

Dinner at Metropolitan Golf Club Monday 27 June 2022

Women Working in Golf

Guests at the latest GSA dinner event heard from a panel of three prominent women working at the highest levels in the golf industry in Melbourne.

Andrea Watson, general manager at Yarra Yarra Golf Club; Geraldine O'Callaghan, superintendent at Sandringham Golf Links; and Phoebe Torrance, women's golf and development manager at Metropolitan Golf Club, all shared details of their varied paths in golf.

The facilitator for the event was another prominent woman – journalist and broadcaster and Golf Australia's head of female engagement, Tiffany Cherry. One recurring theme emerged during the panel discussion: the importance of mentorship and strong role models for women in the heavily male-dominated golf industry in Australia.

All three women spoke with passion about their love of the industry and the enjoyment they get from being involved with golf, as well as the personal milestones they have been able to achieve in getting to top levels of their profession.

They also agreed that women and men have very different views about what they seek as golf club members, and for women the social aspect of club life is especially important. Phoebe Torrance told how information sessions with new women members at Metropolitan gained greater resonance when they included social elements such as fun, fashion, physio and connectedness.

Andrea Watson spoke of feeling slightly ostracised at first in a “sea of men” in her chosen field of golf club management, but time and her talent has seen those barriers broken down. She told of being invited to attend The Masters in 2014 as a guest of Augusta National and being given an exclusive back-of-clubhouse tour, seeing the private wine cellar with a special corner once reserved for President Dwight Eisenhower's personal bottles, and a plentiful supply of Grange Hermitage laid in for the champion's dinner after Adam Scott became the first Australian winner of the tournament in 2013.

Geraldine O'Callaghan began her career in turf management at Sandhurst Club in 2007 before progressing to the ground staff at Royal Melbourne where she was promoted to foreman of the East Course. She was recently appointed superintendent at Sandringham Links, which incorporates the Australian Golf Centre of excellence and the headquarters of Golf Australia and the PGA. She is a scratch golfer and spoke of her personal highlight of working at the 2011 Presidents Cup at Royal Melbourne, being able to stand close to Tiger Woods on the practice tee and watching Phil Mickelson hole 8 out of 10 shots working on his greenside chipping.

The dinner at Metropolitan Golf Club attracted a large audience of 75 GSA members and guests. There were many prominent attendees, including men's and women's Captains as well as board and committee members from a number of golf clubs.

The audience also gave a round of applause to one special guest, Sandra McCaw AM, who was made a Member of the Order of Australia just two weeks earlier in the Queen's Birthday honours list for her services to Australian golf. McCaw represented Australia more than 30 times in amateur and team events between 1971 and 1987.
