

**WWCHA AGM 28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

**MEETING OPEN AT 7:07PM**

Welcome to Country by President – Lee Murrell

Apologies – Rebecca Peel, Benson Williams, Carla Bailey, Sharon Smith, Garry Smith, Susan Fielding

**FORMAL BUSINESS – 2023 MINUTES**

2023 Minutes Approved

Moved by KEN LARKIN

Second by Charmain

**BOARD REPORTS**

President – Lee Murrell

Moved by Lee Murrell

Second by Sharyn Wellham

Treasurers – Karen Boyd

Moved by Karen Boyd

Second by Adam Boyd

**OTHER BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS**

Secretary - Rebecca Peel – Not present

Competitions Manager – Melinda Chyb

Officiating Manager – Zac Tinning

Representative Manager – Jaclyn Hogan

Development Manager – Nathan Szymanski

Events Manager – Liz Cronin

Facilities Manager – Benson Williams – Not Present

**NOMINATIONS AND ELECTED BOARD FOR 2024 (Unopposed)**

**PRESIDENT** - Liz Cronin

**SECRETARY** - Jenna Rowe

**TREASURER** – Karen Boyd

**COMPETITIONS MANAGER** - Amy Smart

**OFFICIATING MANAGER** – Zac Tinning

**REPRESENTATIVE MANAGER** – Carla Bailey

**FACILITIES MANAGER** – Ken Larkin

**EVENTS MANAGER** - Lara Laurent

**DEVELOPMENT MANAGER** – Lauren Gailey

Lee Murrell as President moved that all current board members signatures to be removed from all WWCHA account.

Moved by Lee Murrell

Second by Kylie Cowell

Lee Murrell as President moved that Eliabeth Cronin & Jenna Rowe signature be added to the WWCHA accounts.

Moved by Lee Murrell

Second by Kylie Cowell

### President's Report

The purpose of annual reports is to reflect on the recent performance of the association and to set out a vision for the year come.

At its most rudimentary, the purpose of the Association is to run an adult and junior competition, and provide the opportunity for representation for those that seek it. By these simple measures, the boxes have been ticked.

In addition to 'putting on a show', to ensure the long term future of the association, we must also prioritise:

1. the engagement and outreach with the community outside of hockey,
2. ensure that playing the game strikes the right balance between social and competitive,
3. increase revenue, and
4. ensure that our volunteers are supported and upskilled.

The next committee should take advantage of the fact that they are seated in November and not February like the current committee was. That quarter of a year is where the hard work needs to be done to launch the next year and put actions into place that will give the association the best chance of success. It is the difference between being proactive and reactive. The difference between growing our sport or seeing it diminish.

### The season

I believe that each of our competitions were runs successfully under what could be considered trying circumstances. The Div 1 women's competition was on shaky ground until CSU stepped up and took on the management responsibilities for a second CSU team that allowed for four teams to be named.

On the men's side, the eleventh hour coming together of Mel and leaders of each club, saw the creation of the Dolphins which not only proved successful on the field, it increased the comradery between the players across the division. The success of this team should be used as a blueprint for all aspects of the association. We had a group of people that put aside their self-interests of themselves and their clubs for the betterment of the association. If everyone took this approach, Wagga hockey would only go from strength to strength.

The Saturday competition was a disruptive one as a result of the holiday breaks and hosting obligations and privileges. Next season's calendar should be kinder, and consideration should be given to a couple of double header weekends to ensure the season can be kept tight whilst allowing for fair breaks for competitions and known hurdles such as uni holidays. Despite the disruptions, we saw the season successfully wrapped up with, for the most part, good spirited hockey played at a high level. Congratulations to all the winning teams. And not to diminish their achievements, I think it is important to reflect on those clubs that gave key players to the second CSU women's team and the Dolphins. As noted, the success of the competition rests equally on their shoulders.

The juniors on Friday night also saw success in an otherwise challenging year. Thanks to Nathan and Sharon, along with the support of Mel and Rosie and the team coaches, we saw numbers increase and be sustained. Having our junior rep team members attended to coach an umpire the 5.30 game, meant that players were hanging around throughout the night, creating a positive atmosphere.

A key part of that atmosphere was having the canteen in full operation and well served. We were slow to get it up and running, losing about four rounds before Benson took it on, and it did not have the advantage of running an alcohol tent at a carnival like previous years, but by Benson and his families putting in the many, many hours for free, all clubs benefited by not having to provide rostered volunteers as in previous years and the association able to channel funds into different areas. A small increase in prices will see greater revenue next year.

The problems that juniors face is almost always related to numbers, both in players and volunteers. Unfortunately, due to the late forming of the committee, there was very little time for outreach – a job that need

to start on day 1 of term 1. We are lucky to have Nikki Lloyd take such an active role in this space and the everyone in the association to help her build on the success of the twilight competition, both at a junior and senior level. I know that there is a push by some to get a men's div 3 comp up and running. I agree, but the numbers aren't there yet. Not many clubs can field two full teams without players doubling up, and those players signing up for a div 3 team are less likely to want to play that second, full field game on the same day. If anything, I would highly encourage the Association to continue the midweek twilight mixed comp as an entry point to the Saturday competition.

Back to the juniors, it is no secret that I believe that the junior competition should be prioritised. Almost everyone who plays in the senior competition played when they were young. If our junior product is not engaging for those that do try it, our numbers will not grow and the senior competition will simply wither and die. The key issues identified are retaining girls, and ensuring the standard of hockey engages the more skilled players whilst not intimidating the new or more social players.

I encourage the Association to invest in a means of dividing up the field into quarters to introduce a fast five comp on the Friday night so that we can have girls v girls and create an approachable entry to hockey.

#### Player conduct and standards of officiating

Across all competitions, there remains the problem of on field conduct. I strongly urge the Association to formalise umpire training. We cannot rely upon Hockey NSW to provide training any more than once a year if we are lucky. An increase in the standard of umpiring, in knowledge, communication and positioning, should be a focus. Consistent umpiring is the key to managing player behaviour. I believe that we would be better served by not necessarily having our most senior umpires on the field but rather committing the same hours to umpire training. As an example, instead of having Charmaine and Gary umpire a couple of games each weekend, where they control half a field, engage them in observing and mentoring the eight umpires that will be officiating those games.

It is this investment in people that will ensure the long-term future of the association.

#### Finances

Ideally, we would do it all, but finances are finite. We of course have to maintain our facilities but I would encourage, where possible, to put the money into growing numbers.

Of course, paying members to perform tasks is problematic. If we pay one person, say a member who is an accountant to do our books, then it breeds resentment on those that put hundreds of hours and their own dollars into training and travel. What I would recommend, however, is using money to grow revenue. We have not, for years, engaged with sponsors or brought money into the association beyond fees and grants. This is a huge, missed opportunity but one that requires professional specialities. We should strongly consider engaging outside help to grow and attract sponsors to the association.

#### Representatives

Beyond the competitions that we run in Wagga, we have also sent away many strong representative teams, with more people, both as players and officiators, going on to higher representative duties, than we have had for many years. Of particular note, and a good sign of things to come, our 15 year boys have progressed to Div 2 and are committed to cementing their spot next year, and both the boys and girls teams will be playing in Div 2 at the indoor state championships.

This was also the first year of the Scorchers. The new committee will need to determine if a second year is approved. I have mixed feelings about the Scorchers initiative. From a team perspective, one can only admire the professionalism the management group provided and the commitment from the players. If the innovative is to continue, I would like to see more of a benefit to the association. I would like to see those players look to Pat, Adam, Zac and Jarrod as examples of giving more to the development of others. There are around 20 players in the Scorchers squad. If each of them was to commit just 3 hours across the season, that could see 60 hours of junior development or allow every single junior rep to have a one hour one-on-one coaching session with the

best players we have. Neo did this and you immediately saw a lift in coaching and player quality. Similarly, Skittles is down at juniors on a Friday night and the impact is wonderful. To see this across the squad would be a great benefit to the Association.

When the Scorchers were approved, it was on the promise that it would benefit hockey in Wagga – it is hard to measure this. On one hand, it certainly brought high class hockey to Wagga, but on the flip side, it took visibility of our div 1 comp away from Saturday and meant that some of those player that would umpire or be available to mentor on Saturday, were not there. It is also regrettable that some of the player on field conduct did not meet the standard of role models. Certainly, something to consider moving forward.

### Culture

What this highlights, however, is that in our community we have the people with skill and passion to make good things happen. The trick, and it really is tricky, is to move away from a culture of factions and criticism. It is tough - so many of our members have been making contributions for years and what happened 3 or 5 or 10 years ago still reverberates. Unfortunately, this maims us as much as it benefits us. My experience this year is that almost to a person, the people I have worked with have come with the purest of intentions and have put, in some cases, literally hundreds of hours into helping others.

And this is perhaps the Achillies heel of the association. People do not see the good intentions, and if you are not there helping them, you do not see the hours. Many people have come forward and said 'keep an eye on that person' or 'they did nasty things'. Not one of those people have produced any evidence to counter my own experiences. People are trying to do a good job and defaming them helps no one and only harms hockey. Keep an open mind, challenge those that engage in rumours as to whether they are helping or hindering. If you have an opinion about someone, think about whether that is your experience or just something you heard from someone else.

This is too small a document to pass on all of the learning that has occurred this year. The current committee was at a huge disadvantage by starting so late. We, and me in particular, did not have the ability to forward plan and spent the year reacting to problems rather than setting up long term solutions. That is not to say that we have not formed a vision for the following years. We have identified areas for improvement, some aspirational, others essential. I can't stress enough the value of hearing of the lessons learnt by the current committee. Moving forward, the new committee should not wait to be offered assistance. Approach the current committee weeks in advance of decisions, involve them in the planning. You may not care for the person but I can assure you that each of them has committed hundreds of hour to hockey over the last 12 months – they really do have its best interest at heart.

So to the future – I challenge the next stewards of this association to not just be problem solvers; embrace the possibilities of what can be. We have the human resources, with good planning, acceptance of each other and engagement, the future of hockey in Wagga can be bright.