

Victorian Golf District Associations Review

Date: February 2026

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Acknowledgement:

The Review Group acknowledges the valued contribution of Karen Faehndrich and Peter Frost throughout the review process.

Executive Summary

This document sets out the outcome recommended by the District Review Panel following completion of the Victorian Golf District Review conducted under the approved Terms of Reference.

Following endorsement of the Terms of Reference, an independent consultant was engaged to conduct workshops, surveys and document review. The resulting issues papers and consolidated report are formally recognised as a summary of stakeholder feedback at the time of engagement. It does not constitute a recommendation for structural reform.

The review phase is now closed. No boundary changes, amalgamations or structural adjustments are proposed.

Consultation identified consistent themes across districts, including volunteer capacity pressures, increasing governance and compliance demands, variation in capability between districts, and uncertainty regarding the purpose and direction of the review. Districts reaffirmed that their primary function is the coordination of regional competitions and events.

In response, this document adopts a support-based approach rather than structural change. District Support will be delivered by Golf Victoria and Golf Australia within existing authority and resources, including through Relationship Officers and central governance support.

Participation in District Support is voluntary. Assistance will be tailored to district needs and may include governance guidance, administrative tools, clarification of roles and responsibilities, reduction of duplication, and operational support for competitions and coordination.

Roles and responsibilities within the existing governance framework remain unchanged. Support does not alter accountability.

The review process has taken time and has provided an opportunity for clearer understanding across the system. Ongoing communication between Golf Victoria, Golf Australia, districts and clubs will continue to be strengthened through regular, transparent and direct engagement, with sustained attention to constructive working relationships moving forward.

This position provides clarity, removes structural uncertainty, and enables districts to continue their core functions with appropriate and proportionate support. This approach is intended to strengthen working relationships across the system and create stable conditions for sustainable growth of the game in regional Victoria.

1. Introduction

District associations have long played an important role in the administration and coordination of golf in country Victoria. They have been responsible for organising competitions, supporting clubs, and representing regional interests within the broader governance structure.

This document sets out the position recommended by the District Review Panel following completion of the recent district review process. It acknowledges the work undertaken, clarifies the status of that work, and sets out the agreed way forward.

It does not propose structural reform, boundary change, or amalgamation. Its purpose is to confirm what was heard through consultation, explain how that information will be treated, and outline the next steps.

The consultant engagement gathered input through workshops, surveys, and document review. The feedback identified operational pressures, governance challenges, and differing expectations across districts. It also highlighted concern about the direction and implications of the review process itself.

This document is intended to provide clarity. It reframes the consultant's output as an issues paper, formally concludes the review phase, and shifts the focus to practical support for districts, delivered without structural change.

2. Consultation findings

Feedback received through workshops, surveys and written submissions identified a consistent set of themes across districts, notwithstanding differences in size, geography and resourcing.

Districts consistently identified their primary function as the coordination and delivery of regional competitions and events. This activity remains the central focus of district effort and volunteer contribution.

Beyond event coordination, there is no agreed or consistently understood definition of the district role. Capability and capacity vary significantly. Some districts operate with stable governance and administrative structures. Others experience difficulty maintaining committee membership, meeting compliance obligations, and managing increasing administrative requirements.

Volunteer capacity was identified as a material risk. Succession planning is limited in many districts. Smaller districts, in particular, reported that current responsibilities exceed available volunteer capacity.

Governance, compliance and administrative requirements were described as necessary but increasingly complex. Several districts expressed concern about exposure and risk in these areas where expertise and support are limited.

The consultation also identified a decline in confidence and trust between some districts and the governing bodies. This was attributed to uncertainty regarding the purpose and potential outcomes of the review process.

A clear and consistent position was expressed that boundary change or amalgamation should not be imposed as a response to operational or capacity pressures.

3. Review Status and Determination

Following endorsement of the Terms of Reference, an independent consultant was engaged to undertake the approved scope. The consultant conducted the agreed workshops, surveys and document review in accordance with that brief.

The Review was undertaken against the six Key Objectives set out in the Terms of Reference:

1. **Evaluate Governance Structures** – assessing district governance models, voting rights and decision-making processes.
2. **Assess Financial Sustainability** – evaluating resource allocation, affiliation fee models and operational capacity.
3. **Address Volunteer and Operational Challenges** – identifying issues relating to volunteer capacity and operational efficiency.
4. **Enhance Communication and Engagement** – reviewing communication and collaboration between GV, GA, districts and clubs.
5. **Propose Structural Improvements** – developing evidence-based options for alignment, including consideration of boundaries or amalgamation.
6. **Develop a Transitional Framework** – if structural changes were recommended.

The Review process substantially met the objectives relating to governance, volunteer and operational challenges, communication and engagement, and structural considerations. Stakeholder perspectives were documented, key operational themes were identified, and the relationship between districts, GV and GA was examined.

However, the objective relating to financial sustainability could not be fully assessed. The information available during the review process was insufficient to enable a definitive evaluation of affiliation fee allocation, resource distribution, or long-term financial modelling across districts. As a result, no evidence-based financial determination or structural adjustment grounded in financial analysis could be made.

The resulting issues papers and consolidated report reflect the themes and concerns raised during consultation. The consultant fulfilled the scope as defined in the Terms of Reference.

The consultant's report is appropriately regarded as an issues paper. It documents stakeholder perspectives and operational challenges at the time of consultation.

It does not constitute a recommendation for structural reform.

The District Review Panel formally confirms that the consultant's work will be treated as contextual material. No boundary changes are proposed. No amalgamations are recommended. No structural adjustments are assumed.

The District Review Panel recommends that the review phase be concluded.

Adoption of this recommendation provides certainty and removes ongoing ambiguity regarding potential structural outcomes.

This determination has been adopted on the basis that it:

- provides certainty
- removes structural ambiguity
- acknowledges volunteer capacity constraints
- recognises variation between districts
- prioritises operational stability.

The Review sets out a high-level articulation of roles and responsibilities for Golf Victoria (GV) and Golf Australia (GA), districts and clubs. This provides a starting framework intended to improve clarity and support consistent expectations across the system.

During consultation, stakeholders indicated that further refinement at an operational level would assist with practical implementation. The Review Panel therefore recommends the establishment of a time-limited working group comprising representatives of GA, GV, districts and clubs.

The purpose of this group would be to test the practical application of the roles and responsibilities outlined in this Review, confirm their appropriateness, and identify any necessary clarifications to support effective collaboration.

Subject to endorsement by the GV Board, this work should be undertaken during 2026, with outcomes communicated through structured engagement sessions at a local level.

By providing structural certainty and proportionate support, this approach is designed to strengthen working relationships and create stable conditions for the continued growth of the game.

This determination and associated support framework give effect to the objectives of the approved Terms of Reference.

They strengthen governance clarity and clarify roles and responsibilities. They support financial and operational sustainability by reducing administrative duplication, improving allocation of responsibilities, and providing access to shared governance resources.

They also improve coordination and collaboration across districts, clubs and the governing bodies, while maintaining existing district structures.

4. District Support

With the review phase concluded and the status of the consultant report clarified, attention moves to implementation.

District Support provides a structured, voluntary framework to assist districts in addressing the operational and governance pressures identified through consultation. It is designed to strengthen existing district functions while maintaining the current structural model.

District Support will be delivered by GV and GA within their existing roles and authority. Delivery will include direct engagement by Relationship Officers and access to central governance, compliance and administrative resources.

Participation is voluntary. Districts may engage based on their circumstances, priorities and readiness.

Support is operational in scope and directed toward improving sustainability and efficiency within existing responsibilities. Areas of assistance may include:

- governance and compliance guidance, including templates and procedural support
- access to shared administrative tools and standard documentation
- clarification of committee roles, responsibilities and workload expectations
streamline reporting and administrative processes to ensure districts are not required to provide substantially the same information multiple times in different formats
- support relating to competitions, coordination and event delivery
- districts supporting districts.

Support will be tailored to the needs of each participating district. There is no mandated pathway, standard package or fixed timeframe.

There is no proposed increase in the allocation of budget or personnel directly attributed to this report or the issues paper. However, GA will realign effort where required to support Districts in line with these recommendations.

It is the panel's recommendation for all parties to work collaboratively and explore ways of support to enable Districts to best deliver their role and function. This should be in alignment with the Australian golf strategy and objectives and may (or may not) have future budget implications that can be considered through the appropriate planning processes.

There is no consideration of boundary adjustment or amalgamation within this framework.

Support is provided in recognition of differing capacity levels across districts. It does not constitute a performance assessment and does not amend, reassign or diminish formal accountability.

5. Roles and responsibilities

This section sets out the formal allocation of roles within the existing governance structure. It is presented separately to ensure clarity between the provision of support and the assignment of accountability.

The Support approach describes how assistance may be offered to districts. It does not amend, reassign or diminish existing responsibilities. Governance authority, decision-making rights and accountability remain as defined within the current framework and are summarised below.

5.1. Districts

Districts continue to be responsible for:

- coordination of regional competitions and events
- facilitating communication and collaboration between clubs within their area
- supporting the promotion of club-led and state-led initiatives at a regional level

Districts are not expected to independently manage complex compliance systems or develop specialist administrative capability beyond reasonable volunteer capacity.

5.2. Clubs

Clubs remain accountable for their own governance, financial management, operations and program delivery. This framework does not alter club autonomy or responsibility.

5.3. Golf Victoria and Golf Australia

Golf Victoria and Golf Australia retain responsibility for system-level functions that are more effectively delivered centrally. These include:

- governance and compliance frameworks
- policy guidance, templates and standard documentation
- central administrative systems
- strategic development and oversight of state-wide programs

Allocation of responsibility reflects scale, expertise and efficiency considerations.

5.4. Relationship Officers

Relationship Officers continue to perform their existing roles.

There is no reduction or withdrawal of current support to districts or clubs. Relationship Officers remain focused on liaison, coordination and practical problem-solving, and form part of the support delivery model.

6. Implementation Plan

The Review Panel recommends that effective immediately, the review is closed and this document stands as the confirmed reference position. Relationship Officer engagement continues without interruption.

GV and GA will formally communicate this position to all districts and clubs to ensure consistent understanding and remove any residual uncertainty. Recognising the concerns identified during consultation regarding confidence and clarity, ongoing communication will be strengthened through regular, transparent and direct engagement between Golf Victoria, Golf Australia, districts and clubs. This will require a shared commitment from all parties to constructive dialogue, consistent information exchange and early resolution of issues.

In the coming period, GV and GA will finalise and communicate the District Support framework to all districts. Districts may elect to participate based on their circumstances and priorities.

Support will then be delivered in consultation with participating districts. Progress and outcomes will be monitored and refined as required.

There is no structural transition or boundary change associated with this plan.

Implementation of the Review's recommendations will require shared ownership across GA, GV and the districts. In addition to operational delivery, ongoing Board-level oversight will be important to ensure that the perspectives and operational realities of regional and smaller districts are well understood.

The GV Board, in collaboration with GA, will maintain structured engagement with districts during the implementation period to strengthen understanding of regional issues, monitor impacts, and ensure that governance settings remain responsive to the diversity of Victorian golf.

7. Conclusion

The district review has now been finalised under the approved Terms of Reference. The position outlined in this document confirms that existing district structures will remain in place and that the review phase is closed. The emphasis now moves to stability, clarity and consistent delivery. District Support will operate within the current governance framework and will be available to districts on a voluntary basis.

This document provides the agreed foundation for moving forward with the intent of achieving greater unity of all stakeholders and working together to enhance the future of golf in Regional Victoria. It clarifies status, confirms accountability and sets a practical course of action. Districts can proceed with certainty under this framework.

By confirming structure and clarifying roles, this framework provides a stable basis for collaboration and supports the long-term sustainability of golf in regional Victoria. It strengthens working relationships through clearer expectations and more consistent engagement and a shared commitment to practical delivery.

Appendix A

Review of the role and future of Victorian Golf District Associations
CPR Group | FINAL | February 2026

Review of the role and future of Victorian Golf District Associations

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Executive summary

This review is aligned to the achievement of the Golf Australia Golf Strategy which has been endorsed by the Golf Victoria (GV) board. The Golf Australia (GA) strategy identifies the ambitions of “More Australians playing more golf” and “Golf clubs as vibrant community hubs”. To achieve these ambitions the strategy identifies actions to “Rollout participation programs” and “Support clubs with targeted services”. The strategy also identifies the need to “Work together” “to grow golf as efficiently and collaboratively as possible”. The achievement of these ambitions in country Victoria is a responsibility shared among golf clubs, the 15 districts and GV/GA and this review aims to identify how these stakeholders may effectively work together to achieve them.

Specifically, the intent of the review is defined in the Purpose Statement:

"The review is designed to enable a better understanding of the needs of the District and its members for the purpose of developing recommendations around structure, systems and support to advance and grow the future of country golf in Victoria".

The review acknowledges that the operational landscape for Districts has evolved over time, leading to an opportunity to clarify their core purpose and enhance their value proposition to member clubs. It is acknowledged that in 2024 Golf Victoria and Golf Australia produced a paper recommending the rationalisation of the Districts from 15 in number down to 6; that paper was not accepted or endorsed by the Golf Victoria board and was therefore not considered relevant by the review panel in undertaking this review process. There is no recommendation to reduce the number of Districts in this report.

It is further acknowledged that there exists a deficit of trust between many Districts and GV/GA and that good relationships between them need to be rebuilt if golf in country Victoria is to flourish and reach its full potential. It is hoped that by adopting an open, communicative and collaborative approach to this review that a start can be made to rebuild trust and improve relationships.

Key findings from the consultation process indicate that while event delivery is the central focus of District activities, there are opportunities for enhancement to ensure consistent value is delivered to all clubs. The review also highlights the diverse landscape of the Districts in terms of size and resources, which suggests that a flexible and supportive approach is needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the volunteer-led model. Furthermore, the findings point to a need for clear definition of District responsibilities beyond event management, particularly in areas such as club development and marketing.

In response, this report recommends a strategic evaluation to determine the optimal future roles for Districts and for GV/GA, focusing on their potential inherent strengths in local facilitation, communication and collaboration. The proposed delivery model outlines a clear set of core responsibilities for Districts, while recommending that functions such as governance support and strategic leadership for development programs be managed centrally by GV/GA to ensure efficiency and a consistent approach.

To guide this process, a phased and consultative program is proposed, commencing with establishing a clear and agreed set of roles and responsibilities for GV/GA, Districts and clubs along with the identification of strengths and areas for improvement for each. Once this key starting point is established new programs to test and refine improved service delivery can be trialed with engaged Districts. After a period of time these programs should be reviewed and their implications to the future delivery model evaluated. At all stages of this process open communication should be maintained with all involved parties.

At this stage of the review process there is no recommendation to change the number of Districts; the review recognises there is a need to explore how all parties can work together more effectively to grow the game in country Victoria. If, in the future, structural changes are considered appropriate by any stakeholder, these will need to be discussed and require the agreement of all relevant partners and stakeholders prior to embarking upon any changes.

1. Introduction and background

1.1. Project brief and objectives

This strategic review was initiated and designed to enable a better understanding of the needs of the golf community in country Victoria for the purpose of developing recommendations around structure, systems and support to advance its future growth. The review addresses uncertainty among stakeholders regarding the role of Districts. This role has changed significantly over time and varies from one District to another with some being well resourced and other struggling to deliver on their member's expectations. There exists an ambiguity about the role that Districts are best placed to play in the delivery of support to regional golf clubs.

To provide a clear and evidence-based pathway for reform, this report directly addresses the following key questions as outlined in the project brief:

1. What is the optimal future role for District Associations within the GV/GA network, and what specific services should they be responsible for providing to member clubs?
2. What guiding principles should be established to effectively:
 - a. Determine the future role of Districts and the support required from GV/GA; and
 - b. Implement a successful and sustainable improvement program.

1.2. The current landscape: historical and legal context

The historical context of the District network is rooted in the traditional organisation of amateur golf in Victoria. Originally operating as separate men's and women's associations, most of which covered the same regional areas, a significant structural change occurred between 2015 and 2018 when these bodies amalgamated into a single, unified Association per District.

The legal basis for the existence and operation of District Associations is formally defined within the Constitution of GV. The Constitution defines a "District" as a body representing affiliated regional clubs, in contrast to metropolitan "Member Clubs," which are each members of GV in their own right. This distinction is the foundation of the current governance model.

1.3. The case for change

Consideration of the future role of Districts has been ongoing in various forms for several years. The desire for role clarity and a delivery model that optimises the use of resources and provides the highest level of support to regional clubs has seen discussion papers, board papers and ongoing conversations dating back to at least 2020.

A primary driver for this review is concern for the sustainability of the existing model for supporting regional clubs. A shrinking volunteer base, financial challenges, and growing disconnect between GA/GV, Districts and clubs underpin the need for a review and subsequent change. During consultation some Districts openly acknowledged that they cannot continue as they are and several clubs and Districts highlighted the reduced relevance of Districts to the success and sustainability of regional golf. At the same time, the consultation process highlighted examples of the various stakeholders working well together which provides opportunities to replicate these successful practices in other parts of network.

The increase of direct communication channels between GV/GA and its member clubs, facilitated by modern technology and the deployment of Relationship Officers, has rendered the historical function of Districts as a primary communication conduit less relevant.

Several Districts reported that their member clubs organised club events on the same dates as Districts events and many raised concerns that District competitions were not as well supported as they have been historically.

This functional shift has created an opportunity to clarify the purpose and value of this existing model. This review is important for defining a valuable and sustainable path forward for the success of regional golf in Victoria and to ensure a clear and valued service to regional clubs.

2. Review Methodology

To understand the regional Victorian golf landscape the review included consultation with stakeholders in the following ways:

2.1. Review Panel

A review panel has been established to oversee and guide this review. It acknowledges and aims to build upon the work of the District Working Group. The review panel comprises seven members, four of whom currently, or previously, sat on District association committees. The panel commenced work in May 2025 and had held 6 meetings to date.

The workshop and survey responses as presented in this report do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any individual panel member.

2.2. Document review

A review of documents was undertaken to establish context and gain some understanding of the history of the current District network along with previous work undertaken by several parties in reviewing the golf service delivery model and recommending changes. Membership data and governance documents were also reviewed.

2.3. District committee member workshops

A primary component of the consultation process involved conducting two dedicated workshops with District committee members. These sessions aimed to capture direct, qualitative feedback from the volunteer leaders responsible for the day-to-day operation and governance of the District Associations.

The workshops brought together representatives from 12 of the 15 regional Districts, ensuring that the insights gathered were representative of the varied experiences and challenges across the state. Discussions were guided to elicit candid feedback on the current state of the District model, including its perceived functions, operational challenges, volunteer engagement and the fundamental question of its value proposition.

2.4. Club survey

To complement the qualitative insights gathered from the workshops, a comprehensive survey was distributed to all regional member clubs. The objective of the survey was to capture quantitative and qualitative data directly from club-level stakeholders, including committee members, staff and general members, regarding their perceptions of the District Associations.

The survey was designed to assess the effectiveness of Districts in delivering their core functions, such as running competitions, facilitating communication and supporting development programs. It generated 75 completed responses with clubs from 14 of the 15 Districts responding at an average rate of 30% of available clubs per District completing the survey. This data offers a club-centric perspective, providing an insight into how the services provided by Districts are received and valued by their primary constituents.

3. Key findings

3.1. Perceived role and performance

Across all consultations, there is a clear and consistent understanding that the principal function of District Associations is the organisation and delivery of events. Feedback from District committee workshops affirmed that this has become the central focus of their activities.

While event delivery is recognised as their core responsibility, quantitative data from the club survey suggests there are opportunities for enhancement in this area. Club satisfaction with "Intra-District competitions (e.g. District Championships)" registered a Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) score of 53.85 (out of an optimum score of 100), while "Inter-District competitions (e.g. Country week)" received a score of 46.84.

Other than the organisation and delivery of events there was no consistent view of what role the Districts are designed to perform. In the absence of a documented remit and, with the variance in circumstances in which different Districts operate, it is no surprise that services have evolved in a variety of ways from District to District. Some survey respondents questioned the need for Districts to exist at all and saw little to no benefit provided to their club from their District whilst others thought that their District was performing well. Having been asked to define the role of their District, survey respondents were asked to rate how well it performed against this defined role. The average (CSAT) score was 54.43

The overall CSAT score for the survey questions concerning Districts performance in the areas of running events, having District volunteers, communicating between GV/GA and clubs, and running development programs was 59.93.

3.2. Structural and operational challenges

The operational effectiveness of the District model is influenced by several factors, most notably the considerable variation in the scale and resources of the individual District Associations. The District landscape includes two large, well-resourced Districts in Golf Peninsula Victoria and South West with over 10,000 members each coexisting with numerous smaller Districts that operate with limited membership (between 300 and 4500 members) and financial capacity.

This disparity directly impacts the sustainability of the volunteer-led operational model. While larger Districts like Peninsula report strong volunteer engagement and have the capacity to implement effective governance practices, such as task-focused sub-committees, this is not a universal experience. For many smaller Districts, sustaining a sufficient and engaged volunteer base to manage administrative and governance responsibilities presents an ongoing challenge. This affects their capacity to deliver services and engage effectively with their member clubs. With succession issues on District committees and a dearth of younger volunteers coming through, the future

sustainability of some smaller Districts is in doubt. How to best support and work with these districts needs further consideration.

These factors contribute to differing operational models and experiences across the state. The well-resourced Districts are largely self-sufficient and operate with a degree of operational maturity. In contrast, feedback from the workshops indicates that smaller Districts can experience a sense of isolation, lacking the scale and support networks available to their larger counterparts. This operational inconsistency demonstrates the difficulty of applying a uniform set of expectations and support mechanisms across the current Victorian District set-up.

3.3. Ambiguity of responsibility

A significant challenge identified through the consultation process is the absence of an agreed-upon set of responsibilities for District Associations beyond their core event-management function. This has led to differing expectations among both District volunteers and member clubs, creating ambiguity in several operational areas.

This is particularly evident regarding development programs. Workshop discussions revealed a lack of a consistent view on whether the responsibility for junior and women's development lies with individual clubs, the District or GV/GA. While some stakeholders see the District's role as one of promotion for club-led initiatives, others believe a more strategic, top-down approach is required to ensure consistent outcomes at the local level.

A similar divergence of opinion was noted regarding marketing and membership growth. While some participants suggested that Districts should take an active role in marketing to drive participation, others maintained that this is fundamentally a club-level responsibility. Others opined that GV/GA should also play a role in marketing the game, clubs and events.

In contrast, a notable area of consensus emerged regarding governance and compliance support. There was broad acknowledgement among District representatives that functions such as compliance, governance and policy support for clubs should be provided centrally by GV/GA.

3.4. Stakeholder relationships

It was clear throughout the District committee member's workshops that there is a lack of trust between some attendees and GV/GA. The experience of each District is unique, but several expressed a lack of faith in GV/GA's desire to consult with them and to work collaboratively through this review. It will be challenging to deliver upon the needs and wants of the involved parties if this lack of trust remains. A change and commitment will be required by all parties to overcome current differences and create a successful working relationship. Parties are encouraged to unite and work together with the best interest of golf in country Victoria in mind.

4. Recommendations

In response to the key findings identified in this review, the following recommendations are proposed:

4.1. Define core responsibilities

To support the redefined purpose, it is recommended that a clear delineation of responsibilities between clubs, Districts and GV/GA be agreed upon. From the workshop and survey feedback it would appear that there is likely agreement that:

- District responsibilities focus on the coordination of regional competitions, facilitation of a regional collaboration network, and the local promotion of club and state-level initiatives.
- GV/GA's responsibilities centralise the provision of governance and compliance support, strategic leadership for development programs, and shared administrative services to leverage expertise and efficiency.
- Once core District responsibilities are defined it is proposed that all parties identify any other services that may be delivered successfully by a District. If, for example, an existing program is established and operating well then it could be agreed that this remains the responsibility of that District.

4.2. Evaluate Districts' ability to deliver core responsibilities

Once core responsibilities are determined an evaluation of each District's capacity to deliver them should be undertaken. Establishing a clear understanding of each District's strengths and weaknesses will identify any shortcomings which may provide opportunities for trialing new service delivery approaches. Such trials should always seek to leverage the District Associations' regional strengths.

4.3. Implement a phased and consultative change program

It is recommended that the transition to a new service delivery approach be managed through a planned, multi-phase program as detailed in Section 7 of this report. This approach should be supported by principles of consultation, the use of pilot programs to test and refine the model, and the provision of targeted assistance to ensure a successful and sustainable statewide implementation.

5. The role of districts: future model

5.1. What is the role?

It was recognised by some people through the process that the burden on a dwindling number of District volunteers, combined with financial pressures and the lack of a clearly defined current role was having an impact.

The implementation process outlined in Section 6 is therefore designed to evaluate this model and to determine the optimal future model for effective delivery of services to country clubs. There are any number of future models that may evolve through this review process and at this stage it is considered too early to propose any one of them as being preferred.

5.2. A redefined core purpose

In response to the operational challenges and role ambiguity identified in the preceding analysis, it is proposed that the future role of District Associations be strategically repositioned. This involves a deliberate evolution from a traditional, and at times ambiguous, administrative body to one with a clear and focused purpose centred on local facilitation, communication and collaboration. It is recognised that local knowledge, and “boots on the ground” in each corner of regional Victoria are vital to golf’s success but the operating model under which this local activity is delivered needs review and reconsideration.

This redefined purpose would leverage the inherent strengths of the District model of delivery, its regional presence and established relationships, while alleviating the burdens associated with functions that are more effectively managed centrally. In this model, the District may not act as a layer of governance, but as a local convener and enabler. Its primary objective could be to foster a stronger, more collaborative network of clubs within its geographical area.

This ~~strategic shift~~ clarification directly addresses the feedback from the workshops and surveys by establishing the District's value proposition. It positions the District as a partner to both its member clubs and to GV/GA, ensuring its activities are complementary and add value at a regional level.

5.3. Core responsibilities and services

Based on this redefined purpose, the core responsibilities of District Associations could be focused on the following three areas where their regional presence and local knowledge provide the most significant value. This clear and concise mandate will enable Districts to concentrate their efforts on services that directly benefit their member clubs.

5.3.1. Coordination of regional competitions

The organisation and delivery of key inter-club events, including pennant series and District championships, should remain a primary responsibility. This function provides valuable competitive opportunities for players across the region that extend beyond individual club events and foster a sense of regional golfing identity.

5.3.2. Facilitation of a regional collaboration network

Districts are uniquely positioned to act as a hub for communication and collaboration among their member clubs. This includes facilitating forums for the sharing of best practices, coordinating event calendars to optimise participation and avoid scheduling conflicts, and fostering a network for club administrators to discuss common challenges and opportunities.

5.3.3. Support for club and state-level initiatives

In this redefined capacity, the District's role in development is one of local support and promotion. This involves actively promoting club-run junior and women's development programs across the region and acting as a local partner for the delivery and amplification of initiatives led by GV/GA. This ensures that state-level strategies are effectively communicated and supported at a grassroots level.

5.4. The role of GV/GA - Services to be centralised

It is recognised that GV/GA is a key stakeholder in the delivery of support and services to ensure the future growth of golf in regional Victoria. As such, it needs to be ready to implement changes to its role as a result of this review.

To complement a redefined role of the Districts and to ensure the most efficient and effective delivery of services across the state, it is recommended that certain key functions be formally designated as a central responsibility of GV/GA. This strategic alignment of responsibilities ensures that clubs receive expert, consistent support in critical operational areas, while allowing Districts to focus on their core strengths. The following functions are best managed centrally.

5.4.1. Governance, compliance and policy support

Providing direct support and resources to Districts and clubs on matters of governance, legislative compliance, risk management, and the implementation of state and national policies. This was a point of clear consensus during stakeholder workshops.

5.4.2. Strategic leadership for development programs

The strategic design, funding and overarching management of major state-wide development programs, including junior and women's golf initiatives. This ensures a consistent, high-quality approach across Victoria, which Districts can then support at a local level.

5.4.3. Provision of shared administrative and specialist services

The provision of centralised shared services to reduce the administrative burden on both clubs and District volunteers. This may include access to specialised legal advice, IT tools and support and standardised financial management tools, leveraging economies of scale. The production of administrative resources, including template documents and standard operating procedures is another way in which GV/GA can increase its support to Districts to reduce the burden on their volunteers. Additionally, GV/GA can assist Districts with accessing resources through Community Clubs Victoria.

Further discussion should take place between Districts and GV/GA to identify other administrative services that GV/GA could provide. These could be provided on a case-by-case basis or offered to all Districts.

6. Implementation

6.1. Guiding principles for determining future roles and service delivery responsibilities

To ensure that any future change is both effective and equitable, it is recommended that the process be supported by a set of clear guiding principles. These principles serve as criteria for evaluating and shaping the future role and operating model of GV/GA, District Associations and clubs.

6.1.1. Clarity and accountability

The future role of any District Association must be explicitly defined, with a clear and unambiguous mandate. This clarity should be supported by a framework of simple, measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure that the value and effectiveness of the District can be understood and demonstrated. The ability of Districts to deliver on the defined role will be an important criteria in determining their place in the recommended future set-up.

6.1.2. Flexibility and scalability

Recognising the significant diversity in size, membership and resources across the state, the governance model must be inherently flexible. It needs to be designed to accommodate the varying capacities of different Districts, ensuring that the core responsibilities and KPI's are scalable and achievable for both larger and smaller Districts.

6.1.3. Sustainability

The long-term viability of the District network is intrinsically linked to the capacity of its volunteers. Any future service delivery model must be sustainable, with a realistic and manageable workload for volunteer committee members, fostering continued engagement and preventing burnout.

6.1.4. Efficiency

The overall service delivery model should be designed to maximise efficiency and reduce the duplication of effort across the state's golf ecosystem. This involves a clear delineation between the responsibilities best managed at a local, District level and those that benefit from the expertise and economies of scale provided by a centralised, state-level approach.

6.2. Guiding principles for the implementation process

The successful implementation of these changes requires a thoughtful and well-managed process. Consistent with the GA strategy, the future success of golf in country Victoria will be best served by all stakeholders working together collaboratively. To foster buy-in and minimise disruption, it is

recommended that the following principles guide the evaluation and potential implementation of the proposed reforms.

6.2.1. A phased and consultative approach

It is recommended that changes be introduced gradually over a clearly communicated timeline. This phased approach allows for adjustments based on feedback and ensures that District volunteers and member clubs have adequate time to adapt. Throughout this process, a commitment to open and ongoing consultation with all District Associations is essential to foster a sense of shared ownership and collaboration.

6.2.2. Partnering programs and engaging early adopters

As suggested during stakeholder workshops, a practical approach to implementation would be to "work with the willing" by initially partnering with a small number of engaged and capable Districts. These partner Districts could serve as test cases to refine new operational models and their support mechanisms. This would allow for the identification of best practices and potential challenges in a controlled environment before subsequent phases of the rollout are considered. The success of these test programs can then serve as a case study and build momentum for wider availability and adoption.

6.2.3. Targeted support and resourcing

Recognising the significant diversity among the Districts, a uniform approach to support and resourcing would be inefficient. The implementation should therefore be aligned with a principle of targeted support. This involves directing resources, training and assistance to those Districts that require it most to meet the new operational expectations. This tailored approach ensures that all Districts, regardless of their current size or capacity, are given the opportunity to succeed within any redefined set-up.

7. Proposed change program

Based on the principles outlined above, the following three-phase program is proposed to guide the determination of the future of the service delivery model to clubs in country Victoria. This staged approach is designed to be consultative, evidence-based and manageable.

Phase 1: Define and communicate (Months 0-6)

The initial phase is focused on establishing a clear and universally understood foundation for the future role of Districts. The primary objective is to resolve the current ambiguity and set clear expectations for all stakeholders.

- **Action 1:** In consultation with the Districts, agree the redefined roles and responsibilities of GV/GA, the District Associations and the member clubs.
- **Action 2:** In consultation with District representatives, establish a clear set of minimum requirements and key performance indicators (KPIs) for a District, aligned with the core responsibilities outlined in Section 4.1.
- **Action 3:** GV/GA to commence work on the provision of services to support District volunteers in accordance with Section 5.4.3. These should be rolled out as soon as available to provide immediate support to Districts.
- **Action 4:** GV/GA to organise open round table meetings of involved parties, aligned to existing golf events, to continue the consultation process and further develop the next steps in this review process.

Phase 2: Develop and deliver support (Months 6-18)

This phase is focused on testing the viability and effectiveness of an improved operational model in a practical setting and providing the necessary support to ensure all Districts are positioned for success.

- **Action 5:** In partnership with a selection of engaged Districts, identify opportunities to develop innovative ways to provide improved service and support for clubs and golfers. As suggested by survey respondents, these could trial new collaborative approaches, such as
 - engaging a shared regional administrator across several smaller Districts;
 - GV/GA jointly funding field staff with Districts supported by a service agreement detailing staff responsibilities, reporting requirements and funding share;
 - the improved coordination of event management with regional clubs;

- creating a forum where best practices and solutions to common problems are shared among Districts;
 - creating a District project team of GV/GA, District and club representatives to develop solutions to the challenges faced by struggling Districts
- **Action 6:** Concurrently, GV/GA to provide targeted support and resources to all Districts to assist them in aligning their operations with the newly defined requirements and KPIs. This support would be tailored to the specific needs of each District and may involve review of KPI's of existing GV/GA field staff.