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Lawn Bowls

(1845 -)

Born	18450101
Occupation	Sport

Summary

In 1990, the Australian Bowls Council (now Bowls Australia Inc.), the national administrative body for men's bowling, was affiliated with 2,225 clubs. The Australian Women's Bowling Council was parallel, with 2,185 affiliated clubs. By the late 1990s, Australia could boast 43% of the world's bowling population.

Details

Popular in Britain, bowls was introduced to Australia for male members of the colonial elite in the nineteenth century. Public greens were formed beside hotels, with membership fees introduced later to control the clientele – the respectability of the sport was constantly emphasised. Private clubs developed early, and the first recorded game took place at Sandy Bay, Tasmania, in 1845. In 1864, the Melbourne Bowling Club in Chapel Street became Australia's first formalised club.

Women had been bowling at Stawell in Victoria since 1881 and a ladies' tournament was organised there in 1896. The Colac Club was set up by eight women in 1899, but later became a men's club, and on the whole the sport of lawn bowls was a white male-dominated scene until the twentieth century. The Fitzroy Club's invitation to the Aboriginal cricket team to play in 1866 was an anomaly.

After Australia's first interstate match between New South Wales and Victoria in 1880, those two States established their own Bowling Associations. Associations were likewise formed in Western Australia in 1898; South Australia in 1902; Tasmania in 1901 and Queensland in 1903. All States amalgamated to form the Australian Bowls Council in 1911. The Australian Women's Bowling Council was formed much later, in 1947, and the first Women's National Championship was held in 1949. The first World Bowls Championships were held at Kyeemagh Bowls Club in New South Wales in 1966.

Published resources

Book
Lawn bowls: the Australian way, Pollard, Jack, 1962

The first one hundred years of the Royal Victorian Bowls Association 1880-1980, Henshaw, John, 1979

Centenary: the history of the Royal New South Wales Bowling Association, 1880-1980, Guiney, Cyril, 1980

The first fifty years: a brief history of the growth and development of the Queensland Ladies' Bowling Association, 1930 to 1980, Morelle, Lettie, 1980

Bowls west: a centenary history of the Royal Western Australian Bowling Association, 1898-1998, McDonald, Gilbert, 1998

Site Exhibition
She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html

Edited Book
The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport, Vamplew, Vray; Moore, Katharine; O'Hara, John; Cashman, Richard; Jobling, Ian, 1997

Archival resources

National Library of Australia
Annual report / Federal District Women's Bowling Association

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Digital resources



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