**Golf Club – Board Responsibilities Under the Harmonised WHS Acts**

Under the harmonised Work Health and Safety (WHS) Acts adopted by most Australian states and territories, the management board of a golf club—like any other organisation—has a legal duty to ensure the health and safety of workers (including employees, volunteers, and contractors) as well as other persons such as patrons and visitors. These responsibilities are comprehensive and extend to all aspects of the club’s operations.

**1. Primary Duty of Care (Section 19)**

A golf club, as a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU), has a primary duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of:

* workers engaged or caused to be engaged by the club
* workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the club
* other persons (e.g., players, visitors) while on the premises

Key duties include:

* Safe Systems of Work: Ensuring that all work (e.g., groundskeeping, hospitality) is carried out safely and without risk to health.
* Safe Plant and Structures: Equipment such as mowers, golf carts, and kitchen appliances must be maintained and safe.
* Provision of PPE: Personal protective equipment must be provided and maintained where necessary (e.g., gloves, safety glasses, ear protection).

**2. Consultation with Workers (Sections 47–49)**

Boards must ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms for consulting workers on WHS matters.

* Identifying Hazards and Risks: Workers should be involved in identifying risks and implementing control measures.
* Changes to Work: Any change that may affect health and safety (e.g., new chemicals, changes to the course) must be discussed with affected workers.

**3. Workplace Safety (General Duties)**

The WHS Act places clear obligations on PCBUs to provide and maintain:

* Safe Working Environment: The golf course, clubhouse, pro shop, and other facilities must be free of hazards.
* Emergency Preparedness: Emergency plans must be in place (e.g., for fire, storms, injuries) and all staff should be trained in response procedures.

**4. Hazard Management (Section 17 – Risk Management)**

Golf clubs must implement a risk management process that includes:

* Identifying Hazards
* Assessing Risks
* Implementing Controls
* Reviewing Control Measures

This applies to all areas, from equipment use to environmental hazards like snakes or heat exposure.

**5. Training, Information, and Supervision (Section 19(3)(f)-(h))**

The board must ensure that:

* Workers are Competent: Training must be provided in safe work procedures and the use of tools, machinery, and vehicles.
* Safety Inductions: New workers, including volunteers and contractors, should be inducted into site-specific safety practices and emergency procedures.

**6. Incident Notification and Management (Sections 35–39)**

The WHS Acts require PCBUs to:

* Notify the Regulator: Certain serious incidents (e.g., death, serious injury, dangerous occurrences) must be notified to the relevant WHS regulator immediately.
* Preserve the Site: The site of a notifiable incident must not be disturbed until cleared by the regulator (unless necessary to assist an injured person).
* Investigate Internally: All incidents should be investigated, and corrective actions taken.

**7. Responsibilities Towards Volunteers and Other Persons (Section 19(2))**

The club’s duty of care extends beyond paid employees:

* Volunteers and Contractors Must be given the same level of protection and training as employees.
* Public Safety: The board must ensure that golfers, visitors, and members are not exposed to health and safety risks (e.g., clear signage, safe paths).

**8. Officer Duties and Due Diligence (Section 27)**

Board members and executives are considered Officers under the WHS Act and must exercise due diligence to ensure the club complies with its health and safety duties. This includes:

* Keeping up to date with WHS matters
* Understanding the operations and associated hazards
* Ensuring appropriate resources and processes are in place
* Verifying compliance through monitoring and reporting

Failure to meet these obligations can result in personal liability, including fines and, in severe cases, imprisonment.

**9. Contractor Management (Section 19 and WHS Regulations)**

When engaging contractors, the board must:

* Ensure Contractor Safety: Verify that contractors are competent, insured, and operating safely.
* Coordinate Activities: Ensure communication of site-specific hazards and coordinate shared duties.
* Keep Records: Maintain up-to-date records of contractor qualifications, licences, and insurance.

**10. Psychosocial Hazards and Worker Wellbeing (2022 Regulations Amendments)**

Under recent amendments to the WHS Regulations, PCBUs must manage psychosocial risks just like physical risks. This includes:

* Preventing Bullying and Harassment: Fostering a respectful and inclusive culture.
* Managing Work-Related Stress: Ensuring appropriate workloads, clear communication, and support mechanisms.
* Promoting Wellbeing: Encouraging positive mental health practices across the club.

**Conclusion**

Under the harmonised WHS Acts, the management board of a golf club has clear and enforceable legal responsibilities to safeguard the health, safety, and wellbeing of its workers, volunteers, contractors, and visitors. This includes maintaining a safe physical environment, consulting with workers, managing hazards, and exercising due diligence as Officers. Ignoring these obligations can lead to serious legal and financial consequences, including personal liability for board members.