

**Canberra North Bowling and ACT Rugby Union Club
(Incorporated)**



**54 McCaughey Street
Turner ACT**

A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE	
SUBMISSION NUMBER	58
DATE AUTHD FOR PUBLICATION	15.5.15



**51 Blackall Street
Barton ACT**

Dr Andrea Cullen
Secretary
Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Office of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Cullen,

Inquiry into elements impacting on the future of the ACT clubs

The Canberra North Bowling and ACT Rugby Union Club Inc wishes to make a submission to the Committee's Inquiry into elements impacting on the future of the ACT clubs.

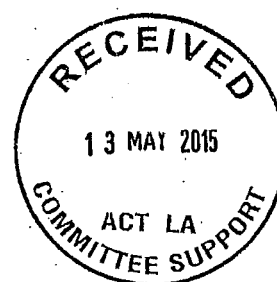
By way of background, the ACT Rugby Union Club and the Canberra North Bowling Club were two small to medium ACT Clubs established in the 1960s. In 2014, the clubs decided to amalgamate to provide both clubs with a more sustainable future. The clubs are now in the final stages of amalgamation with a common board, common membership and the same management at two sites, one in Barton and one in Turner. The main operational club is now the Canberra North Bowling and ACT Rugby Union Club while the ACT Rugby Union Club will be wound up later this year.

The issue that the Club wishes to raise with the Committee is the requirement under the ACT Gaming Act and Regulations to conduct a postal ballot of members for the issue, withdrawal or transfer of a gaming machine licence.

For example, S12.2 of the *ACT Gaming Machine Act 2004* requires a ballot of members before a new licence can be issued. Part 4 of the *ACT Gaming Machine Regulations 2004* requires that the ballot papers be posted to members and that members may lodge their ballots by a post paid response.

As part of the process of amalgamation and providing gaming machines at the Turner site, this club has been forced to conduct three ballots over the last 12 months. The Club has a combined membership of some 9,000 members.

The first ballot was required in support of an application for a licence to replace the poker machines removed from Turner by the Canberra Southern Cross Club at the end of its lease. The second and third ballots were required to transfer the licence for 15 gaming machines at Barton from the ACT Rugby Union Club to the Canberra North Bowling and ACT Rugby Union Club. Both the losing and gaining club memberships were required to vote although the



membership was common to both clubs. The ACT Gaming and Racing Commission helpfully agreed that two ballots might be combined into one envelope.

Nevertheless, the ballots cost some \$25,000 in total – a massive imposition on two small clubs struggling for survival.

And for little effect.

While the membership supported the issue of a new licence and the transfer of the old licence, only 5% of the membership voted. We understand that this is a typical response rate.

The Club considers that the requirement for postal ballots under the gaming machine legislation is outdated and the cost has an adverse impact on the viability of clubs, particularly small and medium size clubs.

On-line voting would clearly be significantly cheaper and would potentially result in higher participation rates.

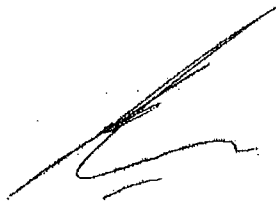
At the same time, it is accepted that some work would be required to ensure adequate safeguards if on-line voting were to be adopted.

In the meantime, a better solution would be to allow voting in person at club premises, with members who are unable to attend in person requesting a postal vote. Again this would represent a significantly cheaper option. Arguably it could also improve the participation rate.

The Club suggests that the Committee consider recommending that *the ACT Gaming Machine Regulations 2004* be amended to allow that, where a ballot of members is required, Clubs be given the option of a postal ballot, on-line ballot or voting in person.

I would be happy to provide any further information to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Wilcox, Secretary/Manager

12 May 2015

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