

Volunteering Victoria submission to Active Victoria: A FRAMEWORK FOR SPORT AND RECREATION IN VICTORIA

TO: Sports and Recreation Victoria

FROM: Scott Miller (CEO), Jenna Chia (Policy Officer), Dominic Szeker (Senior Policy Officer)

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STATUS: Final



OVERVIEW

Sport and active recreation is a vital part of the social fabric of Victoria, contributing to improved health, economic and social outcomes. The sport and recreation sector is comprised of a wide range of organisations from sporting bodies and community organisations to local government. Partnership with sectors including transport, infrastructure, education and tourism are also essential in the promotion and facilitation of sport and active recreation activities.

Volunteering is critical to sport and recreation, and its partner sectors. Sport and recreation organisations and services would not be viable without the contribution of volunteers. Victorians volunteer for sports and recreation more than for any other activity, making it the largest volunteer base across all sectors. Over 580,000 Victorians volunteer in sport and recreation activities giving more than 47.4 million hours each year. The contribution of sports and recreation volunteers in Victoria is valued at the equivalent of \$596 million annually.¹

“To the Australian sporting industry our volunteers are priceless – they are the backbone of the Australian sport industry”²

-Kate Palmer, former CEO, Sports Australia

For their priceless contribution, the sports industry and government owe it to volunteers to ensure they are effectively supported and managed. We want to ensure that volunteers are not only referenced and recognised for their contribution, but understood as a priority for government and organisations, along with active strategies and investments commensurate for such a significant workforce.

This submission to the Active Victoria Refresh brings into focus the contribution of volunteering and recommendations to guide strategies that support and promote volunteering in the sector (see appendix 1 for specific survey answers).

The submission is divided into four sections based on the key priorities of the Active Victoria Refresh including participation, models of delivery and building sector capacity.

Section 1: Participation in sport volunteering.

Section 2: Models of delivery: impact on volunteering.volunteering.

Section 3: The role of volunteering and building sector capacity.

Section 4: Volunteering policy and advocacy.

¹ 'The value of community sport and active recreation infrastructure', Sport and Recreation Victoria, 2020.

² Sport Australia thanks volunteers: backbone of our industry', Sport Australia, 2019 https://www.sportaus.gov.au/media_centre/news/sport_australia_thanks_volunteers_backbone_of_our_industry

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

Develop strategies aimed at increasing the diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups in sport and recreation volunteering.

Recommendation 2:

Conduct research on the sector-specific barriers and motivators to volunteering in order to inform strategies to increase participation.

Recommendation 3:

Consultation with community volunteers to understand region-specific needs and develop innovative ideas to increase participation in sport and recreation volunteering.

Recommendation 4:

Gather further data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on volunteering in the sport and recreation sector, to inform strategies that address the challenges faced by volunteers.

Recommendation 5:

Create opportunities and support systems for existing and new volunteers, including within online and limited capacity programs and events.

Recommendation 6:

Increased investment and resources for sport and recreation volunteer programs to engage and support volunteers.

Recommendation 7:

Incorporate volunteering in workforce analysis to better understand how volunteers complement the workforce, and how this varies across different sports and regional areas.

Recommendation 8:

Investment in volunteer support services and peak bodies to strengthen their engagement with the sport and recreation sector, and provide required support and resources.

Recommendation 9:

Embed role and importance of volunteering throughout all Sport and Recreation Victoria policy, frameworks and strategies.

Recommendation 10:

Advocate for increased investment and resources for volunteering across all sectors particularly identified partner sectors.

ABOUT VOLUNTEERING VICTORIA

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering, focusing on advocacy, sector development and the promotion of volunteering. We are a member-based organisation with over 400 individual and organisational members from all sectors and places around Victoria.

Volunteering Victoria has a singular and specialised focus on volunteering. We see our role as leading the development of a collaborative, sustainable, thriving volunteering community and movement in Victoria. Our purpose is to promote and build a vibrant, strong volunteering community that is inclusive, respected and sustainable.

In Australia, volunteering is defined as: “time willingly given, without financial gain and for the common good”. According to this definition, 2.3 million Victorians volunteer in our communities in regular times. That is 42.1% of Victorians who contributed some 507.7 hours of volunteering efforts in 2019.³

CONTEXT OF THE PAPER

Active Victoria, the Victorian Government’s strategic framework for sport and recreation, guides the planning and activities of Sport and Recreation Victoria. The Active Victoria Refresh is a review of the framework with key priorities of exploring participation, models of delivery and building sector capacity.

Sport and recreation volunteering has been heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and is yet to return to a pre-pandemic rate of participation.⁴ Volunteering Australia and Sport Australia have recently partnered to work together to promote and strengthen volunteering in the sport and recreation community.

This submission has been prepared to provide recommendations on resourcing, supporting and promoting volunteering, to contribute to the sustainability of the sport and recreation sector in Victoria. In line with the State Government commitment to support and enhance volunteering and the impending Victorian Volunteer Strategy, this submission should also be a catalyst for further discussion with the sector and State Government on strengthening volunteering in the sport and active recreation sector.

³ State of Volunteering in Victoria 2020, Volunteering Victoria, 2020. <https://stateofvolunteering.org.au/>
⁴ Sport Australia and Volunteering Australia team up to bring Aussies back to sport”, Sport Australia, 2020
https://www.sportaus.gov.au/media_centre/news/sport-australia-and-volunteering-australia-team-up-to-bring-aussies-back-to-sport

SECTION 1: PARTICIPATION

Increasing the participation of Victorians in sport and active recreation is a key priority of Active Victoria, particularly by groups who are traditionally under-represented in participation figures including people with disability, Aboriginal Victorians, low socio-economic communities and CALD communities. Participation by people from all communities is required in order to develop a diverse and inclusive sector.

Volunteers are essential to the functioning of the sport and recreation sector. Volunteering is an inclusive activity that is open to all members of the community⁵ providing an opportunity to encourage greater participation of people under-represented in sport and recreation. However, volunteers also experience unique barriers to participation, and there is a need for further data on the sector-specific barriers to volunteering.

The Victorian Government has conducted effective research in other sectors on the barriers experienced to participation, such as the 'Environmental volunteering social research report'.⁶ Further research on the barriers and motivators for volunteering in sport and recreation would support strategies to increase participation and provide an evidence base for further investment and resourcing.

In addition to the positive physical, mental and social benefits of volunteering, volunteers in sport and recreation promote participation in sport within their communities.⁷ Consulting with community volunteers has the potential to harness their unique perspective and knowledge to develop innovative ideas aimed at increase participation at a local level.

*“Participation in sport has the capacity to improve lives, strengthen communities, and hurdle language and cultural barriers like few other endeavours. Whilst we celebrate our sporting achievements, these wouldn't be possible without the committed efforts of over three million volunteers who support participation at every level”.*⁸

-Mark Pearce, CEO, Volunteering Australia

5 State of Volunteering in Victoria 2020, Volunteering Victoria, 2020. <https://stateofvolunteering.org.au>

6 'Environmental Volunteering Social Research Report, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2020. https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/510810/NGR-2005009-Environmental-Volunteering-Research-Report-Public-Final.pdf

7 Active Victoria: a strategic framework for sport and recreation in Victoria 2017-2021, Department of Health and Human Services, 2017

8 Sport Australia and Volunteering Australia team up to bring Aussies back to sport", Sport Australia, 2020 https://www.sportaus.gov.au/media_centre/news/sport-australia-and-volunteering-australia-team-up-to-bring-aussies-back-to-sport

Recommendations

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Recommendation 2:

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Recommendation 3:

Consultation with community volunteers to understand region-specific needs and develop innovative ideas to increase participation in sport and recreation volunteering.

SECTION 2: MODELS OF DELIVERY

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed multiple challenges to the sport and recreation sector including cancelled community sport programs, capacity restrictions, ongoing limitations on events and the transition to online forums, particularly for governance activities. These changes in models of delivery are one of several factors that have impacted volunteer roles and programs in the sector. The online delivery of programs and the staggered return to large scale programs and events is likely to continue in order to ensure programs are COVID safe and the sector is prepared for future challenges.

In the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic volunteers in sport and recreation have returned at a slower rate than participants, with up to 57% of volunteers in sport not having returned as at August 2020.⁹ In planning for future sustainability, the sector needs to better understand how volunteers can be encouraged and supported to return to their volunteering and navigate the challenges within this changed environment.

“There has been a singular focus on encouraging participants back to sport, but without volunteers there is no return to play... we are looking to deepen our understanding of the challenges for sports in the recruitment and retention of volunteers and work collaboratively across the sector to identify opportunities to support them”¹⁰

-Rob Dalton, CEO Sports Australia

To plan for sustainable changes in the sector, new opportunities must also be created for volunteers, along with strategies to support them. This may include opportunities for volunteers who have traditionally been under-represented in sport and recreation.

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Sport Australia and Volunteering Australia team up to bring Aussies back to sport”, Sport Australia, 2020
https://www.sportaus.gov.au/media_centre/news/sport-australia-and-volunteering-australia-team-up-to-bring-aussies-back-to-sport

Recommendations

Recommendation 4:

Gather further data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on volunteering in the sport and recreation sector, to inform strategies that address the challenges faced by volunteers.

Recommendation 5:

Create opportunities and support systems for existing and new volunteers, including within online and limited capacity programs and events.

SECTION 3: BUILDING SECTOR CAPACITY

Volunteers in sport and recreation are essential to the capacity and capability of the sector and play an important role from grassroots organisations to major events. Sport and recreation volunteering is often not formalised, however the sector would not be able to function or achieve its social, health and economic outcomes without the contribution of volunteers. The act of volunteering is free however including and supporting volunteers has a cost. Formalising volunteer programs is likely to promote sustained engagement and support for both volunteers and organisations.

Volunteer roles in sport and recreation are diverse, ranging from coaching and team coordination, to governance. There is an identified need to better understand the unique role of volunteers who complement the sport and recreation workforce and how this varies across sports and regions. Developing roles that are meaningful to volunteers and targeted strategies to support volunteers in their role is likely to promote greater recruitment and retention.¹¹

“Sport does not take our volunteers for granted. They are one of sport’s greatest assets and as we look to get back on the field, we will be relying on them even more than ever. Without them, sport in Australia could not survive”.

-Rob Dalton, CEO Sports Australia

11 State of Volunteering report, Volunteering Australia, 2012

Regionally based Volunteer Support Organisations (VSOs) provide critical support to volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations across Victoria. Where funding allows, VSOs can provide much needed assistance in formalising volunteer roles and programs, maintaining volunteer engagement, and providing support to volunteers and volunteer co-ordinators. Increased investment in these services would enable them to engage and support the sport and recreation sector, thereby strengthening the capacity of volunteer programs.

Recommendations

Recommendation 6:

Increased investment and resources for sport and recreation volunteer programs to engage and support volunteers.

Recommendation 7:

Incorporate volunteering in workforce analysis to better understand how volunteers complement the workforce, and how this varies across different sports and regional areas.

Recommendation 8:

Investment in volunteer support services and peak bodies to strengthen their engagement with the sport and recreation sector, and provide required support and resources.

SECTION 4: VOLUNTEERING POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Volunteering drives the sport and recreation sector and is essential to its functioning at every level. The role of volunteering and how it can help achieve identified policy priorities, needs to be embedded in all policy and frameworks of Sport and Recreation Victoria. Clearly articulating the value of volunteering to sport and recreation at all levels can help to drive more targeted strategies and advocacy activities that promote volunteering.

The sport and recreation sector identifies the role of 'partner' sectors in the successful promotion and facilitation of its strategies and activities, including education, tourism, transport and infrastructure, and community services. These sectors all rely on volunteers for their effective functioning. In its unique position as having one of the largest volunteer cohorts across all sectors, Sport and Recreation Victoria is well placed to advocate for resources and funding for the volunteer community.

“Without volunteers there would be no sport in Australia at any level – amateur, professional, large or small, metro or regional.”

-Hazel Maynard, Volunteering Victoria workplace trainer

Recommendations

Recommendation 9:

Embed role and importance of volunteering throughout all Sport and Recreation Victoria policy, frameworks and strategies.

Recommendation 10:

Advocate for increased investment and resources for volunteering across all sectors particularly identified partner sectors.

CONCLUSION

Volunteering is widely acknowledged as key to the functioning of the sport and recreation sector, from community sport and recreation clubs to large scale sporting events. Volunteering is an accessible activity that shares similar aims of promoting improved health outcomes and social cohesion, and is key to meeting Sport and Recreation Victoria aims of increasing participation and securing the capacity and capability of the sector.

Volunteering also ensures that communities benefit from the financial investment in sports and recreation, particularly large events and projects. Additional investment and resources to support volunteer programs and volunteer support services would benefit the sport and recreation sector, and its partner sectors, through strengthening their viability and ability to adapt to the changing social environment and challenges.

The Victorian Government and organisations in the sector have an opportunity in the next iteration of Active Victoria Framework to develop a more comprehensive approach towards maintaining, sustaining and improving volunteering in the sports and recreation sector, all for the benefit of Victorian communities.

APPENDIX 1: RESPONSE TO ACTIVE VICTORIA REFRESH SURVEY

As the peak body for volunteering in Victoria, Volunteering Victoria is responding to the survey for the Active Victoria Refresh, as it relates to volunteering in the sport and recreation sector.

1. Please take a moment to consider what a successful sport and active recreation system looks like to you.

a. Please describe this 'future-state'.

A sport and active recreation system with a robust, diverse and inclusive volunteer base, which is supported by well-resourced volunteer programs and support services

b. Referring to the 'future-state' you described earlier, what is preventing you/your organisation from achieving this state?

Volunteering Victoria is the peak body for volunteering, offering general advice and membership-based services and support. Our organisation provides support for volunteer-involving organisations. However, we do not have the resources to support the sports and recreation sector with volunteer sports-specific tools and training opportunities. With modest investment we could better facilitate improved practices of organisations in sport and recreation.

Regionally based volunteer support organisations can provide more direct support to local organisations. Funding for volunteer support services would support the sport and recreation sector to formalise, strengthen and grow their volunteer base.

c. Is there something Sport and Recreation Victoria can do that has not been covered in the Discussion paper to help you/your organisation achieve this 'future state'?

Given the fundamental role of volunteering in sport and recreation, Sport and Recreation Victoria should embed volunteering promotion and support in all components of the Active Victoria Framework. As the sector with the largest cohort of volunteers, Sport and Recreation Victoria are well placed to advocate for greater investment in sport and recreation volunteering and associated support services.

2. Reflecting on the current Active Victoria: A Strategic Framework for sport and recreation in Victoria 2017-2021.

a. What are the strengths of the current plan?

- » The commitment to increasing participation, promoting diversity and inclusion and collaborating with partner sectors.
- » The acknowledgement of the role of volunteers and need for volunteer support and retention under Strategic Direction 4 (Build system resilience and capacity).

b. What are the opportunities for improvement?

Reflecting the importance of volunteers in all strategic directions of the Active Victoria framework, and how volunteering connects with the objectives of the framework.

3. Reflecting on the Discussion paper that accompanies this consultation.

What is the role of Sport and Recreation Victoria?

a. Do you agree/disagree with role of Sport and Recreation Victoria?

Strongly Agree

What are challenges that require attention through a refresh of Active Victoria?

Three key opportunities are highlights (participation, models of delivery and building sector capacity).

b. Participation - How can the sector more effectively engage and retain traditionally under-represented population groups in sport and recreation?

Recommendation 1:

Develop strategies aimed at increasing the diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups in sport and recreation volunteering.

Recommendation 2:

Conduct research on the sector-specific barriers and motivators to volunteering in order to inform strategies to increase participation.

Recommendation 3:

Consultation with community volunteers to understand region-specific needs and develop innovative ideas to increase participation in sport and recreation volunteering.

c. Models of delivery - How can the sector continue to leverage new models of delivery for sport and recreation participation at all levels to improve physical activity and participation rates?

Recommendation 4:

Gather further data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on volunteering in the sport and recreation sector, to inform strategies that address the challenges faced by volunteers.

Recommendation 5:

Create opportunities and support systems for existing and new volunteers, including within online and limited capacity programs and events.

d. Sector capacity - How can we support the sector to develop its capacity and capability to engage new and diverse participants while ensuring the viability of organisations is protected?

Recommendation 6:

Increased investment and resources for sport and recreation volunteer programs to engage and support volunteers.

Recommendation 7:

Incorporate volunteering in workforce analysis to better understand how volunteers complement the workforce, and how this varies across different sports and regional areas.

Recommendation 8:

Investment in volunteer support services and peak bodies to strengthen their engagement with the sport and recreation sector, and provide required support and resources.

Other areas to consider as part of the Active Victoria refresh

e. Are there any other significant areas that have not been mentioned in the Discussion paper that should be considered?

Recommendation 9:

Embed role and importance of volunteering throughout all Sport and Recreation Victoria policy, frameworks and strategies.

Recommendation 10:

Advocate for increased investment and resources for volunteering across all sectors particularly identified partner sectors.

How do we plan to address these challenges?

f. Do you agree/disagree with how Sport and Recreation Victoria plans to address these challenges.

Agree

How will we know if we have been successful?

g. Do you agree/disagree with the proposed measures of success?

Agree

h. The Discussion paper describes what Sport and Recreation Victoria will do differently to create change that will contribute to successful outcomes. Do you agree/disagree that we can achieve this change by working in the ways described through the Discussion paper?

Agree

i. The Discussion paper recognises that our actions need to be driven by data and evidence. Please provide your experiences (good and bad) with finding, accessing, and using sport and recreation data sources, including data gaps that have been identified.

While there are broad statistics available on volunteering in sport and recreation, there is a lack of data related to volunteering in specific sports or regions. There is also a lack of data on the barriers and motivators for volunteering, particularly for communities that are underrepresented in volunteering and in the sport and recreation sector more broadly.

Active Victoria – proposed refresh structure.

j. Do you agree/disagree with the proposed structure for the refresh of Active Victoria?

Agree

4. (Optional). In the refresh of Active Victoria, we would like to publish innovative stories from sport and recreation. These stories can be about: participation, high performance, events, infrastructure, sector development and/or welfare and integrity. Please ensure that individuals are de-identified through your story.

a. Please provide a summary of an innovative story from sport and recreation.

