



A Not-So-Dirty Dozen

How a re-imagined approach to an established golf course is helping to boost female participation

WHEN she's not busy being an active grandmother, Nada Vesio is hitting the fairways at her favourite public course.

Sales manager at Watermark Residences, specialists in luxury golf-course living, Vesio has discovered a new passion – encouraging senior women to join the “Chippers” group at Sydney’s Chatswood Golf Club. It’s a beginners golf program that has been running for more than 20 years and it is where Vesio believes she has unlocked a secret to increasing female participation. Chatswood’s new-look 12-hole course has been designed to offer golfers a wider variety when it comes to playing a round. Here’s why the short course could be the start of something much bigger for the game.

▶▶▶ **Tell us about your background as well as your role at Watermark Living?**

I have been part of Watermark Living for more than 10 years and over that time, I have seen first-hand the commitment and passion that goes into each of our developments. Prior to my current role as sales manager for Watermark Residences at Chatswood, I was the village manager at the award-winning Watermark Castle Cove village. To me, seniors living is not just about creating desirable buildings. Our philosophy is to create a welcoming, comforting and caring residence that promotes well-being and longevity.

▶▶▶ **How did the idea of a 12-hole course come to be and why do you think it will be advantageous in comparison to a regular, 18-hole course?**

Back in 2019, Chatswood Golf Club engaged specialist consultants to review golf industry trends and found that only

4 percent of the Australian population regularly played golf. Interestingly, of the regular golf cohort, 76 percent were over the age of 50 years.

This apparent trend, coupled with the Chatswood club’s smaller land area, provided an opportunity for the club to re-assess its traditional approach and envisage a course that may be attractive to the younger demographic, while still catering to traditionalists who favour an 18-hole round. Through creative hole routing, the club is able to provide the option to play nine, 12 or 18 holes. Golf Australia has acknowledged the progressive move and all players will be able to keep a Golf Australia handicap, allowing them to play in competitions.

Many of the ladies at the club have been happy playing 12 holes already, because they end up back at the clubhouse in time for lunch. We hope the shorter course might encourage more women to play the course, especially if they’re beginners.

▶▶▶ **Talk about the partnership with Chatswood Golf Club – the concept of the new sustainable retirement village, as well as the inclusion of a 12-hole golf course?**

Chatswood, like many clubs within Australia, was not immune from the financial hardships created by changing demographic trends and the demands of maintaining expensive, aged infrastructure. To survive, it needed to reinvent itself. A review of options available, which commenced more than seven years ago, saw great compatibility with an over-55s lifestyle village as an opportunity for:

- Improved golf facilities, modernised for the future of the game and with more accessibility options for junior and school-age introduction to the game.
 - New infrastructure to support our local ageing population, ensuring that the services, support, research and expertise have a place from which to support the local community and to ensure residential options exist close to home for those looking to make the move into the lifestyle offered by the village.
 - Diversified income streams that will ensure Chatswood Golf Club is more financially adaptable, sustainable and resilient into the future.
- The overarching concept has been to



NADA VESIO

challenge the status quo and build on the success that Watermark has established in the past 20-plus years in the industry to offer a signature lifestyle that embraces a sustainable community where residents are active, happy and connected.

The focus is on things that matter to residents, with tailored wellness programs, exclusive exercise classes and pioneering environmental design initiatives, all while creating an industry-leading golf experience. A sustainable community is one that fosters activity, engagement and inclusiveness.

▶▶▶ **Who will have access to play the course?**

Chatswood is a member-based club and has provided for public-player access throughout its 85-year history. This arrangement is expected to continue with the development of Watermark Residences.

▶▶▶ **There has been a surge in women older than 50 taking up golf since COVID hit in 2020. How will the retirement village and 12-hole course help in drawing more women to the game?**

As important as golf is, the exercise in the fresh air and the social interaction on and off the course are just as important, particularly as we get older. Providing an enjoyable, but challenging, course of 12

Brought to you by



BY ANNABEL ROLLEY



holes provides an ideal balance between the playing and social opportunities around golf.

Having a modern clubhouse with appealing offerings of food and beverage, as well as a wellness centre and activities floor, we expect will encourage women to come to the club, maybe to eat, play cards, or do Pilates or yoga. We hope more women are encouraged to join the “Chippers” group, which is the ladies beginners golf program that has been running at Chatswood for more than 20 years.

▶▶▶ **Talk about your golf. What is your handicap and how often do you play?**

I’m more of a recreational golfer. My husband Tom plays fairly regularly, but as a grandmother to three beautiful grandchildren, I find it more challenging to get out on the course for a full round these days, so the option of playing 12 holes or the Himalayas-style putting green is quite appealing to me.

▶▶▶ **Watermark prides itself on building the project with sustainability and green initiatives in mind. What does this encompass?**

Our focus has always been on creating spaces that offer sophistication and

comfort for our residents, but for this project, we’ve sought to hit a higher benchmark with our sustainability goals and green initiatives.

We have enough solar energy panels on-site to generate 100 percent of the electricity for every apartment. Residents will never receive a power bill for their home, which is an incredible cost and energy-saving outcome. Additional sustainability measures include double glazing on all windows and sliding doors for superior acoustic and insulating capability, in addition to rapid electric vehicle charging stations and overnight charging outlets for every car space.

The entire green space of the club has been preserved and we’ve limited the residences development to the existing car park, plus we’ll be planting more than 650 new trees on the course.

▶▶▶ **What type of accommodation is available and when?**

There will be 106 magnificent apartments to choose from, including two, three and four-bedroom layouts, as well as top floor penthouses. Construction is about to commence and the builders are forecasting to complete construction in mid-2024.

▶▶▶ **What other facilities does the village**

offer other than the 12-hole golf course?

The unique aspect to this village is the sharing of the facilities in the clubhouse. These include a restaurant, café/bistro, hydrotherapy pool and gym, and activities floor that includes a 30-seat cinema. In addition, the golf club development will also include a Himalayas-style putting green, modelled on St Andrews in Scotland.

▶▶▶ **There is a holistic health approach driven by former rugby union legend, Dominic Vaughan. What does this involve for village retirees?**

The residents will have access to qualified therapists and fitness professionals to guide them in the most appropriate activities for their health and well-being. Fitness guru and former legendary halfback Dominic Vaughan has worked with Dr Chris Watt from Watermark Living to develop proven wellness programs to optimise strength and fitness and maintain brain health.

We have also partnered with Vitalis – the leaders in homecare solutions for retirees – to establish a concierge service at Watermark Residences to provide integrated clinical, care and advocacy services so that residents can feel safe and supported in their homes.

