

New lease of life for local icon

Steph Konatar
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Mayor Tim Overall and Queanbeyan Bowling Club general manager Shane Holland ahead of the Club's much anticipated reopening. Photo: Steph Konatar.

WHEN the Queanbeyan Bowling Club called last drinks in late September last year the bowling community were devastated, the Club's general manager, Shane Holland reported seeing "grown men cry", so Holland was more than pleased to announce the Club's reopening on Monday, September 21.

Almost a year to the day after going into voluntary insolvency the Club has been helped to its feet after falling on hard times.

The Club will open under the management of the Queanbeyan Sports and Community Club Ltd who have funded the opening.

"It's the footprint of the community and council have been so supportive in the process," Mr Holland said.

"It's just a wonderful result for the people of Queanbeyan. To see grown men cry when we called last drinks to now open the doors is a great achievement.

Established in 1934 the Queanbeyan Bowling Club was the original bowling club in town and was rich in local and regional tradition, the birthplace of some of the great local, national and international bowlers and the second home to many.

But last year the Club announced it was in around \$800,000 of debt and was forced to close three of its greens and play was moved to the two greens across the road.

On September 29 the Club was forced into voluntary insolvency and management and the local community alike have been looking for a solution since.

Mr Holland explained the Club will open its doors on Monday under the management of new entity Queanbeyan Sports and Community Club Inc, run by local staff, feature

a seven day a week bistro and aim to provide a home to not just the bowling community, but the sporting community as a whole.

"We will keep the bowling club traditions, but we're also looking to give back to sporting clubs," Mr Holland said.

"The new vision for the Club is to be home for all sporting talent and community group contributors of which there are plenty.

"Good food, drink, fun, play and it's not only my club and not only your club, it's the community's club."

The Queanbeyan Bowling Club and Queanbeyan RSL Bowling Club have recently won the opportunity to host the Australian Sides Championships in 2016, an opportunity made possible by the reopening Queanbeyan City Council Mayor Tim Overall said.

"It's allowed the opportunity for Queanbeyan to host one of the most significant bowls tournaments, the Australian Sides Championships," he said.

"It will put Queanbeyan on the map in the national bowling arena and will in turn bring a lot of money into the local economy."

Cr Overall said he is personally "looking forward to the [Club's] reopening", has applauded the efforts of all involved and said he looks forward to its future.

"[The opening] is great news for the Queanbeyan community and for Queanbeyan sporting groups and teams and of course the local bowling community," he said.

"The club has had a wonderful tradition for over 80 years and to have it reopen after 12 months is brilliant.

"It has always been known as a friendly bowling club and now it will also be home for local sporting teams."

Future plans for the club include a complete renovation inside and out, but for now Mr Holland said he is "very excited" for Monday and the reopening of the "people's club".

"Through hard times it's made us unite, this wouldn't have happened without the help of the volunteers and Council has helped a lot," he said.

"Without the local community the club may not have come back."