



## 2017 Member Survey Summary Outcome and Committee Responses

### Summary Outcome

This section is a summary the survey data already published on the Club Taree website; it provides a numerical reflection of the key messages aggregated from the 160 responses from members in the member survey conducted by the Committee in July 2017:

- Of the total respondents, there were 27 women and 130 men a very satisfactory response overall and the Committee is grateful to those who responded for their commitment.
- Seventy percent of you are full playing members playing either competition only or competition and socially with the bulk of the remainder hitting out in mixed events as well.
- Eighty- one golfers played two or more times a week and another fifty-eight at least once a week.
- Most of you obtained information about the programme from the Club's website, the Fixture Book, Time sheets and the captain's regular weekly email.
- The most used sections of the Fixture Book were clearly the sections dealing with the programme and the member's directory.
- When asked to indicate what event type you would like to see less of there was clear "winner": the one Men's 4B v Par we run each year as a qualifier for the NSW Four-Ball Championship is not at all highly regarded.
- When asked what event types you'd like to see more of, singles events, Stableford and stroke, featured strongly; four-ball events with "singles in conjunction", both Men's and Men's and Mixed were also strongly supported.
- On those questions seeking individual ratings, your average votes for the quality of greens and their surrounds, the friendliness of playing colleagues, the support from local sponsors and the work of the committee all averaged "9". Course layout and quality, pro shop and club house experiences all averaged 8 while areas rating an average of 7 included pace of play, the overall programme and the half-way house.

**It is important to see the detailed member comments below in the context of this really positive overall expression of the work of the greens staff, committee and the Club in providing the golfing experiences at Club Taree.**

### Committee Responses to Member Comments

Just over one third (69) of all 160 respondents provided a comment when asked what they thought the Committee might do to provide a better golfing experience for them; what follows is a response to those comments.

For ease of understanding, the comments have been re-ordered by grouping them under the headings you see below; in some cases shorter and similar comments have been joined into one consolidated comment. Each discrete comment or group of comments is followed by italicised text responding in a way that is hoped will be instructive of the work being undertaken behind the scenes by the Committee and Club.

## Events

**Why no NTPs on Tuesdays?** *Simply a question of the low numbers playing on the day.*

**More shot-gun starts to have more people in the club house for presentation.** *It is true the evening presentation is likely to be better attended after a shot gun start and that is our experience. However, shot gun starts mean two separate starts: one quite early and the other toward midday, and this reduces flexibility for members for the times they prefer to start at (given other family and sporting commitments) and reduces the total numbers playing. That said, we use shot gun starts strategically and whenever appropriate.*

**Have a hit off 1 tee on Saturday ... those hitting of the 13th tee block all the times around.** *One tee starts at both the 1<sup>st</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> tees have been tried on a number of occasions the latest being just over two years ago. There was a big reduction in mid-morning fields, total fields dwindled and the "experiment" was abandoned.*

**More foursomes and Ambrose events and Saturday ... 2-person Ambrose days are a great opportunity to introduce new players to competitions.** *We try to have as many "novelty" events as possible but they seriously disadvantage players who, through work commitments, can only play Saturday. This important part of our membership finds handicap movement, either upward or downwards, far too slow and this is exacerbated when the programme has too many such novelty events. That said, we are constantly experimenting with new ideas such this year with the Stoney Creek Classic 3B format.*

**Allow a 13<sup>th</sup> tee start on Thursdays.** *This has been tried and it simply does not work as it means the 13<sup>th</sup> tee cannot be used for social golfers who are a much needed source of revenue for the club.*

**For a fun or charity day make all holes par 3.** *An option certainly worth exploring as and when the need arises. Too many prefer to adhere to the same group perennially. Perhaps occasionally drawing for a group of four would encourage mixing. The Committee would tend to agree with this although the "cure" is likely to be more painful and dislocating than the disease! Using a draw as suggested works well with the smaller women's fields over a more concise time frame for starts but would prove difficult over a whole day. A walk-up start ... in other words, no time sheet ... is another option we can consider.*

**Have some fun at the presentations ... it's so boring. It would be nice to have the professional attend sometimes and mix with members.** *Both worth exploring and specific ideas are welcome.*

**Two-ball competition running in conjunction on stroke days - single stableford, cut down time on course to under 5 hours or less.** *The committee is not too sure how this would work and is concerned at the idea of a competition round lasting anywhere near as long as five hours when the current expectation is between 4 and 4½ hours.*

**Being a low-handicap player, it is hard to get a true handicap due to the amount of non-handicap events.** *This is something the Committee is well aware of and is currently re-thinking its Saturday programme in particular to try to meet the needs of as many golfers as possible ever mindful of the need to allow the Saturday golfer maximum opportunity for competition based handicap adjustments.*

**Increase Ambrose and Stoney Creek events in program.** *See earlier comments about the balance we try to strike in our programme.*

**Maybe have a money hole on a par 3 on Saturdays....pay an extra dollar and then on 1 hole have a NTP as a bonus prize divided between the 3 grades from the kitty.** *Good idea. We did think about a par 3 jackpot hole on a similar basis but integrity and logistics issues got in the way of its introduction. This just might do the trick. The Committee are looking at a couple of similar options part directed a "golfer reward" and part at building funds for junior development.*

**First hole:** Tee off lower tier on the 1st hole. *We do use the lower tee for men's events occasionally although we have to be mindful that all course ratings are based on the upper tee. To use the lower deck too often would seriously affect handicaps. For those of us playing only at Taree, this may not be a concern but it could be a serious worry for those who play at other courses every now and then.*

**Sixteenth hole:** Convert the 16<sup>th</sup> hole back to a par 4 even if only used on tiger tee days and medal days and special events ... Play the 16<sup>th</sup> as a par four. *However much we would like to do this, all the legal and insurance advice the Club has points the opposite way.*

**Women's Golf:** More effort needs to go into the ladies. They normally sponsor their own prizes. I am a new member whose wife also plays. It's a bit of a men's club. *The women's golf competitions are run by a Taree Women's Golf, a club that is quite separate from the Golf Management Committee although there is one women's representative elected to the Committee. Women golfers are eligible to stand for all other committee roles on the Committee. That said, a significant proportion of all Saturday competitions are sponsored by members as well as local businesses many of whom are members just as it is with women's Wednesday competition. We also have more than the district average of mixed events on a Saturday many of which are sponsored by members or member businesses. It's difficult to deny categorically that Taree "is a bit of a men's club" but it's also true to say (1) It would be hard to find any golf club in the area or elsewhere that did not carry over some of the vestiges of the "men's club" that typified golf in the distant past, and (2) Your Committee works hard to mitigate any "men's club" behaviours in the design of its programme events and there is a high level of good will and cooperation existing between Taree Women's Golf and the Committee.*

## **Course**

*A general response to all comments and suggestions on the course and its presentation is that the Committee is very much aware that (1) the Taree course is one of the very best "country courses" in the state; (2) "country courses" by their very nature do not present in the way that a high membership base metropolitan courses do; (3) the Taree course is managed by a team that does wonders with the resources at its disposal and, in many ways, are the envy of many clubs in the district and elsewhere; (4) the greens and green surrounds we have are the envy of all clubs in the district and, indeed, up and down the coast ... the Committee is constantly fielding comments to this effect from visiting golfers; (5) there is a steady programme of improvement across all areas of the management of the course already in place at Taree; and (6) to accomplish half of what is suggested, the Club would need to provide vastly more resources (staff, machinery and funds generally) than is appropriate both to the number of golfing members at the Club and the low proportion of golfers who actually use the course on a regular basis. What is more, the Committee is only too aware that the Club already subsidises the course maintenance and the provision of services to golfers to the tune of \$150,000 to \$250,000 in any one financial year.*

**Course - General:** (1) 1st year as a member I find holes 10 & 11 as my biggest issues, regards downhill run etc; *We understand the comment and sympathise but ... one of the underlying principles of the game of golf is "to play the course as you find it"; our experience is that time and experience will assist;* (2) Schedule work on the course better on competition days; *This is one of our priorities but with limited resources sometimes there is no option but to do what work has to be done on the day of competition particularly mid-week and hopefully with minimal interference with play ... there is no evidence however that this overly delays play beyond an average four-hour round most days. It's worth saying also that, although our "course rules" give greens staff right of way at all times, we have yet to find a course where the green staff are as considerate of golfers as they are*

at Taree; **(3)** Cart paths throughout the entire course; *The priority is to get the course drainage right before any more paths are created. The poor drainage at the back of the 13<sup>th</sup> green adjacent to the 17<sup>th</sup> green came about because paths were installed there without thinking through the potential affect on drainage; members will now be aware that drainage issues there and elsewhere have indeed been addressed;* **(4)** The current overall golf experience is good. Nothing short of major changes to course layout and water provisions during summer would improve the golfing experience; *Ta! Much appreciated ...we always welcome positive comments just as we welcome the more critical directed as they are at helping us all improve the golfing experience at Taree;* **(5)** In the long term, it would great to see the 18th hole moved so the green is in front of club house; *We would all like to see this kind of "finish" to the full course and perhaps some such opportunity will occur during the proposed restructuring the course over the next three to four years;* **(6)** Make sure green staff are ahead of the field or stop mowing when on the green; *See comment 2 above;* **(7)** Ensure all players fill divots on fairways and rough AND on practice fairway. Also repair your pitch mark and one other on every green. *The Committee would welcome this above all else. That said, we are well aware that the majority of members "do the right thing";* and **(8)** Appoint a specific course committee member, with suitable experience/knowledge, to liaise with the course superintendent. *Kay Woolcock is both Secretary-Treasurer of the Committee and Greens Director on the Club Taree board.*

**Course - Greens: (1)** Stop watering the greens and tees because that wets the greens fringes. Commence a program of rebuilding and re-turfing the tees with the industry standard grass for teeing grounds. (I believe it's Santa Anna couch but anything would be better than the turf we are currently using.) I am also extremely disappointed with the quality of the work undertaken by our greens staff regarding the 2 new tees. The 11th is already as bad as it was before the work was undertaken and the 15th is a joke. A tee should be level and firm. The 15<sup>th</sup> is uneven and soft and I don't believe there has been a roller anywhere near either tee during construction or after turfing. A golf tee should be a firm as a bowling green, ours are not! *There is little more that can be said to these comments beyond those set out above under course-general. Perhaps the only detail the Committee can provide is that these are exactly the kinds of issues that are front and central to the programme of work we undertake. The fact is that the unfolding programme of work is slower than we would like does not hide the appreciation we have for the slow and steady progress that has been made ... within our resources. One specific comment: we have used Santa Anna couch on two tees over the past year or so and within a few months it has been overgrown with Kikuyu.* **(2)** Drainage-Drainage-Drainage even when its dry some parts of the course are still very wet. Tuncurry and Harrington courses are much better now that drainage work has been done. Visible distant markers that you can see, not the ones we have got that you have to be standing on to know, however how do you know when nothing has been written on them. Bare patches where no relief is given, ie all approaches to cart paths, around the first green, where trees have been removed from 8th fairway just off cart path, the worn path made by carts between 15th & 16th fairways. Surely a local rule could address this problem. Calling up on the 1st green. Even though it is a rule for carts to keep their distance from the greens, why is it that certain members are an exception to the rule. *As touched on above, we are aware that drainage is, indeed, an ongoing issue for our course and not one that lends itself to ready or quick solutions. Our drainage concerns are a product of the terrain with its rocky substratum and thin top soil combined with the damage done by the surface roots of many of the eucalypt trees that prevail on the course. Some additional work has been done toward the end of the survey period and we look forward to this having a positive effect. Rest assured it is something the Club is very much aware of and addresses whenever season,*

time and funds allow. **(3)** Less watering of the greens surrounds. *There is always a nice balance between the level of watering necessary given ambient conditions and the need to preserve the health of grass on greens and approaches and the available drainage. This is integral to the excellent staff we have and the work they do. Sometimes, extreme weather conditions require more watering than the green surrounds can cope with. The “proof of our pudding” in this respect is how well we survived the severe drought earlier this year. The greens and surrounds survived that drought as we know and the conditions of our greens now have never been in better condition.* **(4)** Lies are too thin or muddy. *True and this is largely a product of the type of course terrain we have;* **(5)** Reduction of second cut and rough areas around greens eg. left of second green, front of 6th green, 13th green, 14th green etc. *Most of these longer cut areas are maintained in this way to reduce the severity of the run away from the green;* and **(6)** The 11<sup>th</sup> green is badly in need of rebuilding. *There is a long list of repairs and restructures that would make Taree so much better course. Most if not all have been identified and are part of the Club’s long term plans for the course and its development. For the moment, time, staffing costs and funds generally remain an important determinant of what is actually achieved.*

**Course - Fairways:** **(1)** Get rid of bare patches on fairways; **(2)** We need more GUR marked clearly around the bare patches, especially on holes 7 & 8; **(3)** Improve the fairways; **(4)** Use pipe drainage in place of the dangerous rock drains. Ball can be deflected and can go anywhere dangerous if lose balance trying to retrieve ball; **(5)** the approaches to path ways are very rough, needs filling with say road base; and **(6)** Do NOT remove trees unnecessarily, keep rough areas relatively clear. *Please see introductory comments under Course - General.*

**Course - Tees:** The tees are appalling. A golf tee across the golf industry are Santa Anna Couch. We should change our tees as a matter of urgency. The two new tees are. A tee should be like a bowling green, firm and flat. *Again, please see general comments above under Course - General; also note remarks earlier on the failure of the Santa Anna turf at the course.*

**Course - Bunkers:** **(1)** The bunkers are very difficult with little sand; and **(2)** Condition of sand in bunkers disappointing, primarily due to fellow member's failure to rake bunkers after use. *Raking bunkers appropriately is an issue readily addressed by more careful attention by members as and when they make use of the bunkers. The bunkers are re-sanded as and when funds and time allow but are subject to unusual ravages from heavy rain which is a feature of our area; when the area experiences heavy rains the excess water floods through the bunkers taking a great deal of sand with them. It is an issue we are all too conscious of and we do what we can to keep on top of it with the resources available.*

## **Event Administration**

A number of comments and suggestion related to “**on line booking**” and related computer based enhancements to the process now used: **(1)** A simpler way of entering scores at the end of the day, particularly in shot gun start events when all players finish together; **(2)** Book in on the internet - finding programme is easier in on internet (Club Taree Golf events); **(3)** A online tee/time login would be beneficial; **(4)** MyClub for processing cards and tee times; **(5)** A computer system that works, so annoying with current set up always having problems; and **(6)** Computer program that allows members to put their name down from home computer or nomination sheets up in the clubhouse. *Both the Committee and board of Club Taree are well aware of the deficiencies of the current computer system, with time sheet bookings, results entry and display not to mention the*

*“back of house” difficulties in the professional’s shop and for the Club in efficiently presenting these aspects of golf administration to members. A completely new system has been provided for in the 2018 budget and assessments are currently underway which the Committee hopes will see major changes in this area early in 2018. MyClub is but one of a few such systems under investigation for performance, presentation and, of course, cost effectiveness.*

## **Club house**

**Presentations: (1)** During summer trial presentations on the balcony area. *We did this last year for the Taree Open and we now use the auditorium for some major events; it may be worthwhile using the outdoor area during daylight saving times.* **(2)** Encourage more players to attend Presentation on Saturday's. *The Committee would just love to see more at presentations and would welcome any ideas by which this could be achieved ... short of outright bribery.* **(3)** The presentation area in the club is terrible, sponsors don't really get the value or acclamation at presentation time; there is no area that the TGC can claim as their own. *A work in progress.*

**Golfers to be treated better in 'the clubhouse'.** The raffles etc shouldn't take over the golfers' presentation time especially on large events. There should be a separate 'sports bar' area for the golfers as an actual club house. *In the absence of a “sports bar” there is always a nice balance for the Club between the golfers on the one hand and non-golfing patrons on the other.*

**Sports Bar-Own area for golfers:** build the sports bar downstairs so the golfer can enjoy a drink after golf away from the public. *See above.*

**Membership prices:** are way too expensive. *This is essentially a Club matter rather than one for the Committee. It’s worth bearing in mind, however, that meals, bar, gaming and functions all turn a profit for the club and this goes some considerable way in supporting the golf course in the condition it now enjoys.*

**Social Membership:** Introduce a social membership around \$200 pa for social golfers with nominal green fee. *Again, this is a matter for the Club rather than the Committee although we do understand the Club is aware of the need to draw more social golfers to the course.*

**Promotions:** Regular promotions and events to encourage people who are interested in playing golf. *This is something the Committee and the Club are acutely aware of and indeed, do participate in October Month of Golf, Golf for Seniors and other programmes as well as embarking on a programme for development of junior golf. What we are desperately in need of is a reasonably large team of dedicated and “qualified” volunteers to help with all these programmes.*

**Improve cart storage with dust free environment.** It is difficult to keep carts and clothes clean. *This is being undertaken over three weeks commencing 28 August.*

**Fees: (1)** Full membership plus no discount rates to play competition is a lot of money considering the average prizes and limitations of where you can spend your prizes. I would rather pay say extra full membership, then the cost of competition was \$3. \$1 for green fees and the remainder is prize money for the day to be split evenly for 1st 2nd and 3rd throughout the 3 grades. *First, the value of prizes is currently \$40-50 for 1<sup>st</sup>, \$30 for 2<sup>nd</sup> and \$20 for 3<sup>rd</sup> with scratch prizes additional on medal days; these are more than competitive in the district particularly when the value is ramped up considerably for major and significant events both in value and distribution sometimes to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> placings. Sourcing of vouchers are distributed as evenly as possible between pro shop, bar and sponsors gift vouchers whereas most other clubs in the district provide credit on the professional shop as the only option. One district club does have three or four categories of membership up to \$1500 pa which each higher level of annual payment attracting lower green fees. This would be something for the Club management to consider in the context of its annual budgeting processes.*

**(2) Discounts for pensioners and seniors** is another matter for the Club to consider.

**(3) Membership Cards:** Should carry an electronic storage of credit from competition, payments etc from which bar and pro shop payments can be made. *This is a facility that is available with at least one of the golf events management systems the Club is assessing. Whether or not it is part of the system ultimately decided upon will be largely coincidental as other features may be more significant overall in presenting the best possible events management system.*

### **Committee-Staff**

**(1)** All good - people doing their job well. **(2)** I think everyone is doing a great job. **(3)** I don't really know what the committee have done of late, so I gave them a 9 because i haven't heard any complaints. Also, I haven't played enough events to have an opinion on what events I favoured or not. Please keep the water up in the ball cleaners, some were without, that's my only complaint. **(4)** Appreciate efforts of those on Committee. Hard to have a Golf Club atmosphere under current arrangement. **(5)** the management and staff have taken RSA to a new level; I have spoken to many people about this subject and all agree. Unless you are a tea-sipping poker machine player you are pretty much frowned upon. *In respect of 1-4: Great ... happy campers make it all worthwhile for all of us! As to (5), the Club's RSA responsibilities are a matter of strict liability meaning that any infringement, however trivial it may seem to those directly involved, involves heavy fines on staff and management with the potential of loss of licence. The Club is aware that this may mean difficult decisions affecting some members adversely and have taken the stance, correctly from your Committee's point of view, that it is better to apply the proper level of commitment to the state Liquor laws and all that this implies than run the risk of the more serious consequences that might well affect many more people and the amenities they enjoy.*

### **Pace of Play**

**Women golfers** move very fast so not their fault also some members are very slow. *The Committee is very pleased with the way our women golfers fit with Saturday play not just their contribution to our mixed events but to their separate competitions each Saturday.*

**Tee times:** Ensure players are ready to tee off at the correct time. *This is something that would be made easier if we were able to have a starter's loudspeaker at the first hole-practice green, something that was tried a few years ago and abandoned after complaints from nearby residents. Something that would help would be if all players got into the habit of going straight to the starter (pro-shop) after parking, paid their fees and then went off to change gear etc before proceeding to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> tee. The starter could then give a "hurry up" to any player arriving too close to their tee time.*

### **Pro Shop**

**(1)** Should trade clubs. *Ultimately a matter for the club professional and his business model. (2)* A lot of members also would like to have a hit with him ... I think they would appreciate it and share his knowledge. *The Committee have noticed that Wayne (and Bryan) are both out in the field more often than they were in the past and this has been welcomed by the Committee.*

Golf Management Committee  
August 2017