
Submission to the
Department of Health and Human Services
In response to
Valuing Sport and Recreation: A framework for the
future

Introduction

As the *Valuing Sport and Recreation: A framework for the future* Discussion Paper notes, the Victorian sporting events calendar adds \$1.8 billion to our State's economy every year. A major component in driving the sporting sector to deliver such positive economic value is the volunteer workforce.

Over 580,000 volunteers work in sport and recreation in Victoria, more than twenty-two times the number of paid employees. Of the 32.3% of Victorians who participated in volunteering as of 2014, 32% volunteered in sport and recreation – the largest industry-specific cohortⁱ. We already know that Victoria's major sporting events are supported at every level by volunteers: whether it be in providing information to visitors or providing support to our sporting stars, volunteers are woven throughout the fabric of any successful major sporting event.

However, it is also on the court, field or arena that we see evidence of the power of volunteering. Champions don't just happen – they are born out of local community sporting clubs where they are coached, trained and supported in their youth by volunteers.

The *Valuing Sport and Recreation* Discussion Paper lists on page seven the key changes “that would both strengthen sport and active recreation in Victoria and further contribute to Victoria's liveability”:

- A higher rate of participation in sport and active recreation
- Broader, more inclusive participation across our community
- A robust and sustainable sector
- Flexible options and choices for participants
- Efficient, multi-use of current, upgraded and new infrastructure
- Infrastructure and programs that more effectively meet demand.

We would suggest an addition to this list: the need to consistently grow and resource a strong and effective volunteer workforce. This presents as a key challenge that must consciously be monitored and addressed in the years ahead.

Volunteering Victoria believes that there are four key issues facing the future viability of the sports volunteer workforce:

- A lack of formalised volunteer management frameworks to place, train and supervise volunteers in sport and recreation
- An over-reliance on parents and past participants to staff the volunteer workforce at a community club level
- A perception in some sectors of the community that sport and recreation constitutes “informal” volunteering, and an identified gap in interest
- Markedly low participation in sport and recreation by Victorians from non-English speaking backgrounds, and poor gender diversity in sports governance roles

We thank the Government for the opportunity to make a submission to the *Valuing Sport and Recreation: A framework for the future* discussion process, and would welcome any queries you may have regarding our submission as per the contact details provided.

Inquiries about this submission should be directed to:

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About Volunteering Victoria

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering and we have a singular and specialised focus on volunteering.

Through our dynamic and transformative leadership we will promote and build a vibrant, prosperous and strong volunteering community that is inclusive, respected and sustainable. Our vision is resilient communities and empowered and active citizens through volunteering.

We provide support to volunteers and to organisations that involve volunteers in their workforce, support volunteering in their communities, or offer volunteering programs for their employees.

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Informal Volunteering and Opening Up the Sport and Recreation Volunteer Workforce

Overall, we know that formal volunteering is reported as being on the decline: nation-wide 31% of Australians surveyed indicated participation in volunteering in 2014, compared to 36% in 2010ⁱⁱ. To a large extent, Volunteering Victoria believes that this is linked to a shift to less formal or more episodic forms of volunteering, together with under reporting. Even though the number of volunteers who report their participation in sport and recreation is high, we believe this lack of formality and under-reporting may be particularly prevalent in sport and recreation.

In Volunteering Australia and PwC's *State of Volunteering in Australia 2016* report, 29% of respondents indicated that they had participated in *informal* volunteering by assisting sports clubs or teams during the past year. In spite of this, when asked "what sector would you be most interested in volunteering for in the future?", just 14.7% indicated sport and 12.8% indicated recreation – the fifth-lowest and third-lowest responses, respectively, out of twenty-two optionsⁱⁱⁱ.

It is not clear from the report why so many respondents view their contribution to sports clubs and teams as an informal form of volunteering. The anecdotal feedback we receive from community sport members, however does support the evidence that parents in particular are becoming less interested in volunteering for sporting clubs of which their children are members, citing lack of time as a barrier (75% of Australians say that they feel rushed or pressured for time^{iv}) or even saying that they view their membership fees as their contribution to the club. In spite of this, strategies developed by the sport and recreation sector often focus on parents as a key audience when filling volunteer roles (see for example, the Australian Sports Commission's 2008 report, *Too Few; Too Much: a report into the delivery of Australian softball*)^v. We believe that the sector would benefit from strategically diversifying its pool of volunteers.

If the sport and recreation sector is to rely increasingly on informal volunteers – and it is true that informal and episodic volunteering has always been critical to sport, especially around major events which take place on an irregular basis – then the structures must be put in place to properly support informal volunteering, including through active and ongoing recruitment. Respondents to the Volunteering Australia/PwC *State of Volunteering* report indicated pressing concerns surrounding administrative issues with informal volunteering: 35% indicated that they would feel better supported if they had access to more information and resources on informal volunteering arrangements, and over 33% indicated that more help was needed to find informal volunteering opportunities. 43% of respondents supported the idea of introducing an online platform specifically marketed at individuals seeking informal volunteering opportunities^{vi}.

As part of the *Valuing Sport and Recreation* framework, we would like to see the State Government address the growing informality of volunteering in community sport and recreation, and expand on the need to draw volunteers from a more diverse pool rather than relying on parents and past players.

Formalising the Leadership and Management of Volunteers in Sport and Recreation

As recipients of a Victorian Volunteer Innovation Program 2013-15 grant, Volunteering Victoria published a Volunteer Management Manual for Sport and Recreation which is available on the Club Help website: <http://www.clubhelp.org.au/volunteers/volunteer-management-manual/getting-volunteers-started>. This Manual acknowledged one of the overwhelming concerns with volunteering in the Sport and Recreation sector, which is that local clubs are run almost entirely by volunteers yet frequently lack professional and

consistent volunteer management systems. A lack of professionalised leadership and management of volunteers means that:

- sporting clubs are unable to appropriately forecast and prepare for changes in the volunteer landscape
- the needs of the organisation are rarely identified in a formal way and so volunteer skills are not fully matched and deployed to match those needs
- recruitment of new volunteers takes place in a very organic and informal sense from within existing club networks and resources – leading to less ability to generate new, external leads
- formal structures to report concerns or otherwise raise issues often do not exist.

All of this has the potential to lead to an experience that is less than positive for both the club and the volunteer.

More support to build formalised frameworks for the leadership and management of volunteers would empower sporting clubs to recruit new volunteers in a way that is more open and inclusive, and identifies and fills required skills gaps. It would give potential volunteers who do not have existing connections to a club (i.e. as parents or past players) the opportunity to engage.

We identified earlier the need to draw on a more diverse pool of volunteers than parents and past players. This can only be achieved by more open advertising and collaboration across sporting and other related networks. There are a range of reasons why somebody might be motivated to volunteer for a sporting club without necessarily being a current or past participant or parent. A potential sport volunteer might:

- have recently moved to a new area and be looking for opportunities to build new friendships
- be studying in a field related to recreation or youth and be looking for professional development opportunities through volunteering
- have an injury or disability that precludes them from playing the sport, but be a committed fan of the sport that means they would like to help out in some other way – for example, in the canteen or as part of a fundraising committee
- just want to give back to their community in a way that supports the benefits of health and physical activity!

We would encourage the State Government to work alongside Volunteering Victoria to examine means and structures of introducing a more formalised model of volunteer leadership and management in the sport and recreation sector. This may require funding to support the recruitment of professional leaders and managers of volunteers, either at a club level or perhaps as a starting point, working at the Association level to support the needs of local clubs.

Gender and Multicultural Diversity in Sport and Recreation Volunteering

Finally, we want to touch on the issue of gender and multicultural diversity in sport and recreation volunteering and the opportunities that are present to improve on this.

In our submission to the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy in 2016, Volunteering Victoria noted that although women make up the majority of the overall volunteering workforce – with 32.5% of all Victorian women volunteering compared to 28.2% of all Victorian men – the only two sectors where this is not the

case are the emergency services, and sport and recreation^{vii}. Overall, 15% or 1.2 million men volunteered in sport and recreation in 2014, compared to 12% or 1 million women^{viii}.

We recognise with enthusiasm the many measures that the Government has already implemented to seek to improve the participation of women and girls in sport. This includes \$10 million to upgrade women's change rooms and facilities at local sporting clubs, \$1 million to begin to implement the recommendations of the Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Recreation, and the Changing the Game: Increasing Female Participation in Sport initiative. We believe that these programs will go a long way toward improving gender diversity in sport and recreation volunteering.

The Board and Cotery structure that supports the work of our major sporting clubs in Victoria is also made up predominantly of volunteers; in many cases Boards in particular are elected, rather than appointed. This has made the existing situation in certain sports, where Boards are heavily male-dominated, difficult to remedy. We know that the Victorian Government is committed to ensuring equal gender representation on Boards and will support continued efforts to improve gender diversity on professional sporting club Boards. We also support moves to provide training and mentoring opportunities to encourage and support those women who do put their hand up for sporting club boards, acknowledging that developing Board skills can often be a cost-intensive exercise and that this is a particularly relevant consideration for volunteers.

In regard to cultural diversity, we note with concern that only 17.5% of people who do not speak English currently participate in Victorian sport. Sport is an important way of connecting with local communities, staying fit and active and even improving language skills. Encouraging multicultural community members to volunteer with local sporting clubs as well as professional leagues is an important step toward widening multicultural engagement in Victorian sport.

Volunteering Victoria has been very active in promoting volunteering to our multicultural communities and seeking to engage with multicultural volunteers around the issues that matter to them. In August 2016, we hosted Victoria's first Multicultural Volunteering Conference, which was a sell-out success attended by over two hundred delegates from across a variety of volunteer-involving organisations that work with and for the Victorian multicultural community.

Whilst we applied for a Multicultural Festivals and Events grant through the Victorian Multicultural Commission, unfortunately the 2016 grants were awarded well after our event took place. We are eager to run another Multicultural Volunteering conference in 2018, and would be happy to partner with the State Government to conduct a side-event, panel or other opportunity to discuss and promote the role of the multicultural volunteering community in encouraging more people from non-English-speaking backgrounds into sport and recreation.

Conclusion

Volunteers critically underpin the Victorian sport and recreation workforce, with 580,000 volunteers representing 22 times the number of paid employees in the sector. As volunteerism in sport and recreation becomes less formal in nature, it is important that community sport clubs in particular be supported to diversify and professionalise their volunteer workforce. We thank the Department of Health and Human Services for the opportunity to contribute to this Submission process and look forward to its outcomes.

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- ⁱ ABS, Volunteering Characteristics, Table 23 Persons who volunteered in the last 12 months, Selected characteristics of voluntary work- By state/territory, cat. no. 4195.0, 17 September 2015, <http://www.abs.gov.au>, accessed 7 July 2016
- ⁱⁱ Volunteering Australia (2015) 'Are time poor Australians abandoning volunteering?', <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/2015/07/are-time-poor-australians-abandoning-volunteering/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Volunteering Australia and PwC (2016) 'State of Volunteering in Australia', available online at <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>
- ^{iv} Volunteering Australia (30 June 2015) 'Are time poor Australians abandoning volunteering?', <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Media-Release-ABS-General-Social-Survey.pdf>
- ^v Innovation and Best Practice Unit, Australian Sports Commission (April 2008) 'Too Few; Too Much: a report into the delivery of Australian softball', available online at https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/563189/Two_few.pdf
- ^{vi} Volunteering Australia and PwC (2016) 'State of Volunteering in Australia', available online at <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>
- ^{vii} Volunteering Victoria (2016) 'Submission to the Women and Royal Commission Branch – Department of Premier and Cabinet, in response to A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy Consultation Paper', available online at <http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Gender-Equality-Submission.pdf>
- ^{viii} Volunteering Victoria (3 August 2016) 'Key facts and stats about volunteering in Victoria', available online at [file:///C:/Users/m.hopper/Downloads/Facts-and-Stats-August-2016_update%20\(4\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/m.hopper/Downloads/Facts-and-Stats-August-2016_update%20(4).pdf)