

Canterbury Blind Bowls Launch

The Burnside Bowling Club hosted a fun event on Friday evening when 52 people attended the launch of the Canterbury branch of the New Zealand Blind Lawn Bowling Association (NZBLBA). The CEO of Bowls Canterbury, Mel Mather attended along with guests from several other Christchurch clubs and guests and friends from the Blind Foundation. Burnside Bowling Club members were present in abundance. Special guests also were upcoming NZ Trans Tasman players, Tayla Bruce, Bruce Wakefield and Sue Curran.

Sue Curran, President of the NZBLBA, came from Hamilton to support the event and spoke about the opportunities for players and directors (guides) to be involved in this area.

Greg Johnson, former NZ Blind Singles champion from Auckland, was the keynote speaker. Greg shared an engaging story of his life and the challenges of his journey with blindness. Greg captured the audience and his presentation was warmly received.

The purpose of the evening was to launch the Canterbury branch to be able to provide lawn bowls as a potential sport for blind and low vision people. One of the intentions was to raise awareness of the needs of blind and low vision people when playing bowls. Another key goal was to recruit a modest five new playing members within the NZBLBA organisation. Alongside that was the intended recruitment of potential directors for the players. The final goal was to achieve a small amount of fundraising as a base for the local branch.

The whole evening was a huge success and achieved outcomes significantly beyond expectations. Three full playing members and seven new associate members (directors) signed up on the night. There are indications that up to seven other full playing members will join in the next few weeks. Financially \$1369 was raised which was a remarkable achievement. Grateful thanks are extended to local Burnside club member, Chris Iggo, who made an exceedingly generous donation of \$1000. Thanks to all involved for making this launch such a great success. New friends and partnerships have already been established from the evening.

Plans are in place for a blind bowls tournament for all comers, sighted and blind, friends and families, players and non-players. This will be held at the Burnside Club on Sunday 29 October. Watch out for information for this event. Support is available to all individuals and clubs who need any guidance around blind bowls. Please contact Kevin Smith on 022 312 1632 or kevincsmith23@gmail.com if you need any further information.

The two links below provide photos from the launch event. Thanks to Arjan Van Hasselt for these photos.

<http://www.burnsidebowlingclub.com/2017BlindBowlsLaunchPhotos.html>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10155193748924702.1073742057.594594701&type=1&l=85ed2d4f03>

If you can only partially see up the green, and you wish to be involved in the world of blind lawn bowls, please be in touch. If you can only partially see up the green, then you should be in touch with us.

As Greg shared within the evening, the mantra behind participation in blind bowls is *"Don't let what you can't do, stop you doing what you can."*