

14th August 2023



Mr Martin Slumbers – Chief Executive Officer
Mr Steve Otto - Executive Director - Chief Technology Officer
Mr Dominic Wall – Asia-Pacific Director
The R&A

Dear Martin, Steve and Dominic,

As stakeholders in the future success of golf, golf course architects have been closely monitoring progress of the **Model Local Rule (MLR)** on golf balls project for the potential impact on the future of golf course design. The European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA) and Society of Australian Golf Course Architects (SAGCA) surveyed members for their views and each asked their members the same five questions (see attached sheet).

When asked if the proposed MLR would change current approaches to design, 82% of EIGCA and 72% of SAGCA members said their approach would not change. When asked if they support the proposed MLR being applied across all golf, not just elite competitions, 50% of EIGCA and 100% of SAGCA member respondents gave their support.

Three quarters of respondents – an average 74% (EIGCA 59% and SAGCA 89%) - believe The R&A and USGA should have applied stronger limitations on the ball than currently proposed with a larger differing of opinion (EIGCA 52% and SAGCA 94%) when asked if limitations should also be applied to the driver to better address the distance issue.

The final question asked related to the timing of the proposed rule with an average 68% (EIGCA 75% and SAGCA 61%) of respondents believing the current version of the MLR will be obsolete by the time it would come into effect in January 2026.

Caspar Grauballe, EIGCA President, says: “As golf course architects, we support measures to reduce hitting distance. I believe this is vital for protecting the game and keeping it relevant in a world where resources are becoming scarce.

“From a design perspective, the proposed MLR is unlikely to cause golf course architects to change how courses are designed. However, it will protect the intended design strategies of



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older golf courses and ensure that historic courses will stay relevant. It will reduce safety issues and allow for the design of courses focused on a range of skills rather than simply focusing on distance.

“Limiting the distance a golf ball will reach, either through a change in the ball or in the driver, would mean that courses can be shorter which brings many benefits. Shorter courses require less land and use fewer natural resources, are cheaper to maintain and potentially more profitable.

“Shorter courses take less time to play, and time is one of the limiting factors in growing the game, and are more accessible and inclusive. All are positive steps in safeguarding future participation in golf.”

Paul Mogford, SAGCA President, says: “The Society of Australian Golf Course Architects welcomes the recent R&A and USGA proposal to introduce a **Model Local Rule (MLR)** for elite competition events. The SAGCA believes that year-on-year increases in the distance a ball travels has the potential to threaten the sustainability and relevance of existing competition golf courses, and in particular some of the great and historical tournament courses. There is often a flow on effect with many existing courses seeking longer holes, but where finite land leaves no room for lengthening or increasing safety dimensions.

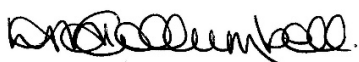
“Creating longer new courses or lengthening existing ones places significant pressure on development and operational costs. Increased inputs leading to pressure on resources and the environment. Longer golf does not necessarily equal better golf, more enjoyable golf, or reduce the time it takes to play. We believe better golf course design does that.

“The SAGCA looks forward to ongoing discourse on this topic with our fellow golf architect’s at EIGCA and providing feedback and views to the R&A and USGA on this complex and evolving issue.”

The full breakdown of responses to the five questions by respondents from the EIGCA and SAGCA membership is below.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss the EIGCA or SAGCA position further, please get in touch with me at my email address.

Yours sincerely



Lindsey Collumbell
Executive Officer



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EIGCA and SAGCA member survey on the proposed MLR on golf balls

The memberships of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA) and the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects (SAGCA) were surveyed in April and May 2023.

Each Institute asked the same five questions of their members with the breakdown of responses as below:

1. Will the MLR change your current approach to design?

- EIGCA = 18% (Yes) 82% (No)
- SAGCA = 28% (Yes) 72% (No)

2. While the MLR currently only applies to elite competitions, do you support the MLR ball being applied across all golf?

- EIGCA = 50% (Yes) 50% (No)
- SAGCA = 100% (Yes) 0% (No)

3. Should The R&A and USGA have applied stronger limitations on the ball than currently proposed?

- EIGCA = 59% (Yes) 41% (No)
- SAGCA = 89% (Yes) 11% (No)

4. Should The R&A and USGA have also applied limitations to the driver to better address the distance issue?

- EIGCA = 52% (Yes) 48% (No)
- SAGCA = 94% (Yes) 6% (No)

5. Do you foresee the current version of the MLR becoming obsolete by the time it comes into force in January 2026?

- EIGCA = 75% (Yes) 25% (No)
- SAGCA = 61% (Yes) 39% (No)



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