health or turf colour varied throughout the year with dormancy and wear in the warm-season grasses having the greatest effect on the NDVI readings



Top: Where there is a strong couch base and the soils remain well drained and relatively dry, there is excellent wear tolerance. While most of the leaf is worn away, the strong network of stolons and rhizomes holds the surface together

Above: Oversowing with ryegrass has little if any influence on wear resistance when the ryegrass establishment has not been managed correctly

Far right, top: Figure 5. Field 1 traction readings on various parts of the ground

Far right, bottom: Figure 6. Surface hardness readings for Field 2. This kikuyu field, which is soil based and has no drainage, varied considerably

### TRAFFIC AND WEAR

The wear over the winter months tends to be concentrated in particular areas such as the goal squares, centre of the field and on the pavilion side of the field. This has been a common occurrence and observation over our 35 years involved in turf management. It highlights one of the most damaging aspects of winter sports use and that is training and the lack of control of where training occurs. There are several key facts noted around surface wear;

- Very high wear at the initial inspections due to pre-season football training and the effects of this wear persisted across the football season.
- Overseeding in this study appears to have very little influence on wear tolerance and this is due to the timing of overseeding and allowing time for the ryegrass to establish.
- Most fields had concentrated wear in goal squares and the side of the field adjacent to the pavilion.
- The wear and turf damage increases as the winter season progresses.
- The surface levels were within acceptable limits with no holes greater than 10-15mm depth.

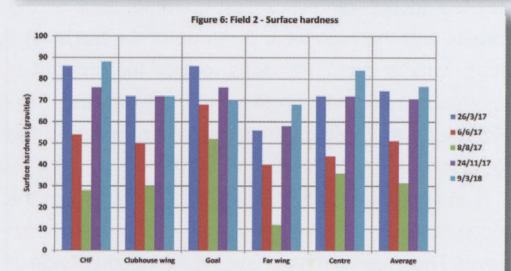
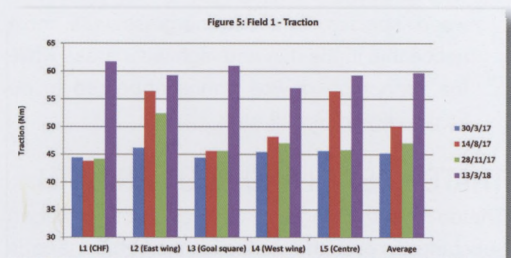
- Some high wear areas at the March 2017 inspection was due to a carryover of turf damage from the previous football season and the lack of repair over the summer months.
- Where there is a strong couch base and the soils remain well drained and relatively dry, there is excellent wear tolerance. While most of the leaf is worn away, the strong network of stolons and rhizomes holds the surface together and prevents holes from developing. This aspect emphasises the importance of maximising growth and turf density during the summer months.
- The growth and recovery from the wear in the spring is highly dependent on good fertility, water management and insect control.
- The surface levels on most fields were within acceptable limits with no holes greater than 20mm depth. On the high use soil field (Field 2) the surface levels are highly disturbed once the soils become saturated.

### TRACTION

As a general overview, traction readings recorded across the various assessment dates were within acceptable limits throughout the study period, providing the soils were relatively dry (Figure 5). On Field 2 where the soils were saturated, the traction was very low and the surface was boggy and slippery.

One of the interesting observations was the increase in traction as the couch became dormant and there was a loss of leaf. What appears to be happening is that in the late summer there is a lot of leaf and a buffer between the traction device (or potentially a boot) and the layer of stolons. As the leaf is abraded and exposes the stolon layer there is increased grip.

Surface traction and the overall playability of the surface is strongly related to grass type and soil moisture content. A strong couch base on well drained soils is going to provide the highest level of playability.



## SURFACE HARDNESS

The surface hardness was within acceptable limits at all of the assessment dates though there was a high variation between and within fields. The fields that had good drainage had a relatively consistent surface firmness. Field 2, which was soil based and had no drainage, varied considerably (Figure 6). During winter the soils were saturated and very soft whereas in summer, as the soils dried out, the surface was considerably harder.

## HOURS OF USE

The sports field use data has been compiled for the winter months and are presented in Table 1. The data was collected from council booking schedules and information from the user groups.

The hours of use that can be tolerated before there is significant turf damage is influenced by the construction type, weather and maintenance of the surface. There is little doubt that the investment in a well-drained field with couch provides the highest hours of use. This presumes a level of maintenance

that ensures there is a 100 per cent grass cover of high density at the end of summer, leading into the winter sports. The other confounding factor is the quality of the surface acceptable to the user groups. Where a substantial loss of turf cover is "acceptable" the hours of use can be greater.

The ever-present problem with the hours of use is training and the concentration of traffic in a relatively small area. A prime example of this is for Field 1 where there was significant wear on one side of the field due to pre-season football training. The damage to sportsfields and the cost of restoration would be greatly reduced if the user groups were either more aware or more cooperative in spreading the training activities. It is noted that Field 3 had no training lights for the first 12 months of the project and this greatly reduced the traffic and wear. However, as of July 2018 lights have been installed and this is expected to substantially alter the dynamics of use and wear. The management of wear has to be a cooperative effort between the user groups and the facility operator/owner.

TABLE 1: HOURS OF USE WINTER 2017

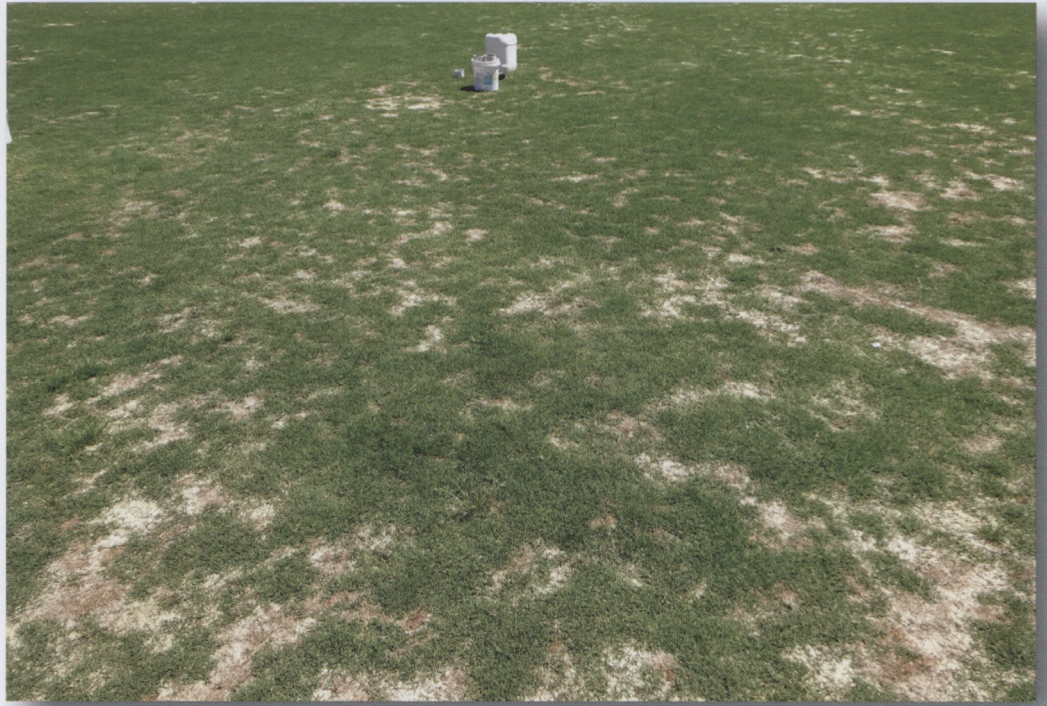
Location	Hours/week			Total hours/winter season		
	Training	Games	Total/week	Training	Games	Total/season
Field 1	13.5	17	30.5	351	442	793
Field 2	13	3.6	16.6	416	71	487
Field 3	2.5	2.5	5	60	60	120
Field 4	18	7	25	468	182	650

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Good fertility in the spring is essential in the recovery of the couch and kikuyu and it was noted at one site that the lack of spring fertility restricted the rate of recovery



## CONCLUSIONS

After 12 months of monitoring there are several conclusions;

- The dry winter of 2017 assisted in the fields coping with the traffic.
- The oval constructed on a heavy soil type deteriorated very quickly once the rain came in August and further highlights the importance of a well-drained profile.
- A sand profile that has some drainage substantially improves the ability of the surface to cope with high traffic loads.
- A strong couch base provides a high wear resistant surface even when there is very little leaf due to the high traffic. The stolons and rhizomes are the key to providing this resilience.
- Oversowing with ryegrass has little if any influence on wear resistance when the ryegrass establishment has not been managed correctly resulting in poor plant density. The ryegrass must be well established with high plant density.
- The spring transition is most important to restoring the warm-season grass base. Three of the fields were exhibiting moderate recovery due to the increasing temperature, however, recovery was slow due to a lack of fertility.
- The warm and dry summer of 2017/18 has been highly beneficial in developing a strong warm-season turf irrespective of the soil type, providing there is adequate water.
- The poor water distribution at some sites was affecting the overall turf health, turf density and root growth.
- The condition of the turf in late summer has a significant impact on the performance of the surface through the winter. Attention should be given to late summer fertilising to ensure high turf density leading to winter use.

- *Poa annua* was the most prominent weed species during the winter and all fields had been successfully treated with a selective herbicide in the spring. Consequently, the amount of *Poa annua* was very low. It was noted that on those fields that did not have a complete turf cover, summergrass germinations were widespread.
- The hours of use data indicate that on a well-drained couch field, with a moderate level of maintenance, 30 hours of use per week over a 26-week autumn/winter period is sustainable. With a moderate increase in fertiliser and soil aeration, it is expected that this could be increased. The timing of maintenance practices is also an essential element in improving the hours of use.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

John Neylan and David Nickson wish to thank STA Victoria for their support and funding of the research project 'Compare hours of use for different sports field construction types and maintenance inputs'. They also wish to thank the councils that have allowed access to the sports fields being assessed. For more project information and to download full reports, visit [www.vicsportsturf.asn.au](http://www.vicsportsturf.asn.au). 🙏



*Poa annua* was, not surprisingly, the most prominent weed species during the winter

“The hours of use data indicate that on a well-drained couch field, with a moderate level of maintenance, 30 hours of use per week over a 26-week autumn/winter period is sustainable. With a moderate increase in fertiliser and soil aeration, it is expected that this could be increased.”

– John Neylan





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For the first time in the history of the annual conference, the AGCSA teamed up with its NZGCSA counterparts to take the event across 'the ditch'. ATM looks back on a wonderful week in Wellington for what was the inaugural Australasian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition.



Wellington's Westpac Stadium was one of the stops on the post-conference turf tour



# Wellington WOWS

**S**eize the day. If Rob Hamill didn't inspire delegates at the inaugural Australasian Turfgrass Conference, then it's fair to say no one could. Turf managers are a passionate lot – they have to be given the many challenges they are asked to overcome on a daily basis – and they certainly found a kindred spirit in Hamill, a man who has endured his own unique challenges in life.

The former Commonwealth Games gold medallist and endurance rower had Tuesday's Plenary session agog as he recounted his life story, one which has been punctuated by incredible sporting achievement and heartbreaking loss. From the highs of winning the inaugural trans-Atlantic rowing race in 1997 to the loss of his two brothers and the personal journey he went through to come to terms with that, Hamill's tale was a powerful one.

Above all, he carried a very simple message – you can't achieve anything in life without passion. He implored delegates to seize the day, asking them 'If you don't have a go, what is life really all about?' He quoted Sir Peter Blake, a famous New Zealand yachtsman tragically killed by pirates off the coast of Brazil back in 2001. In the days prior to his death, the former America's Cup and Whitbread Round the World Race winner penned in his journal that to win you have to believe you can do it and you have to be passionate about it. You have to really want the result even if it means years of work, but the hardest and most important thing is taking that first critical step.

Hamill's address set the tone for what was an incredible week in Wellington as the Australian



WORDS AND PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

and New Zealand turf management communities gathered together truly for the first time. The week had been many years in the making between the AGCSA and NZGCSA and going on the feedback received all that work certainly paid off. The official functions were a testament to the wonderful camaraderie engendered during the week, with some of the best attendances ever. The Syngenta President's Dinner had more than 340 in attendance, while the Simplot Partners Farewell Bash swelled to 400. It all went to prove unequivocally that turf managers on both sides of 'the ditch' have a common bond.

Hamill's presentation was among the most popular of the week, but there were many others which struck a chord with delegates. Workshops on how to effectively manage volunteers and making the move from superintendent to general manager were well subscribed, while conference keynotes Scott McElroy (Auburn University, USA) and Andy Johnston (Sentosa Golf Club, Singapore) delivered plenty of food for thought during their sessions, including the well-attended Jacobsen-sponsored Monday workshops.

The trade exhibition was well supported by companies from both sides of the Tasman and the two associations joined together to collectively honour their leading practitioners through their respective awards programmes.



Above: VGCSA president Barry Proctor gets hands on during one of the group exercises in Andy Johnston's Jacobsen sponsored Monday workshop

Left: 'Seize the day' was the mantra espoused by conference inspirational speaker Rob Hamill, who recounted some incredible life stories of great achievement and tragedy

In the weeks following the conference, ATM canvassed delegates as to what their key 'take home' message from the conference was. Here's what resonated with some during the week...

"As well as the great material from the educational sessions, the key thing I took away from the conference was meeting all the other like-minded people in the industry and hearing about/sharing experiences with them." – **Foreman, NZ**

"How important your staff are to you; help them with training, education and then let them do their job. Don't micro-manage." – **Superintendent, Tas**

"Scott McElroy's presentations were incredible, not only the information he presented but the way he delivered it. Rob Hamill's journeys through life and following his passions was a great 'take home' and has helped to push me along and pursue my goals in greenkeeping and life in general. The people that I met that week were great to feed off of also." – **Assistant superintendent, WA**

"I was provided many different strategies to put into place at my course. No matter what course we came from, the ideas and strategies provided could assist us in some way." – **Superintendent, NZ**



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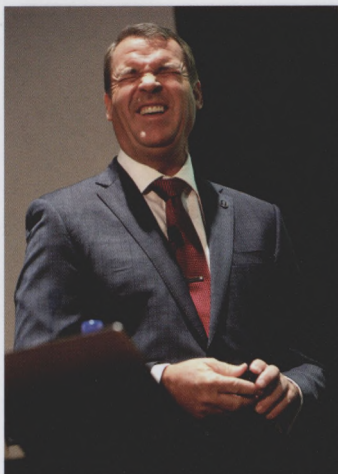
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**Jamie Scott gets animated during the men's health session on rethinking mental health**



**Andy Johnston from Sentosa Golf Club called upon his many years of experience in greenkeeping, golf course design and facility management to present a range of talks during the week**



**From left, Brendan Allen, Andy Johnston and Leo Barber share a light moment during their insightful superintendent to GM workshop**

**Miramar Golf Club was the final stop on the Friday tour. The club has an impending land battle on its hands with neighbouring Wellington Airport**



"The thing that grabbed me most was the Nano Bubbles Technology. I think this is one of the most innovative ideas I have seen in a long time and to me it makes a lot of sense." – **Superintendent, NSW**

"One of the best things for me was catching up with the Jacobsen boys and having a chat to Terry Sullivan from PowerTurf New Zealand. His quote to me was 'Your fairways are just an extension of your greens'. From that quote we resigned with Jac for another five years!" – **Superintendent, WA**

"I am pleased to report my worm problem has not flared up again!" – **Sports turf manager, Vic**

"More help or assistance for turf managers with mental health issues. More sessions held where mental health is talked about or ways presented to deal with mental health would greatly benefit the industry." – **Assistant superintendent, NSW**

"Networking and working together, moving forward to keep on top of the changing climate. Times are changing throughout the world, temperatures are changing making our job difficult. Health and safety is becoming a big thing moving forward also. Share your knowledge." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"I have been in the industry 39 years now, 35 of them as superintendent or in leading roles, and always pick up a few pointers and food for thought. You are never too old to learn. Talking to people from NSW, the extent of ground pearl invasion being recognised in the last few years is frightening. I have been dealing with the problem at my club for 15 years and hope that highlighting the issue may initiate further research towards a solution to a tough problem." – **Superintendent, NSW**

"From Scott McElroy's presentation – resistance is extremely unlikely to occur when tank mixing different A/Cs (I think the stat was 1:1billion). Also, tetraploid hybrids e.g.: Santa Ana couch develop more by stoloniferous growth rather than rhizomatous growth, so be careful not to go to aggressive when fraise mowing as recovery will be slow." – **Turf management educator, Vic**

"For me it really was the whole week – meeting and chatting with other people who have the same passion. The talks I attended were awesome and full of interesting views and I will be implementing a couple of things from them." – **Superintendent, WA**

"I heard on the radio you should cannibalise your business every year so as to keep up and improve your product. We are not going to core this spring but instead use the Air2g2 which was at the show to improve the drainage and air capacity in our greens as they have been quite wet this winter. We normally core the third week in August to provide greens to play for people when others are coring which is always a challenge. Club champs are also in September and the beginning of October so by not coring there will be a better surface for them to play on, as the thatch levels aren't that high." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"The opportunity to be a part of the inaugural Australasian Turfgrass Conference is something I'll remember for life, along with the many different people I met. Truly grateful." – **Apprentice, Tas**

"Regardless of who's talking or how sweet the 'gin and tonic' flavoured donuts are, conferences bring like-minded people together who otherwise would never have met, especially a joint nation conference like this one." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"The continued interaction between the speakers and the delegates, I believe, makes the learning experience real. It was encouraging to see new and fresh faces enjoying the opportunity to further their education and the opportunity of two countries and associations coming together to share and learn together made for a great week." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"It's really hard to choose one 'take home' message as I enjoyed a number of the presentations. If I had to choose one it would probably be Professor Scott McElroy's presentation on manipulating fertility to control *Poa*. Many 'old school' turf management methodologies are making a comeback. Strategies around lower pH management, the use of acid-forming fertilisers, reducing the amount of



phosphorus and using high volumes of iron were all discussed and are systems that we already have in place at our club. Probably the most interesting discussion during this paper was the research completed around the use of zinc to discourage *Poa annua* establishment. Scott discussed that the university has seen some areas where turf paint had been used which showed significantly less *Poa* contamination. From there, they completed some trials using a zinc fertiliser which provided some form of pre-emergent *Poa annua* establishment prevention." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"New Zealand and Australian golf course greenkeepers are very similar in their outlook. The same industry camaraderie is shown on both sides of 'the ditch' which can only enhance collaboration in the future." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"The importance of contractors staying relevant in the industry in regards to machinery and practices.



Above left: Auburn University weed expert Scott McElroy was a popular addition to this year's conference education programme

Above: NZGCSA president Steve Hodson formed part of the panel during an in-depth volunteer management workshop

I saw technology that could replace almost our entire renovation fleet and halve the time it takes to undertake major renovations. Our current contractor doesn't have a very structured renewal plan for their gear, so it's something I'm encouraging them to get better at." – **Facilities manager, NZ**

"The wide spread use of turf growth regulators throughout the industry. Maybe we are not keeping up with the times and modern practices..." **Council coordinator, NZ**

"My take home points were taken from the speakers talking on management issues and also the talk on mental health and being able to separate

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◀ Above: The trade exhibition featured more than 50 companies from both sides of the Tasman

Above right: Hagen Faith shows delegates around Wellington's famed Basin Reserve cricket ground



"I really enjoyed the transitioning from superintendent to GM talk. It was pleasing to hear reassurances from those who have moved into a GM role in relation to backing yourself and trusting your systems. I have a saying that I have used for many years with my staff – control the things you can control. This makes staff accountable and as mentioned at the session above runs along the lines of backing your systems." – **Superintendent, Qld**

"The fantastic camaraderie that was displayed between the Kiwi and Aussie turfies and their ability to relate to each other over both turf and general matters." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"I was blown away with Andy Johnston's presentation 'What drives your management practices?' The extreme detail and management of his standard procedures, going to lengths of putting rim protectors on all cups in the event of a thunderstorm to prevent erosion. This is management at a supreme level." – **Superintendent, NSW**

"This was a new experience for me and I was really excited to attend the conference. The key thing that resonated with me was the sense of belonging, being connected to the world of turfgrass knowledge and aiming for new standards." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"The vital role that volunteers play in our industry and the support they provide to so many clubs. I see this as a growing area that more clubs should explore and embrace especially within such a labour intensive environment." – **Superintendent, NSW**

"One thing that I picked up on was the huge importance of men's health and the pressure put on supers to perform with less resources. I think it is time the conversation should be started between the GMA and AGCSA to improve the understanding of the pressures involved in producing at the highest level with ever-diminishing resources. Some of the conversations I was involved in really opened up my eyes to a very expansive health and wellbeing problem." – **Superintendent, Tas**

And finally, this from one of our Northern Hemisphere visitors... "I feel there was a new energy at this conference. People are more positive and I think finally we are shaking the recession, turning the corner and everyone was more energised about the industry. The future is bright ahead!"

The AGCSA and NZGCSA thank all delegates, speakers and exhibitors who attended the Wellington conference. The 2019 conference will be held in Brisbane, the first time it has been in the Queensland capital since 2006. The conference will run from 23-28 June, 2019 – see you there! 🍷

yourself from work during your free time. This is a big issue and being a super with a young family it's really important for me to be able to leave work at work. The trade show was great. I loved the GPS sprayer John Deere had on display and Yamaha's drone helicopter which we will be using at our course to spread a product into our irrigation lakes. Elastopave had a brilliant path product which we will also be trialling." – **Superintendent, NZ**

"One take home message that really stuck with me was from Andy Johnston. He had many good ideas but this was the one that stood out to me – 'No toxic talk, up or down'. I guess it's easy to gossip behind somebody's back at work, but it is counterproductive and serves no benefit to anyone. Also, 'You're a leader everywhere, or nowhere'." – **Superintendent, SA**

"AGCSATech moving into the field of drone services – exciting; Bayer's new Exteris fungicide; some different and new *Poa annua* control strategies from Scott McElroy; Syngenta's phone microscope is a great tool; and the tools now available for turf and data management and subsequent reporting from soil moisture sensors to online management systems." – **Superintendent, Qld**

"Andy Johnston shedding light on the idea of 'dual transformation'. The idea of embracing change and evolving moving forward was the strongest message I took from the week. Andy's 'What drives your management practices?' was the webcast I was looking most forward to receiving; I have already re-watched it. It's also the one I will reference most and share the 'team' aspects of the presentation with my staff." – **Grounds manager, WA**



Royal Adelaide superintendent Nathan Bennett talks tournament set up and preparation

The Simplot Farewell Bash proved quite revealing for a few delegates





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# No passing Fads

In one of the closest finishes to an AGCSA Golf Championship, Tony McFadyean claimed his maiden Toro Red Jacket with his very last shot of the day.



WORDS AND PHOTOS: BRETT ROBINSON

**Above: Tony McFadyean drives down the last at Royal Wellington. Having just dropped a shot on the previous hole, he was tied with two-time Red Jacket holder Michael Dennis going down 18**



It wasn't the start that Tony McFadyean had envisaged. Teeing up for his first tilt at the AGCSA Golf Championship at Royal Wellington Golf Club in late June, the Nedlands Golf Club superintendent had effectively consigned his round to the scrap heap without having stepped off the 1st tee.

As he commented to fellow playing partner and two-time winner of the event Michael Dennis (Royal Perth GC) while they were waiting to tee off, he'd been hitting his tee shots left a bit in recent rounds. Sure enough, moments later, his first drive went left, way left. His provisional followed a similar trajectory. And so did his third. Game over...

Given McFadyean's golfing pedigree, it was the sort of opening you would have least expected. A former touring pro for three years, with two top-50 Australian Open finishes (2005 and 2006) and the 2005 SA PGA Championship to his name,

McFadyean was being touted as a hot favourite around Royal Wellington. It was his first outing at the event, having last August been appointed superintendent at Nedlands after spending the previous 11 at Royal Perth Golf Club, first as an apprentice and then as assistant to Dennis.

"I thought I was shot," says McFadyean, a long-time WA representative and former winning pennant player for Joondalup. "We'd been waiting on the 1st tee for a while and I mentioned to Mick that I had been pulling my tee shots left a lot. I didn't expect to then go and hit three shots almost identical!"

"Luckily, I managed to find the first ball and chipped it out. I then put my third right of the green behind the bunker, hit a flop shot to around eight feet and holed it for bogey. Meanwhile, Mick has birdied the hole and knowing how good of a player he is, I knew I was up against it from there. After that I just really relaxed and didn't focus too much on the



round. I ended up talking with the other guys more about greenkeeping than anything else. It wasn't until we were walking off the 18th that I knew I was in with a chance."

That opening hole was just a taste of things to come in what transpired to be one of the closest finishes ever witnessed at the AGCSA's premier golf event. McFadyean and Dennis would swap and share the lead multiple times during their round, which was played in sometimes horrendous conditions, with McFadyean sealing a maiden win with his very last shot of the day.

Having dropped two shots on Dennis at the 1st, McFadyean soon found himself three adrift after another bogey on the 3rd. Come the next hole, however, it was Dennis's turn to slip up. His second and third shots both found bunkers and his fourth narrowly avoided a similar fate. He two-putted for bogey while McFadyean calmly rolled in a birdie putt after a dead-eye approach. Stung, Dennis countered with back-to-back birdies on 5 and 6, both par fours, to take his lead back out to three, but a bogey on the par three 8th saw him finish the outward nine two ahead of McFadyean.

That two shot gap remained until the par four 13th when there was another two shot swing, this time McFadyean making birdie and Dennis bogey. McFadyean took the lead for the first time in the round after Dennis bogeyed 15, but they were level again just a few holes later after a dramatic 17th.

Taking two-iron off the tee on the short par four (299m), McFadyean's tee shot found the trees on the right, forcing him to punch his second out onto the fairway. His third shot was sublime, to within a few feet, but he proceeded to miss the short par putt to the right. Dennis made the green in regulation but agonisingly missed his birdie putt which would have put him one ahead going down the last.

McFadyean's hopes sunk further when his tee shot on the par five 18th caught the fairway bunker. He smashed a four iron to the front of the green which left him with an 80-foot putt. Dennis was in prime position off the tee, but his second found the left hand greenside bunker. He then thinned his bunker shot and two-putted for par. All that was irrelevant, however, as McFadyean lagged his third shot to 15 foot and then coolly drained the birdie putt to finish with a one-over 73.

"I couldn't believe it," says McFadyean when he found out he'd won the Red Jacket. "I didn't realise we were tied going down the last. When I was a touring pro I would usually have a pretty good idea of my score, but it wasn't until we were doing the cards that I found out I had shot 73 and Mick 74.

"It was fantastic to win it in my first go and I was even more excited when I found out that I would be going to the GCSAA event in the US next year. I've never been to the US before and as a kid I had always wanted to play on the US Tour. I can't wait."

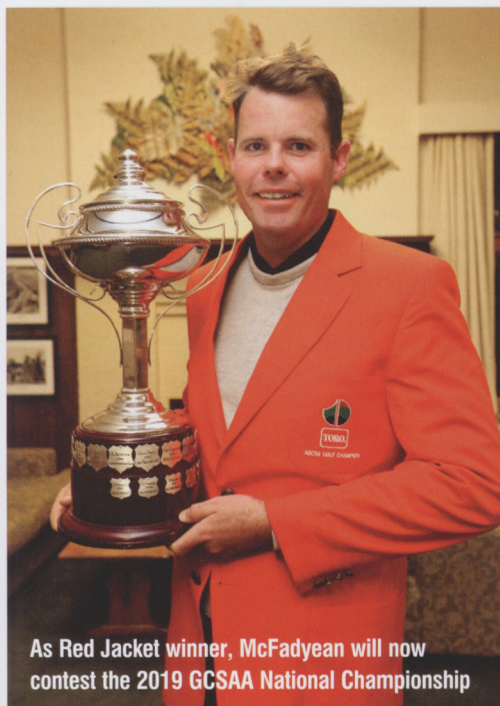
While it was a WA one-two, Royal Canberra superintendent Ben Grylewicz nearly upset the party, finishing a shot back in third. Playing in the group behind, Grylewicz was four over at the turn before coming home strongly. He shot the lowest back nine total across the entire field – a 1-under 35 – to finish with a three-over 75.

Grylewicz didn't go away empty handed, winning the Nett trophy by a shot from Club Mandalay's Rhett Pinder, while Pukekohe Golf Club superintendent George Flynn amassed 43 points to collect the stableford trophy by three shots. It proved to be WA's day too in the state teams event, with McFadyean and Dennis anchoring the WA team which also included Eric Dennis (Lakelands CC) and Idris Evans (Western Australian GC). WA prevailed comfortably over the ACT and Tasmania. 🍷



**McFadyean tracks what would be the championship-winning putt on the 18th. He drained the 15-footer for birdie to win the Red Jacket by a single shot from Dennis**

**The elements conspired to make Royal Wellington a stern test of golf**



**As Red Jacket winner, McFadyean will now contest the 2019 GCSAA National Championship**

## 2018 AGCSA GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP – ROYAL WELLINGTON GOLF CLUB, NZ

**Host superintendent:** John Spraggs

### AGCSA Golf Championship – Stroke

- 73: Tony McFadyean (Nedlands GC, WA)
- 74: Michael Dennis (Royal Perth GC, WA)
- 75: Ben Grylewicz (Royal Canberra, ACT)
- 82: Idris Evans (Western Australian GC, WA), Brent Hull (Moruya GC, NSW)

### AGCSA Golf Championship – Nett

- 74: Grylewicz
- 75: Rhett Pinder (Club Mandalay, Vic)
- 75: McFadyean

### AGCSA Golf Championship – Stableford

- 43: George Flynn (Pukekohe GC, NZ)
- 40: Stephen Mallyon (Bexley GC, NSW)
- 36: Shay Tasker (Carnarvon GC, NSW)

### State Teams Trophy

- 96: WA (McFadyean, Dennis, Eric Dennis and Idris Evans)
- 87: ACT (Grylewicz, Brent Hull, Pat Wilson and Campbell Griggs)
- 86: Tasmania (Steve Lewis, Gareth Kelly and Phil Hill)

### Trans-Tasman Trophy

- 98: Australia (McFadyean, Dennis and Grylewicz)
- 87: New Zealand (Flynn, Stuart Baird and William Harris)

### Nearest the Pin (8th)

Jason Bushell (Rowes Bay GC, Qld)

### Longest Drive (18th)

Pat Wilson (Pambula Merimbula, NSW)



The lone worker will always have unique worker safety needs due to the circumstances of their job role and it requires careful risk assessment

# Going solo

ATM's EHS expert Terry Muir looks at the challenge of managing lone workers and the risks superintendents and turf managers must consider.

There seems to be no letup in regulatory change and we know that many golf course superintendents and turf managers are clearly experiencing regulatory fatigue and overload in the face of ever-changing and growing regulations. A 2016 compliance report by Thomson Reuters reported that almost 70 per cent of businesses are expecting regulators to publish even more information in the coming year, with 26 per cent expecting more regulatory requirements.

The issue of managing lone workers is yet another significant legislative requirement in workplace management and has particular relevance to the golf and turf industry. Whilst the term 'lone worker' is not always a familiar one in the turf industry, it is quickly becoming more well-known in response to workplace health and safety legislation and many superintendents, turf managers and general managers becoming more proactive in all forms of worker safety and employee protection.

So who is considered a 'lone worker'? It's really as simple as the name suggests. Lone workers are considered those who work by themselves and/or work on site with only limited support arrangements, which therefore exposes them to risk by being isolated from the usual back-up support. To put a little bit more context to it, a lone worker is anyone who carries out work out of eyesight and/or earshot of colleagues and employers. Lone workers present their own unique worker safety needs. They face environmental and safety risks, some more than others based on their job role and work location.

## THE LEGISLATION

The legislation now provides a specific definition that describes remote or isolated work. In relation to a worker, it means "work that is isolated from the assistance of other persons because of location, time or the nature of the work."

The WHS legislation also specifically states the obligations of superintendents or turf managers to manage the risks associated with isolated workers – "A person conducting a business or undertaking must manage risks to the health and safety of a worker associated with remote or isolated work" and "in minimising risks to the health and safety of a worker associated with remote or isolated work, a person conducting a business or undertaking must provide a system of work that includes effective communication with the worker." The penalties range between \$6000 and \$30,000.

## COMMON LONE WORKER TYPES IN THE TURF INDUSTRY

Every golf club or turf facility will have lone workers in their team. In some situations, a worker may be alone for a short period of time, while in other situations they may be on their own for most of the day in a remote location. Workers at golf clubs, for instance, may work remotely or in isolation if they:

- Physically work alone (e.g.: at night in the clubhouse or early morning weekends setting the course up for play);
- Work separately from others (e.g.: trying to locate a fail in an irrigation line or mowing roughs);
- Work outside normal working hours, work shift work or engage in night work;
- Work unsupervised; or
- Work on a reduced roster (e.g.: setting up the course on public holidays).

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF LONE WORKERS

The employer holds the main responsibility for protecting the safety and health of lone workers. Nonetheless, lone workers themselves have a responsibility to help their employer fulfil this duty, and they must;



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- Take reasonable care to look after their own safety and health and the safety of others in the workplace;
- Co-operate with their employer's safety and health procedures;
- Use tools and other equipment properly, in accordance with any relevant safety instructions and training they have been given;
- Not misuse equipment provided for their safety and health; and
- Report all accidents, injuries, near-misses and other dangerous occurrences

## RISKS

It is important to understand the physical capabilities of the employee, volunteer or contractor who is working remotely. This includes their level of fitness required to perform the proposed duties. Some questions you can ask include:

- Has the person had training to prepare them for working alone and in remote locations?
- If plant and equipment is involved, is the person competent to use the equipment and have they been deemed competent under the new verification of competency requirements?
- Is the worker able to make sound judgments about their own safety?
- Is the person physically capable of completing all work activities alone?
- Are there any pre-existing medical conditions that may increase risk?

Safework NSW reports that fatigue is mental or physical exhaustion that prevents a person from performing work safely and effectively. It is more than feeling tired and drowsy – it is a physical condition that can occur because of prolonged exertion, sleep loss and/or disruption of the internal body clock and is a critical factor in managing lone workers.

Fatigue can be caused by factors that may be work-related, lifestyle-related, or a combination of both. Examples include:

- Too little or poor-quality sleep;
- Working at times when you would normally be asleep;
- Carrying out mentally or physically demanding activities;
- Poor nutrition and/or inadequate hydration;
- Effects of alcohol and/or other drugs; and
- Driver or operator fatigue

Only sleep can cure fatigue. Sleep debt is cumulative and must be repaid.

## WHAT CAN MANAGERS DO?

The most important worker safety practices for the lone worker to keep in mind all involve proactive and preventative approaches. This will involve information, training, instruction and communication. Workers need training to prepare them for working alone and in remote locations. This may include training in dealing with potentially aggressive people,



using communications systems, administering first aid, obtaining emergency assistance and activity-based risk assessment.

It is important to identify all unique, individual risks that your lone workers may face and create an action plan for how they and the business will react should an incident arise. This can be achieved through the development of a Lone Worker Policy that includes a Lone Worker Risk Checklist and communication protocols.

Superintendents, turf managers and those responsible for the safety of the lone worker should establish a system that allows them to check in with their workers and keep track of their location as often as possible. Good practice for managing remote workers should include having a schedule of regular contact or communication with the worker to someone who is in a position to raise an alarm and can do so if there is a communication failure. The frequency of communications and the actions to be taken if a communication attempt fails should also be developed and implemented.

The lone worker will always have unique worker safety needs due to the circumstances of their job role which requires careful assessment. By considering the questions in the Lone Worker Management Checklist (see next page) and conducting a hazard identification and risk assessment in consultation with workers, you can identify the issues relevant to your unique working environment and take action to limit the risk of an incident occurring.

## CONCLUSION

The management of lone workers will undoubtedly require extra risk-control measures as they must not be at more risk than other employees. As a superintendent or turf manager with lone workers, the precautions you initiate should take account of normal work as well as any foreseeable emergencies.

The best working alone risk control that I'm aware of is to not work alone. Whilst this may be impractical in the turf management sector, many businesses have implemented a No Working Alone Policy and this eliminates the lone worker risk altogether. Whilst working alone isn't ideal, the demands of working in the golf industry will necessitate that from time to time employees, volunteers and even contractors will be working alone on your site. If so, you must take all reasonable steps to reduce the risks. 🙏

**WHS legislation now specifically states the obligations of superintendents or turf managers to manage the risks associated with isolated workers**

**While the employer holds the main responsibility for protecting the safety and health of lone workers, lone workers themselves have a responsibility to help their employer fulfil this duty**



# LONE WORKER RISK MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

## LENGTH OF TIME

- Consider how long the person would need to be alone to finish this job and then answer this question – Is that a reasonable time for that person to be alone?
- Is it reasonable or necessary for the person to be alone at all?
- Is it lawful for the person to be alone? For example, confined spaces or hazardous zones (e.g. cellar or chemical store, or remote area of course).

## TIME OF DAY

- Is there increased risk at certain times of day? (Burglaries or armed intruders or using plant and equipment in dark conditions on course).

## LOCATION

- Is the work proposed to be undertaken in a remote or isolated location?
- Does the work involve using a vehicle or other plant and equipment?
- Is the vehicle fitted with emergency supplies, such as adequate drinking water or a first aid kit?
- Will the person be required to leave their vehicle for long periods of time?
- If first aid equipment is vehicle-based, are arrangements in place to cover the person when they are away from the vehicle?
- Is the lone worker trained in first aid?

## NATURE OF THE WORK

- Is there adequate information and instruction for the person to be able to work alone safely?
- Is there a Safe Work Procedure in place?
- Is equipment and machinery maintained so that it is safe to use?
- Is there high-risk work involved? For example, heights, electricity, hazardous chemicals or equipment, working near waters, working on steep slopes, counting cash/money/takings?
- Is fatigue likely to increase risk (for example, with long hours driving a vehicle or operating machinery)?
- Is there an increased risk of exposure to violence or aggression when workers are alone?
- Can environmental factors affect the safety of the worker? For example, is the person likely to be exposed to extremes of temperature?

- Is there risk of attack by an animal, including reptiles, insects and water creatures?
- Is there an effective system for checking that all protective clothing and equipment and emergency equipment is packed and in good working order?
- Are there procedures for regular contact with the person who works alone?
- If the person is working inside a locked building, will emergency services be able to gain access if the person is unable to let them in?

## COMMUNICATION

- Does the lone worker have access to communication when working alone?
- Is voice communication essential for the safety of the person?
- Has the communication system been tested to ensure it will work properly in all situations?
- If communication systems are vehicle-based, are there arrangements in place to cover the person when they are away from the vehicle?
- If communication systems are office-based, are there arrangements in place to cover the person when they are away from their desk or the office?
- Is there a regular check-in system or protocol in place?

## COMPETENCIES AND CHARACTERISTICS

- Are you aware of anything in the person's ethnic, cultural or religious background that is likely to increase risk if the person works alone? For example, long periods

of fasting where the lack of food and water intake may increase the risk of ill health in very hot weather.

- Is there anything that would interfere with the person's ability to contact someone in an emergency?
- Are there factors relating to the person's age that are likely to increase risk?
- Is the person's general behaviour and level of maturity appropriate to allow them to work alone?
- Is the person physically capable of completing all work activity alone?
- Are you aware of a pre-existing medical condition that may increase risk?
- Is the person likely to make sound judgements about their own safety and about protecting the environment?
- Is the person likely to cope in unexpected and stressful situations?
- Has the person had training to prepare them for working alone and, where applicable, in remote locations? For example, training for first aid, relevant administrative procedures, vehicle breakdowns, communications systems, evacuation, armed intruder training?

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Is there anything else that applies to your situation that is likely to increase risk for the person who works alone?

**Good practice for managing remote workers should include having a schedule of regular contact or communication with the worker to someone who is in a position to raise an alarm if there is an accident or can do so if there is a communication failure**





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Ensuring a workplace investigation is balanced and procedurally fair is vital, especially if it ends up in a Fair Work claim



# Under investigation



So, you've received either a formal or informal complaint from an aggrieved employee or someone has witnessed an incident that may warrant further investigation. HR expert Vicki Crowe provides advice on how you should manage it.

**W**orkplace investigations appear to be on the increase in clubs. It doesn't have to be a serious allegation to warrant undertaking some sort of investigation process and if you decide you're going to undertake such a process yourself and not engage a third party, the following provides a comprehensive guide to running one that is procedurally fair.

There are four different parties involved in an investigation process;

- The aggrieved employee (the complainant);
- The investigator (internal or external person);
- The employee with allegations made against them (the respondent); and
- The witness(es).

The process must be confidential and should not involve anyone outside of the four parties.

Before you start the process, you should check the respondent's Employment Agreement, specifically the termination clauses for serious misconduct or clause that shows the conduct was a breach of contract. Also, check the club's employee manual or handbook for relevant policies of poor conduct.

If you have a Grievance Handling Policy and Complaints Procedure, ensure you follow each step stringently. When you begin your investigation, provide a copy of these two documents to each person you interview, along with any relevant policies from the employee manual. Keep in mind that it may end up before Fair Work so the investigation process must be robust and procedurally fair to all parties.

## INTERVIEW STEPS

Interview the complainant first and decide whether the allegations are serious enough to initiate a formal investigation. In some cases, a complainant will just want to be heard and will make an informal complaint that only requires a file note to be

put on the employee's file, or they may want to remain anonymous which can make an investigation process very difficult to proceed with.

Review the complainant's allegations and determine whether you have sufficient facts to proceed with a formal investigation. If you decide on a formal process, communicate the process to the complainant and the respondent only.

Once you have interviewed the complainant, provide a copy of the allegations to the respondent to respond too. Depending on the number of allegations, provide the respondent plenty of time to prepare their responses. For example, for between one to four allegations, allow three or four days. If there are several allegations, allow at least a week to 10 days. If the respondent wants an extension of time to respond, allow it and note their request.

When you conduct the interview with the respondent, ensure you let them know in writing and in advance that they are able to bring a support person to the meeting. After you have interviewed the respondent, interview any witnesses.

When all interviews have been concluded, review the statements. If there is evidence that is contradictory to either party, provide it to the relevant party and give them time to respond. There is no requirement to conduct another interview at this stage; the second response can be in writing.

## COMPLAINT OR ALLEGATION?

A complaint tends to be a broad sweeping statement that is often based on emotion. An allegation is more specific with details to back up the conduct or behaviour.

- An example of a complaint would be: "My manager always changes my shifts without checking that it is okay with me. It makes me feel like she is favouring other employees over me and that she doesn't like me."



- An example of an allegation would be: "On 17 June 2018 my manager raised her voice and said 'Your shift is cancelled tomorrow, it's not negotiable and I don't want to discuss further.' That same day she said, 'I have given your shift to Michael because he is a better worker than you.' Further, on 20 June 2018, my manager said to me, 'I am not interested in discussing any changes to the shifts because I was stupid and my opinion didn't matter'. This was witnessed by Jane and Trevor."

Often, the complainant is highly emotive when they are making their statement. It is important to ensure that you keep the interview calm and drill down to find the facts. Your questions need to be based on how, what, why and when.

As you go through the process, you are also assessing the credibility of all parties. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the evidence make logical sense?
- Is it subjective or objective?
- Are they trying to convince you that something happened?
- Is it supported by other reliable witnesses?
- Is it factual and specific?

In a situation where there are no witnesses and it comes down to a 'he said, she said' scenario, what you are looking for is the balance of probability. Consider past history of the people involved as there is often other situations that have occurred in the past.

## PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS

'Procedural fairness' is concerned with the procedures used by a decision maker, rather than the actual outcome reached. It requires a fair and proper procedure be used when making a decision.

In employment law, affording an employee procedural fairness means that you must give an employee a fair and reasonable opportunity to

respond to matters or evidence that you believe may justify terminating their employment.

Procedural fairness is sometimes called natural justice. If you fail to afford an employee procedural fairness before they are dismissed, your business could be exposed to a potential unfair dismissal claim. Issues that can impact on procedural fairness include;

- The investigation didn't follow internal policies and grievance handling procedures.
- The allegations provided to the respondent were too vague, making them hard to respond too.
- No support person was offered.
- The respondent was not informed of the potential termination consequences if proven.
- The investigator was biased or was a witness to the incident.
- The investigation took too long and caused the respondent to become stressed.

## INVESTIGATION REPORT

If your policy doesn't support it, there is no requirement to put a report together with the findings. If you are required to compile a report, it must be detailed and accurate to withstand scrutiny by external parties like Fair Work.

A good report contains a summary of the allegations, a summary of the findings (proven, not proven, partly proven), a list of who was interviewed, the interview process, a credibility assessment and any issues that arose during the interviews, like capacity or delays by either party.

Following the above steps will ensure a robust process that is fair on all parties and more importantly will stand up should Fair Work become involved further down the line.

**Editor's Note:** If you have any HR management topics that you would like Vicki Crowe to address, please email editor Brett Robinson [brett@agcsa.com.au](mailto:brett@agcsa.com.au) or call the AGCSA on (03) 9548 8600. 🙌

“If you fail to afford an employee procedural fairness before they are dismissed, your business could be exposed to a potential unfair dismissal claim.”

– VICKI CROWE, PGA OF AUSTRALIA

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Royal Wellington was the second course in New Zealand to achieve GEO certification and is a leader for other golf courses wanting to contribute to the environment and sustainability



PHOTO: ROYAL WELLINGTON GC



Environmental management expert Kate

Torgersen took time during the Australasian Turfgrass Conference to visit the recently GEO-certified Royal Wellington Golf Club.

**A**fter returning from the inaugural Australasian Turfgrass Conference in Wellington, New Zealand, it's a perfect time to showcase Royal Wellington Golf Club and the achievement it recently made in attaining certification from the GEO Foundation.

For those who may not be familiar, GEO stands for Golf Environment Organisation. The GEO Foundation is a not-for-profit entity dedicated to helping golf to deliver and be recognised for having a positive impact on people and nature. GEO provides three programmes and also administers golf's sustainability assurance – GEO Certified® – available for golf facility operations, developments and renovations.

Royal Wellington was the second course in New Zealand to achieve GEO certification and is a leader for other golf courses wanting to contribute to the environment and sustainability.

Royal Wellington is situated 25 kilometres north of the Wellington CBD and provides a parkland transition between residential areas of the Upper Hutt township and the Hutt River. It blends well with the surrounding environment largely due to its stands of podocarp (conifer) forest, mix of native and exotic trees, impressive wetlands and waterways that meander through the site. The introduction of larger, naturalised areas that complement the beautiful presentation of the course occurred throughout the remodelling of the course from 2011-2013.

The course has an operating plan that sets out a vision, principles and practices that is updated regularly and presented to new maintenance employees on commencement. Some aspects included in the plan are locations of no mow zones, identifying suitable buffer zones from waterways, waste treatment options for washing machinery and grass clippings, just to name a few.

The certification includes all aspects of the club. Other departments have contributed to the achievement by investing in water-saving technologies, such as dual flushing toilets, and

transitioning into energy saving technologies, such as changing to LED lights and installing sensor lights. This is exactly what GEO searches for when certifying clubs.

While attending the conference, I caught up with Royal Wellington superintendent John Spraggs who was more than happy to discuss the GEO certification process.

**How did you find out about GEO?** I had seen endorsement from The R&A in a newsletter and enquired about using the GEO Foundation's 'OnCourse' as a tracking template programme. We commenced with OnCourse, then that model changed and I left it in limbo until I saw it again in The R&A newsletter. We reconnected with Will Bowden from Auckland-based company SSDM who guided me/us through the process.

**Why did Royal Wellington GC want to become GEO certified?** Royal Wellington was the first club in New Zealand to get 'Royal' status (there is currently only one other) and it's important that we are seen as driving the way forward with things like this. It started out as a nice feel. I wanted to be seen to be doing good things to the environment as there are many negatives associated around what we do. GEO appealed as it offers a whole of operation report not just a focus on agronomics.

**What sectors from the club were involved in the process?** Involvement in the process was from all departments, from the CEO to office staff, kitchen staff, pro-shop, operations and course maintenance staff. All departments jumped in on the process from light bulb replacement through to altering pest control strategies.

**Do any staff have to be specially trained for the certification?** No, not at all. I think we have subconsciously been working in caring for the environment and have been sustainable for a long





time. We just needed to get that compiled into reports that ticked the right boxes to say that we were of a certifiable standard.

**Was the process difficult?** I thought the process was very good. We had assistance from Will Bowden (SSDM) and he helped guide us through the processes. The only challenge was gaining numbers from Golf Operations personnel around their division. I can't speak highly enough of GEO and would love to see NZ Golf take it on board and offer to all golf facilities.

**Are your members aware of the certification? Are they supportive?** Certainly the committee is. Members are aware, however, we should be promoting it more throughout the club and highlighting the commitment we have made.

**Were you able to gain any financial support (e.g.: grants) from any stakeholders?** No, this offers no incentives from funders or local councils, but it should be recognised by them. Perhaps in the future there may be an option for us.

**How long does the certification last? Will the club re-apply?** Certification lasts three years from memory and yes we will continue to renew it.

**How much native vegetation do you have and what projects have you undertaken?** We have approximately 3ha of native areas that are regenerating. We have no spray zones, introduced 28 beehives and have 72 stoat (introduced mammal pest) traps spread around the course all in the hope of helping our environment. We have what is thought to be the oldest kahikatea tree in the greater Wellington region in the centre of one of our forest areas. It is thought to be 500 years young – quite majestic. I have thoughts to creating a board walk into it to minimise foot pressure on its roots.

**What has Royal Wellington gained by becoming certified?** I believe that it has opened our eyes by being more conscience of what we are doing. We



were already doing a lot right, but GEO certification just proves that we were. We are also currently working with Audubon International to get certified with them as well. Audubon is more course-related. It's a lot of fun, but like everything you've got to find the time to devote to it to do it properly. My aim over the next 12 months is to complete that process and hopefully become the second course in the country behind Cape Kidnappers to be Audubon certified.

Kristine Kerr from Kura Golf Course Design was the GEO verifier for Royal Wellington. Kerr visited the site throughout the process and submitted a verification report last September. In her report she stated; "The facility is well maintained and on the golf course there is a balance between the high expectation for playing experience and natural/naturalised areas – large stands of podocarp forest, streams with buffer zones and native riparian edge treatments... Royal Wellington takes its water use and care seriously and engaged one of New Zealand's leading environmental consultancies to provide a 'Stream Care Plan' for the waterways."

A copy of the full report can be viewed through the GEO website <https://sustainable.golf/>. Congratulations to all involved at Royal Wellington in achieving GEO certification; it is a testament to their dedication in providing a sustainable future for one of New Zealand's most historic courses. 🙌

**Royal Wellington Golf Club blends well with the surrounding environment largely due to its stands of podocarp (conifer) forest, mix of native and exotic trees, impressive wetlands and waterways that meander through the site**



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The Berri Golf Club is a parklands style course which has utilised the natural Mallee surroundings, with most holes running across a natural sand dune system

# Berri Golf Club, SA

After starting his turf management career as an apprentice at Berri Golf Club, Ryan Swanbury now finds himself in charge of this important community hub.

**Berri superintendent Ryan Swanbury (left) and apprentice Jarryd Roberts**



**Superintendent:** Ryan Swanbury (37).

**Nickname:** Swanny.

**Family:** Fiancé Amanda and Shelby (Maltese tshitsu).

**Period as a superintendent:** Three years and 10 months.

**Association involvement:** AGCSA and SAGCSA member since 2015.

**Turf management career:** Berri Golf Club (apprenticeship); Central Irrigation (irrigation technician); Renmark Golf Club (assistant superintendent); and Berri Golf Club (assistant superintendent and now superintendent, 2014 to present).

**Qualifications:** Certificate IV in Horticulture and currently halfway through a degree in agricultural science.

**Major hobbies/past-times outside of turf management:** I do play golf and have so since I was 10. I also have a couple of dirt bikes, ski boat etc... there is always something to do here as there is so much open space. It is quiet out here in the country so fame does not visit very often, although

I did win the Berri club championship in 2016 and played golf at Pebble Beach in 2015 which was a great experience.

**Where in Australia is Berri Golf Club and what is the region known for?** Berri is situated on the Murray River just over the border as you enter South Australia from the eastern states. Berri is part of the greater Riverland region with an overall population of 35,000 and five golf courses (they include Loxton, Renmark, Waikerie and Barmera). The Riverland is a major horticultural region famous for national brands such as Berri fruit juices and Banrock station wines. The Riverland is the largest wine region in Australia with the largest winery in the Southern Hemisphere – Berri Estates – which exports 100 million litres of wine annually. The club was founded in 1924 which makes it due for its 100th birthday in six years' time.

**Give us a bit about your background and how you came to be a superintendent.** My family background is in production horticulture so working with plants, the soil and operating machinery equipment was already quite normal to me from a young age. My father introduced me to golf when I was young which led to the natural progression into the turf industry due to my interest in the sport.

**Who were some of your early mentors and what did your early postings teach you about the industry and turf management?** I guess I was mentored early on the family property from my grandfather which gave me a good foundation for everything I pursued since. Kym Traeger (ex-Berri Golf Club superintendent for many years) played a big role in learning the fundamentals of turf management during my apprenticeship.

Kym was a tough but fair superintendent who always created a good working environment with

his occasional antics. It was common to leave work sometime in the evening on a Friday once the fridge was empty. Kym was made a life member of the club when he retired after around 35 years at the one club and he still drops in occasionally to offer a hand.

**After your apprenticeship you worked for an irrigation firm – why the move?** Yes, working for Central Irrigation was a good experience for me as I worked on some large projects. Among them was the complete installation at Royal Adelaide Golf Club and other projects on golf courses and sports fields all over South Australia which exposed me to different irrigation methods, equipment and technology.

I have a specific interest in precision growing and the use of modern technology and growing systems which is why I am currently studying a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Adelaide University and is something I will pursue in the future. Harking back to the earlier question on mentors, I gained a lot of knowledge from Richard McMichael during my time at Central Irrigation.

**You then headed back to golf course management and eventually found yourself back at Berri.** After spending around five years in Adelaide, I decided urban life was not for me and returned home knowing Kym was due for retirement. I thought coming back would be a good opportunity to progress my career and I was lucky enough to secure a job as an assistant superintendent at Renmark Golf Club for a couple of years. I used my time there as a stepping stone to refresh my skills in turf management. Working alongside superintendent at the time Matt Milner (who now works in NSW) gave me a fresh new approach at looking at turf issues. Most of the other superintendents in the Riverland region have been in their positions for 20-plus years, therefore opportunities at these clubs don't present very often, but when Kym retired I was fortunate enough to take over.

**What do you like most about being the superintendent at Berri GC?** I guess it is satisfying when you have the course in top condition before major events after the challenges you overcome to get it that way. It is a fairly tight knit community in the Riverland and I guess managing one of the regional golf courses allows you to do something good for the community, helping to promote tourism and visitors. So when we hear positive comments coming out of the metro area from visitors, it has an overall positive effect on everyone here.

**Give us an overview of Berri GC and some of its unique characteristics from a course perspective?** The Berri Golf Club is a parklands style course which has utilised the natural Mallee surroundings, with most holes running across the



natural sand dune system created by the prevailing winds from the west.

On most of the longer holes you are hitting up the sand dunes with the greens not visible from the tee. The Mallee trees definitely add to the challenge if you miss a fairway as playing shots through them can be almost impossible at times. Other natives have been planted over the years adding to the overall natural aesthetics by providing some variation in foliage colour. Many of the greens are the original push ups built in 1971, with around half being reconstructed into slightly elevated greens with greenside bunkers.

**What are some of the unique features about Berri GC from a turf management perspective?**

Growing good turf out in the semi-arid zones of Australia can be challenging as the climate is so harsh. The native soil is infertile and does not hold water, evapotranspiration rates are incredibly high during the summer months and you can literally watch turf which is watered to its saturation point begin to wilt when we get a hot northerly wind.

**Is it an easy/hard facility to manage? What's the most challenging aspect?**

I guess the most challenging aspect is operating a golf course on such a low budget. You need to be constantly using your ingenuity to solve all sorts of problems. Summer can be quite a challenge as we get heatwaves with temperatures reaching up to 46 degrees which keeps you on your toes.

**Take us through your turf management operations there. What changes have you implemented in terms of managing the course during your tenure?**

When I first arrived at Berri GC, the irrigation system was not automated and due to the age of the system parts were failing. The system was hydraulically controlled with Hardy Century Plus valves which were not holding hydraulic pressure anymore. I decided to reset the whole system for reliability by replacing all 128 valves with Toro P-220 valves and rewired the whole system back to the existing Osmac satellites, converting the internals to electric.

**Some of the Berri greens are the original push ups nearing 50 years old, with the club identifying a number to be reconstructed in the future**

**The Berri greens comprise a Seaside bentgrass mix. Fairways and tee tops are a mix of kikuyu and couchgrass**





can cause acidification in the subsoil making toxic elements like aluminium available to the plants and contaminate subterranean watercourses.

**What are some of the major challenges facing Berri GC from both a turf and general club management perspective?** There is the ongoing issue of membership numbers. The Berri Golf Club had less than 100 members when I started here which has gradually increased. This problem seems to be correlated with the demographics of a given region which can be out of the club's control.

Success of the club has largely been tied to the success of the region which seems to vary as exporting of fruit, wine and grapes can change as world markets change. Golf can be a luxury to some people and this has a flow-on effect to course conditioning as there are not the people around to become members which affects your overall budget.

**Outline any major course improvement works recently completed and/or highlight any ongoing or future works that the club is undertaking.** We have been actively applying for Department of Sport & Recreation grants over the past couple of years to seek funds to upgrade our poor existing practice facilities. We have a very popular junior golf programme at Berri but they currently have to practice on our 10th fairway. The club has identified the growth in junior golf as being crucial for the future viability of the club.

We are also currently reshaping the internals of our bunkers as they have become irregular shaped over time and removing any colloidal clay from irrigation water to improve drainage and replacing with washed white sand sourced locally. We have also identified a number of the original push up greens (now 47-years-old) to be reconstructed which will occur once the club is in a financial position to do so.

**Water is obviously a critical issue for any golf course. How is Berri GC faring in the water management stakes?** The club went through a tough period during the last decade as water was restricted to Murray River users, with the water switched off on fairways. Since that period the club has connected to the council recycled

◀ **The club is currently reshaping the internals of bunkers as they have become irregular shaped over time and replacing with washed white sand sourced locally**

We are now in the process of a five-year plan to replace all of the fairway sprinklers with Toro B Series. The existing Rainspray impact drivers are decades old, with the brass jets eaten away and too brittle to repair and therefore are presently providing a highly variable precipitation rate and spray pattern. We are two years into this plan which is already paying dividends, with improved coverage and accuracy in water management.

**What other maintenance changes do you want to introduce/plan on introducing?** Once we retire our current greens mower, I will use it to cut tees slightly shorter. We currently cut tees with our fairway mower which is not practical. We are also currently investigating methods of monitoring plant stress on top of our current method of monitoring water use which will hopefully add some improved accuracy surrounding our water usage.

**Any special environmental considerations that you have to incorporate into the management of the course?** Any changes we make to the local environment are always taken into consideration for any adverse impacts. The main change we make to our local environment is the use of recycled water and therefore the quality is monitored. The available recycled irrigation water is high in organic compounds and metals, therefore the use of such water can be an issue as movement of minerals in the native soil here is high. Excess leaching of nitrogen

**The Berri greens are renovated straight after the club's Open tournament in September with 12mm hollow tines. During autumn Swanbury also uses 12mm solid tines to help improve drainage going into winter**



water scheme allowing us to access around 100 megalitres of recycled water annually for fairways and tees. Murray River water is used on our greens all year round.

**The weather and climate is always a great leveller for a course superintendent. How has Mother Nature treated the course in recent times?** This year has been extremely dry with only 19.4mm YTD (mid-May). We also saw a record highest average temperature throughout April 2018 – 1.5 degrees above the mean. Pumping costs definitely become an issue with our current electricity market.

**The one product I couldn't manage my course without is...** wetting agents. An obvious choice especially in our climate as they reduce the amount of weekend visits during the summer months.

**What are some pros and cons of being a regional-based superintendent?** We do not get the high course traffic that our metro counterparts receive, therefore accessibility to the course is better. The distance between suppliers can sometimes be a challenge, especially when you require chemicals or spare parts in a hurry.

**Are expectations of course presentation and conditioning any less than those placed on your metropolitan counterparts?** There is a balancing act when deciding how much to spend on the resources and getting return on investment so the club may remain viable. This is the main determining factor on course conditioning, but overall I think members/visitors receive good value for the price they pay.

**Do you have to be more resourceful as a regional-based superintendent?** Coming from an agricultural background, resourcefulness just comes with the territory. We do not have spare mowers therefore at times you just have to do what is necessary to get the job done, whether that is fabricating parts or borrowing mowers from neighbouring clubs if your equipment breaks down. In general, you just find a way.

**What are some of the more unusual requests/things you have had to do as a superintendent of a regional course?** Golf courses are public spaces so you never know what you may find. I have come across people fornicating when checking irrigation late at night and chased people across town after riding motorcycles on the course. There's never a dull moment...

**Do you use volunteers to assist with the management of the course? How important are volunteers to a course like yours?** Often our volunteers are retired yet they are still highly skilled and we try to use them according to their

strengths. We have a retired mechanic who often helps make repairs to equipment, a member who can build parts on his metal lathe (particularly for our older equipment) and other guys who manage the trees on the course. Everyone generally pitches in when required so staff can focus on growing and maintaining the turf surfaces.

**If you could change one thing about your job as a regional superintendent what would it be and why?** I would hire a secretary, which is fairly self-explanatory!

**How important are the relationships you have with other course supers/trade reps?** Because of our share equipment agreement with other Riverland clubs, local supers keep in contact and occasionally bounce things off each other. Often when we have machine breakdowns we interchange spare parts which can get us out of trouble at times as the majority of parts come out of Melbourne and can take a few days to arrive. Trade reps have been helpful getting the most out of the products they sell and the best techniques when using them.

**What have you got in your shed?** We currently have a 2005 Toro 6500, 2005 Toro 3150, 2012 Toro 360, 1987 Toro 322, 1998 Toro 328, 2018 John Deere Loader, 2012 John Deere Z track, 1980s Sand Pro 14 and an International 674. We have a share arrangement with the Barmera, Loxton and Waikerie golf clubs which includes a Redexim Vertidrain and Speedbrush, Dakota turf tender, Sisis Rotorake 1000 and Kubota 20hp tractor.

**What's your favourite piece of machinery and what's next on the hit list?** I have grown quite an attachment to our fairway mower. I learnt to cut fairways on it as an apprentice back in 2005 when the machine was brand new. It's still going strong with 5700 hours on the clock. I guess you could say I am very accustomed to its seat. We have a very old fleet and the plan is to replace our fairway and greens mower in the next couple of years as both have clocked up some serious hours (the greens mower has 4200 hours).

**Do you have any interesting pieces of machinery?** Our Sand Pro 14 is an old 1980's model which we kept alive by retrofitting with a new Honda GX engine which may keep it going for another 30 years, who knows?!

**Do you think regional/country superintendents have a better work-life balance than their metro counterparts?** Being in a regional area definitely has its benefits – it's a five minute drive to work and you are lucky if you see a car on the road. You can leave work and have your boat in the river within half an hour, so there is little to complain about in that respect.



**The club is currently two years into a five-year plan to replace all of the existing fairway sprinklers which is making a big difference to distribution uniformity and quality of the surfaces**

“I guess the most challenging aspect is operating a golf course on such a low budget. You need to be constantly using your ingenuity to solve all sorts of problems. Summer can be quite a challenge as we get heatwaves with temperatures reaching up to 46 degrees which certainly keeps you on your toes.”

– Ryan Swanbury, Berri GC



With temperatures ranging from minus 6°C to 46°C throughout the year, combined with native soils that are infertile and don't have great nutrient or water-holding properties, Swanbury has his work cut out managing his playing surfaces

**Favourite spot on your course?** I actually enjoy our 2nd hole which is a great little par five with a double dogleg across two valleys. Also, during the summer months a lot of the local fauna come in to use this hole as a refuge from our surrounding arid environment which is satisfying to see.

**Best advice you have received?** Kym Traeger advised me to always keep a knife and a screwdriver in the door pocket of the work ute – it's amazing the uses you find for them.

**What is the most challenging aspect of a superintendent's role today?** Definitely the diversity of the role. Most professions specialise in a specific skill set, yet we perform tasks normally set for different roles, especially in a regional area. I think it is important to be self-critical which allows you to be aware of where you can improve. Always evaluate your methods and how subtle changes can improve the systems you have.

**Most pleasing/rewarding moment at Berri?** The club has been quite progressive during my time here. We have made improvements to the irrigation system and it is satisfying to see the course slowly evolving as a result. 🌱

## AT A GLANCE – BERRI GOLF CLUB, SA

**Course specs:** Men's par 71, 6070m and ladies par 73, 5262m. Greens are the original Seaside bentgrass mix. Fairways and tee tops are a mix of kikuyu and couchgrass.

**Members/rounds:** 130/5000.

**Major events:** Berri Hotel Open (14-16 September) and Berri Veterans Classic Week (18-22 June).

**Annual course budget:** \$65,000 excluding wages.

**Staff structure:** Two staff – superintendent Ryan Swanbury and apprentice Jarryd Roberts. We also we have course volunteers who complete jobs such as tree and debris clean up, rough cutting, equipment maintenance etc.

**Climate/rainfall:** Southern temperate climate, winter dominant rainfall pattern, temperature range between minus 6°C and 46°C and a highly variable annual rainfall distribution with an annual mean of 262mm.

**Soil types:** Dominantly a calcareous soil, high sand content and limestone present throughout the profile with good drainage yet poor water and nutrient holding capacity. Native soil is in the 8-8.5 pH range. Calcareous soil is common to South Australia in the semi-arid regions as the limestone has blown over from Western Australia for millions of years and due to the low rainfall has not entirely leached through the profile.

**Cutting heights/regimes:** Greens cut three times weekly at 3mm. Fairways and tees cut weekly at 11mm, roughs at 40mm.

**Water sources/irrigation system:** Total allocation is 50 per cent River Murray allocation, 50 per cent council effluent scheme B Class. Irrigation system comprises four Grundfos CR90's and Toro Site Pro control system with Osmac satellites. PVC mainlines and laterals with everything watered in

a block system from electric Toro P-220 valves. Green sprinklers are Toro 25mm 800 series. Fairway sprinklers are currently Rainspray impacts being changed to Toro B series.

**Renovations:** We renovate virtually straight after our Open tournament in September with 12mm hollow tines. I use the opportunity to get some liquid humus into the holes with any applications of secondary nutrients required. Once that is complete we topdress using our Speedbrush to work the material into the holes which works reasonably well. During autumn we use 12mm solid tines to help improve drainage going into winter. We also try and groom monthly if time permits, with the occasional dusting when possible to aid in thatch management.

**Major disease pressures:** Disease pressure is quite low with our dry climate. Dollar spot is probably the most common disease we see but never seems to be aggressive. Curative fungicides are used to combat outbreaks with preventative maintenance based on using high K fertiliser, maintaining suitable moisture levels and thatch management.

**Nutrition management:** In the past two years I have introduced prokaryotic organisms to the greens at spring renovation time with a liquid humus with any required secondary nutrients to enable good soil structure for a longer period, also giving a good steady flow of nitrogen throughout the summer period with the microbial conversion to plant available molecules. An NPK prill is used upon observation of turf health usually around every six weeks at other times. Our tees and fairways are only fed nutrients from the recycled water which has much of what the turf requires.

A retrofitted Honda GX engine and this 1980s model Sand Pro is as good as new



# PURE DISTINCTION BENTGRASS

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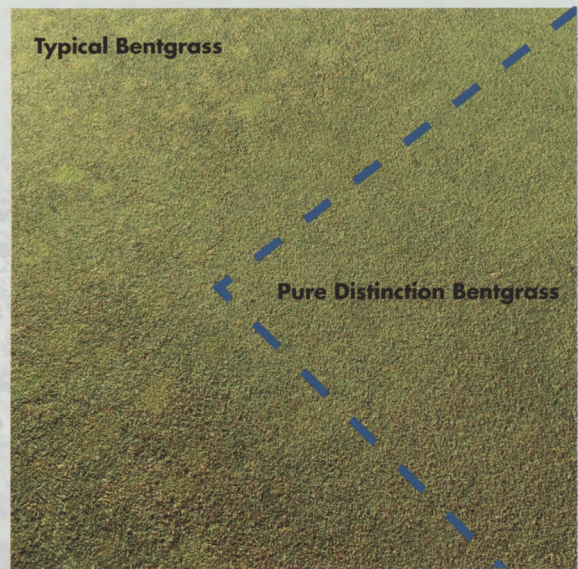
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*Glenn Stuart, Director Of Courses - Peninsula Kingswood*



Poa invasion in typical bentgrass.

27/10/2016				
Averages	Quality	Density	Colour	% Poa annua
<b>Pure Distinction</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Penn A4*	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0
Penn G2	5.3	5.7	6.0	13.3
Crystal Blue Links	5.7	5.8	6.0	15.0
MacKenzie	5.5	6.0	6.0	15.0
LSD (P<0.05)	0.7	0.7	0.2	6.2

\*Note: There was only one viable plot of PennA4  
Independently trialed Keysborough Golf Course, VIC by John Neylan

**Backed by independent trial results.**

For further information contact  
**Matt Merrick** on +61 413 442 811 or  
your local Nuturf representative on 1800 631 008  
[www.heritageseeds.com.au](http://www.heritageseeds.com.au)



Exteris Stressgard turf fungicide is a next-generation fungicide containing a unique combination of two active ingredients and two proprietary formulation technologies

## BAYER LAUNCHES NEW TURF FUNGICIDE EXTERIS STRESSGARD



**A** GCSA Silver Partner Bayer launched the newest addition to its Stressgard Formulation Technology (FT) family – turf fungicide Exteris Stressgard – at the recent Australasian Turfgrass Conference and Trade Exhibition in Wellington, New Zealand.

Exteris Stressgard is a next-generation fungicide containing a unique combination of two active ingredients and two proprietary formulation technologies, delivering preventative and fast curative control of a broad spectrum of damaging turf diseases as well as improved plant health and turf quality. The unique formulation of Exteris Stressgard delivers a highly flexible product that turf managers can apply with confidence throughout the year and under a wide variety of environmental conditions.

“It’s a constant challenge to maintain peak playability throughout the season, especially when you’re fighting diseases, plant health and player perceptions,” says Bayer turf market manager James Royal. “That understanding is the reason we continually work to harness the latest innovations in plant health and formulation technology to develop industry-leading solutions.”

Exteris Stressgard contains a new and exciting active ingredient for the turf market – fluopyram – utilising succinate dehydrogenase inhibition (SDHI) as its mode of action. Combined with the proven control of trifloxystrobin, Exteris Stressgard offers both systemic movement and translaminar activity, delivering broad-spectrum control of diseases like dollar spot, brown patch, fusarium and helminthosporium.

Exteris Stressgard is the first Bayer turf product in Australia to combine Leaf-Cote™ and Stressgard FT. Australian superintendents who have trialled Exteris Stressgard reported thorough and uniform coverage of the leaf surface which is important to ensure rapid curative knockdown of damaging fungal mycelium and to maximise residual disease control. With Leaf-Cote technology in Exteris Stressgard, turf managers will have a reliable fungicide that stays where it’s needed and has the versatility to work when unanticipated climatic changes occur.

Exteris Stressgard, together with Signature Stressgard, Interface Stressgard and Reserve Stressgard, expands the Bayer Stressgard FT portfolio in Australia to four products. Exteris Stressgard is available from Bayer’s turf agency network in a 5L container and has a labelled application rate of 10L per hectare. Recommended spray volume is 400L-800L water per hectare.

**For more information on Exteris Stressgard visit [www.environmentalscience.bayer.com.au/](http://www.environmentalscience.bayer.com.au/) and visit the Turf Management Products section.**

### NU ROLES FOR MELVILLE, PAGET

AGCSA Gold Partner Nuturf Australia announced a reshuffle of its senior management staff at the start of July with Andrew Melville appointed as new national sales and operations manager and Craig Paget as new NSW state manager.

Melville joined Nuturf in 2006 as a territory manager and quickly established himself as a critical member of the team and through hard work and commitment soon stood out for advancement. In 2009 he was promoted to the position of senior territory manager in NSW and in 2012 was further promoted to the role of NSW state manager.

“Andrew has shown himself to be an effective, collaborative leader who lives the values we as a company aspire to uphold,” says Nuturf business manager Peter Schumacher. “He has a deep knowledge of turf agronomy, the turf marketplace,

products, suppliers and importantly he is a fierce advocate for our customers and their businesses.”

Paget joined Nuturf in a technical services role from Pacific Dunes Golf Club before transitioning out into a territory manager’s role. Over the past five years Paget has established himself as one of the best technical and agronomic professionals in the NSW turf industry.

“Craig’s turf experience and technical agronomic expertise in New South Wales is at the highest level possible and he will not only be a great leader to the NSW team but will continue to set new standards for support to our customers and our suppliers in NSW market,” says Schumacher.

**Contact details for Melville and Paget remain unchanged – [andrew.melville@nuturf.com.au](mailto:andrew.melville@nuturf.com.au) or on mobile 0418 146 810 and [craig.paget@nuturf.com.au](mailto:craig.paget@nuturf.com.au) or on mobile 0419 476 827.**



**Nuturf’s Andrew Melville (top) and Craig Paget (bottom)**





## MOSCH JOINS SYNGENTA TURF & LANDSCAPE TEAM

AGCSA Gold Partner Syngenta announced in June that it had appointed Dean Mosch to the position of WA/Queensland territory sales manager. Based in Brisbane, Mosch is now responsible for supporting the Syngenta portfolio of products in both states, working with the company's partners and with turf and landscape managers.

Mosch comes to Syngenta with 12 years' experience having worked with a number of Syngenta partners in South Australia, Victoria and more recently in Queensland. Beginning his turf management career at Pacific Golf Club, Mosch's previous work has included working with turf managers and assisting with agronomic solutions.

"We are very fortunate to have Dean join the business as we look forward to working closely with our customers and commercial partners in assisting turf managers providing the best possible surfaces that they can," says Syngenta business manager Paul Jackson. "With Dean's appointment we now have a team of five full-time staff dedicated to servicing the turf and landscape business in Australia and New Zealand."

**Mosch can be contacted on 0427 259 826 or email [dean.mosch@syngenta.com](mailto:dean.mosch@syngenta.com).**



## GLOBE SECURES STRACHAN

On the eve of the Australasian Turfgrass Conference, AGCSA Silver Partner Globe Growing Solutions announced that it had bolstered its Western Australia team with the appointment of highly experienced former superintendent Trevor Strachan as territory manager.

Strachan arrives at Globe with over 30 years' experience as a superintendent and having managed, maintained and constructed some of the best golf courses in Australia. During his career to date Strachan has worked at the likes of Melville Glades, Gosnells, The Western Australian, The Vines Resort, The Links at Kennedy Bay, Port Bouvard Country Club (The Cut), Lake Karrynup Country Club, sales and consulting services Woodlands and most recently Mt Lawley Golf Club. In 2014 he was bestowed the WA Golf Industry Recognition Award, the WA industry's highest honour.

"Trevor's turf experience and technical agronomic expertise in Western Australia is at the highest level possible," says Jeff Bowtell, national sales and operations manager for Globe Growing Solutions. "He is not only a great addition to the Globe team, but will set a new standard for turf representation in the west, as well as being a great resource for our customers and all turf practitioners in the West Australian market."

**Strachan can be contacted on 0438 702 200 or email [trevor.strachan@globeaus.com.au](mailto:trevor.strachan@globeaus.com.au).**

## TURFCARE AUSTRALIA EXPANDS WA, NSW OPERATIONS

Turfcare Australia announced a raft of new appointments to the company in early July, including Albie Leggett, Caine James and Gregory Jackson to its teams in NSW and WA.

In the west, Turfcare Australia expanded its operations there last July with Stephen Dartnall heading up operations. A year on, Dartnall has been joined by respected turf manager Gregory Jackson who has been in the industry for over 18 years.

In NSW, earlier this year Turfcare Australia appointed the experienced Scott Armstrong to its team. He is now joined by the equally experienced and respected duo of Caine James and Albie Leggett. Leggett's experience includes a total of more than 26 years ranging from roles as a turf manager and product development specialist where he was responsible for running and evaluating field trials and pesticide development. His most recent role was with Syngenta.

James arrives at Turfcare Australia in the newly created role of Business Manager and brings with him 26 years' of experience in the turf industry. James has spent the past 14 years working in sales, product development and distribution.

Contact details for Turfcare Australia's new team members are: NSW (Caine James – 0499 210 301 or email [caine@turfcareaus.com.au](mailto:caine@turfcareaus.com.au); Albie Leggett – 0499 211 302 or email [albie.leggett@turfcareaus.com.au](mailto:albie.leggett@turfcareaus.com.au); and Scott Armstrong – 0452 459 133 or email [scott@turfcareaus.com.au](mailto:scott@turfcareaus.com.au)); WA (Steve Dartnall – 0417 986 285 or email [stephen@turfcareaus.com.au](mailto:stephen@turfcareaus.com.au); Greg Jackson – 0499 211 303 or email [greg@turfcareaus.com.au](mailto:greg@turfcareaus.com.au))



**New Turfcare Australia recruits Albie Leggett (top), Caine James (bottom left) and Greg Jackson**



## HAMBLETON, LANE HELP LIVING TURF EXPAND INTO WA

Living Turf has joined forces with established Western Australian turf professionals Danny Hambleton and Jeff Lane. The duo has joined Living Turf with the intention of continuing their service to the WA turf industry with the added resources in people and technical backing from Living Turf.

"I have known Danny and Jeff as industry colleagues for over 20 years, and have long dreamed of the opportunity for us to work together," says Living Turf managing director Rob Cooper. "This geographic expansion represents a major growth ring in the life of our business, with WA being a sophisticated and innovative

turf marketplace in its own right. Our intention is to enable Danny and Jeff to continue their normal mode of operation while, over time, introducing them to products, services and digital tools that have become our trademark."

**Lane can be contacted on 0409 991 133 or by email [jlane@livingturf.com](mailto:jlane@livingturf.com). Hambleton can be contacted on 0409 991 122 or email [dhambleton@livingturf.com](mailto:dhambleton@livingturf.com).**

## PORTER BACK AT ETP-TURF

Holmesglen TAFE's loss is ETP-Turf's gain after Jim Porter agreed to take on a full-time role as senior turf consultant with the Melbourne-based company from mid-July. Porter was one of the founding consultants at ETP-Turf from 2009 to 2012 before he undertook a lifelong desire to be an educator in the role of lecturer/coordinator – turf programs at Holmesglen TAFE's Waverley Campus.

**Porter can be contacted on 0418 587 916 or [jim.porter@etpturf.com.au](mailto:jim.porter@etpturf.com.au).**



**NZGCSA Parkland Excellence Award recipient John Spraggs (centre) with Craig Johnston (Parklands, left) and NZGCSA president Steve Hodson**

**W**ow, what a conference! If that's what we get when we combine the skills of the Kiwi and Aussie turfies collectively, then bring it on again! The inaugural Australasian Turfgrass Conference in Wellington in June was a fantastic week of camaraderie, upskilling and all round great banter and fun.

The week started with the Toro AGCSA Golf Championship at Royal Wellington Golf Club with visitors treated to a day of very mixed weather. Despite the fickle conditions, some good numbers were crunched, but unfortunately the ANZAC challenge saw the visitors from the West Island convincingly beat their New Zealand counterparts. A great day and evening to kick start the week.

Monday saw the Jacobsen workshops well subscribed, while others took the opportunity to register and get a feel of Wellington. The city proved to be a superb choice to host the conference, as did the choice of the TSB Arena as the base for the week. The easy walking city proved friendly and accommodating and provided a multitude of splendid socialising establishments for the after-hours.

Monday night saw the Syngenta Presidents Dinner attended by 340 people which I understand to be the biggest conference dinner yet. Throughout the night many of our number were recognised for their efforts in our industry. The NZGCSA Parkland Excellence Award, sponsored by Parkland Products, was duly won by **John Spraggs** from Royal Wellington and deservedly recognises his overall excellence and contribution over many years there.

The NZGCSA Environment Award, supported by PGG Wrightson Turf, was won by the Remuera Golf Club and course superintendent **Spencer Cooper**. Spencer has shown a genuine passion for the environment and is constantly striving to do things better environmentally and has the whole of his club supporting his endeavours. Congratulations to both

recipients and a big thank you to both sponsors for their continued support of the awards and the industry overall.

Throughout the week there were some amazing sessions to attend with something for everyone regardless of their level of expertise. Motivational speaker and NZ Commonwealth Games gold medallist rower **Rob Hamill** provided an inspirational address, sharing the highs and lows throughout his life and how he faced family tragedy and came out the other side a stronger and more driven man. The trade exhibition was well structured and enabled delegates to keep up to date with both new products and services. Trades were kept busy with a constant stream of visitors and enquiries.

A talking point of the conference for a long time will be the Simplot Partners Farewell Bash. Some 400 attendees were treated to a night of friendship and fun over a few craft beers at Wharewaka. The highlight undoubtedly was the two Maori performers who after displaying their taiaha skills proceeded to teach six unsuspecting Aussies how to do the haka, among them AGCSA CEO **Mark Unwin** and VGCSA president **Barry Proctor**. It was a spectacle to behold and side-splitting laughter for all!

The years of planning to get the conference over here certainly paid off and it was great to see it so well supported from both sides of the 'ditch'. The AGCSA Board has been a pleasure to work with and my personal thanks must go to AGCSA events manager **Simone Staples** for her professionalism and patience over these last few years. To all those that attended the conference, we hope you enjoyed the week and to our visitors from Australia we hope you enjoyed Wellington and had the chance to indulge in a bit of what New Zealand has to offer. We look forward to catching up with you all again.

During the conference, the NZGCSA conducted its AGM. As written previously, **Brendon O'Hara** had resigned from the board after joining PGG Wrightson Turf from Nelson Golf Club. All existing board members were available for re-election and were re-elected together with new board members **Rick Machray** (Arrowtown GC) and **Spencer Cooper** (Remuera GC). The full NZGCSA board is:

- **President:** Steve Hodson (Westown GC)
- **Executive:** Greg Swafford (Titirangi GC), Jason Perkins (Omanu GC), Sam Keats (Royal Wellington GC), Rick Machray (Arrowtown GC) and Spencer Cooper (Remuera GC)

The mix gives good geographical representation and also a good cross-section of ages and ideas. We welcome Rick and Spencer to the board and look forward to working with them. In the meantime, enjoy the quieter time before the onslaught of spring is upon us.

**STEVE HODSON**  
PRESIDENT, NZGCSA

**Spencer Cooper collected the NZGCSA Environment Award on behalf of Auckland-based Remuera Golf Club**



It has been a very dry winter in South Australia, with rain events few and far between. Hopefully we will receive rain during late winter and spring to fill up some dams before what will no doubt be another hot summer.

There has been a fair bit of movement in the South Australian superintendent ranks over the past 12 months. Harking back to last year, with **Richard James** taking the position of superintendent at Kooyonga, it opened up a great opportunity at The Grange Golf Club for **Rowan Daymond**. Rowan was Richard's 2IC for a number of years before he moved to Murray Downs G&CC as the superintendent in January 2017.

At the start of this year **Daryl Sellar** announced his resignation from Glenelg Golf Club, finishing up in March. Daryl felt the time was right to move on and focus on his other interests. Congratulations to Daryl on what he has been able to achieve at Glenelg. After a short time as Rowan's assistant at The Grange, **Tim Warren** (aka 'the Nomad'), was fortunate enough to be appointed as Glenelg's new superintendent, proving that putting yourself out there and gaining as much experience as possible does pay off.

And also, one of South Australia's most likable and genuine men, **Mal Grundy**, decided to pull up stumps at the Murray Bridge Golf Club after 37 years and head to the big smoke to take on a role as a senior groundsman at The Grange Golf Club. This is a big change for Mal, but one I'm sure he will relish given his passion and commitment to the industry.

The most recent SAGCSA meeting was the 2018 Country Trip which headed to the famed Barossa Valley. First stop was Penfield Golf Club where superintendent **Kim Tonkin** showed us around. I think most of us were taken aback with what Kim is able to produce with the staff he has and the visions he has in trying to progress the club forward. It was a real eye opener.

The next stop was to Sandy Creek Golf Club where **Michael Cabel** showed us around



**Tim Warren was appointed Glenelg Golf Club's new superintendent in May**

and explained some of the challenges he has which includes attracting and retaining staff. He demonstrated some areas where he was having good success with controlling couch encroachment which interested a lot of guys.

We then moved on to Barossa Valley Golf Club where **Steve Chapman** entertained us. Steve showed us the water catchment scheme through which he receives waste water from nearby wineries which supplements his existing salty bore water. We played a casual nine holes of golf there before heading into the Vine Inn at Nuriootpa where **Nathan Tovey** (epar) and **Craig Burleigh** (Bayer) gave presentations.

The following day we moved out to the McEvoy Mitchell horse training facility where **Megan Bathgate** showed us around. Megan explained what she is trying to produce on the track and the methods used to get it up to a standard that reflects the McEvoy Mitchell name.

The final stop was Tanunda Pines Golf Club where superintendent **Damien Mangelsdorf** had the course in great shape. Damien is in the unique position of managing both bentgrass and couchgrass greens and he discussed the different maintenance practices he employs. Judging by their condition, it may be unique but it works really well.

**NATHAN BENNETT**  
PRESIDENT, SAGCSA



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# STA WA



Turf Australia market development manager Jenny Zadro

The STA WA is busy gearing up for the Cricket Pitch Seminar, hosted by Mow Master, at Richardson Oval on 29 August 2018. A meeting was held following the recent ICL seminar to develop the plans for this day. I am ever-amazed at the willingness of our industry partners and sponsors to be involved and contribute to such events, knowing that they are valued by our membership. I'm 100 per cent sure that it will be an informative and educational day.

Jenny Zadro, Turf Australia's new market development manager, spent three days in WA in May, with the intent of visiting as many turf farms as possible, meeting with turf producers and also the executive officers of the STA WA and GCSAWA. We travelled many miles over three days catching up with industry members. A dinner event was held at Brookleigh Estate as a 'meet and greet' opportunity for those we weren't able to get too personally.

I believe that it gave Jenny a really good insight into just how well the WA turf industry works together. We are unique here in WA with regards to how well we communicate and work together across the different turf related associations and sectors. In the eastern states it is unheard of for the production sector to communicate and interact constructively with the turf maintenance sectors. I believe that we have a most successful working relationship here in WA, one that the rest of Australia would do well to emulate. I know that it was the one thing that impressed Jenny the most and I look forward to working with her to achieve similar on a national level.

The Green Space Alliance WA (GSA WA) recently held a meeting with the discussion paper updated ready for reissue across government. Late last year the group decided to update the discussion paper as a living document. Many around the table were involved with supplying relevant information, however, thanks must go to STA WA president **Tony Guy** for actually updating the document personally.

The GSA WA stalled for a short period of time unfortunately. However, there was a recent meeting with the Director General and his team at the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to attain some assistance with direction in navigating government circles. An update will be shared with the STA WA executive very soon.

At the recent GSA WA meeting, executive officer of Landscape Industries Association WA **Esther Ngang**, who has been administrating the GSA for the past 12 months, informed the group that she had resigned. She will be sadly missed by many of us for her dedication and commitment to the amenity horticultural sector and great support she gave the turf industry. With Esther moving on, I will take back the role of administrator for the GSA WA. We will also be seeking a new chairperson shortly.

Finally, if you are on Facebook, please support the following pages – the Sports Turf Association WA, Turf Growers Association WA and a great page called WA Lawn Addicts run by **Kerion Ralph**. Keep up your great work in keeping our state green.

EVA RICCI,  
EO, WA TURF INDUSTRY

# TURF QLD



As I write this Turf Queensland update, frost is causing considerable problems in the south east of the state with slow growth of turfgrass the result. This means that harvest time is extended and usually through this period turfgrass shortages are the order of the day. Water sustainability continues to be a priority to our turf producers across the state, especially with the lack of rain being experienced through winter.

Separate research is currently being undertaken into couch mites by a company in Victoria and couch smut by a consortium based in Queensland. Both items are of concern across the turfgrass community and the results will be eagerly awaited. Whilst on biosecurity, we also continue to fight fire ants, electric ants and crazy ants in Queensland.

Turf Queensland held a regional board meeting in Cairns in June as a way of taking our board to the regions. Our regional board members regularly travel to Brisbane at their cost and this recognised their efforts.



Turf Queensland has a revamped website [www.qtpa.com.au](http://www.qtpa.com.au) that holds considerable information for those within the turf industry and both commercial and residential uses. We also continue to promote the use of turf for erosion control, sediment and nutrient run-off reduction. An awareness project is being promoted to ensure the Australian Standard AS-5181:2016 is being adopted and utilised by specifiers and tenderers for natural turfgrass.

JIM VAUGHAN  
TURF QUEENSLAND

The new-look Turf Queensland website [www.qtpa.com.au](http://www.qtpa.com.au)

The past month has seen record rainfall around much of New Zealand, in particular the North Island, with many places well up on their long term averages (see figure far right).

A large number of New Zealand turfies travelled to Wellington at the end of June for the inaugural Australasian Turfgrass Conference and from the feedback to date all were impressed with the participation and variety of educational opportunities. It was particularly good to have overseas speakers adapt their data and technical information to the New Zealand and Australian region, rather than presenting data that was more applicable to the west coast or deep south of the USA.

Already the thoughts of turf managers turn to spring renovations. Many of the regional councils are reviewing their operational plans this year and this has involved an overhaul of what is expected in terms of renovation outcomes. Not all of this will be positive, as savings inevitably have to be sought, but where budgets might get reduced in one area can always create an opportunity for innovation in a different area.

Over the past 12 months in Auckland, we have seen an increasing number of goal mouths

being enhanced with the installation of hybrid turf as a means of mitigating concentrated wear and tear in and reducing subsequent and ongoing maintenance and renovation costs.

With operational sustainability in mind there are often benefits from an environmental sustainability perspective also. Recently we were asked to look into the potential to embark upon environmental accreditation (through the STMA of America) for a number of high profile/use sports parks in Auckland. This is in the very early stage of feasibility, but rather like the value of environmental accreditation for many of our golf courses, a similar scheme would celebrate the environmental and operational best practice that goes into the management and care of a large number of sports fields and parks in New Zealand.

If you are not aware of STMA environmental accreditation, I fully recommend taking a look at the programme: <https://www.sportsdestinations.com/sports/sports-facilities/sports-turf-managers-association-awards-environment-14538>.

**WILL BOWDEN  
COMMITTEE, STANZ**



**It has been a wet winter for most parts of New Zealand**

**TURF NSW** Turf New South Wales Grow Green

Turf Australia has recently appointed a new Industry Development Officer for the turf industry in NSW – **Matthew Plunkett**. I started the part-time role in July and one of the key objectives will be in market development and helping the turf industry to grow. This will be undertaken through direct support and communication to NSW growers, specifiers and the wider turfgrass industry.

I have had experience working with turf producers on water and nutrient management projects, understanding costs of production training and more recently in my role as a Turf NSW board member. Ongoing support will also be provided to Turf NSW and its members to advance the objectives of the organisation in the future.

One of the main challenges for our industry is to work together across the whole supply chain to grow profitable turf production businesses and sell the unique characteristics of turfgrass to the community and end users.

One of the first duties in my role was to facilitate a successful Safety Railing Field Day held in partnership with Turf Australia, Safe Work NSW and EngAnalysis on 10 July. From 1 October 2018, all hand stack harvesters in NSW must comply with new safety standards. Over 30 growers attended the day at Greener Lawn Supplies (**Anthony and Margaret Muscat**) in the Hawkesbury region north west of Sydney.



**NSW turf producers learn about the new safety railing system for hand stack harvesters at a recent field day**

The documentation and testing processes for the railing system were reviewed on the day, with growers able to view two machines with railing modifications installed, both of which had been tested and approved for use.

Turf NSW would like to thank the Turf Australia Board for funding this important work. Many thanks also to the Muscat family and the Turf NSW committee for their tireless work on this issue. **Jenny Zadro**, now the market development manager with Turf Australia, also worked very hard to achieve this practical outcome for our industry.

Any growers who would like a copy of the documentation please contact me on 0434 147 988 or email [info@turfnsw.com.au](mailto:info@turfnsw.com.au). I look forward to connecting with producers and the wider industry in the future.

**MATTHEW PLUNKETT  
IDO, TURF NSW**

**A book honouring Nick Bell's contributions to the WA turf industry has recently been published**

## ON THE MOVE...

**BRAD AYRES:** Departed as senior assistant superintendent of The Grange Golf Club, SA to take up a project manager role with a landscaping company.

**IZAAC JONES:** Elevated to superintendent Ulverstone Golf Club, Tas replacing previous superintendent Mark Johnson who has moved into the general manager's role.

**PAUL KEARY:** Appointed superintendent Fox Hills Golf Club, NSW.

**STEPHEN MALLYON:** From superintendent Bexley Golf Club, NSW to construction project coordinator with Renworx.

**JOHN MANN:** Named as the new superintendent at Commonwealth Golf Club, Vic. Starts his new role in October after serving out his notice at Woodlands Golf Club, Vic.

**PETER MURPHY:** Appointed assistant course superintendent Strathfield Golf Club, NSW.

**CHRIS ROGERS:** From assistant superintendent to superintendent Portsea Golf Club, Vic.

**PAUL SANSON:** From curator Riverway Stadium, Townsville to Australian National Botanic Gardens, Canberra.



Stephen Mallyon

It has been a very wet start to winter 2018 with the west recording its wettest June in six years and July starting with a bang as well. Fingers crossed the aquifers are being reinjected with all the rain that we have had. For everyone in the industry over here, issues with water allocations and a drying climate are never far from our thoughts, so we all take pleasure in witnessing these quality rain events.

From a turf sales point of view it has been hard going for the majority of Turf Growers Association WA members in recent times. Sales have been down for most, in some instances up to 50 per cent. The reduction in block sizes, less focus on public open space in new developments (dare I say it, due to ill-informed or uneducated developers and specifiers), difficult economic times, continuing challenges with water and the scourge of plastic carpet, have all taken a toll. The image of turf has copped a hammering as a result and we intend to do something about this as a matter of priority.

TGAWA members have decided to seek professional assistance in changing the image of lawns/turf. Interviews were recently conducted with several marketing/branding consultants with a view to selecting the perfect candidate to undertake a proper analysis of the industry, competition and target market.

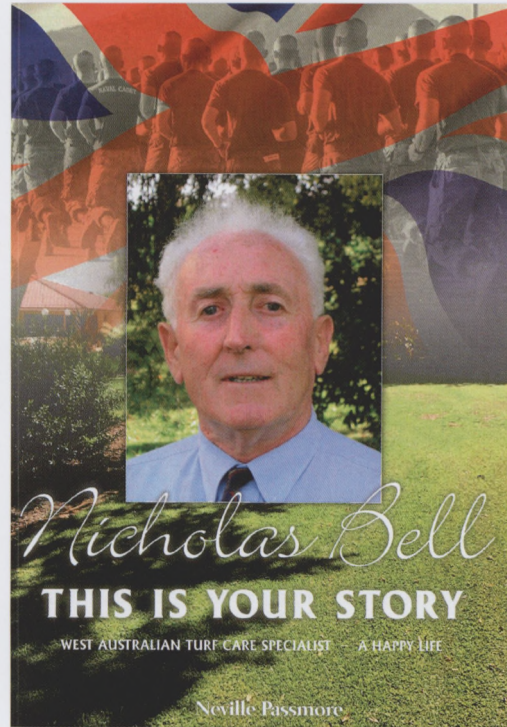
**Harsha Quartermaine**, ex-state manager of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects WA, has been engaged to initiate this process. Harsha will assist in developing and tailoring turf/lawn branding with a focus on speaking directly to the identified target market, as simple marketing and promotion activity can be less effective.

It will be a systematic sequence including research and analysis to produce a marketing plan that includes;

- Business positioning;
- Competitor and industry analysis;
- Target market identification;
- Branding, point of difference/unique selling proposition;
- Marketing Considerations Report;
- Branding guide;
- Marketing action plan; and
- Marketing initiatives implementation.

Initially it will include the gathering of key information through a series of four face-to-face industry meetings followed by further desktop research. The information gathered, together with application of marketing concepts and theories, will shape the marketing considerations report for review/clarification by key stakeholders. After this is completed, a branding guide will be developed along with a marketing action plan with detailed activity for a set period.

The TGAWA membership has also committed to taking on head-first the issue of synthetic turf in the



urban landscape. This is an ongoing project that I will be working on over coming months.

After completion of the above, we are hoping to have an implementation process that will include working closely with a marketing coach on a project by project basis or ongoing depending on requirements. This project will address metropolitan and regional issues and possibilities and is close to being allocated.

On a lighter note, in April the Perth Garden Festival was held with TGAWA member **Graeme Ferguson** kindly and succinctly presenting on stage on behalf of the association. Graeme talked about best practice turf installation and maintenance which was very well received. He also distributed fliers advertising contact details for TGAWA members.

Also at this event, **Nick Bell**, one of the WA industry's most well-known and well-respected turf care specialists, was honoured with a book on his life and contributions to the industry. Nick is 85 years old and still active in the industry. The TGAWA and the Sports Turf Association (WA) co-funded this book along with the Landscape Industries Association WA.

It's a short read, 46 pages, and was developed as a historical record of an industry elder statesman. It is proposed that similar books will be developed over the coming years on other industry stalwarts to provide a living historical library while we still have such industry personalities. Should anyone like a copy of the book please let me know as they are available for purchase.

**EVA RICCI,**  
EO, WA TURF INDUSTRY

I can't believe another couple of months have passed since the last edition of ATM was published. A lot has happened during this period in Victoria with some great long-standing and very supportive guys in our industry moving on to different areas. This has created opportunity for others to climb the ladder in the slowly revolving wheel that is our industry. We have also lost two of our leading educators from the TAFE system and I can only hope that we find replacements with similar technical knowledge and on course experiences. I wish all the very best on their new endeavours.

What a fantastic week all attendees had in Wellington for the Australasian Turfgrass Conference. I know the number one reason for attending such events is to further educate, improve our skill set whilst continually grow our network of peers, which I got plenty of. But, I honestly can't recall laughing as much as I did at the attendance of a turf conference.

Not only was it the camaraderie of the Victorians who were fortunate enough to take the trip over, but also the time spent with the others from across Australia and New Zealand that made the conference one of the best yet. The knowledge shared between all delegates and the programme of speakers from around the globe made the conference a very worthwhile trip.

The hospitality of the Kiwis was phenomenal too! Over a couple of quiet beers one night, myself and a couple of fellow Victorians had mentioned during conversation that we did not get the opportunity to attend the pre-conference golf tour for various reasons. Before we knew it, a couple of local Wellington legends had organised a car, along with a couple of tour guides, to take us to Royal Wellington and Paraparaumu Beach golf clubs the first thing the next morning. It's the little things like this that I love about our industry. A big thanks to the AGCSA for a well-organised event and I hope we can repay the Kiwis with similar hospitality with a joint conference here in Australia in the future.

With winter well and truly set in, the VGCSA hosted its eighth Superintendent/2IC meeting on the Murray River in late July. Cobram Barooga Golf Club (superintendent **Matt McLeod**) hosted the event which consisted of golf, education, machinery displays/operation, open forums and plenty of shop talk over the course of two-and-a-half days. This year we focused a considerable amount of time on HR management as this is always a hot topic within our membership base.

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# What a ride...



Liverpool Golf Club superintendent Mark Schroder recently notched up 40 years in golf course management. How the industry has changed...

**Top: Forty not out! Mark Schroder recently celebrated his 40th year in the turf management caper, including two stints at his present club Liverpool in Sydney**

**Below: Where it all began – Tenterfield Golf Club**



**W**here have the years gone?! Forty years straight at eight golf courses, including two innings at my present home Liverpool Golf Club in the western suburbs of Sydney... some may describe that as absolute madness but it's a journey that I wouldn't change.

I was born and educated in Tenterfield on the Northern Tablelands of NSW, just 20km from the Queensland border. I am the second son to a grazier/farmer, growing up on a 6000-acre merino sheep and Hereford beef cattle property. We also grew lucerne, oats and maize. The old homestead didn't have electricity until I was 11 and we had a kerosene fridge to boot! I was on a tractor ploughing paddocks by the time I could touch the pedals and boom-spraying the lucerne crops for aphids. The transition therefore to greenkeeping was quite easy.

I left school part-way through Year 11 and started working at an abattoir for a year until an apprenticeship came up at Tenterfield Golf Club. The club was thriving at the time thanks to poker machine revenue which enabled it to rebuild the clubhouse as well as install an automatic irrigation system which back then was a big deal in the bush.

After serving my apprenticeship under Les Smith, I threw myself into the fire by taking on the role of head greenkeeper at Goondiwindi Golf Club (there's no such title as 'course superintendent' in the bush). I started there on 6 December 1982 in the middle of a massive drought and in my first month temperatures ranged between 42 and 46 every day.

With Penncross bentgrass greens it was certainly a baptism of fire and what made matters worse was that we only had a manual irrigation system. It was a very harsh initiation, but one that gave me a more bulletproof approach to greenkeeping which would serve me well later in my career.

## BIG SMOKE

I left the bush for a touch of city life in 1985, moving to Brisbane which was still like a big bush town then. The Brisbane Golf Club was my first experience with

warm-season grasses and upon arrival the greens were being converted to 328. It was the grass of the time, with all the new developments on the Gold Coast going for this 'new gen' variety as well.

From Brisbane I moved to Sydney where I worked under the great Bob Chessell at Cabramatta Golf Club from 1987 to 1990. It was a great honour and privilege to work under 'Chesso' and during my time there the top section of the course received an irrigation upgrade that was previously controlled by the old 'greenkeepers boxes' (you need to be a certain age to know what they are).

One thing I will always remember is going through a period of 34 wet weekends in a row in 1987 which crippled the industry. It was that wet that clubs had members out mowing fairways with Victa rotary mowers! I distinctly remember pushing a Victa backwards with gumboots on up the 15th fairway all day. I must have been fit then or mad, I'm not sure.

In February 1990 an opportunity came up at Liverpool Golf Club as 2IC under the iconic Reg McLaren who would go on to become a NSWGCSA life member. Knowing the calibre of the course, saying 'yes' was a no-brainer.

One of my first undertakings with Reg was to lead a tree-planting team, 'funded' by the State Government, planting the boundary of the new elevated driving range. One thing that stuck out was Reg's incredible knowledge of anything flora. I tried to go head-to-head over botanical names, but with no success. Also under Reg's supervision was a bunker drainage programme following all the floods of the late 1980s through to early 1990s.

In April 1992 Reg retired and I was promoted to superintendent which was a great privilege. Projects that were considered key to moving forward were the reconstruction and levelling of tees and turfing out unthrifty areas on fairways. The real focus was to convert all fairways back to pure couch as it was when the course opened in 1971. Starting in 1993, by 1997 about two-thirds of the property was reinstated back to 100 per cent native couchgrass.



## SOUTHERN STINT

We all get caught sometime in life. I married a Melbourne girl, hence the pressure to move south. I applied for the superintendent's position at Waverley Golf Club in April 1997 and was successful. Waverley is home to the Victorian Junior Masters every January and in my first year I was privileged to see two up and coming players battling it out in the last group – Adam Scott and Aaron Baddeley.

On arrival at Waverley there was already a Santa Ana couchgrass conversion programme instigated by the former super Dean Holden. Subsurface drainage was also being carried out hole-by-hole, as well as bunker remodelling. My biggest and most challenging job was reversing the 7th and 8th holes, both par fives. This was achieved in a very tight window between November and the January tournament and included solid turfing 2.2 hectares of Santa Ana turf on fairways, new tee sites and greens surrounds, along with bunkering.

I must also importantly make significant mention of VGCSA life member Bill Powell who I was very fortunate to get to know in his final year or so before he retired. Bill was former Waverley superintendent and still very professionally looked after the club's two bowling greens. He ended up retiring after some 54 years at the club – surely that's a record!

In September 2006 a great opportunity came up at Churchill Park Golf Club when Andrew Casey moved on to Northern Golf Club. In my short stint there we sprigged the 14th fairway and rough and a retro-fit control to all greens and tees was put in place. It is quite ironic that I worked at both Waverley and Churchill Park considering that in the years since they have merged.

## NORTHERN HOMECOMING

My next move was to the Northern Rivers region of NSW and Evans Head, a sleepy coastal township of 3500 people. Upon starting there, I had no idea that I would experience over 2.5m of rainfall in both 2008 and 2009. I remember the holiday explosion period in January 2008 with 24 wet days and having 170mm of rain in one night. The tidal pressure was that great at the golf course's main drainage canal discharge into the Evans River that the water was running upstream back toward the clubhouse!

I said goodbye to my northern seaside paradise after successfully being reinstated at Liverpool Golf Club in July 2010. Between 2005 and 2010, Liverpool went down the path of contract maintenance, so the initial period of coming back to an in-house operation was quite an expensive exercise.

In addition to needing a complete new fleet of turf machinery and associated small tools, the primary concern was the overall poor condition of the greens. There was no root system and water would pool after just 2mm of rain. On close examination there was a hard pan that had developed through continual usage of the verti-drain to the same depth, in association with no significant thatch removal.



Having knowledge that all the greens had been previously reconstructed with a complex herringbone sub-surface drainage system back in the 1980's, I was more than confident that punching big core tines down the profile and the associated removal of the accumulated thatch would do the job. Using 21mm tines we went down to a maximum depth of 250mm – madness some may say!

The 1.2ha of 'open greens' was then topdressed using 105 tonnes of pure river sand with 5 per cent by volume of organic carbon. This was followed up a week later with a deep blade type slicer/decompactor to a depth of 300mm. After four major corings we had a vastly improved root system and water penetration levels and we have since ramped back our renovations to normal core tine sizes. Other areas we have addressed include managing high sodium levels in our reclaimed irrigation water and kikuyu encroachment on the greens.

Looking ahead, a key document that I have toiled over for many hours is a 'Course Operational Management Plan.' Within this is the desire to adopt a one grass policy back to the original native couchgrass, the reconstruction of several tees and bunker drainage and re-modelling.

## COME A LONG WAY

Looking back, the past four decades have been filled with so many wonderful experiences, especially the friendships that I have made. The industry has gone from strength to strength in so many areas, whether it's through improved practices, products and turf varieties, through to aspects such as the enhanced professionalism of the state and national superintendent associations. We have come such a long way and I look forward in a very optimistic way to what the future will have in store for us who choose this wonderful profession. 🌱

After his first stint at Liverpool Golf Club between 1990 and 1997, Schroder returned to Liverpool in 2010 after the club did away with contract maintenance

Schroder spent 10 years in 'Mexico', including a stint as superintendent at Waverley Golf Club





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