



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2024

Dear Members,

I am pleased to present the Chairman's Report for the Leichhardt Bowling and Recreation Club for the year ending 30 June 2024. This year has been marked by significant achievements, operational improvements, and a deepening of our community engagement.

Firstly, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my fellow directors – David Smedley, Gary Talbot, Greg (Ed) King, Scott Bowers and Matthew Ovington. We are incredibly fortunate to have a cohesive and driven team that strives to push our club to realise its full potential, while still honouring our traditions as one of the state's oldest bowling clubs. Your dedication, often at the expense of time with family and friends, is not lost on me, and I am deeply grateful for your unwavering commitment to the club.

I'd also like to acknowledge Kylie McCartney and Jenny Kalogeropoulos, who stepped down as directors during the year due to work commitments. Your contributions during such a challenging period were invaluable, and you have left the club in a far stronger position.

As a team, one of the Board's most significant achievements this year was the unanimous support received from Inner West Council in regard to the rezoning of the club from residential to recreational use. This will ensure the club remains a bowling and recreational space for the community in perpetuity.

We worked closely with councillors to address this issue, resulting in a Mayoral Minute tabled by Mayor Darcy Byrne and Councillor Philippa Scott, which committed the council to exploring options for rezoning at little to no cost to the club. This change, when finalised, will reduce the financial strain on the club.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank our Secretary Manager, Baz, whose dedication to the club has been instrumental in navigating both the challenges and the many successes we've experienced. We are incredibly fortunate to have someone with Baz's talent, passion, vision, and determination driving our club from what were very dire times to the ever-growing and pioneering club we see today. On behalf of myself and the board, it is an absolute pleasure to work with you, and I look forward to our continued collaboration to see the club thrive in the year ahead.

I'd like to warmly welcome Darren Price, our new General Manager, who has truly hit the ground running. Darren's leadership and dedication have already delivered tangible results, particularly in reducing staff wages and driving our club's financial stabilisation. Welcome aboard, Darren, and thank you for your immediate and impactful contributions.

Thank you to our club sponsors: Manning's Funerals and Pilchers Residential. Your support has been invaluable to our success and we look forward to our ongoing partnerships in the year ahead.

The resilience of our club can also be attributed to our dedicated team of volunteers. Arie, Manny, Bill, Biff, Matty, Pete, Jeff, Shannon – your unwavering support has been nothing short of extraordinary. Thank you to all of you.

To all our bar and kitchen staff – thank you for your commitment and hard work throughout what was another record year of trade for The Bowlo. I'd particularly like to acknowledge Jan Priest, who in October this year celebrates 30 years of employment at our club. Congratulations, Jan.

This year, our club celebrated several outstanding achievements on the greens.

Congratulations to Geoffrey Seton for earning a Silver Medal in the NSW State Multi-Disability Singles Championships, proudly representing The Bowlo.

A special congratulations also goes to our Grade 6 team, who triumphed at the Zone Finals, emerging as Grade 6, Zone 13 champions. They went on to represent Leichhardt at the NSW Grade 6 State Open Finals in Yamba, finishing equal fifth out of 230 teams across the state. We truly are the little club that punches well above its weight.

Our Grade 2 Pennants side played with resilience against some of the best bowlers in the state following their 2023 Zone Finals win and NSW State Championships campaign.

Thank you to the teams' manager, Geoff Seton, and Bowls President, Biff, for their invaluable contributions to these successes.

Congratulations to all our Club Championship winners and runners-up. Leichhardt Bowling Club has an incredibly talented pool of bowlers, so it's no coincidence that very few years go by without our club taking home some silverware. This year, the Leichhardt Lions Major Champion was Mark Latkowski, with Peter Swindale taking the title of Minor Champion. For the Leichhardt Lynx, congratulations to Major Champion Teisha Swindale, and Minor Champion Elissa 'Lis' Clyne. Well done to all.

None of this success on the greens could have been achieved without the hard work and commitment of our greenkeeper, Craig Stephens. The quality of our greens, which are highly regarded throughout the NSW Bowls community, are a credit to his skills.

The year also marked a significant step forward in our focus on our food and beverage offering. We welcomed Alex Habhab and his team from Hannah's Kitchen, whose drive and adaptability have been truly impressive.

This year has been another strong period for membership growth at the Bowlo. We welcomed a steady stream of new members, with 1,031 social members joining during the year and an increase in participation across our bowls clubs. This is largely due to our expanding online presence, heightened public profile, and, more recently, the successful adoption of our new digital membership card system. This application has removed barriers to entry, simplified the application process, and provided members with greater ease of use. The system has already been embraced by a majority of our members, demonstrating its value in modernising the membership experience and aligning with the club's broader efforts to streamline operations.

The club's profile in the Inner West continues to grow. This year, we supported local grassroots sporting clubs, organisations, and initiatives with over \$25,000 in sponsorships and community donations. These contributions are invaluable to the club, not only in consolidating our not-for-profit status, but also in fostering meaningful relationships with like-minded institutions. It's worth noting that approximately \$4,500 of this total was provided in the form of in-kind contributions, which comes at a significantly reduced cost to the club. Of the total, approximately \$16,000 was allocated to local sports teams and \$8,000 supported The Lions and Lynx, including funding for our Grade 6 side to compete in the NSW State Pennants Championships in Yamba.

We also saw record membership sign-ups at our Bowlo stall during the Norton Street Festa. It was incredibly heartening to see so many members and familiar faces drop by to show their support and share their love for the club.

The club continues to strengthen its relationships with local council, state MPs, and industry bodies. Of particular note, Bowls NSW reached out to Baz and the board on a number of occasions for input on various industry discussions, recognising The Bowlo as a valuable contributor to the broader bowling club community. Our clubhouse was even featured in Bowls NSW's social media and marketing campaign 'Sounds Like Your Local'.

The club remains committed to the continued improvement of our facilities and member experience. Key priorities for the coming year include the construction of an additional bar and service outlet to enhance the family area which will also reduce the load on the main bar while boosting revenue. Plans are also underway to astroturf areas of the grounds and carry out small but impactful renovations to the beer garden. A key focus will be on renovating the mens, womens, and accessible bathrooms. This project will be supported by our upcoming bathroom fundraiser, and we thank our members in advance for their generosity in helping to bring this vision to life.

We will also place a strong emphasis on significantly improving the customer experience, focusing on both customer service and streamlining operations, ensuring that The Bowlo continues to be a welcoming, unique and innovative hub for our members and the broader community.

Finally, the Board would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our members and guests for your continued support. Your trust and patronage have been invaluable in helping us grow the institution that is Leichhardt Bowling and Recreation Club.

Go The Bowlo!

Sincerely,



Alistair Scott
Chairman
Leichhardt Bowling and Recreation Club