



St. Mary's Tennis Club – Strategic Plan 2022-2027

Introduction:

The purpose of this strategic plan is to build on the previous strategic plan from 2017-2022 and provides clear direction for the St. Mary's Tennis Club over the next five years.

The aim is to create a sustainable future, setting ambitious, but achievable goals and grow the club in several key areas. There is scope for the Committee to set yearly goals related to this plan.

St. Mary's Tennis Club has a strong tradition and a solid membership base, courts that have been refurbished and are well maintained and an excellent club coach. This plan is designed to build on the good work that has come before.

Overall, the club is aiming to provide an inclusive, friendly environment that promotes the great sport of tennis which also striving to create an affordable experience.

This strategic plan will be reviewed regularly by the Committee to ensure the club's objectives are on track and reflect the changing nature of tennis and community environments.

Role of St. Mary's Tennis Club Committee:

To implement the various elements of this plan and make appropriate adjustments as necessary. The strategic plan should form the basis of each month's committee meeting. There should also be significant club member input to the strategic plan with opportunities created for members to share their views of the way forward for the club.

St. Mary's Tennis Club – Mission Statement:

St. Mary's Tennis Club seeks to provide the community with the opportunity to participate in social and competitive tennis, and to foster programs that enable aspiring players to achieve their tennis potential.

Review of the previous strategic plan:

The past five years have been overshadowed by the COVID pandemic. This meant the club was closed for periods of time due to Government lockdown restrictions. This meant the Committee couldn't operate as normal, with the focus on ensuring the club and its members were safe. There were several new rules to be implemented and guidelines to follow but as of the writing of this report, most, if not all, restrictions have been lifted.

On a positive note, the courts were refurbished, and a new sprinkler and LED lighting was installed. While the lockdowns meant play was limited for the first year or so, the improvements have been well-received.

Objective One: Capital Works Program

The club was able to obtain funding from council and Tennis Victoria to refurbish the courts at Kalparrin and install a new LED lighting and sprinkler system. Clubroom toilets have been renovated. It was noted in the previous strategic plan that the priority was for two new courts to be built at Kalparrin. This was investigated and the costs were too high for this project hence the refurbishment of the existing four courts.

Objective Two: Membership

The club continues to have a strong membership base and while we didn't reach the strategic goal of 250 members, numbers were over 200 for a time and have now settled around 150. The impact of COVID meant the committee wasn't able to focus on growing membership. There was flexibility around membership renewals to compensate for lockdown restrictions and time spent off the court.

There are strong numbers in the coaching program and a lift in junior members and teams. The most popular junior competition timeslot is now Sunday mornings, signalling a shift away from the traditional Saturday morning timeslot.

Objective Three: Enhance links with community including school and Church (promotion of the club)

There has been very little done by way of marketing of the club and this continues to be a challenge going forward. In a competitive sporting environment, promotion is crucial to ensure a steady turnover of members and casual court users. There is great promotion through the schools via our club coach. Open days have been run in the past, but these had limited success and COVID was a factor. The court upgrade meant the club had limited facilities to be able to present but this must be a priority in the next five years.

Objective Four: More benefits to members

Prior to COVID, the club held the club championships with the centerpiece being the finals day with the Christmas Party. COVID caused these events to be postponed for the past few years. There have also been issues with a lack of volunteers to run events for members and court availability when they were being renovated. There is a new online membership and court booking platform which has assisted with reducing the workload on the membership manager. The upgrade of facilities has been beneficial for members.

Objective Five: Utilising key stakeholders in the club for maximum benefit

The club continues to have good relationships with all of its key stakeholders. We were able to obtain funding from Banyule Council and Tennis Australia for the refurbishment of the courts. We have strong links with each of our competition associations and Tennis Victoria. Banyule Council and Tennis Victoria were incredibly helpful during COVID as well as the State Government.

Objective Six: Succession Planning and creation of roles

There has been very little turnover of committee members which is a concern. Although COVID has slowed the process down, it's healthy to have new members of committee in key roles. The role of the junior manager was streamlined into one role but has now been broken up again to reflect the different associations and days of play. The role of membership manager has been streamlined. Club rules (constitution) and by laws have been updated to meet current standards.

Objective Seven: Growth and maintenance of existing club function

The coaching program has experienced challenges over COVID and finding coaches is an issue. There is no marketing and promotions plan. Court booking system has been implemented embracing technology. There has been no sponsorship, we've been successful in obtaining ETU grants to provide some other forms of income. The committee has been able to maintain a healthy budget and sinking fund. Courts are well maintained and have been throughout the past five years.

Current state of St. Mary's Tennis Club and tennis in general:

St. Mary's Tennis Club is in good shape, both on and off the court. The club has a solid financial base, with funds reserved for emergencies as required. Membership is at a stable level with only slight fluctuations. The club is on a sustainable financial footing and is able to meet its financial obligations comfortably. This is despite the challenges of COVID.

The strengths of the club are as follows:

- The main functions of the club are covered well with a good committee, good junior structure, successful in competition, variety of competition/program options with something for everyone.
- The club maintains courts to an excellent standard – and maintains off-court facilities well.
- Things get fixed quickly, even the little things.
- St. Mary's is a very welcoming club, friendly, inclusive.
- Willing to try new ideas/innovative.
- Retains members with an inclusive atmosphere.
- With night competition, there's a mix of ages, everyone gets along, happy time.
- Accessible courts.
- Safe environment.
- Active in communicating with members.
- Strong relationship with Banyule Council and Tennis Victoria.
- Having a strong president pushing key stakeholder relationships through persistence and advocacy.
- We get to meetings run by other stakeholders so we have a voice.
- Club coach relationship is good.
- Strong Committee and coordinators.

The major concern for the club going forward continues to be membership, to ensure the club continues to be sustainable and grow. There is also a tennis-wide problem of attracting girls and female players to the sport and keeping them playing. There is also the increased competition from other sports.

There is also the concern of the nature of volunteerism changing. As we lead busier lives, the time to devote to volunteering has diminished therefore there may be shortfalls in this area.

Other areas for improvement are as follows:

- Increase junior to senior conversion.
- Develop sponsorship plan.
- Develop marketing plan.
- Develop membership plan.
- Increase female and/or social members and social opportunities.
- Coaching or pre-coaching from parents to allow a transition from having a hit to getting them to play competition.
- We need more juniors and more teams; overall we need more depth, including Pennant depth.
- Location of Kalparrin courts (can be hard to find) and lack of signage at the front of the court.
- Website not reviewed regularly to check info is current.
- Graffiti and vandalism.
- Better communication with members.
- Converting junior members into senior members and playing senior competition.

Tennis continues to shine across the summer months with the Australian Open generating significant interest in the sport and recent Australian success. It's a matter of filtering that interest into participation at a local level via TA hotshots programs and strong local promotion from the club.

St. Mary's Tennis Club – SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- Strong membership base with loyal members Club in good financial situation.
- Excellent coaching structure.
- Two facilities with 7 courts.
- Plenty of competition options and social play 7 days a week.
- Strong and sustainable Committee structure.
- Affordable membership.
- We're a welcoming club.
- Innovative committee.
- Safe environment and great facilities.
- Open to suggestions and criticism/advice.
- The Australian Open being in Melbourne helps with promotion.
- Working well with school and parish and other schools in area.

Weaknesses:

- More volunteers needed for on and off-court roles – needing people to assist with specific events and roles – sub committees.
- Location of courts – hard to find.
- Many sport options in local area.
- Lack of depth in some competitions.
- Lack of marketing strategy.

- Juniors to senior transition.
- Girls/female tennis participation rates.
- Not enough communication with members.

Opportunities:

- Room to grow membership.
- Improve marketing of the club.
- Working with other schools in area and other organisations and community groups and charities in the area.
- Using Tennis Victoria resources to full potential.
- Council funding for projects.
- Attracting new members.
- Flexible membership options.

Threats:

- Rising costs of running club.
- Other clubs in area attracting members and other sports.
- Graffiti and vandalism.
- Changing nature of volunteerism and attracting volunteers.
- Increasing government requirements increasing administrative burdens.
- Change in how people play tennis and time to commit.
- Confusing and unclear competition pathway – too many associations and competitions and ensuring they are viable.
- Management of new comps and concepts – having support from Tennis Victoria to assist with this.

Vision for St. Mary's Tennis Club:

- To be the best performing sporting clubs in the leagues we operate in (on and off court).
- To have regular and sustained success on court in each of the different competitions we compete in.
- To actively engage the community to be a part of the club and in doing so, promoting the sport of tennis.

St. Mary's Tennis Club values:

- Enjoyment
- Inclusion
- Equality
- Transparency
- Commitment
- Hard work
- Sportsmanship

Strategic Objectives over the next five years (2022-2027)

Objective Area One - Capital works

- Kalparrin: Continuous improvement of facilities including installing energy efficient, environmentally-friendly appliances. Each year a wishlist to be created by the committee with appropriate funding sources identified.
- Installation of the book-a-court gate lock system or financially viable equivalent.
- Church Courts: Work with the Parish in the resurfacing of the Church courts which will fall due in this period.

Objective Area Two - Participation: Membership/court hire/everyone who comes through the gate

- The club will aim to improve participation across all aspects of the club. This also includes court hire and investigating new, flexible membership options.
- The club will aim to have **consistent** growth year on year across the five-year plan. A particular focus is on encouraging female participation.
- Improvement in the social calendar across all levels.
- Court hire – to improve ease of access to the courts and build court hire and social play.

Objective Three - Key Stakeholders:

Banyule Council, Tennis Victoria, Competition Associations, Members, Committee, State Government, St. Mary's School and Parish.

- Maintain a good working relationship with key stakeholders with the opportunity to expand the list. Club to also focus on grant and sponsorship opportunities for specific projects.

Objective Area Four - Committee: (succession planning/creation of roles)

- Investigate part-time paid administration to take on key day to day operational roles at the club.
- Succession planning in place across the club including committee.
- Streamlining committee meetings including meeting online and key committee roles such as the role of secretary.
- Ensuring safeguarding children guidelines and policies are kept up-to-date in accordance with relevant legislative guidelines and reviewing all policies and procedures as required.

Objective Area Five - Communications:

- Annual surveying of membership.
- Increasing communications to members including newsletter, social media and investigate club roles for communication and social media officer.
- Marketing and promotion plan to be created to set the key strategic goals for promoting to the local community.

Update of plan

This plan should be regularly adjusted over the period of 2022-2027 with a new plan created in the committee term 2026-2027 for presentation to the membership at the 2027 Annual General Meeting.