

7 Wonthaggi & District Table Tennis Association

“The friendly club”



The Wonthaggi & District Table Tennis Association has catered for more than 100 members at all levels of the sport. Some of the players have represented the State and Country and the club is very well regarded by the peak Table Tennis Body. There is strong support for the club by Council and the facilities are maintained in excellent condition.

GippSport program coordinator Gene Parini said, *“For the Association, the HSE program was about recognising the fantastic work already being done. We did see an opportunity to try some new initiatives to try and attract a broader range of members, and they have done just that!”*

Club committee member Nancy believes the HSE program kick-started a culture change for her club, *“Our club has improved its professionalism, raised awareness around good practices, improved safety practices, and lifted the club profile. I have loved working with the new members to share my love of the sport”.*

This is a club that has moved with the times, being flexible to adapt to changing community expectations. The HSE program has helped this little club open up its doors and let everyone see what a friendly place Wonthaggi Table Tennis Association is.

The Wonthaggi & District Table Tennis Association has always been a friendly local club, but now they want the world to know about it. Through the VicHealth Healthy Sporting Environments (HSE) ‘inclusion’ module, the club’s main priority was increasing its profile, by improving its social programs.

It started with a Facebook page to increase the club profile and open up communication with its members. Next came the introduction of two social programs. Monday nights is all about attracting people who have never played table tennis. It’s a try before you buy. An opportunity for new players to try the sport before (hopefully) transitioning into the club’s more competitive system.

Recently some new residents who had moved into the area for work did just that. Joining in on a Monday night with friends and signing up for the A and B Grade competition after discovering how wonderful the club and the sport is. It is this feeder system: from social to competitive that will ensure the club’s sustainability. It is an opportunity to recruit new members in a relaxed and informal way. Giving potential new members a taste in a non-competitive environment without the commitment of signing up for a full membership.

In contrast to Monday nights feeder program, on Thursday afternoons the club opens its doors to various local disability and mental health service providers. Fifteen to twenty participants come along every week to play, purely for the love of the game. There is no pressure to sign up as a member or join in the competitive system. Thursday afternoons is all about fun. The club’s profile is improved and new people are playing the sport. For many of the participants, this is the first time that the residents have had the opportunity to try a traditional sport.

