

CHAIR REPORT

In my first year as Chair of Bowls Gr8 for Brains Ltd, it's my honour to present our 2022/23 Annual Report. This past year has been marked with significant growth and we have flourished as a volunteer-driven organization, independent of any direct funding or paid staff support.

I take immense pride in our Board members and our volunteers who've dedicated countless hours of their time, driven solely by our vision of "Bringing People Together." From lounge room meetings, lots of travel, and networking efforts, we've united a passionate team across Australia. Our shared goal remains steadfast, erasing the stigma around Mental Health challenges and fostering supportive environments on the bowling green. Our aim is always to combat loneliness, reignite purpose in lives, and advocate proactive strategies toward better mental and physical well-being.

What started as an idea among Former First Responders and Veterans at a local Albury Bowling Club has blossomed into a vibrant community of people and organisations working together toward a common goal. Our focus remains steadfast to offer solace, forge friendships, and infuse some healthy fun by providing peer-based support for individuals navigating their own mental health challenges.

This year, our development has soared beyond expectations, marking over 100% growth compared to the previous year's report.

Key Achievements:

1. In July, we achieved the seemingly impossible, attaining National Charity Status, a first in Australia within our domain. This status empowers us to do more, more frequently, amplifying our already positive impact in the community.
2. We've extended our operations by welcoming Our Veterans Forge into the family, inspired by Iain Thomas's similar initiative in Western Australia. Iain's expertise has guided us toward attaining Charitable status.
3. Hosting Responders and Veterans family days nationwide has heightened our shared understanding of awareness raising and is creating more avenues to provide more support.
4. Our engagement with politicians across various regions has elevated our visibility, earning us multiple mentions in Federal Parliament. This has opened doors for us to advocate for the transformative power of bowls in improving lives and raising awareness of the challenges PTS and poor mental health can bring.
5. Successfully acquiring more equipment including disability aids, has broadened access for more individuals in diverse ways.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our sponsors and supporters, listed in this report. Your unwavering support enables us to continue to provide free access to our participants.

I invite you to delve into our 2022/23 Annual Report and witness the strides we're making in fulfilling our long-term mission of supporting others and becoming a leading organisation toward better community-based mental health outcomes for our wounded heroes.

Warm regards,
Darryl Coventry
Chairperson

Our Board of Directors for 2023/24

- Chairperson: Darryl Coventry
- Deputy Chair: Raymond Silverstone
- Secretary/Public Officer: David Van Der Waal
- Director/Treasurer: Paul Cole
- Director: Deborah Swain
- Director: Neil Dalrymple
- Director: Iain Thomas
- Director: Terri Sullivan
- Director: Vacant

We would personally like to thank our outgoing Directors Boyd Dumbrell, Ian Paterson and David Inglis for their time and efforts in helping us slowly mature Bowls Gr8 for Brains into an organisation of choice, and one that is sustainable into the future.





Thank you to our

EVENT SUPPORTERS



Sean Skelton – Open Arms champion – Defence Veteran

Bowls Gr8 for Brains has provided me a safe place to participate in physical activity, enjoy some friendly competition, and become part of a fantastic and supportive community free of discrimination and stigma surrounding mental health. The green has quickly turned into a safe space of sorts, it is place where I can have a reprieve of the stressors and anxiety of daily living and become completely present on the task at hand, an experience that I can only compare to a form of active meditation .



Active regular groups

Location	Sessions	Attendees	Exception reporting/Lessons learned	Volunteer hours at groups	Lead volunteer
Albury	52	778	No reportable incidents	400	Paul Cole
Boolaroo/Lake Macquarie	16	195 est	No reportable incidents	120	Boyd Dumbrell
Shoalhaven Heads	30	183	No reportable incidents.	108	Ray Silverstone
Cockburn Sound (OVRS)	51	785	No reportable incidents	400	Iain Thomas
Chirnside Park	5	35	No reportable incidents	35	Brian Hillier/Gavin Wall
Coolangatta	2	10	New group formed in September 2023	8	Rodney Vandermaat



Allan Finlayson – National “Nasho” Serviceman

I thought that it was about time that I got around to thanking yourself and Paul for initiating the Bowls Gr8 for Brains concept. This time a year ago I was diagnosed with severe depression and anxiety, which combined together, had brought me to a functional standstill, both workwise, socially, and most importantly, unable to cope with the day to day activities that, to my mind then, had become insurmountable....

Twelve months on I find that the associations that I have formed with the people of your group have proved invaluable to my recovery. I hope that our group continues to grow and that I can contribute to its success by spreading the word to as many people as I can. The most important aspect that has changed for me is that I now find no difficulty in talking to anyone about my mental health recovery and especially its success as an attribution to your group.



Annual events – combined first responders and Veterans families’ days.

Location	Attendees	Summary of event	Volunteer hours	Lead Volunteer
Albury	35	4 th annual Veterans health week event 2023	16	Paul Cole
Bungendore	38	Combined Veterans and first responders’ fun day	16	Craig Hinder
Wangaratta	72	2 nd Annual RSL fun day	16	Darryl Coventry
Shoalhaven Heads	83	2 nd BG4B/Invictus combined veterans and family’s fun day	22	Ray Silverstone
Chirnside Park	38	Launch event – Combined Veterans and first responders’ family fun day	18	Brian Hillier
Gympie	49	Combined first responders and family’s fun day	22	Balan Pillay
Cockburn Sound	30	Veterans’ Health week event 2023	16	Iain Thomas
Bendigo	16	Veterans’ Health week event 2023	10	Darryl Coventry/Gavin Wall



Charity Events

Location	Attendees	Summary of event	Lead Volunteer	Amount received
Bundoora Bowling Club Crime information night	169	Crime storytelling night by distinguished speakers – telling real stories about Homicide investigations and the Thai Cave Rescue – Thankyou Graham ‘Gus’ Guy	Graham Guy	\$2000
Chirnside Park Country Club Bowls Gr8 for Brains Charity Day	135	A wonderful day of raising awareness and a masterclass of bowling by Karen Murphy AM and Gary Willis – Thankyou to everyone involved	Brian Hillier	\$5810.86



Paul Cole – Co-founder Bowls Gr8 for Brains – Distinguished NSW Police Officer – Protector of Children

I have always been into sport and into teams. My work both in both tactical and in my Child Protection team was all about teamwork and supporting each other.

I find that bowls and Bowls GR8 for Brains has given me that sense of team, belonging, and community again. Things that I had lost.

I found that when I first started, I was able to be on part of the green with just one other person. This was important as I didn't trust others or crowds. I needed space.

Bowls and BG4B gives me exercise. I know that when I play, my step count goes up. I am outside in the air, be it sunshine or cold. Not only does my hand/eye get a workout so does my body. My mind must kick into gear and get back into working mode. I must work out what line and pace to play - not only this – I am also exercising my memory as to what lines work and what I have already played. I have to work out tactics. Where to attack, how to defend. I have walked off

greens after bowls games mentally tired due to concentrating on the above. From handling complex investigations - to not being able to remember things or concentrate on things = back to being able to work through games is a vast change for me.

My wife has said to people that bowls has changed me for the better and that it gets me out the house and motivated again.

I have been able to find people like me - living with their challenges. I am learning to trust again and to be with people I can relate to - that is the most important thing for me.



Presentations given.

Location	Attendees	Summar of event	Volunteer hours	Lead Volunteer
North Albury Rotary Club	45	Guest speaker - \$450 obtained for purchase of new printer	4	Paul Cole
Vic APES Games – Belmont	80	Raffle and fundraising speech to Vic Emergency services	28	Paul Cole Darryl Coventry
Australian Police Bowls Champs	75	Raffle and fundraising speech to Australian Police	4	Paul Cole Darryl Coventry
Bundoora Crime information night	169	Crime information storytelling night and fundraising event	16	Graham Guy Brian Hillier

DVA networking forum	65	Bendigo Veterans and first responders' health networking group	24	Darryl Coventry
Albury Senior Citizens	28	Information night	6	Paul Cole

Groups in construction

Group	When	Available \$\$	Details	Lead Volunteer
Townsville	TBC		Preliminary inquiries – Launch planned for March 2024	Glenda Mann
North Bendigo	TBC		Preliminary inquiries	Vicki Fox
Bundoora Bowling Club	TBC		Preliminary Inquires	Graham Guy

Volunteer hours

Travel – 256,

Administration – 1640

Volunteer hours combined groups – 1070

Volunteer hours – Annual events – 136

Volunteer hours – presentations and speeches – 72

Volunteer hours – Charitable events - 250

Total volunteer hours – 3324,

Total all attendances at events involving BG4B this year – 2320

Iain Thomas – Distinguished ADF Veteran – 10 tours – founder – Our Veterans and Responders Social

I remember when I was diagnosed with PTSD in 2015, I didn't like the idea that I had PTSD. I could not accept it. In fact, I disagreed and argued strongly with the psychiatrist about his diagnosis.

The day after my separation from the Army, everything seemed to stop. I realised I was on my own and felt isolated. I felt completely removed from the very thing I loved and what made me, me. I had no purpose, too much time, no structure. I questioned, what now?

After more than a year, my support team said 'Iain you have to try and do something. Sitting at home is not good for you. You're stacking on the weight and your mental health is suffering.' So, we made a list of things I could do. A lot on that list didn't interest me or I was physically unable to undertake.

Someone suggested Lawn Bowls. I thought “that’s an old person’s game” and didn’t think it could be for me, but I had no better ideas so thought if “old people” could do it, I should be able to do it too.

It felt good to be outside, to use your brain to focus on your line and length, and I realised whilst I was doing this my PTSD wasn’t peaking. My chest wasn’t pounding. I wasn’t looking for escape areas or analysing people. I was still a little anxious but not in the fight or flight mode I would usually be. The lack of crowds was a bonus.

Our Veteran Bowls has given me a purpose, a direction to help others like me, and to instil some normality into our troubled lives. To help overcome physical and mental limitations, and just meet new friends. I still have bad days where I walk close with the ‘Black dog’. But our group collectively helps each other, and cares for each other. I think that this is what it is all, about isn’t it?

Bowls didn’t save my life, but I do know it saved some in our group. Bowls is making me a better life right now. I am happier, more active, less anxious and I am meeting some wonderful and remarkable people.



Special mentions – donations/grants/fundraising/achievements

Who	What	Outcome
Henselite Australia – Ian Paterson	Donated 4 x Banners, 6 x Sets of XG Bowls, 28 x sets of bowls for groups, Travel assistance, 50 Polo Shirts and Major sponsor of Chirnside Park Charity day 6/11/2023	Estimated value of \$12000 in goods and services donated by Henselite

Paul Cole	Raffle	\$3265.27 net profit – Insurance paid for the next 12 months.
Ian Thomas	Cockburn City Council grant	\$3000 to purchase bowls and bowling aids
Ray Silverstone	Networking	Building relationships with Invictus and Legacy – organising fun days
Brian Hillier	Chirnside Park Charity day, VPES games speaking opportunity, Bundoora Crime night and Vic networking and promotions.	Total fundraising achieved - \$7810.86
Boyd Dumbrell	NSW Health networking	Assisting clients from Lake Macquarie Mental Health onto the green
Neil Dalrymple	Corporate documentation	Strategic planning
Ian Thomas	Charity status	Assisting in developing amendments to the constitution for elevation to charity status.
Paul Cole/Darryl	Border Connected Communities Grant	\$5000 toward tech upgrade and website build
Gavin Wall	Chirnside Park volunteer	Has attended and helped out at Bendigo functions.

Other agencies involved:

- Open Arms/Defence Veterans Association
- NSW Retired and Former Police Association
- Albury City RSL Sub-Branch
- Invictus Australia
- Bowls Australia
- Henselite
- NSW Lake Macquarie Mental Health
- Lifeline
- Australian Police Bowls Association
- Nasho's a fair go
- RSL Active

- Police Legacy South Coast
- Wangaratta RSL Sub-Branch
- Bowls ACT
- Bowls For your Lives

Politicians who have been present/ briefed:

- Justin Clancy MP – Member for Albury
- Sussan Ley MP – Federal Member for Farrer
- Fiona Phillips MP – Federal Member for Gilmore
- Aaron Violi – MP – Federal Member for Casey

Mainstream and social media

- 2AY
- Border Mail
- ABC
- Henselite
- Bowls Australia
- Gympie local media
- Bowls NSW

Summary of Finances for Financial Year 2022/2023

1 July, 2022 – 30 June, 2023.

MAIN ACCOUNT.

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Opening Balance			\$1544.24
Merchandise	\$3634		
Membership	\$50		
Veterans Day	\$700		
Donations	\$1600		
Travel Payments	\$1012.94		
Raffle	\$3796		
Grant transfer	\$7.05		
Merchandise		\$1492.70	
Travel		\$3531.91	
Insurance		\$1789.12	
Equipment		\$268.55	
ASIC		\$357.23	
Raffle		\$357.33	
Postage		\$347.70	
Web names		\$198	
Total	\$10799.99	\$8342.54	\$4001.69
		Profit	\$2457.45

Addendum A – Amounts allocated to local areas (now held in main account)

Shoalhaven Heads

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Opening Balance			\$506.90
Donations	\$246.95		
Bowling arms		\$460	
Total	\$536.90	\$460	\$293.85

Albury

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Opening Balance			\$7.05
Grants			
Transfer to main acc		\$7.05	
Total	\$nil	\$7.05	Nil

Deniliquin

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Opening Balance			\$1532.02
Sales	Nil		
Donations	Nil		
Expenditure		Nil	
Total	Nil	Nil	
Closing Balance			\$1532.02

The above financial report is true and correct account of the accounts of Bowls Gr8 for Brains as at 30th of June 2023.

Paul Cole

30 November 2023

Addendum B – Financial reporting for the period 1 July 2023 – 30 November 2023

MAIN ACCOUNT.

	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Opening Balance			\$4848.64
Sales	\$485		
Interest	\$32.21		
Raffle	\$740		
Membership	\$		
Veterans Week	\$800		
Rotary North Albury Donation	\$450		
Bundoora Donation	\$2000		
Donation Local hero	\$500		
Donation	\$50		
Bendigo Bank Grant	\$5000		
Chirnside Park Charity Day	\$5910.86		
Certificates		\$54.85	
Insurance		\$3738.10	
Constitution		\$53.23	
Postage		\$79.60	
Chair and printer		\$667	
Shirts		\$816.75	
Net Intellect		\$3635.50	
Travel		\$1489.28	
Total	\$15968.07	\$10534.31	
Closing Balance			\$10282.40