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Established 1958

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Monday, January 31, 2022 Discussion

Paper

## OUR AGING DEMOGRAPHIC

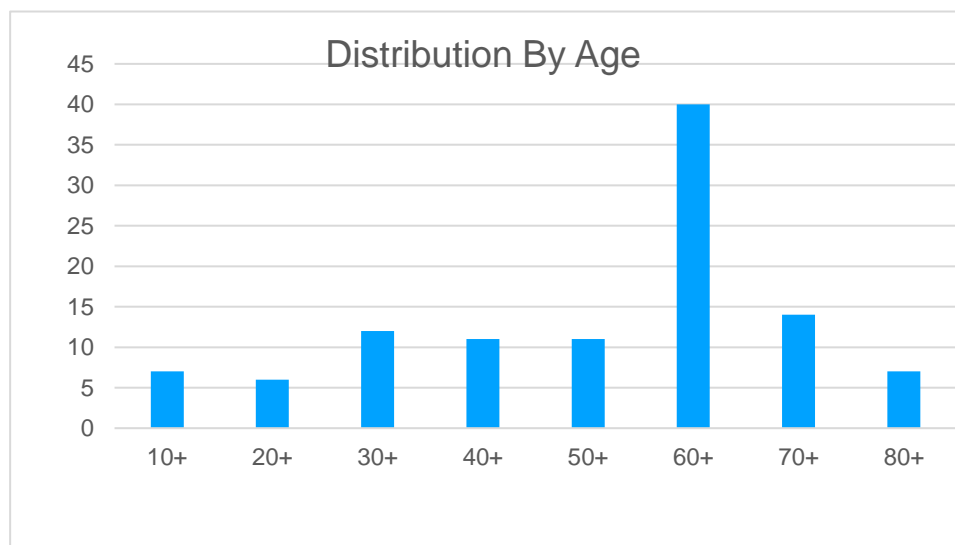
### Background

Some of you may remember the early eighties when we were the first local Club with all-weather courts, a growing suburb was across the road and we had over 500 members, four active morning groups during the week plus Sunday tennis, twelve mid-week teams, fourteen AYC teams and over eighty members playing winter pennant. Junior tennis was strong at this time with some 100 or so in the total membership, social tennis and junior pennant both thrived on the back of good junior committee support. An active social committee supported Christmas lunches and other social events. As they say, those were the days.

Things continued well, with demand for Court 6, until the early 2000's, since then things have declined. Glenorchy in the early 1980's and then Sunshine Tennis Clubs have both been developed.

Forty years on the situation is somewhat different, a well recognised aging membership base that is, not surprisingly, playing less tennis as other interests take hold or we are just less able to play quite so often or so much.

A quick assessment of our current ~120 members gives the adjacent age distribution. If they have been assessed correctly over half of our membership is in the 60+ or greater group



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## **The Impact**

The Monday and Thursday groups are long gone, Tuesday morning has good numbers but less tennis being played such that some of the “younger” members are looking to play at an alternate time to get a good hit. Tuesday night tennis is struggling for much of the year, Friday morning is a small group, Friday afternoon continues with Sunday morning remaining as probably our best supported, in terms of numbers and tennis played, social tennis activity.

Midweek has about fifteen active players, we have only three AYC teams plus around eight players in Div 01 while the winter pennant struggled to get sixteen players, the invitational Wednesday night pennant continues to be reasonably well supported and is probably our best competitive event, mostly non-members.

While there is less tennis being played the Club remains financially viable with ~ 120 predominantly adult members more than covering the cost of running the Club and, fencing aside, our facilities are in good condition with little to spend in the near future.

The other related challenge we face is the size of our Committee and the number of volunteer contributors in general. This is most likely also related to the age profile of our membership. Those that are inclined to contribute are mostly in our 60+ group, several have been contributing for a long time, perhaps still doing so, and aren't likely to be inclined to do more or perhaps start over again.

We have only 6 Committee members and three convenors, no Junior, Social or Match & Tournament Committees. While things are going along OK it is probably because these few have taken on a bit extra. It would be a pity if the members don't see that we have an issue here and assume that a few is all we need going forward, this will make it harder to get more in the future.

Spreading the load of support for the activities these groups would undertake is a bit of a challenge.

While it seemed unthinkable, after the AGM of 2021 we didn't have sufficient Committee to form a quorum and were temporarily unable to legally function.

## **Possible Solutions**

We have a primary school with 370 students next door that is planning for 500 over the next couple of years, we have a new subdivision across the creek and more in the pipeline off Clinton Rd along with the growing Olive Grove and Risdon Vale View at the top of Sugarloaf Rd. Possibly ~ 200 lots coming on line over the next 5 years.

These subdivisions are all to our North and we would be the first tennis club they drive past.

If there aren't 50 potential tennis players in that lot it would be surprising.

**Creating A School Link** – this is the obvious solution to our lack of active juniors outside of coaching programs. Not just Lindisfarne North but also the two other local schools. Our coach already has good links to the schools for his programs which could give us an initial contact, one of our members is a teacher there. The challenge in achieving and sustaining a good link is the time and effort required to support it. Junior

tennis is often rewarding but can be hard work. Unless we can generate a pool of volunteer support from the member and parent bodies it will be difficult to sustain.

**Increasing Participation** – while our aging player base is playing a bit less tennis an increase in numbers across any or all of the age groups would see activity levels increase improving the viability of all of the activities. Our programs and activities have been, and perhaps still are, well regarded for providing well organised and reliable tennis, we need to be able to promote these to a broad audience of potential tennis players. Tools such as our website, Book A Court, social media, letter drops, open days, etc all have the potential to attract players looking to get started or get back into the game but, once again, the human effort to carry out these tasks and maintain our profile is not insignificant.

**Engaging The Next Generation** – This is required on two fronts, engagement in playing tennis and in supporting the Club.

We may need to implement a new range of programs more specifically suited to group of potential players in the younger age groups.

While we have been fortunate to have some of our younger members become involved in Club administration in recent years it has been relatively few and not generally for the long term. Our profile indicates that very few of the 60+ group remain active beyond that. We need to find a way to engage the 30+ and 40+ members in some of the roles the club requires while the current volunteers are still around to provide some support and mentoring.

## **Conclusion**

Ours is a Club with a long history approaching 65 years that has been well regarded in the tennis community for a long time. We have good facilities and programs, a good financial base along with good links to local schools, the local council, Tennis Tasmania and Community Sport & Recreation.

While the aging profile is having a noticeable impact on activity and volunteer levels we probably have a few years to turn things about. That said, our lease is due for renewal in September 2023, not that long off.

The purpose of this paper is not to be alarmist but to raise awareness of where we are currently at. I look forward to your comments and suggestions over the coming months leading to the 2022 AGM.

Campbell Palfrey

**PRESIDENT**

