



Volunteers in Sport Issues and Innovation: A report prepared for NSW Sport and Recreation

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VOLUNTEERS IN SPORT: ISSUES AND INNOVATION



**A report prepared for
NSW Sport and Recreation
Project Manager: Ms Kerry Turner**



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March 2008**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
BASA	Backing Australia's Sporting Ability
<i>N</i>	Number
NSW	New South Wales
SA	Sport Association
SSO	State Sport Organisation
VSO	Voluntary Sport Organisation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to rising levels of concern about the trend of decline in sport volunteering and the impact of this on the community sport system, NSW Sport and Recreation commissioned Griffith University to complete a study of innovative volunteer club practices and the issues facing volunteers throughout New South Wales.

Focus groups, face-to-face interviews and an on-line survey were conducted with representatives across the three sports involved in the study: Little Athletics, Rugby League and Softball.

The sports were selected by NSW Sport and Recreation and were broadly representative of male and female dominated sports; inner and outer metropolitan and regional centres; summer and winter sports; a large participant / high profile sport; team and individual sports; and included one smaller association of a lesser profile sport.

Focus groups were conducted with eight representatives from sport organisations at state, district and association levels. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with representatives of volunteer sport clubs, and a total of 242 sport volunteers completed an on-line survey about issues facing volunteers.

In comparison to peripheral volunteers, core volunteers described themselves as more heavily involved and committed as well as making greater contributions to planning, decision making and hands on work within their clubs. Overall, core volunteers contribute significantly more hours per week than peripheral volunteers in both their main and secondary volunteer roles.

A majority of respondents reported that they were involved in their sport club in both main and secondary volunteer roles (i.e., they held more than one position in their sport club). The main role was the principal or most important role that the volunteer held in a club, and the secondary role referred to the minor or less important role. The most frequently reported roles overall were Secretary, Trainer / Instructor / Teacher / Coach and President or Chair. The data indicate that many people in board roles are likely to be Coaches, Managers, or Officials in their secondary roles, whereas few that are in Trainer / Instructor / Coach roles are likely to be on their club's boards.

The President or Chair position was almost three times more likely to be held by a core volunteer than by a peripheral volunteer as a main role. In contrast the roles of Team manager, Trainer / Instructor / Teacher / Coach were about three times more likely to be held by peripheral volunteers than by core volunteers.

The analysis revealed no significant differences between core and peripheral volunteers in terms of: sex distribution; age; employment categories; educational attainment; overall years of involvement; and, sport or their club involvement.

A number of issues facing volunteers were identified from the State Sport Organisation and Sport Association focus group sessions. The issues identified included:

Social and sport system issues:

Perception that most people are paid to run sport clubs; Increased bureaucracy associated with running Voluntary Sport Organisations (VSO); Managing risk is a major concern; Participation in Master's Sport has increased; Time devoted to other leisure pursuits has reduced time available for volunteering; and, Time spent in other volunteer roles also impacted on VSOs.

Organisational issues:

Aging volunteer workforce; Volunteer roles are too demanding; and, Lack of local council support.

Personal issues:

Pressures of paid work; Out of pocket expenses; Lack of confidence, skills, knowledge, and/or experience; Fear of being sued; Fear of being abused and/or harassed; and, Lack of appreciation or recognition.

A number of issues facing sport volunteers were identified by the volunteers themselves. The issues identified included:

Social and sport system issues:

High levels of concern with parental expectations of volunteers; Bureaucratic approach to managing clubs; Managing risk; and Loss of a sense of community.

Organisational issues:

The demanding nature of volunteer roles; Capability of sport clubs to attract suitable volunteers; Long serving volunteers not making 'space' for newer volunteers to become involved; and, Pressure to gain external funding.

Personal issues:

Pressures of family and paid work; Hours involved in volunteer work; Fear of being abused; and, Lacking knowledge or skills about the sport and/or administrative processes to operate the club.

There were no significant differences in the rankings between core and peripheral volunteers on personal issues. However, core volunteers were more concerned with parental expectations than were peripheral volunteers whereas peripheral volunteers ranked the bureaucracy associated with

running sports clubs more highly than did core volunteers. The only difference between core and peripheral volunteer rankings on organisational issues was core volunteers tended to rank the issue of long serving volunteers making it hard for new volunteers to become involved less frequently than peripheral volunteers.

Examples of best practice included reinforcing a cooperative culture within the VSO best demonstrated through the provision of social interaction opportunities and emphasis on shared goals and values among volunteers.

Examples of innovation included:

Formal and managerial approaches:

The development and implementation of mentoring programs and training and development programs; use of contemporary organisational structures including non-traditional volunteer roles; and, support for volunteer coordinators.

Explicit contribution culture:

Changing the existing volunteer culture; developing systematic volunteer recruitment programs and systematic volunteer recognition approaches.

Emphasis on organisational performance:

Using contemporary forms of communication (e.g., email and sms); and, business-like communication methods (e.g., web pages, intranet and internet).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SPORT

That Sport at all levels adopt and fully support the implementation of contemporary volunteer management practices by conducting a series of Club Workshops targeting:

1. *Volunteer recruitment drives aimed at increasing the pool of volunteers from a range of population groups;*
2. *Provision of more positive experiences for volunteers through:*
 - a. *appointment of volunteer coordinators to help reorganise volunteer workloads (through better rostering and scheduling) and reduce perceived pressures on volunteers;*
 - b. *better management of the interactions between club stakeholders such as parents/spectators/players and volunteers*

- (e.g., hands-on conflict resolution sessions and coping mechanisms for dealing with abuse and harassment);*
- c. reinforcement of the social and community experience;*
 - d. implementation of formal and informal mentoring programs; and*
 - e. recognition and appreciation initiatives;*
- 3. Appropriate volunteer education and training opportunities to overcome the increasing concerns amongst volunteers (and potential volunteers) that they lack the skills and knowledge to manage sport clubs in an increasingly bureaucratic and compliance focussed environment;*
 - 4. Strategic management of the volunteer leadership succession process and the development of opportunities for experienced volunteers to ease into retirement through roles as mentors or volunteer coordinators (e.g., formal recognition of current competencies to enable experienced volunteers to make the transition from sports volunteer to mentor or volunteer coordinator); and*
 - 5. Development of contemporary club management models / organisational structures that include non-traditional volunteer roles;*

That Sport at all levels adopt and fully support the implementation of contemporary volunteer management practices through:

- 6. Development and implementation of reliable systems to monitor the recruitment and retention of sport volunteers at all levels (club and association);*
- 7. Inclusion of “Strategy for knowledge sharing among clubs” on the agenda of state conferences and workshops.*

RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

Government agencies at the state level should:

- 8. Provide funding support for the delivery of a series of Club Workshops as outlined in Recommendations to Sport (1 to 5) above (\$40,000 per annum);*
- 9. Regularly collect and update information on innovative club practices in order to develop resources (e.g., case studies) to assist clubs to implement such practices (e.g., through the Club Workshops in Recommendations 1 to 5 above). These resources should be*

available in multiple formats including print and electronic (on-line) access and be supported by a statewide dissemination and ‘train the trainer’ strategy (\$50,000 per annum);

10. *Enhance the professional development for regional office staff (of NSW sport and recreation, and local government) and SSO staff and development officers to:

 - a. *facilitate proactive organisational change at various levels; and*
 - b. *overcome the concerns of volunteers (and potential volunteers) that they lack the skills required in the contemporary non-profit organisation environment (\$50,000 per annum);**
11. *Initiate an annual reward system that recognises particularly innovative clubs (e.g., volunteer retention) and disseminate statewide the information about the volunteer management practices of those clubs (\$20,000 per annum);*
12. *Ensure that state conferences and workshops include on the agenda “Strategy for knowledge sharing among clubs”;*
13. *Sponsor action research; for example to cooperate with selective clubs to work through the change process to assess the efficacy of different approaches to volunteer management. This may include reforming governance, revisiting constitutions, examining policies and processes for fundamental change not temporary change. The data derived from these studies should inform the Recommendations to Sport above (\$50,000 per annum);*
14. *Use media campaigns to increase public awareness of the volunteer industry and promote positive parent / spectator attitudes towards supporting volunteers (\$100,000);*
15. *Work with other providers and agencies in the volunteer industry to:

 - a. *Develop new strategies for attracting and retaining suitable volunteers in sport (e.g., examine ways to reduce costs associated with volunteering);*
 - b. *Investigate the bureaucracy (“red-tape”) issues concerning volunteers and streamline administrative processes where possible; and*
 - c. *Develop resources and training support with Sport to address the administrative burdens facing volunteers (e.g., user-friendly and accessible resources, and flexible training options to**

address legislation requirements, risk management, and other policies);

- 16. Encourage a shift towards contemporary club management models and support this initiative through appropriately designed policies, awards and incentive grant schemes to undertake that process (\$50,000 per annum);*

Government agencies at local levels should:

- 17. Allocate financial resources to support local sport clubs through regular maintenance and annual upgrading of facilities;*
- 18. Increase their recognition of local sport clubs by providing adequate resources for volunteers (e.g., separate and secure rooms and storage space at all venues; meeting spaces for volunteer run organisations).*

INTRODUCTION

The involvement of sport volunteers is the key to the success and long term sustainability of sport clubs, sport organisations, and sport events. Without volunteers, the sport system could not operate and there is growing cognisance of the need to better manage and nurture volunteers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2002, p.39) defined sport volunteers as those participating in 'roles undertaken to support, arrange and/or run organised sport and physical activity'. Understanding their needs, why they volunteer, what motivates them to do the huge amount of work they do, how and how well they fill volunteer roles and what attracts them to continue or quit these roles, are important topics for research.

The contribution of volunteers is impressive and is well documented. In the 12 months preceding 2000, volunteering was worth an estimated \$24-31 billion to the Australian economy, and more than one-quarter (26%) of the total volunteers in Australia were sport volunteers (National Centre for Culture and Recreation Statistics, 2003). Sport volunteers participate in a wide variety of formally and informally designated roles and positions to "support, arrange and/or run organised sport and physical activity" (ABS, 2002, p.39). These 'non-playing' roles include: coach, instructor, or teacher; referee or umpire; committee member or administrator; scorer or timekeeper; medical support; and other roles. Furthermore, many volunteers often have more than just one role with data revealing that while about 60% take on one volunteer role, a further 25% are active in two volunteer jobs, almost 10% in three and around 5% take responsibility for 4 or more volunteer positions (ABS, 2007, p.13).¹

The commitment volunteers make in terms of their time is also substantial. For example, while 48% of those with a non-playing involvement contribute 3 hours or less per week, 42% contribute between 3 to 9 hours and a further 7% spend between 10 to 19 hours per week (ABS, 2007, p.19). Moreover, many volunteers demonstrate sustained levels of commitment to their sport over many years. The input of volunteers is thus critically important for the state and national sport delivery systems and to maintain and enhance these systems demands a deeper understanding of volunteers and their activities.

State and federal sport policies, inter alia, generally aim to expand participation in sport and physical activity. For example, the former federal government's Backing Australia's Sporting Ability (BASA) Sport Policy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, p.6) in Section 2: "A More Active Australia" identified the following goals: 'Significantly increase the number of people participating in sport right across Australia, including in rural and regional

¹ Those involved in playing roles (61% of all those involved in sport and physical activity) also contribute to non-playing roles, but are not included here.

communities; Markedly increase youth participation in organised sport; Boost the active membership and reach of sporting organisations and local sporting clubs'. These policy goals demand, in turn, that volunteers exist in sufficient numbers to allow for this expansion. Recruitment and retention of sport volunteers, therefore, is a vital component in achieving increased levels of participation in organised sport. However, the current data are concerning.

While the importance and significance of volunteer involvement in sport is well established, the outcomes of a recent industry-wide consultation of sport in NSW (NSW Sport and Recreation) as well as other recent research (Cuskelly, 2004; Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoyer and Darcy, 2007) indicate that there is trend of declining involvement in community sport volunteering. In particular, a review of organised sport and physical activity involvement in NSW between 1996 and 2007, revealed a general trend of decline in the number of coaches/instructors/teachers, referees/umpires and committee/members/administrators. However, the numbers of scorers/timekeepers and medical support volunteers remained relatively stable or increased (ABS, 2005). Changes in volunteer involvement suggest that volunteering may be becoming more peripheral and short term. As Cuskelly (2004) suggested, a decrease in volunteer work capacity is likely to have an impact on the provision of sport participation opportunities throughout the country.

Another NSW study, the *NSW Sport and Recreation Industry Strategic Directions – A Five Year Plan Key Issues Discussion Paper* (developed by The Ryder Self Group), identified the priorities in the areas of facilities, participation, people and volunteers, funding and coordination. In those areas relevant to this project, the top four priority issues for 'people and volunteers' identified were:

- Better support and incentives are needed for volunteers e.g., coaches, officials and administrators (70.9 per cent of respondents);
- An improved volunteer model (recruiting and retaining volunteers) is required to ensure a sustainable sport and recreation industry (48.9 per cent);
- Innovative and flexible approaches are required for training coaches and officials in sport and recreation (41.9 per cent); and,
- The quality of instruction of coaches and officials needs to improve (34.8 per cent).

Although these findings guided the current research, this project also sought further identification and clarification of the issues, to understand how issues are viewed by two volunteer types and how these issues affect volunteerism.

The trend of declining sport volunteerism in NSW and the impact of this on the community sport system is of concern to the NSW Sport and Recreation. However, the potential of the Agency to develop strategies to ameliorate this problem is constrained because little research has been conducted to

investigate the issues actually faced by different types of volunteers at the respective club and association levels, and the extent to which club structures facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of services.

NSW Sport and Recreation commissioned Griffith University to investigate the factors which may be contributing to the trend of decline in the numbers and/or involvement of volunteers from selected sporting clubs. The study specifically examined the following questions:

1. What are the key issues facing volunteers in sports clubs and associations in NSW?
2. What innovations have clubs and associations implemented to address the issues facing volunteers?

The research investigated the issues facing two groups of sport volunteers (core volunteers and peripheral volunteers) within selected NSW sport clubs and associations. Core volunteers are described as volunteers who are usually board or committee members, often seen as leaders, and who have higher levels of involvement and commitment than peripheral volunteers (Pearce, 1993). Peripheral volunteers are described as steady contributors, who have lower levels of involvement and commitment than core volunteers, and are occasional contributors (Cuskelly, Hoye and Auld, 2006). While both types of volunteer are crucial to sport, differences in attitudes and behaviours between the two categories are not clearly understood.

Further, how each category of volunteer views the issues facing those clubs and associations will enhance how government departments can work to help volunteers ameliorate those issues at the macro (social and sport system), meso (organisational) and micro (personal) levels of the sport system. By working through the identified issues it is expected that retention and recruitment of volunteers will improve, consistent with the policy objectives of both state and the former federal government.

The following sections outline the method used to investigate these questions, the findings of the study, and the resultant conclusions and recommendations.

METHOD

This section of the report outlines the methods used in the study. Four main stages of investigation and analysis were used to a) identify the key issues facing volunteers, and b) develop case studies of innovative club models/structures from selected sport clubs in NSW.

A variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied to the project. Stage 1 comprised a focus group with representatives from three State Sport Organisations (SSO), and Stage 2 involved a focus group with representatives from three sport associations (SA). In Stage 3 an on-line survey of volunteers in sport clubs and associations throughout metropolitan and regional NSW was conducted. Stage 4 entailed the development of case studies using focus groups with core volunteers from six sport clubs (Figure 1).

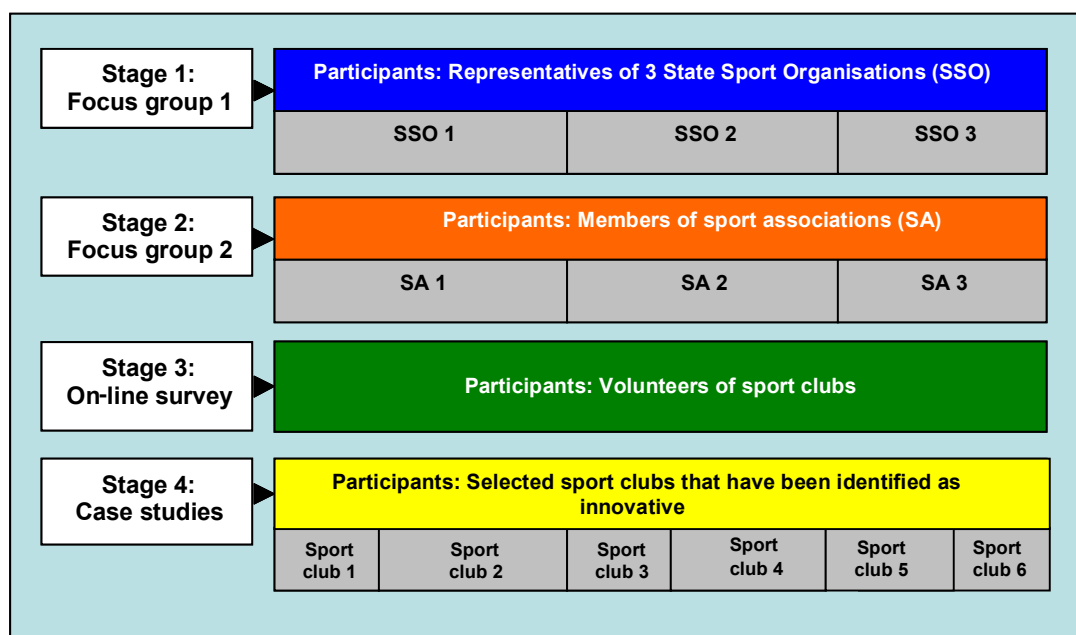


Figure 1. Research design

The sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis procedures used for the focus groups, on-line survey, and case studies are detailed in the following section. The limitations of the study procedures are also outlined.

STAGES 1 AND 2 (FOCUS GROUPS)

Sampling strategy

A sample of three SSOs was selected in consultation with NSW Sport and Recreation. The sports included Softball, Rugby League, and Little Athletics, and broadly represented differing sport volunteer environments including:

- a large participant / high profile sport
- a smaller association of a lesser profile sport
- male and female sport
- team sport and individual sport
- regional and metropolitan sport
- summer and winter sports.

Focus group 1

Prior to the initiation of the data collection process, Mr. Brad McCarroll (former NSW Sport and Recreation Project Officer) made contact with each of the SSOs selected to participate in the study. Each SSO was provided with an explanation of the purpose and nature of the project and the procedures of the study. The SSO representatives recruited to participate in the focus group included two Chief Executive Officers and one Coaching and Development Officer.

Focus group 2

A sample of five SAs at district and regional levels was selected to participate in the study following consultations between NSW Sport and Recreation and the SSO representatives who participated in focus group 1. Five SA representatives were contacted and recruited to participate in a focus group by Mr Brad McCarroll (former NSW Sport and Recreation Project Officer). Once again, each representative was given an explanation of the purpose and nature of the project and the procedures of the study. The representatives included the Club President and Secretary.

Collection of data

SSO and SA focus group procedures and interview questions

At the commencement of each focus group, the researchers introduced themselves and explained the purpose and procedures of the focus group to the participants who were then asked to read and sign an informed consent /ethical clearance form (Appendix 1). Both researchers shared the role of group facilitator and took detailed notes. Each focus group was audio-taped.

To gather the insights of SSO and SA representatives about issues facing volunteers and examples of innovation, interview schedules were developed in consultation with staff from NSW Sport and Recreation (see Appendix 2). The interview schedules were designed to elicit information about:

1. key issues facing core volunteers in the clubs and associations of the targeted sports;
2. characteristics of well run clubs and associations, and information on club governance structures and their effectiveness in relation to working with sport volunteers; and,
3. innovative models/structures that have been developed and implemented by clubs and associations in response to the issues facing core volunteers. SSO and SA representatives were also asked to provide reasons for the development of innovative models/structures, how those models/structures are implemented, and perspectives on their effectiveness in managing, developing/training, supporting and retaining core volunteers.

The focus groups with SSO representatives ($N=3$) and SA representatives ($N=5$) were each held over a 3-hour period. At the conclusion of the focus group with SSO representatives the notes were transcribed and later used to probe emergent themes in the case studies and assist in the development of the on-line survey. At the end of the focus group with SA representatives, the on-line survey was pilot tested and feedback on the structure and content of the on-line survey was sought. The contact details for innovative sport clubs from inner and outer metropolitan and regional areas of NSW were also gathered.

Analysis of data

Prior to analysis, responses to the questions from each focus group were transcribed and merged with transcriptions of the detailed notes taken during the focus group. These data have been included in the report, however in order to protect the anonymity of the focus group participants and their organisations, the names of the interviewees and their organisations were removed. The data will be held on file at Griffith University for a period of five years from the date of this report. The data analysis employed qualitative procedures aimed at uncovering themes in the perceptions of SSO and SA representatives, regarding the nature and extent of the issues facing sport volunteers and the innovative practices employed by sport clubs.

ON-LINE SURVEY

Sampling strategy

SSOs provided assistance with contacting and recruiting core and peripheral volunteers of selected sport clubs and associations throughout regional and metropolitan NSW. SSOs selected volunteers from their organisational databases, and distributed a letter via email to each volunteer to explain the purpose and nature of the project, and procedures of the study (Appendix 3). To encourage participation in the study, NSW Sport and Recreation confirmed the provision of an incentive available to survey respondents (\$200

sporting equipment voucher). Information about the incentive was included in the letter distributed to each volunteer. SSOs collated the email addresses of the volunteers who expressed an interest to participate in the study and provided the email addresses to the researchers in electronic format. Once the contact lists of each SSO had been received, the researchers distributed the on-line survey to the sport club volunteers.

Collection of data

Survey distribution and response rates

To enhance the efficiency of the research process, the survey was designed for self-administration in an on-line format.

The first distribution of email invitations were sent to 425 volunteers. Of the 425 recipients, 179 agreed to participate in the study and 11 opted out of the study. However, to ensure a representative sample, greater numbers of survey participants were required. The second distribution of email invitations reached 207 volunteers, of which 63 agreed to participate in the study and 2 opted out of the study. Thus the total sample was 632 volunteers of whom 242 (38.3%) agreed to participate in the on-line survey. Of these, a total of 227 volunteers completed the survey, a completion rate of 93.8%.

Follow-up strategies such as those recommended by Dillman (2000) (e.g., follow up emails through the relevant clubs and associations) were used to increase the response rate. Volunteers had two weeks to complete the survey. The first follow-up email was sent to volunteers who had not completed the survey one week after the initial distribution (Appendix 4). The final follow-up email was sent to the volunteers one-day before the survey was closed (Appendix 5).

Survey design and questions

A draft survey was piloted among the project managers, researchers, research assistant, and participants from the second focus group. This allowed the researchers to identify possible problems with ambiguity and level of understanding with instrument wording, and to assess likely survey completion time. The final survey was designed using a survey development software program, ('Survey Monkey'). The survey included three main sections:

1. Demographic data
2. Volunteer involvement:
 - a. type of volunteer role;
 - b. time spent in the role;
 - c. level of involvement in the role;
 - d. level of commitment to the role;
 - e. degree of contribution to decision making and planning; and,
 - f. level of "hands-on" or practical involvement in the role.

3. Factors influencing volunteer involvement and the importance of these factors considering: wider system / societal issues; organisational issues; and personal issues.

At the conclusion of the survey data collection process, participants' email addresses were entered into a random draw for a \$200 sporting equipment voucher provided by NSW Sport and Recreation.

Analysis of survey data

The statistical technique of cluster analysis was applied to the survey data. Cluster analysis was used to capture the volunteers' self described levels of involvement and commitment to their club and their main role as well as their perceived level of contributions to planning, decision making and hands-on work around the club. Cluster analysis is designed to maximise the differences between cases in a dataset as they are classified on the basis of a number of variables. The function of cluster analysis was used to statistically maximise group differences between mean scores for core and peripheral volunteers for all variables.

CASE STUDIES

Sampling strategy

SSO and SA representatives from Stages 1 and 2 of the study informed the selection of clubs to participate in case studies. Recruitment of sport clubs for the case studies was initiated when the Griffith University primary researcher made telephone or email contact with the sport club volunteers. During this initial contact the purpose of the study and its procedures were explained. All volunteers approached by the researcher agreed to participate in one face-to-face interview at a time and place that was convenient to the volunteer. Interviews were conducted with six core volunteers from clubs across the three sports, and were held in different locations throughout metropolitan and regional NSW. The volunteers recruited for the case study interviews were representative of a range of experience levels, qualifications, and gender.

Collection of data

Case study interview procedures and questions

Each interview was conducted by two researchers at a date, time and location that was convenient to the interviewee. At the start of each interview participants were asked to read and sign an ethical clearance/informed consent form (Appendix 6). Both researchers shared the role of interview facilitator and took detailed notes. Each interview was audio-taped as a backup to the interview notes, and was approximately 45 minutes duration.

The case study interview questions (Appendix 7), were designed to gather the views of existing sport club volunteers about the issues associated with the recruitment and retention of sport club volunteers, and to develop an understanding of innovative practices in volunteer sport clubs throughout NSW. The case studies identified:

1. characteristics of innovative club models/structures in comparison with more traditional approaches;
2. reasons for clubs adopting an innovative club model/structure and critical points for change;
3. perceptions of club members on the effectiveness of innovative club models/structures; and
4. use of innovative club models/structures to manage the issues facing core and peripheral volunteers.

At the conclusion of the case studies, the interviewee was thanked for their involvement in the study. The case studies were tape-recorded and notes were taken and later transcribed.

Analysis of data

Prior to analysis, responses to the questions from each case study interview were transcribed and merged with transcriptions of the detailed notes taken during the interviews. These data have been included in the report, however in order to protect the anonymity of case study participants and their organisations, the names of the interviewees and their organisations were removed. The data will be held on file at Griffith University for a period of five years from the date of this report. The data analysis employed qualitative procedures aimed at uncovering themes in the perceptions of sport club volunteers, regarding innovative practices employed by sport clubs.

LIMITATIONS

This study does not claim to present views that are fully representative (in a statistical sense) of the views of sport organisation representatives and volunteers in all sports, or of all sport organisation representatives and volunteers in the sports of Softball, Little Athletics and Rugby League. The selection of sport organisation representatives and association members for focus groups relied largely on a snowball sampling technique utilising the sport contacts of personnel within NSW Sport and Recreation. The limitations associated with the survey instrument relate to the initial lack of access to a sufficient number of email addresses from the distribution lists provided by the SSO to the researchers.

All care was taken by the primary researchers to ensure the data collection and analyses were not dominated by any particular individuals within focus groups by actively seeking the views of all participants.

RESULTS

The findings are presented in a number of sections that a) profile the core and peripheral volunteers involved in the study, b) address the major issues hindering the involvement of core and peripheral volunteers in organised sport, and c) address the characteristics and perceived effectiveness of well run clubs throughout metropolitan and regional New South Wales.

Because the purpose of this research was to identify issues and problems facing volunteers across the sport system, and to investigate innovative club structures and systems to support volunteer involvement, within the limitations of researching three major sports, specific sports are rarely discussed, except to highlight examples of good practice. Reporting findings in this way also serves to protect the anonymity of respondent organisations and individuals and furthermore, focuses on key systemic issues rather than the specific problems and concerns of particular sports or associations.

PROFILE OF CORE AND PERIPHERAL SPORT VOLUNTEERS

The on-line survey elicited information on a range of demographic characteristics including age, sex, education, employment status, living arrangements as well as details about current volunteer involvement in sport and views of the issues currently facing volunteers. This section provides an overview of the survey results, a breakdown of the results by core and peripheral volunteers and, where possible comparisons with ABS sport volunteer statistics.

Core volunteers were of particular interest as they tend to be more heavily involved in and committed to club sport than peripheral volunteers. Pearce (1993) was the first to identify two groups of volunteers that she described as core and peripheral in the context of non-profit voluntary organisations. Cuskelly et al (2006) applied this conceptualisation to sport volunteers and contended that core volunteers usually hold a formal office, often as a board or committee member, are seen as the leaders and those who run things, and have higher levels of involvement and commitment. Core volunteers form both the foundation and a cohesive network which enables sports clubs to deliver services to its members. According to Pearce, core volunteers can be identified by all volunteers in an organisation and compared to peripheral volunteers, contribute 'significantly more time to the organisation and felt that their work was more demanding' (Pearce, 1993: 49). In contrast, peripheral volunteers, though not necessarily apathetic, can be classified as steady contributors who do not want a higher degree of involvement but prefer to be occasional contributors. Both core and peripheral volunteers can have a main and a secondary role in a sport club (i.e., volunteers can hold more than one

position in a sport club). Main roles refer to the principal or most important role that a volunteer holds in a club. Secondary roles refer to the minor or less important role that a volunteer holds in a club.

In this project, core and peripheral volunteers were categorised through the application of the statistical technique of cluster analysis to a number of survey items designed to capture the volunteers' self described levels of involvement and commitment to their club and their main role as well as their perceived level of contributions to planning, decision making and hands-on work around the club. Cluster analysis is designed to maximise the differences between cases in a dataset as they are classified on the basis of a number of variables.

The mean scores for the core and peripheral volunteers on the data used to categorise the survey respondents into one of two groups are displayed in Table 1. Scores on each item could range from 1 'Low' to 4 'Very high'. As expected in comparison to peripheral volunteers, core volunteers described themselves as more heavily involved and committed as well as making greater contributions to planning, decision making and hands on work within their clubs. Not surprisingly, given that the function of cluster analysis is to statistically maximise group differences, there were significant differences between mean scores for core and peripheral volunteers for all variables used in the cluster analysis procedure.

Table 1
Mean scores for core and peripheral volunteer groups on variables used in cluster analysis (Ward's method).

Level of	Core volunteers	Peripheral volunteers
Involvement in main volunteer role	3.8	2.9
Involvement in club	3.8	2.7
Commitment to main volunteer role	3.8	3.0
Commitment to club	3.8	2.9
Contribution to decision making in the club	3.8	2.3
Contribution to planning in the club	3.8	2.2
Practical (hands-on) work in done in the club	3.9	2.8
Total ²	100%	100%
Number of cases	141	98

Demographics

Sex and Age

Research reveals that sport volunteers typically are more likely to be male than female (Cuskelly, et al.,2006). The respondents to the on-line survey

² Totals in all tables may not add to 100% due to rounding

were consistent with an ABS analysis of sport volunteer data; 59% and 56% of core and peripheral volunteers, respectively were male compared to 54.5% male in the ABS statistics (see Table 2). The differences in the proportions of core and peripheral volunteers by sex were not significantly different.

Table 2
Volunteers' sex for core and peripheral volunteers compared to ABS sport volunteers report (2007).

	Sport Volunteers (ABS) %	Core %	Peripheral %
Male	54.5	58.9	56.1
Female	45.5	41.1	43.9
Total	n/a	100%	100%
Number of cases	n/a	141	98

The statistics in Table 3 revealed that volunteers aged 35 to 54 years were over represented in the on-line survey sample, in both core and peripheral categories, compared to the ABS sport volunteer statistics. The younger and older age groups were under represented. However, there were no significant differences in the proportions of core and peripheral volunteers by age group. That is, core volunteers were not more or less likely than peripheral volunteers to be from a different age group.

Table 3
Volunteers' age for core and peripheral volunteers compared to ABS sport volunteers report (2007).

	Sport volunteers (ABS) %	Core %	Peripheral %
24 years or less	15.5	2.1	5.1
25-34	14.6	9.9	10.2
35-44	29.1	48.9	42.9
45-54	24.9	28.4	32.7
55 and over	15.9	10.6	9.2
Total	n/a	100%	100%
Number of cases	n/a	141	98

Locale and living arrangements

The majority of survey respondents lived in the Sydney metropolitan area (58%) followed by other country locations (27%), a major regional centre such

as Newcastle or Wollongong (12%) or other (3%) with most indicating the ACT. As ABS figures indicate, there is a generally higher overall volunteering rate outside of capital cities (e.g., 37% vs. 30% for NSW). However, in the present study most volunteers lived in metropolitan areas due to the sampling focus agreed upon.

The majority of respondents described their family structure as 'couple with dependent children' (73 to 78%) perhaps indicating that a high proportion of volunteer participation in sport is motivated by the involvement of dependent children's participation in sport (see Table 4).

Table 4
Family structure for core and peripheral volunteers.

	Core %	Peripheral %
Couple with dependent children	73.0	77.6
Couple with nondependent children	5.7	6.1
Couple with no children	4.3	5.1
One parent with dependent children	11.3	8.2
One parent with nondependent children	2.1	0.0
Other family or group household	1.4	2.0
Single person household	2.1	1.0
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	141	98

Employment and Education

There was a reasonable match between the on-line survey respondents and ABS data (see Table 5). Slightly more than 80% of those surveyed reported that they were employed full or part-time or self-employed. Those employed outside the home were asked which of several categories described their employment (see Table 6). More than half of those surveyed described their occupation as 'manager or administrator' (29 to 30%) or 'professional or para-professional' (23 to 26%). There were no significant differences between the employment categories of core and peripheral volunteers.

Table 5
Volunteers' labour force status for on-line survey respondents compared to ABS sport volunteers report (2007).

	Sport volunteers (ABS) %	On-line Survey %
Employed full-time / self-employed*	55.9	59.3
Employed part-time	23.9	22.2
Unemployed	** 2.2	0.8
Not in labour force (home duties, retired, full-time student)	18.0	16.9
Total	n/a	100%
Number of cases	n/a	243

* Assumes self-employed (on-line survey) were full-time. ** ABS estimate has high relative standard error and should be used with caution.

Table 6
Occupational category for core and peripheral volunteers.

	Core %	Peripheral %
Manager or administrator	29.1	29.6
Professional or para-professional	23.4	25.5
Tradesperson or related worker	2.1	10.2
Clerical or sales or service worker	15.6	16.3
Production or transport worker	1.4	1.0
Labourer or related worker	2.1	2.0
Other	26.2	15.3
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	141	98

The highest level of education completed by volunteers is summarised in Table 7. Almost half of the core and peripheral volunteers surveyed had completed post-secondary education (excluding trade qualifications). There were no significant differences in the educational attainment of core and peripheral volunteers.

Table 7
Highest level of education completed for core and peripheral volunteers.

	Core %	Peripheral %
Secondary	41.8	36.7
Trade qualifications	12.8	17.3
University or other tertiary degree or diploma	39.0	37.8
Postgraduate degree	6.4	8.2
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	141	98

Volunteer involvement

The on-line survey asked a number of questions about current levels of volunteer involvement. The respondents were asked a number of behaviourally orientated questions aimed at identifying their main and secondary volunteer roles in the main club that they volunteered in. Volunteers were also asked to provide some basic details about hours and years of involvement.

Hours per week

The self-reported hours per week that volunteers contributed to both their main and secondary roles are summarised in Table 8. Analysed separately, there were significant differences between core and peripheral volunteers in the hours contributed to both their main and secondary roles. Focussing on the main role, peripheral volunteers were most likely (68% of cases) to contribute between 1 to 5 hours per week. In contrast, the hours per week contributed by core volunteers were more evenly spread but no core volunteers reported less than one hour per week. An analysis of the secondary role statistics revealed that peripheral volunteers contributed fewer hours per week than did core volunteers. Six percent of peripheral volunteers contributed six or more hours per week, whereas more than 30% of core volunteers contributed more than six hours per week to their secondary role. Overall, core volunteers contribute significantly more hours per week than peripheral volunteers to both their main and secondary volunteer roles.

Table 8
Hours per week in main and secondary volunteer roles.

	<u>Main role*</u>		<u>Secondary role**</u>	
	Core %	Peripheral %	Core %	Peripheral %
Less than 1 hour	0.0	3.1	4.1	10.7
1 to 5 hours	31.9	68.4	65.6	83.3
6 to 10 hours	34.8	20.4	22.1	6.0
More than 10 hours	33.3	8.2	8.2	0.0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of cases	141	98	122	84

*chi square (df 3) = 40.7 p < .01

**chi square (df 3) = 40.7 p < .01

Years involved

Years involvement in main and secondary roles have been summarised in Table 9. Unlike hours per week, patterns of years involvement were not clearly discernible and there were no significant differences between core and peripheral volunteers when analysed separately. Volunteers consistently reported involvement of 1 to 5 years. From another perspective about two-thirds of sport club volunteers continue in their main or secondary roles for five or less years irrespective of being involved as a core or peripheral volunteer. This suggests that the probability of a sport club volunteer being in the same role for more than five years is approximately 33%.

Table 9
Years involved in main and secondary volunteer roles.

	<u>Main role*</u>		<u>Secondary role**</u>	
	Core %	Peripheral %	Core %	Peripheral %
Less than 1 year	10.6	13.3	7.4	9.5
1 to 5 years	52.5	51.0	53.3	56.0
6 to 10 years	17.7	25.5	22.1	21.4
More than 10 years	19.1	10.2	17.2	13.1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of cases	141	98	122	84

* ns ** ns

Years of involvement, both in the sport and the club, for core and peripheral volunteers are displayed in Table 10. There were no significant differences between core and peripheral volunteers in terms of either their sport or their club involvement.

Table 10
Years involved in the sport and the club.

	Sport involvement*		Club Involvement**	
	Core %	Peripheral %	Core %	Peripheral %
Less than 1 year	0.7	1.0	2.1	2.0
1 to 5 years	15.6	24.5	28.4	31.6
6 to 10 years	33.3	35.7	36.9	43.9
More than 10 years	50.4	38.8	32.6	22.4
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of cases	141	98	141	98

* ns ** ns

Volunteer roles

The main and secondary volunteer roles reported by the survey respondents are summarised in Table 11. A majority of respondents (85%) reported that they were involved in their sport club both in a main and a secondary volunteer role. Of the 16 roles listed in the survey, the most frequently reported roles overall (total column) were Secretary (41%), Trainer / Instructor / Teacher / Coach (36%) and President or Chair (30.4%).

As the roles of President or Chair and Secretary are critical to the functioning of most sport clubs, these roles were more likely to be reported as the main volunteer role (26% and 34% of respondents respectively). Very few people identified these positions as secondary roles. In contrast, the roles of Trainer / Instructor / Teacher / Coach were categorised by a larger proportion of respondents as their secondary (23%) rather than as their main role (13%). Likewise, the roles of Official / Referee / Umpire (total 16%) and Team Manager (total 15%) were amongst the more frequently listed roles, but were most likely to be listed as secondary (13% and 9% respectively) (see Table 11). It can be surmised from these data that many people in board roles are likely to be Coaches, Managers, or Officials as a secondary role; whereas few that are in dedicated Trainer / Instructor / Teacher / Coach roles are likely to be on their club's boards. This is an interesting distinction that bears further study.

Table 11
Main and secondary sport club volunteer roles.

	Main volunteer role %	Secondary volunteer role %	Total %
President or chair	26.1	4.3	30.4
Secretary	34.0	6.8	40.8
Treasurer	2.5	1.0	3.5
Registrar	3.7	1.4	5.1
Volunteer coordinator	0.8	3.9	4.7
Competition/event coordinator	2.1	4.3	6.4
Ground coordinator/marshal	0-	1.9	1.9
Team manager	5.8	9.2	15.0
Trainer/instruct/teacher/coach	13.3	22.7	36.0
Official/referee/umpire	3.7	12.6	16.3
Time keeper/scorer	2.9	7.2	10.1
Medical support person	1.2	3.4	4.6
Marketing/PR/news/fund raiser	1.7	6.3	8.0
Canteen and bar	0-	2.9	2.9
General help	1.7	8.7	10.4
Other	0.4	3.4	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	200.0
Number of cases	241	207	

In order to test for significant differences between core and peripheral volunteers in terms of their main volunteer role, those roles with less than 10 cases were recoded as 'other'. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 12 and revealed a number of significant differences. The President or Chair position was almost three times more likely to be held by a core volunteer (35%) than by a peripheral volunteer (13%) as a main role. In contrast the roles of Team Manager (core 2.8% compared to peripheral 10%) Trainer / Instructor / Teacher / Coach (core 6.4% compared to peripheral 22%) were about three times more likely to be held by peripheral volunteers than by core volunteers.

Table 12
Differences between core and peripheral volunteers
for main volunteer role.

	Core %	Peripheral %
President or chair	35.3	13.3
Secretary	38.3	26.8
Team manager	2.8	10.2
Trainer/instruct/teacher/coach	6.4	22.4
Other	17.0	25.5
Total	100.0	100.0
Number of cases	141	98

Chi square (df 4) = 31.3, $p < .01$

ISSUES FACING CORE AND PERIPHERAL SPORT VOLUNTEERS: PERSPECTIVES OF SSO AND SA REPRESENTATIVES

A number of issues facing volunteers were identified from the focus group sessions with representatives from SSOs and SAs. The issues were broadly categorised into three areas: macro (social and sport system), meso (organisational) and micro (personal) issues. The following section presents a sample of respondent quotes to illustrate the meaning of each issue for volunteer involvement.

Social and sport system issues

Issues identified in this category referred to underlying societal and sport system pressures that could prevent interested non-volunteers from volunteering, or subject current volunteers to demands that would influence their continued involvement in sport volunteering.

The perception of SSO and SA representatives that people are paid to run sport clubs was identified as an issue facing both potential and current volunteers and may contribute to the idea among community members that there is *"no need to volunteer"* (SA representative).

- Perception that most people are paid to run sport clubs

"There is a big perception out there that our centres are run by paid people, The average parent thinks that there is a salaried administrator at each of the centres and therefore they think that they don't have to play a bigger role because there's someone being paid to do that". (SSO representative).

The view that people are paid to run sport clubs was also thought to increase expectations placed on volunteers to deliver services to “paying members”. Consequently, the pressures placed on volunteers increased as they tried to fulfil their roles and functions within the sport club. It was generally perceived that members expected sport club volunteers to treat them as a client or customer which reinforces the “pay and play” attitude of some members. Similarly, Taylor (2004, p.107) previously identified greater expectations of higher quality service delivery by voluntary sport organisations (VSOs) as an underlying societal pressure placed on volunteers operating in sport systems.

Another issue thought to be facing volunteers was the increasing bureaucracy and compliance requirements associated with running a community sport club. Increasing bureaucracy placed greater administrative burdens on volunteers as they tried to adhere to government policies, address accreditation requirements, and meet council regulations.

- Increased bureaucracy associated with running VSOs

“The legislation burden for us is also related to council requirements, doing risk management and checking this and doing that. Everything that council need us to do even before even hiring the ground, is turning people away”. (SSO representative)

Cuskelly, et al., (2006, p. 27) support this finding and suggested that increased bureaucracy probably acts as a barrier to individuals considering whether to volunteer in sport. The need to comply with policies and implement professionalised management systems may add to the complexity and accountability of the work of volunteers at all levels of the sport system.

Managing risk also appeared to be a major issue facing volunteers particularly in relation to child protection legislation, and managing liability, insurance and indemnification issues.

- Managing risk is a major concern

“The threat of litigation is also a concern. We all have to be incorporated to protect us from that law suit. No one wants to lose their house. Litigation is a big threat to many people, and it turns them off taking on positions of responsibility”. (SA representative)

Despite widespread agreement that legislative protection measures have improved conditions for volunteers, Cuskelly et al., (2006, p.39) suggested that increasing amounts of legislation highlighted the “risk of potential exposure to legal proceedings faced by volunteers acting in their capacity as a coach, team manager, administrator, or official”. The regulation of

organisations and their activities in order to reduce the risk to participants and volunteers can have a direct impact on the ability of VSOs to attract and retain volunteers.

The case studies also revealed that increased choice and competition for leisure time and expenditure, deterred volunteers from getting involved. For instance, SSO and SA representatives indicated that increased numbers of people returning to sport as active participants meant that fewer people had time to volunteer. This issue was linked to the former federal government's broader agenda of promoting active ageing.

- Participation in Master's Sport has increased

“Some former players were on committees, but now because there are more opportunities to play they stop volunteering and get back to playing the sport. Masters tournaments seem to be popping up everywhere and people want to get back into playing, and don't have time to volunteer”. (SSO representative).

Another example of increased time devoted to other leisure pursuits is related to cultural activities. That is, participation in cultural activities was found to reduce the time available for sport volunteering:

- Time devoted to other leisure pursuits has reduced time available for volunteering

“One cultural group's religious attachments meant that their time at church impacts on whether or not they can come to a sport event and volunteer”. (SSO representative).

Similarly, Statistics Canada (2000) revealed from the Canadian National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (2000) that there was a 5 per cent decline in the number of religiously active Canadians who volunteer from 46 per cent in 1997 to 41 per cent in 2000. Moreover, time spent in other volunteer roles also impacted on VSOs:

- Time available for volunteering

“Some volunteers are stretched across more than one sport (summer and winter sports). Generally there are less [volunteers] to go around so it's hard to get volunteers”. (SSO representative)

SSO and SA representatives agreed that other social and sport system issues presented in the literature were also factors that impacted on volunteers in Little Athletics, Softball, and Rugby League, including:

- a loss of sense of community;
- declining club membership numbers; and,
- places of employment not providing flexible options for individuals to juggle work and volunteering.

Organisational issues

Several organisational pressures were identified by focus group participants as limiting higher levels of involvement among current volunteers and acting as barriers to individuals considering whether to volunteer in sport.

A predominant issue identified by sport representatives was the aging volunteer work force with core administrative roles filled by older people. The aging volunteer work force was found to create difficulties in both replacing volunteers and attracting volunteers from younger age groups to take on a volunteer role. Sport representatives revealed that even though volunteers who had held their positions for a long period of time were good at their jobs, and had the necessary skills to fulfil the role, their commitment to the role deterred new volunteers from getting involved. One SA representative explained:

- Aging volunteer workforce

“Some might feel threatened because they see that volunteers ‘own’ their job and can’t be challenged”.

Other representatives described how *“some groups or families take over the club”* (SSO representative) and *“this makes it difficult for any one else to develop a power base to oppose that family and get involved in the running of the club”* (SA representative).

Other organisational barriers to volunteering in sport included increasing demands placed on volunteers, poor management, and organisations not inviting people to volunteer. These barriers to volunteering in sport have been previously identified in Doherty’s (2005) model of personal and organisational barriers to sport volunteering. For instance, focus group participants emphasised that core volunteers roles were too demanding:

- Volunteer roles are too demanding

“There’s a lot more hard work and organisation required as far as committee member roles are concerned”. (SA representative)

“There’s an increased load that’s placed on volunteers. People think it’s all too hard. Some would just prefer to rake the long-jump pitch on Friday night than commit to a significant role in the club”. (SSO representative)

A lack of local council support for sport club maintenance and development also contributed to the demands placed on volunteers. Focus group participants described how clubs had to pay for facilities (in addition to council rate fees) and other resources associated with the sport ground even though the facility was considered to part of the local council’s jurisdiction. It was thought that the council should be more considerate and supportive of local sport clubs and their needs.

- Lack of local council support

“We pay for the grounds that we use, and we still have to maintain the grounds. We have 2 working bees each year, and the council only provides the soil and the dirt. We even have to mow the grass. They don’t provide us with support”. (SA representative)

There was also a concern that the lack of available information (e.g., job descriptions, policy and procedure handbooks) and training from organisations to help volunteers perform their role deterred people from volunteering. While it was acknowledged that it was often difficult for sport clubs to “*find the time, personnel, presenters, and money*” to provide training, the provision of both on- and off-field training was suggested as a way to increase volunteer involvement.

Focus group participants agreed that other organisational issues presented in the literature were faced by volunteers in Little Athletics, Softball, and Rugby League, including:

- lack of resources, facilities and infrastructure for volunteers to perform their roles effectively;
- uncertainty or conflict between volunteer and paid staff roles in the club;
- lack of procedures / structures for monitoring and evaluating volunteers; and,
- ineffective use of information communication technology.

Personal Issues

Personal issues including a decrease in time left over after paid work, increasing family commitments, costs associated with performing a volunteer role, lack of skills, fear of being harassed or abused, and lack of recognition were identified by focus group participants as significant issues facing volunteers.

SSO and SA representatives felt that volunteer involvement was hindered by the pressures of family and paid work as it reduced the time available for volunteering. In one sport, volunteers were required to perform roles on week nights. However, it was apparent that people found it difficult to volunteer during the week due to work commitments. One SSO representative made it clear that most employed people had the mindset that:

- Pressures of paid work

“After you’ve worked all the day the last thing you want to do is go out and volunteer”.

Out of pocket expenses and cost of incidentals were also identified as an issue facing volunteers. For example, while some organisations had quite good coaching / officiating courses and training networks the costs of the courses could be a burden for potential volunteers. One SSO representative indicated:

- Out of pocket expenses

“Some districts will pay for the courses, but for other districts, it’s up to the person to pay for the course individually. Some clubs reimburse and others don’t. So the cost of the courses could be an issue”.

There was much discussion in the focus groups about the lack of confidence to perform some volunteer roles, either because potential volunteers a) perceived they did not have the necessary skills or knowledge about a sport; or b) were worried they would be sued if they did something wrong as a volunteer. For example in one sport, most of the volunteer coaches were male because the sport was “*male dominated*”. A representative from this sport described how females lacked the confidence to take on a coaching role:

- Lack of confidence, skills, knowledge, and/or experience

“Women do express their interest to take on coaching roles, but their main issue is that they get put down by the players and parent with remarks like ‘you don’t know how to coach, because you haven’t played it’. So these women tend to step back and take on the managing roles, or run the canteen, and stay away from the coaching roles”.

Other sport representatives identified that some people lacked the confidence to perform generic volunteer roles and were unsure about what to do as a volunteer. One SA representative said:

- Lack of confidence, skills, knowledge, and/or experience

“People can feel ‘Oh my God I’m not a business person, I’m just a cleaner or a plumber and I don’t know about club development or risk management or financial planning, and what does corporate governance mean’, so they don’t get involved”.

Auld and Cuskelly (2001) suggested potential volunteers may feel they do not have the skills required to be effective in increasingly professionalised sport environments particularly when society is becoming more litigious. The impact of a more litigious society was identified by sport representatives as an issue facing volunteers.

- Fear of being sued

“We think that some people are scared to volunteer because of the liability they could be exposed to. For example some males who could be age managers for a girl’s team are worried about their interaction with young girls and what the parents may say”. (SA representative)

Fear of making a mistake was perceived by SSO and SA representatives as an issue facing many volunteers. To manage this issue, one club delivers a 3-week orientation program to educate volunteers on management and operational procedures within the club. Fear of being abused or harassed by spectators or players was identified as a significant concern for volunteers and potential volunteers:

- Fear of being abused and/or harassed

“In our sport incidences of abuse are one reason why volunteers might not come back, particularly for referees. Ground managers cop a lot of abuse”. (SSO representative)

Finally the lack of appreciation and recognition for those who do volunteer was thought to impact on volunteers. One SSO representative indicated:

- Lack of appreciation or recognition

“Some volunteers find their roles really rewarding and a lot of fun. But some other jobs like secretary and the like are pretty thankless positions”.

ISSUES FACING CORE AND PERIPHERAL SPORT VOLUNTEERS: PERSPECTIVES OF SPORT VOLUNTEERS

A list of issues facing volunteers was gleaned from the focus group sessions which preceded the development and administration of the on-line survey of sport club volunteers. The issues were categorised as macro (social and sport system), meso (organisational) and micro (personal) issues. Survey respondents were asked to rank the top five issues facing sport club volunteers in each of these categories. The results of several sections of the survey were reported in the previous section of this report. This section reports the results of an analysis of the three categories of volunteer issues and breaks the highest ranked issues down by core and peripheral volunteers.

Overall the most highly ranked volunteer issues across the three categories were associated with high levels of expectations or demands being placed on volunteers and coping with the time pressures of family life to enable volunteering to occur (see Table 13). Volunteers were also asked to place a ranking on each category of issues (social and sport system, organisational and personal). Personal issues were accorded the highest overall ranking, followed by organisational and social sport system issues. There were no significant differences in the overall categories of rankings between core and peripheral volunteers (table not shown).

In terms of social and sport system issues volunteers expressed high levels of concern with parental expectations of volunteers, the bureaucracy of running sport clubs and a loss of a sense of community. Managing risk was not ranked by as many volunteers as other issues, however those that chose this issue tended to rank it very highly (see Table 13).

Amongst the most highly ranked organisational issues, were the demanding nature of volunteer roles and the capability of sport clubs to attract suitable volunteers. A large proportion of volunteers were concerned with the issue of long serving volunteers not making 'space' for newer volunteers to become involved. A small number of volunteers ($N = 29$) reported that the pressure to gain external funding was an important concern. However, those that identified this issue assigned it a high ranking. The highest ranked personal issues were the pressures of family and paid work making it difficult to find the time to volunteer. Also amongst the highly ranked personal issues were the high number of hours involved in volunteer work, fear of being abused and lacking knowledge or skills about the sport.

Table 13
Top 5 volunteer issues by mean ranking within each category of
volunteer issues.

Ranking within categories of volunteer issues	Mean Ranking*	Number of respondents ranking each issue
<i>Social and sport system issues (total = 12 issues)...</i>		
Parents have increased expectations of volunteers	2.6	184
There is a great deal of bureaucracy associated with community sport clubs	2.8	136
Managing risk is a major concern	2.9	90
There is a loss of sense of community	2.9	146
Places of employment do not provide flexible options for individuals to juggle work and volunteering	3.1	123
<i>Organisational issues (total = 14 issues)...</i>		
The main volunteer roles are too demanding	2.0	188
Attracting suitable volunteers is difficult	2.6	166
Long serving volunteers make it hard for new ones to become involved	2.8	112
There are too many pressures to gain external funding through fundraising/sponsorship/grants	3.2	29
The club's processes and policies are not actively communicated to volunteers	3.2	97
<i>Personal issues (total = 9 issues)...</i>		
The pressures of family are reducing the time available for volunteering	2.0	178
The pressures of paid work are reducing the time available for volunteering	2.3	167
Volunteers have to work long hours and there is too much work required	3.2	125
Individuals feel that they may be abused by spectators or other people who behave badly	3.2	100
Individuals feel that they have a lack of skills / knowledge about the sport	3.2	129

* Lower mean equals higher ranking

Each category of volunteer issues was broken down to provide an analysis of the differences between core and peripheral volunteers at a more detailed level. The results are summarised in Tables 14 to 16 which report only the #1 ranked issue for each of the respondents. Major differences in the rankings of core and peripheral volunteers were evident in two of the social and sport system issues (see Table 14). At a rate of approximately 2 to 1, core volunteers were more concerned with parental expectations of volunteers than were peripheral volunteers (30% compared to 16%, respectively ranked this as the #1 social and sport system issue). The opposite was evident for the bureaucracy associated with running sports clubs. Peripheral volunteers ranked this issue more highly than did core volunteers. This might be

indicative of a barrier to peripheral volunteers becoming more involved in running sport and may also cause former core volunteers to take on a more peripheral level of involvement in their club.

Table 14
Highest ranked social and sport system issues by core and peripheral volunteer type (% of total responses).

Social and sport system issues	Core	Peripheral	Total
Parents have increased expectations of volunteers	30%	16%	24%
There is a great deal of bureaucracy associated with community sport clubs	9%	19%	13%
Managing risk is a major concern	12%	15%	13%
There is a loss of sense of community	11%	8%	10%
Places of employment do not provide flexible options for individuals to juggle work and volunteering	8%	11%	10%
Members have increased expectations of volunteers	6%	8%	7%
Club memberships are declining	8%	5%	7%
There is a perception that most people are paid to run sport clubs	5%	7%	6%
Sport rage, violence in sport, and abuse has increased in sport	5%	6%	6%
Participation in Master's Sport has increased	4%	2%	3%
There are cultural differences in attitudes to volunteering	2%	1%	1%
Volunteer workforce is getting older-this makes it less attractive for young people to get involved	0%	0%	0%
Total responses (N = 230)	100%	100%	100%

In contrast to social and sport system issues there was a high level of consistency in the #1 rankings of core and peripheral volunteers on organisational issues (see Table 15). More than half of the organisational issues were ranked #1 by less than 5% of the respondents. The only discernible difference between core and peripheral volunteer rankings was the issue of long serving volunteers making it hard for new volunteers to become involved. Predictably, core volunteers tended to rank this organisational issue as the #1 concern much less than peripheral volunteers (8% and 16% respectively).

Table 15
Highest ranked organisational issues by core and peripheral volunteer type (% of total responses).

Organisational issues	Core	Peripheral	Total
The main volunteer roles are too demanding	48%	46%	48%
Attracting suitable volunteers is difficult	18%	17%	18%
Long serving volunteers make it hard for new ones to become involved	8%	16%	11%
There are too many pressures to gain external funding through fundraising / sponsorship / grants	4%	6%	5%
There is a lack of local council support for sport club maintenance and development	6%	3%	5%
There are clashes of personality between club volunteers	5%	3%	4%
There is a lack of resources / facilities / infrastructure for volunteers to perform roles effectively	3%	2%	3%
There is a lack of information and training available to help volunteers perform their role	2%	2%	2%
There is a lack of procedures or structures for monitoring and evaluating volunteers	2%	0%	1%
The club's processes and policies are not actively communicated to volunteers	0%	3%	1%
There are no clear volunteer job descriptions	1%	1%	1%
There is uncertainty or conflict between volunteer and paid staff roles in the club	1%	0%	0%
Information communication technology is not used effectively	1%	0%	0%
The club does not involve volunteers in decisions that affect them and their work	0%	0%	0%
Total responses (N = 227)	100%	100%	100%

The #1 rankings of core and peripheral volunteers for personal issues are summarised in Table 16. The #1 ranking of personal issues did not reveal any major differences between core and peripheral volunteers.

Table 16
Highest ranked personal issues by core and peripheral volunteer type (% of total responses).

Personal issues	Core	Peripheral	Total
The pressures of family are reducing the time available for volunteering	33%	37%	35%
The pressures of paid work are reducing the time available for volunteering	28%	22%	26%
Individuals feel that they have a lack of skills / knowledge about the sport	13%	8%	11%
Volunteers have to work long hours and there is too much work required	8%	7%	8%
There is a lack of appreciation or recognition for those who do volunteer	5%	11%	7%
Individuals feel that they lack the confidence to perform a volunteer role	5%	4%	5%
Individuals feel that they may be abused by spectators or other people who behave badly	2%	4%	3%
Individuals feel that they could be sued if they do something wrong as a volunteer	3%	3%	3%
The out of pocket expenses or cost of incidentals are not covered for volunteering	2%	3%	2%
Total responses (N = 227)	100%	100%	100%

NATURE OF INNOVATIVE SPORT CLUB PRACTICES

Based on focus group and case study data it was clear that VSOs had adapted in different ways to the complexities of the social and sport environment and the issues facing volunteers.

For the most part, case studies of sport clubs revealed many examples of **best practice** in the management of sport volunteers particularly for sport clubs that had been in existence for more than 10 years.

Examples of best practice often reflected the characteristics of more traditional/informal VSOs (Taylor, 2004) and included for example, reinforcing a cooperative culture within the VSO. The emphasis on a cooperative culture was best demonstrated through the provision of social interaction opportunities, and emphasis on shared goals and values among volunteers. Comments from sport representatives regarding these features included *“Some of the clubs that do retain volunteers have a very strong social aspect”*.

The focus group sessions and case study interviews also revealed examples of **innovative** sport club practices. Innovative practices were described as emerging, forward-looking or new ways of operating that had been developed and implemented by sport associations and/or clubs. Innovative practices were also reflected in the design of non-traditional organisational structures in response to the issues facing core volunteers. Perceptions of innovation were

closely linked to the contemporary/formal practices of VSOs identified by Taylor (2004). Innovative practices were subsequently placed into categories using Taylor's (2004) model of contemporary/formal VSOs including:

- a) formal and managerial approaches to volunteering;
- b) promotion of an explicit contribution culture where each member is expected to help in the organisation of the club; and
- d) emphasis on organisational performance not just playing performance.

Formal and managerial approaches

Innovative VSOs used procedures such as mentoring, training, and job descriptions to support volunteers. Mentoring was viewed as a strategy to increase volunteers' confidence levels by providing volunteers with a support network. For example, one SSO representative described the mentoring support provided to volunteer coaches:

- Mentoring

“Most clubs have a coaching director or provider to support the individual coaches especially with specific skills or areas. It's more a mentoring role”. (sport representative).

Volunteer training and development opportunities were also found to improve the retention of volunteers and were previously identified by Hager and Brudney (2004) as a strategy for improving volunteer retention rates. Providing resources to assist volunteers was also an important component of the training and development package.

- Training and development: providing resources

“Sometimes as an organisation we need to provide resources to our volunteers especially if they [unfamiliar with legislation] like Child Protection”. (sport representative).

Incorporating social events with volunteer development and training opportunities was also described as an important strategy for retaining volunteers. For instance, regular volunteer debriefing sessions with a social orientation contributed to the development of volunteer support networks:

- Training and development: building social support networks

“Clubs have now made a conscious effort to try and be more friendly and welcoming and to increase their support networks within the club by holding debriefing sessions every Monday night for example”.
(sport representative)

The implementation of new (non-traditional) volunteer roles for which job descriptions had been developed was identified as an innovative sport club practice. The introduction of new volunteer roles (e.g., Public Relations or Relationships Officer, Officer for Information and Technology, and Grants Officer) demonstrated a proactive approach to development and planning within the club.

- Non-traditional volunteer roles

“We identified the type of volunteer positions that other clubs had, like a Grounds Officer, Accounts Manager and those types of things, and we agreed that these roles would form the skeleton of our centre. But then we decided that we needed other positions, such as a Relationships Officer which is not a traditional volunteer role, and an Officer for Volunteers. We also developed more administrative roles like an Assistant to the Officer of Officials because we need more administrative support to manage the large number of kids in the club. We also have an Officer for Information and Technology”. (sport representative)

“One of the larger clubs that is new and enthusiastic, have actually appointed a Grant Officer to their committee. And some of the grants that they’ve discovered I didn’t know even existed”. (SSO representative)

Alongside the implementation of non-traditional roles in innovative sport clubs, it was apparent that some clubs had deliberately changed the organisational structure to better suit the needs of the club. For example, one sport representative explained:

- Contemporary structures

“We identified that the traditional structure of most volunteer sport clubs was not working for our centre because we were more use to modern business practices and communications. So this made the way that we operated quite different. The traditional structure was just not working “. (Figure 2).

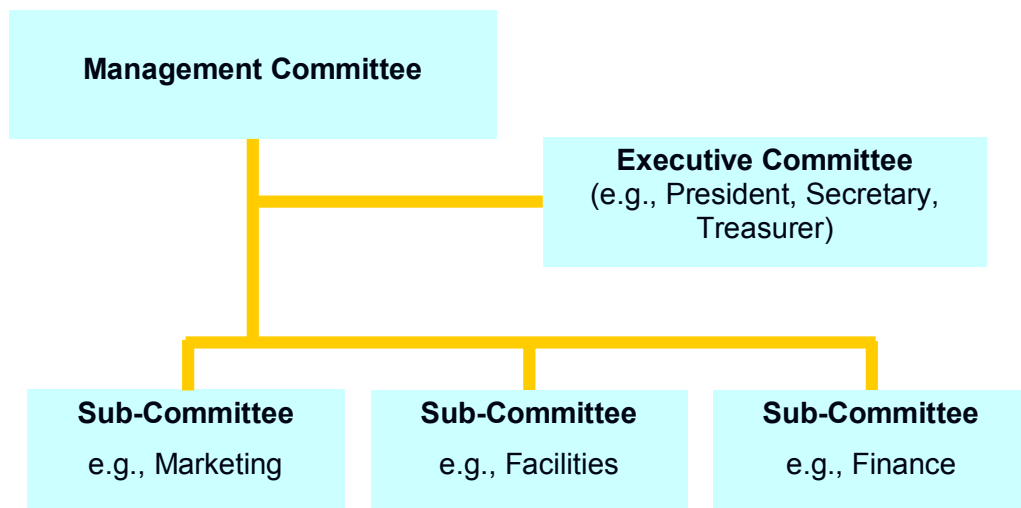


Figure 2. Traditional voluntary sport organisation committee structure

Information from the focus group session in relation to this sport club revealed that during the club's inception, a non-traditional structure was developed and implemented (Figure 3).

- Contemporary structures

“The committee structure from the olden days has changed. The president in the club is in charge of strategic development which includes treasury, revenue, sustainability, sponsorship, and members so the registrar would be here. Then we have operations which include the ground officer, age managers. And then somebody who is in communications and more of the governance role. This works better because the president does not control everything. Each person deals with their own section. The executive committee meets once a month and the rest are like task forces or portfolios”.

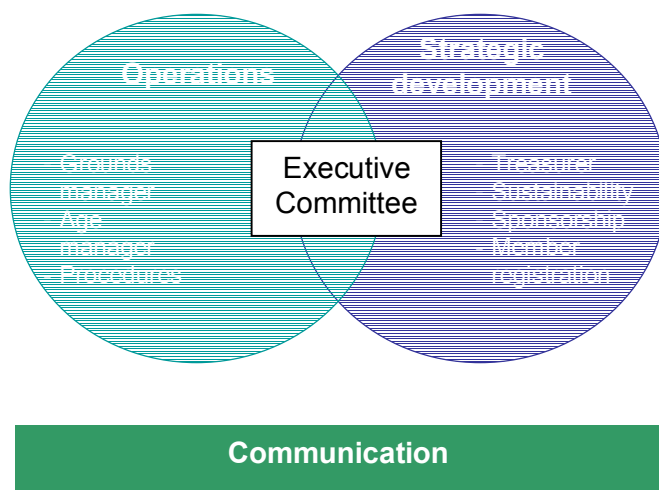


Figure 3. New committee structure – Version 1

However, after a period of time it became clear to the core volunteers of the club that the committee / organisation structure was not suitable. For example, the divisions between operational and strategic development roles created conflict between committee members. Subsequently, the structure morphed into a structure that was flatter and based on a matrix design which more clearly divided roles and responsibilities:

- Contemporary structures

“So now we have a more flat structure and a more business like structure and some roles are more diversified than before. The new model (Figure 4) was developed so that the power did not rest with one person like the President. Now we have five executive positions with 5 portfolios or task groups if you like. Different roles are slotted underneath each of these, and people in each of the groups can work

across other groups. The leader of the group is more a facilitator of the group, and helps to make decisions”.

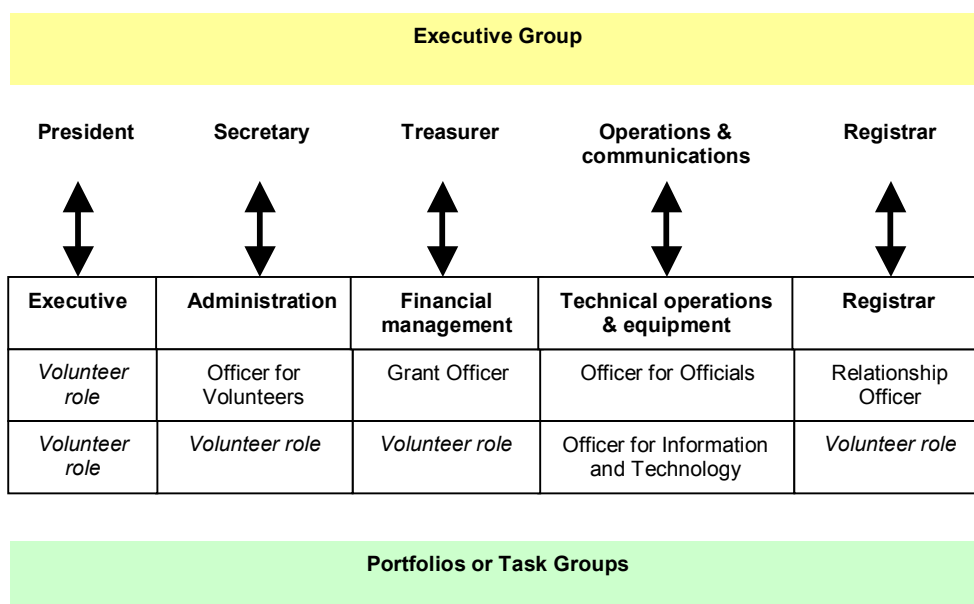


Figure 4. New committee structure – Version 2

Volunteer coordinators were another key feature of innovative sport clubs and reflected more formal approaches to managing volunteers. Volunteer coordinators were responsible for developing systems and procedures to manage volunteers such as planning, recruitment, training and recognition and reward schemes. In one sport, the role of a volunteer coordinator appeared to provide great support to volunteers:

- Volunteer coordinators

“Every club in our district has to have a Volunteer Involvement Program (VIP) coordinator, and the district volunteer coordinator meets with them regularly to find out what’s going on at the club level. The VIP coordinator at the district level goes out to all of the clubs at the beginning of the year to lay down the law about child protection, the rules, and what volunteers are responsible for ... ”.
(sport representative)

Explicit contribution culture

Case studies revealed that innovative clubs were more proactive about changing the existing volunteer culture than non-innovative clubs. For example, systematic approaches encouraged members to embrace the

contribution culture where each member is expected to help in the organisation of the club. Key volunteers of innovative sport clubs actively recruited parents, spectators, and younger people to get involved in non-playing roles and become engaged as volunteers. One club developed a specific V.I.P (Volunteer, Inspire, Participate) program to engage people in the spirit of volunteering:

- Systematic volunteer recruitment programs

“We invented a V.I.P program which stands for Volunteer, Inspire, Participate. We believe that volunteering is about inspiring and making a difference to the operations, to the kids, and to the experience that happens on the day. It seems to work and we are getting more people involved. On registration day the parents sign a statement that says ‘Where I can I will volunteer, inspire and participate’, and these people then go into a database that we can use throughout the year to access volunteers”. (sport representative)

In other sport clubs the explicit contribution culture was reinforced through volunteer recognition and reward schemes which Cuskelly et al., (2006, p.157) describe as “a tangible and often public acknowledgement that an organisation supports and values its volunteers and the work that they do for the organisation”. Public recognition of volunteer efforts and extrinsic rewards were key features of innovative sport clubs. As described by one sport representative:

- Systematic volunteer recognition approaches

“All sports in some ways are trying to improve their recognition of volunteers, by having a volunteer recognition program. Our recognition scheme may be printing the name of a volunteer in a newsletter each week for a job well done, or giving them an award at the annual Christmas function. Also on a broader scale, our League makes the season semi-final game the “Volunteer game”, so volunteers are given a ticket to go to an area of the stadium to watch the game as a token of thanks”.

Cuskelly et al., (2006, p. 157) suggested that sport clubs that develop a strong culture that values volunteers are likely to provide the types of support that attract, involve and motivate sport volunteers

Emphasis on organisational performance

Innovative sport practices were also evident in the way that VSOs utilised contemporary forms of communication (e.g., email and sms) and business-like communication methods (e.g., web pages, intranet and internet) to improve organisational performance. For instance, many clubs emphasised the use of technology to help volunteers communicate with one another and with members. Communication technology also enabled volunteers to readily access learning and development resources.

- Communication technology

“Regular emails at the end of the season and other messages through electronic means of communication are really important so volunteers can keep in contact with members easily”. (SSO representative).

“You now need a proper intranet to communicate with members, and to organise procedures, and put notes on the notice board, and even an on-line volunteer rostering system is helpful. Technology has to come into play now because you can’t communicate otherwise. Things like using SMS streaming to communicate. We put educational tools on the internet, like videos on the internet about ‘how to’”. (sport representative)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The involvement of sport volunteers is the key to a viable sport system. While there are mixed data concerning volunteer trends, most observers agree that the sustainability of the voluntary sector is under stress from the interaction of a complex array of factors occurring at the macro (social and sport system), meso (organisational) and micro (personal) levels. There is also broad consensus that sport organisations need to better manage and nurture their volunteers.

This research has focussed on the issues faced by different types of volunteers at the local club and association levels, and the extent to which organisational structures facilitate effective and efficient volunteer management. Furthermore, the research investigated whether the issues facing volunteers were perceived differently by core and peripheral volunteers. This was crucial as core volunteers tend to be more heavily involved in and committed to their clubs than peripheral volunteers. It is important to understand if there are club and association based initiatives that can assist and encourage more volunteers to make the transition from peripheral to core levels of engagement and also retain them at this level for longer periods.

Issues identified by SSOs and SA representatives and volunteers

A number of similar key issues were identified by the research participants through interviews, focus groups and the survey. In terms of the macro level, the results indicate that concerns about the increased bureaucracy associated with running VSOs and the need to manage risk were major concerns. There was also a general sense that there were many more activities that were eating into time availability of potential and current volunteers (e.g., people returning to Masters Sport, other leisure pursuits as well as other volunteer commitments). This trend was also perhaps exacerbated by the perception that most people are paid to run sport clubs, coupled with concerns about parental expectations of volunteers and the broader loss of a sense of community. These trends are difficult for sports to influence but it does appear there is scope to correct the misconception that people are paid to run clubs, target volunteer recruitment drives at the increasing pool of masters sport participants and better management of the interactions between parents and volunteers.

At the meso level, where there is more potential for clubs to take action, there was again a reasonable degree of consistency between the different types of research participants, especially about concerns related to an aging volunteer workforce, the sense that volunteer roles are too demanding; and more strategic management of volunteer leadership succession (i.e., not allowing

long term domination by a few volunteers inhibiting the motivation of others to get involved).

At the micro level, there were a number of key findings in areas in which clubs and associations can take action. In particular these included more effective management of: the hours worked by volunteers (e.g., better rosters and season schedules); out of pocket expenses incurred by volunteers; recognition and appreciation of volunteers; and, the relationship between parents/spectators/players and volunteer (to reduce the fear of being abused). Importantly clubs and associations can also do a great deal to overcome the concerns amongst volunteers that they lacked the confidence, skills, knowledge, and/or experience to become involved and the growing concerns about legal issues.

The results also indicated that worries about the bureaucracy associated with running sports clubs appeared to be of a concern to peripheral volunteers as was the issue of long serving volunteers making it hard for new volunteers to become involved. This suggests that any actions on the part of clubs in these areas should focus on peripheral volunteers.

Examples of best practice and innovation

The results suggested that any actions on the part of the clubs could occur at both the less formal as well as the more formal levels in the club. For example, reinforcing a cooperative culture through the provision of social interaction opportunities and emphasis on shared goals and values among volunteers ensures that clubs do not lose sight of the 'fun' and social nature of volunteering and that a variety of needs are met for their volunteers.

On the other hand more formal and managerial approaches include systematic recruitment and recognition programs, mentoring and building social support networks, as well as training and development, coupled with appropriate resources. Some clubs have also attempted to be innovative by using non-traditional volunteer roles, more contemporary structures and shifting the existing volunteer culture. Lastly more contemporary forms of communication such as email, sms, web pages, intranet and internet also seem to play a role in more effective links to volunteers in today's communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SPORT

That Sport at all levels adopt and fully support the implementation of contemporary volunteer management practices by conducting a series of Club Workshops targeting:

1. *Volunteer recruitment drives aimed at increasing the pool of volunteers from a range of population groups;*
2. *Provision of more positive experiences for volunteers through:*
 - a. *appointment of volunteer coordinators to help reorganise volunteer workloads (through better rostering and scheduling) and reduce perceived pressures on volunteers;*
 - b. *better management of the interactions between club stakeholders such as parents/spectators/players and volunteers (e.g., hands-on conflict resolution sessions and coping mechanisms for dealing with abuse and harassment);*
 - c. *reinforcement of the social and community experience;*
 - d. *implementation of formal and informal mentoring programs; and*
 - e. *recognition and appreciation initiatives;*
3. *Appropriate volunteer education and training opportunities to overcome the increasing concerns amongst volunteers (and potential volunteers) that they lack the skills and knowledge to manage sport clubs in an increasingly bureaucratic and compliance focussed environment;*
4. *Strategic management of the volunteer leadership succession process and the development of opportunities for experienced volunteers to ease into retirement through roles as mentors or volunteer coordinators (e.g., formal recognition of current competencies to enable experienced volunteers to make the transition from sports volunteer to mentor or volunteer coordinator); and*
5. *Development of contemporary organisational structures that include non-traditional volunteer roles;*

That Sport at all levels adopt and fully support the implementation of contemporary volunteer management practices through:

6. *Development and implementation of reliable systems to monitor the recruitment and retention of sport volunteers at all levels (club and association);*
7. *Inclusion of “Strategy for knowledge sharing among clubs” on the agenda of state conferences and workshops.*

RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

Government agencies at the state level should:

8. *Provide funding support for the delivery of a series of Club Workshops as outlined in Recommendations to Sport (1 to 5) above (\$40,000 per annum);*
9. *Regularly collect and update information on innovative club practices in order to develop resources (e.g., case studies) to assist clubs to implement such practices (e.g., through the Club Workshops in Recommendations 1 to 5 above). These resources should be available in multiple formats including print and electronic (on-line) access and be supported by a statewide dissemination and ‘train the trainer’ strategy (\$50,000 per annum);*
10. *Enhance the professional development for regional office staff (of NSW sport and recreation, and local government) and SSO staff and development officers to:*
 - a. *facilitate proactive organisational change at various levels; and*
 - b. *overcome the concerns of volunteers (and potential volunteers) that they lack the skills required in the contemporary non-profit organisation environment (\$50,000 per annum);*
11. *Initiate an annual reward system that recognises particularly innovative clubs (e.g., volunteer retention) and disseminate statewide the information about the volunteer management practices of those clubs (\$20,000 per annum);*
12. *Ensure that state conferences and workshops include on the agenda “Strategy for knowledge sharing among clubs”;*
13. *Sponsor action research; for example to cooperate with selective clubs to work through the change process to assess the efficacy of different*

approaches to volunteer management. This may include reforming governance, revisiting constitutions, examining policies and processes for fundamental change not temporary change. The data derived from these studies should inform the Recommendations to Sport above (\$50,000 per annum);

14. *Use media campaigns to increase public awareness of the volunteer industry and promote positive parent / spectator attitudes towards supporting volunteers (\$100,000);*
15. *Work with other providers and agencies in the volunteer industry to:*
 - a. *Develop new strategies for attracting and retaining suitable volunteers in sport (e.g., examine ways to reduce costs associated with volunteering);*
 - b. *Investigate the bureaucracy (“red-tape”) issues concerning volunteers and streamline administrative processes where possible;*
 - c. *Develop resources and training support for Sport to address the administrative burdens facing volunteers (e.g., user-friendly and accessible resources, and flexible training options to address legislation requirements, risk management, and other policies);*
16. *Encourage a shift towards contemporary club management models (Figure 5) and support this initiative through appropriately designed policies, awards and incentive grant schemes to undertake that process (\$50,000 per annum).*

Government agencies at local levels should:

17. *Allocate financial resources to support local sport clubs through regular maintenance and annual upgrading of facilities;*
18. *Increase their recognition of local sport clubs by providing adequate resources for volunteers (e.g., separate and secure rooms and storage space at all venues; meeting spaces for volunteer run organisations).*

A spectrum of community sport organisations

Traditional / informal	Contemporary / formal
Motivation-mutual enthusiasm and social benefits	Motivation-want the club to do well in organisationally
Proud culture of informality. Co-operative rather than a business	Formal and 'managerialist'. Some have volunteer co-ordinators
Pragmatic problem solving. Key volunteers staying longer & taking on more duties. Martyred leadership	Systematic. Explicit 'contribution culture'
Reactive. A spirit of 'mucking in', but loyal core of key volunteers only	Proactive. Anticipating. Planning. Taking action to deliver plans
Professionalisation seen as a threat	Professionalisation seen as a response to pressures. Receptive to paying for work, e.g., coaches or officials
Mistrust of assistance offered from external source-perceived as extra work	Receptive to external assistance. Some planned exploitation of assistance. Not mistrustful of external agencies

Figure 5. Adapted from: Taylor, P. (2004). Driving up participation: Sport and Volunteering. In Sport England (2004). Driving Up Participation: The Challenge For Sport. London: Sport England.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Project Information Sheet and Consent form

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A FOCUS GROUP**

Research Team: Caroline Ringuet, Professor Graham Cuskelly,
Professor Chris Auld, Dr Dwight Zakus, Griffith
University

Brad McCarroll, Kerry Turner, NSW Sport and
Recreation

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- My involvement in this research will include participation in a focus group;
- My identity will not be disclosed to any third party;
- My participation in this research is voluntary;
- If I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- I can access the results of this research by contacting the researchers named above.
- I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 07 3875 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) If I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- I agree to participate in the project.

Name

Signature

Date

_____/_____/_____

A SPORT VOLUNTEER STUDY - INFORMATION SHEET

Who is conducting this research?

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Why is the research being conducted?

Research evidence suggests that sport volunteerism is declining. This NSW Sport and Recreation sponsored research will explore the issues facing core volunteers in sport clubs and associations throughout NSW. The research will also investigate the innovative practices that have been developed and implemented by clubs and associations to manage the issues facing core volunteers. You will not be identified in any reports resulting from this research.

What you will be asked to do

Individuals selected for this project will be asked to (a) participate in one focus group session; or (b) complete an on-line survey.

The basis by which participants will be selected or screened

Participants for the first focus groups will be selected by the NSW Sport and Recreation based on the criteria set for this project. Participants for the second focus group will be identified by the Agency based on outcomes of the first focus group. On-line surveys will be distributed through the Agency and State sport association databases of relevant volunteers.

In all cases the researchers will not allow anyone not involved with the research project access to any of the participant's personal details. Information will also be coded so that the identity of participants is protected.

The expected benefits of the research

The outcomes of this research will allow a better understanding of the key issues affecting volunteers in the NSW sport club system. With this understanding better volunteer management programs can be developed to

enhance the delivery of sport in NSW. Also, case studies of effective and innovative club management practices will be developed. These case studies will provide models for best practice in volunteer sport club management and operation.

Risks to you

There are no risks involved in your participation in this research. Any information you provide will be closely guarded as identified below.

Your participation is voluntary

Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not need to answer every probe (focus group) or question (on-line survey) unless you wish to do so. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Your confidentiality

The chief investigators have sole access to all information. The identity of each participant will be protected as each focus group member and each survey cannot be identified as these records will all be coded with a number to identify that member or survey. All data collected will be stored in a secured cabinet. Data entered into computer programs is solely accessible by the researchers.

The ethical conduct of this research

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project you should contact the Manager, Research Ethics on 3735 5585 or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au.

Feedback to you

Results of this research or the final report can be obtained by contacting the NSW Sport and Recreation (contacts listed above) in late November 2007.

Mechanism for distribution and return

Interviews and focus groups will be tape-recorded and transcribed. Participants will be identified by a number. No personal details or other information will be included in this material. The data will be securely held by the research in locked file cabinets.

Privacy Statement

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and use of your personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.griffith.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3735 5585.

Appendix 2

Focus group interview schedule

Volunteer Study Focus Group 1
Focusing exercises/workshop activities and probes

Topic 1 General introduction about focus group procedure and activities for the day, and introduction of participants (30 mins; 10-10:30am)

- Where they're from (which SSO) and where the SSO is "at"?
- What they do there (position/role), particularly in relation to volunteers
- Recent activities/developments in the SSO
- Snapshot of experience and background with the development/management of volunteer clubs (to be expanded on later) (eg success stories or "issues" faced)

Topic 2 Describing volunteers and defining "core volunteer" (20 mins; 10:30-10:50am)

- How would you describe volunteers in your respective organisations?
- How would you describe/characterise volunteers in terms of their:
 - attributes
 - behaviours
 - roles
 - level/degree of commitment, involvement, and participation (eg., hours or years)
- Probe: Are there different classifications or groups of volunteers in your sport?

Topic 3 Issues facing volunteers (30 mins; 10:50-11:20am)

Research question 1: What are the key issues facing core volunteers in the clubs and associations of the targeted sports, from the perspectives of sport organisation representatives at the State Sport Organisation level

- Probe: What are some broad issues facing core volunteers?
- Seek discussion on agreement/disagreement, examples/experiences
- Probe: Do you agree/disagree with the pressures presented on the powerpoint slide?
- Probe: Do you want to add to/change/remove what is on the list?

Topic 4 Trend analysis (20mins; 11:20-11:40am)

- Probe: What are your perceptions of volunteer trends in your respective sport?
- Probe: Do these trends impact differentially of “core” and “peripheral” volunteers?
 - are “core” volunteers more resilient to managing or coping with these trends/impacts than peripheral volunteers)?
 - are the issues discussed in topic 3 managed differently by core and peripheral volunteers?

Break (10mins; 11:40-11:50pm)

Topic 5 Innovative structures/models (50 mins; 11:50:12:40pm)

Research question 2: Are there any innovative models/structures that have been developed and implemented by clubs and associations in response to the issues facing core volunteers

Research question 3: What are the characteristics of the innovative models/structures, particularly in relation to the management, development and support of volunteers.

- Probe: Overall, what new ways of operating have you seen in associations/clubs? What new operating practices have you come across to manage/develop/support volunteers?
- Probe: Why are these considered to be “innovative” or “new”? What are the characteristics of these practices?
 - Probe: Here are some dimensions that we can use to formulate discussion about characteristics of “best practice” (use an overhead/powerpoint slide of 6 dimensions)
- Probe: What makes these ways of operating models of “best practice”? What measures of performance are used to determine that these particular models/structures/processes/practices are “good” or “best practice”?
- Probe: How effective do you think these new practices/structures/models are in developing/managing/supporting core volunteers?

Identify an association within each sport to participate in Stage 2 of the study.

Topic 6 Quantitative survey (10 mins; 12:40-12:50pm)

Survey to be administered on organisational structures (Geoff Nichols)

Volunteer Study Focus Group 2
Focusing exercises/workshop activities and probes

Topic 1

General introduction about focus group procedure and activities for the day, and introduction of participants (10 mins; 7pm - 7:10pm)

- Where they're from (which association) and where the association is "at"?
- What they do there (position/role), particularly in relation to volunteers
- Recent activities/developments in the association
- Snapshot of experience and background with the development/management of volunteer clubs (to be expanded on later) (eg success stories or "issues" faced)

Topic 2

**Describing volunteers and defining "core volunteer"
(10 mins; 7:10pm – 7:20pm)**

- How would you describe volunteers in your respective organisations?
- How would you describe/characterise volunteers in terms of their:
 - attributes
 - behaviours
 - roles
 - level/degree of commitment, involvement, and participation (eg., hours or years)
- Probe: Are there different classifications or groups of volunteers in your sport?

Topic 3

Issues facing volunteers (20 mins; 7:20 – 7:40pm)

Research question 1: What are the key issues facing core volunteers in the clubs and associations of the targeted sports, from the perspectives of sport organisation representatives at the association / district level

- Probe: What are some broad issues facing core volunteers?
- Seek discussion on agreement/disagreement, examples/experiences
- Probe: Do you agree/disagree with the pressures presented on the powerpoint slide?

- Probe: Do you want to add to/change/remove what is on the list?

Topic 4

Survey evaluation of issues facing volunteers (20 mins; 7:40 - 8pm)

Topic 5

Innovative structures/models (50 mins; 8:05 – 8:55pm)

Research question 2: Are there any innovative models/structures that have been developed and implemented by clubs and associations in response to the issues facing core volunteers

Research question 3: What are the characteristics of the innovative models/structures, particularly in relation to the management, development and support of volunteers.

- Probe: Overall, what new ways of operating have you seen in associations/clubs? What new operating practices have you come across to manage/develop/support volunteers?
- Probe: Why are these considered to be “innovative” or “new”? What are the characteristics of these practices?
 - Probe: Here are some dimensions that we can use to formulate discussion about characteristics of “best practice” (use an overhead/powerpoint slide of 6 dimensions)
- Probe: What makes these ways of operating models of “best practice”? What measures of performance are used to determine that these particular models/structures/processes/practices are “good” or “best practice”?
- Probe: How effective do you think these new practices/structures/models are in developing/managing/supporting core volunteers?

Identify CLUBS within each sport to participate in Stage 3 and 4 of the study.

Appendix 3

On-line survey introductory email

To: [Email]

From: c.ringuet@griffith.edu.au

Subject: Volunteers in Sport Project (on-line survey)

Body: We are conducting a survey, and your response would be appreciated.

The survey is about Issues facing Volunteers and you could win a \$200 "voucher" to be used for sporting equipment, simply by completing the survey and sending it back to us!

If you WOULD LIKE TO complete the anonymous survey and be in the running for the \$200 sporting equipment "voucher", here is a link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address, please do not forward this message.

If you think you know someone who may like to complete the survey please send their email address to c.ringuet@griffith.edu.au
Once again, please DO NOT forward this message to people who you think may be interested in participating in the survey, because the link to this survey is uniquely tied to YOUR email address. We will send them another link, once we have their email address.

If you DO NOT wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

What is the survey about?

The survey aims to explore the issues facing volunteers in sport clubs throughout NSW. The survey is part of a larger study on Volunteers in Sport that is sponsored by NSW Sport and Recreation and conducted by researchers from Griffith University.

If you have any queries about the project you can contact Caroline Ringuet on c.ringuet@griffith.edu.au

Thanks for your participation!

Appendix 4

On-line survey reminder email

To: [Email]

From: c.ringuet@griffith.edu.au

Subject: Volunteers in Sport Project (a friendly reminder)!

Body: We are conducting a survey about Volunteers in Sport, and your response would be greatly appreciated.

This is just a friendly reminder that there is one-week left to enter the draw for a \$200 voucher (for sport equipment), by simply completing the on-line survey about Volunteers in Sport.

Here is a link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address, please do not forward this message.

The Volunteers in Sport project is an initiative of the NSW Sport and Recreation and conducted by researchers from Griffith University.

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

Thanks for your participation!

Appendix 5

On-line survey final reminder email

To: [Email]

From: c.ringuet@griffith.edu.au

Subject: Volunteers in Sport Project (a final reminder)

Body: Thank you for expressing an interest to complete the on-line survey about Volunteers in Sport. Your response would be greatly appreciated.

The Volunteers in Sport project is an initiative of the NSW Sport and Recreation and conducted by researchers from Griffith University.

If you would still like to contribute to the project and be in the running for a \$200 voucher (for sport equipment), this is a friendly and final reminder to please complete the on-line survey.

Here is a link to the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address, please do not forward this message.

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

Thanks for your participation!

Appendix 6

On-line Survey

Volunteers in Sport

1.

ISSUES FACING SPORT CLUB VOLUNTEERS IN NSW

Research evidence suggests that sport volunteerism is declining. This survey aims to explore the issues facing volunteers in sport clubs throughout NSW. The outcomes of this survey will allow a better understanding of the key issues affecting volunteers in the NSW sport club system. With this understanding better support programs can be developed to enhance the delivery of sport in NSW.

In completing this survey, your privacy and confidentiality are assured. Your name will never appear on the questionnaire or in the results and all data will be grouped prior to analysis. Please read the instructions at the start of each section and try not to leave any questions unanswered if they apply to you.

It will only take 10-15 minutes to complete the survey!

The study is sponsored by NSW Sport and Recreation and conducted by researchers from Griffith University. If you have any questions about any aspect of this study, please do not hesitate to call Caroline Ringuet on (07) 3735 6663 (office hours). You can e-mail Caroline anytime at c.ringuet@griffith.edu.au.

2. PART A. ABOUT YOU

* 1. Name of your club

* 2. Where do you live?

- Sydney metropolitan
 Major regional centre (eg Newcastle, Wollongong)
 Other country locations
 Other

3. PLACE OF RESIDENCE - other

* 3. If you selected OTHER in question 2, where do you live (please specify)?

4. PART A. ABOUT YOU

* 4. What is your age?

Years

* 5. Are you?

- Male Female

Volunteers in Sport

*** 6. Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?**

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Self employed
- Unemployed
- Home Duties
- Retired
- Student
- Other

*** 7. If you are employed outside of the home, which of the following best describes your current occupation?**

- Manager or administrator
- Professional or para-professional
- Tradesperson or related worker
- Clerical, sales or service worker
- Production or transport worker
- Labourer or related worker
- Other

*** 8. Which of the following best describes your household?**

- Couple with dependent children
- Couple with non-dependent children
- Couple with no children
- One parent with dependent children
- One parent with non-dependent children
- Other family or group household
- Single person household

*** 9. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?**

- No formal education
- Secondary
- Trade qualifications
- University or other tertiary degree or diploma
- Post-graduate degree

5. CURRENT VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Volunteers in Sport

*** 10. What is your MAIN or KEY volunteer role in the sport club you named in Question 1?**

Tick only ONE box in this column.

- President / chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Registrar
- Volunteer coordinator
- Competition / event coordinator
- Ground coordinator / marshal
- Team manager
- Trainer / instructor/ teacher / coach
- Official / referee / umpire
- Time keeper / scorer
- Medical support person
- Marketing / public relations / news / fund raiser
- Canteen and bar
- General help
- Other

6. CURRENT VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT - other

*** 11. If you selected OTHER in Question 10, what is the title of your role?**

7. CURRENT VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT - time spent

*** 12. How many hours per week do you spend in this volunteer role?**

- Less than 1 hour
- 1- 5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- More than 10 hours

*** 13. How many seasons / years have you spent in THIS volunteer role?**

- Less than 1 season (less than 1 year)
- 1- 5 seasons / years
- 6-10 seasons / years
- More than 10 seasons / years

8. CURRENT VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT - other roles

*** 14. Do you have a SECONDARY volunteer role in the same sport club or a volunteer role in ANOTHER sport club?**

- Yes
- No

9. CURRENT VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT - other roles

Volunteers in Sport

*** 15. If you have a SECONDARY volunteer role in the same sport club or a volunteer role in ANOTHER sport club, what is your volunteer role?**

Tick only ONE box in this column

- President / chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Registrar
- Volunteer coordinator
- Competition / event coordinator
- Ground coordinator / marshal
- Team manager
- Trainer / instructor/ teacher / coach
- Official / referee / umpire
- Time keeper / scorer
- Medical support person
- Marketing / public relations / news / fund raiser
- Canteen and bar
- General help
- Other

10. SECONDARY VOLUNTEER ROLE - other

*** 16. If you selected OTHER in Question 15, what is the title of your other role?**

11. HOURS PER WEEK IN SECONDARY ROLE

*** 17. How many hours per week do you spend in this SECONDARY volunteer role?**

- Less than 1 hour
- 1- 5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- More than 10 hours

*** 18. How many seasons / years have you spent in this SECONDARY volunteer role?**

- Less than 1 season (less than 1 year)
- 1- 5 seasons / years
- 6-10 seasons / years
- More than 10 seasons / years

12. CURRENT VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT - length of involvement

Volunteers in Sport

* 19. For how many years have you been involved with, or a member, of the club you mentioned in Question 1?

- Less than 1 season (less than 1 year)
 1- 5 seasons / years
 6-10 seasons / years
 More than 10 seasons / years

* 20. For how many years have you been involved with the sport?

- Less than 1 season (less than 1 year)
 1- 5 seasons / years
 6-10 seasons / years
 More than 10 seasons / years

* 21. Do you have responsibilities in the sport that are outside the club? (eg. association, district or state role)

- Yes No

13. YOUR MAIN VOLUNTEER ROLE

* 22. How would you describe your level of INVOLVEMENT in your main volunteer ROLE?

- Low Medium High Very high

* 23. How would you describe your level of INVOLVEMENT in your CLUB?

- Low Medium High Very high

* 24. How would you describe your level of COMMITMENT to your main volunteer ROLE?

- Low Medium High Very high

* 25. How would you describe your level of COMMITMENT to your CLUB?

- Low Medium High Very high

* 26. How would you describe your level of contribution to DECISION MAKING in your club?

- Low Medium High Very high

* 27. How would you describe your level of contribution to PLANNING in your club?

- Low Medium High Very high

* 28. How would you describe your level of "HANDS-ON or PRACTICAL" work in your club?

- Low Medium High Very high

14. ISSUES FACING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers in Sport

* 29. Wider System / Societal Issues

What are the most important issues in SOCIETY that hinder VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT IN SPORT?

Please rank the TOP 5 issues:

- 1 = the most important issue**
- 2 = the second most important issue**
- 3 = the third most important issue**
- 4 = the fourth most important issue**
- 5 = the fifth most important issue.**

You do not have to rank each row, only the 5 most important to you.

I feel that people do not get involved in sport volunteering because:

- There is a perception that most people are paid to run sport clubs
- There is a great deal of bureaucracy associated with community sport clubs (eg administrative burden; state and local government policies; accreditation; regulations)
- There is a loss of sense of community
- Participation in Master's Sport has increased
- The volunteer workforce is getting older and this makes it less attractive for young people to get involved
- Managing risk is a major concern (eg child protection legislation; liability issues; insurance and indemnification issues)
- There are cultural differences in attitudes to volunteering
- Members have increased expectations of volunteers (eg members may perceive that they are paying for a 'service' and have the right to receive that 'service' from the club and its volunteers)
- Parents have increased expectations of volunteers (eg parents may perceive that they are paying for a 'service' and have the right to receive that 'service' from the club and its volunteers)
- Club memberships are declining
- Sport rage, violence in sport, and abuse has increased in sport
- Places of employment do not provide flexible options for individuals to juggle work and volunteering

15. ISSUES FACING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers in Sport

* 30. Organisational Issues

What are the most important ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES that hinder VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT IN YOUR CLUB?

Please rank the TOP 5 issues:

- 1 = the most important issue**
- 2 = the second most important issue**
- 3 = the third most important issue**
- 4 = the fourth most important issue**
- 5 = the fifth most important issue.**

You do not have to rank each row, only the 5 most important to you.

I feel that people do not get involved in sport volunteering because:

- The main volunteer roles are too demanding (eg there is too much work to do)
- There is uncertainty or conflict between volunteer and paid staff roles in the club
- Volunteers that have been in the club for a long time make it hard for new volunteers to get involved and bring new ideas to the club
- There are clashes of personality between club volunteers
- There is a lack of procedures / structures for monitoring and evaluating volunteers
- Information communication technology is not used effectively
- There are too many pressures to gain external funding through fundraising / sponsorship / grants
- Attracting suitable volunteers is difficult
- There is a lack of information and training available to help volunteers perform their role
- There are no clear volunteer job descriptions
- The club's processes and policies are not actively communicated to volunteers
- The club does not involve volunteers in decisions that affect them and their work
- There is a lack of resources, facilities and infrastructure for volunteers to perform their roles effectively
- There is a lack of local council support for sport club maintenance and development

16. ISSUES FACING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers in Sport

* 31. Personal Issues

What are the most important PERSONAL ISSUES that hinder INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTEERING?

Please rank the TOP 5 issues:

- 1 = the most important issue
- 2 = the second most important issue
- 3 = the third most important issue
- 4 = the fourth most important issue
- 5 = the fifth most important issue.

You do not have to rank each row, only the 5 most important to you.

I feel that volunteer involvement is hindered because:

- The pressures of **family** are reducing the time available for volunteering
- The pressures of **paid work** are reducing the time available for volunteering
- Individuals feel that they have a lack of skills / knowledge about the sport
- Volunteers have to work long hours and there is too much work required
- Individuals feel that they may be abused by spectators or other people who behave badly
- The out of pocket expenses / cost of incidentals (eg telephone, petrol) are not covered for volunteering
- There is a lack of appreciation / recognition for those who do volunteer
- Individuals feel that they lack the confidence to perform a volunteer role; they are unsure about what to do as a volunteer
- Individuals feel that they could be sued if they do something wrong as a volunteer

* 32. In your opinion, what is the level of importance of the following categories of issues?

- 1 = most important
- 2 = between most important and least important
- 3 = least important

- Personal issues
- Organisational issues
- Wider system/social issues

Volunteers in Sport

17. End of Survey - Thank you for your help.

33. Are there any other issues, suggestions or ideas that need to be addressed to improve the positioning of sport volunteering in NSW?

We appreciate your time and assistance. Thank you for completing the survey.

To complete the survey and submit your responses please click the **Submit** button below.

Appendix 7

Case Study interview schedule

1. **Demographic** information
 - a. Name
 - b. Club
 - c. Role
 - d. Years involved in club at a volunteer level
2. Can you describe the **role of volunteers** in your club? What do they do? How can they be grouped / classified?
3. Your organisation / club has been described as “innovative” What do you think are the **key characteristics** of your organisation / club that make it “innovative” compared with more traditional approaches of managing / operating community sport clubs?
4. Why do you think the organisation / club has adopted this new / innovative way of operating? What were the factors that pushed you or your club to do this (**critical points for change**)?
5. How does the club use these new innovative ways of operating to **manage the issues facing volunteers** / cater for the needs of volunteers / support volunteers?
6. What are your perceptions of the **effectiveness** of the innovative models / structures?
7. Are there any other ways of operating? What you learnt from these new approaches that you have tried? What suggestions would you give to other clubs/
8. Can you describe the **structure** of your organisation / club? (If you can / know). Have you changed your structure to deal with the emerging issues facing volunteers / to cope with these new practices that you have going
9. Has this structure changed since the club’s inception? If so, why do you think it has, and in what way?
10. Can you describe the **culture** of the organisation / club? (as above)
11. How has the culture evolved / changed since the club’s inception? Why do you think it has evolved / changed?

