



# GOULBURN WORKERS CLUB'S RENOVATION SUCCESS

Goulburn Workers Club has been an enduring presence in the New South Wales rural centre for more than 50 years. Over this time, plenty has changed: the clientele has diversified, the industry and its technology have progressed, and countless interior design styles have moved in and out of vogue.

**H**eeding the needs of its evolving customer base, and adopting the guiding philosophy to deliver patrons an experience unparalleled in Goulburn, the club has recently undergone a major renovation project. *Clubs and Pubs Manager (C&PM)* spoke to Brett Gorham, Goulburn Workers CEO, to find out all about this resounding success.

**C&PM:** Goulburn Workers Club was established in 1959. Had it had any work done since then? What prompted you to undertake the recent renovation project?

**Mr Gorham:** Over the course of time, there had been some works completed to upgrade facilities and adhere to legislative changes; however, in 1999, the club identified a need to expand, so management and the Board made the decision to purchase what was, at the time, a supermarket with main street frontage.

This site was then linked to the existing footprint, effectively doubling the size of the premises and providing improved

access due to its prime location. The need to maintain a point of difference between ourselves and our competitors was a major factor when deciding to move forward with a substantial renovation.

**C&PM:** In particular, what did you hope to achieve with the renovation?

**Mr Gorham:** In November 2011, we assumed control of the catering department, which had historically been contracted. We needed a fresh start and approach in this department, and the renovation would combine the operation as a whole, with similar décor and atmosphere that would ultimately make the patrons' experience more enjoyable.

**C&PM:** Did you work with an architect on the project? If so, what was the process of working together like?

**Mr Gorham:** We believed that if we wanted to achieve our goals, it was imperative that we would engage the services of an architect. From the very beginning, the process was extremely harmonious; constant communication was vital in the success of the project. Having an architect that had a history of work in our particular field was also particularly beneficial to our end result.

**C&PM:** What were the guiding philosophies by which you worked?



**Mr Gorham:** We needed to achieve a venue in which we could provide superior service to that of our competitors, while also providing a safe, comfortable and enjoyable experience for each and every member when they visited us.

**C&PM:** How did you decide on the changes that you would make to reach the goals you had set out?

**Mr Gorham:** Having a database comprising members from vastly different age demographics with differing expectations, we wanted to combine a country feel with an urban culture. Utilising our architect's experience and guidance, we developed a venue that we believe appeals to all generations.

**C&PM:** What challenges did you face when undertaking the project?

**Mr Gorham:** The project was completed in two stages over an eight-month period. The first stage was the catering department's front of house, which was completely redesigned and included a new bar. While the works were in progress, our trade fell by over 50 per cent in this department, as we had relocated our main dining area to a much smaller function room during the renovation period.

The second stage consisted of a new bar and gaming floor layout. Over a period of three and a half months, we had no main bar area in the lower section of the premises. The gaming area was completed in two stages over one month, which effectively had us trading with half of our machines in that time.

This, combined with the winter weather, certainly made it a challenging experience; however, the relationship we had with the construction company on site enabled us to move through this period as quickly as we possibly could.



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**C&PM:** How have the renovations changed the Goulburn Workers Club, both for your staff and for your patrons?

**Mr Gorham:** As part of the project, we completely redesigned our branding, logo and corporate wear. The staff now have a workplace that they feel proud to be a part of, while working in comfortable surrounds with modern fittings and hardware.

The renovation included a complete refurbishment, which involved replacing all equipment. Meanwhile, our patrons now have a number of dining and entertainment options to choose from when they visit.

**C&PM:** Did you achieve the goals you set out?

**Mr Gorham:** We have seen a remarkable change, not only in our staff’s behavior, but also in patrons alike. The business is continuing to grow and, collectively, the Board and myself are extremely happy with the results that we are achieving.

**C&PM:** Would you encourage other venue managers to undertake renovation projects? And if so, why?

**Mr Gorham:** Continuing to renovate and reinvigorate the business is a must for the long-term success of a venue. As we have mentioned before, our current customers’ needs are extremely different to those of 15–20 years ago. Offering something unlike the other options available is crucial for the further success of the venue.

Goulburn Workers Club has also become quite diverse in what we offer, enabling us to target different demographics, which means that we are not reliant on any one area alone to drive the business. **C&PM**

All images of the Goulburn Workers Club provided by Abeo Architects; photographed by DC Photography – David Curzon

