

 *Paddle Australia*

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER STRATEGY 2022

CONSULTATION
& RESEARCH
FINDINGS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

In the spirit of reconciliation, Paddle Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and the water ways from which we come together to conduct our sport today. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.



WITH THANKS TO

SPORTAUS

**THIS PROJECT WOULD NOT HAVE
BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE
SUPPORT OF SPORT AUSTRALIA.**

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LISTENING TO THE PADDLE COMMUNITY

Consistent with Paddle Australia's values of collaboration, inclusiveness, transparency and excellence, extensive consultation was undertaken to ensure all Paddle stakeholders had the opportunity to have their thoughts, ideas and feedback included in the Paddle Australia National Volunteer Strategy (PANVS).

This consultation included:

- 433 survey responses received from members
- 57 survey responses received from clubs
- Over 25 interviews and focus groups conducted with
- Paddle Australia Board members and staff
- All executive officers from state associations and in several instances their Presidents
- Representatives from six technical committees
- Interviews with the CEOs of international federations including:
 - Canoe Racing NZ,
 - Canoeing Ireland,
 - American Canoe Association,
 - Canoe Kayak Canada
 - Danish Canoe Federation

The willingness of the Paddle community to give their time so generously to the consultation process illustrates their passion for, and the importance of volunteering within Paddle.

While we have included consultation findings and quotes throughout the PANVS, the key themes, feedback and ideas from each consultation type are summarised below.

MEMBER SURVEYS

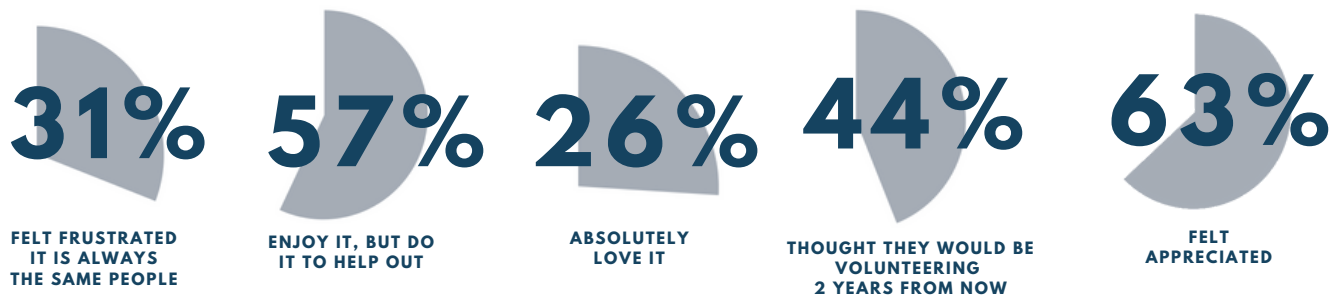
Via their State Paddle Associations, surveys were sent to all club members, with 433 responses received from members located in all states of Australia. Of which, 91.84% of respondents were club members and 8.16% of respondents were direct members. 47% of respondents had been a member of Paddle Australia for more than five years and 53% less than five years.

Of respondents in the last 5 years:

- 44.37% had been on a club, state or national committee
- 27.84% had undertaken a coaching or instructing role
- 44.16% had been a technical official or event volunteer

FEEDBACK ABOUT COMMITTEE AND GENERAL CLUB VOLUNTEERING

Of those who had undertaken a committee role in the last five years:



19% of people not currently volunteering on committees indicated they would if they were asked and an additional 57% stated maybe they would. 21% stated they would consider going on the committee if more resources and training were available and 54% stated they maybe would consider joining the committee.

When those had not been on a committee in the last 5 years were asked for reasons why they didn't volunteer only 4.27% stated they had a lack of interest in volunteering/don't want to. The following reasons were given as to why they did not volunteer.



FEEDBACK ABOUT COACHING AND INSTRUCTING ROLES

Of the 433 survey respondents, 27.84% had undertaken coaching/instructing at a club, state or national level. 73% of respondents stated they had been undertaking their role for over 4 years with 60.71% greater than 6 years.

Coaches undertake the role for the enjoyment they receive with 61.63% of coaches indicating they “Absolutely love it” while 36.05% “enjoy it but really do it to help out”. Comparative to the club based volunteer positions only 6.98% “feel frustrated that it is always the same people”. Re-enforcing this passion for coaching, 76.19% of respondents feel appreciated for the coaching/instructing they undertake.

More than half (54.22%) of coaches and instructors do not believe the development pathways are clear and there is very strong support for the development and provision of more training and support resources. The percentage of respondents who would highly value the resources and training provided for coaches/instructors were:

- 65.82% - Training videos
- 53.16% - Forums for clubs to come together and receive info
- 51.90% - On demand online training
- 49.37% - Resource Library – templates etc
- 43.04% - Live Webinar training programs

When those not currently coaching were asked for reasons as to why they were not coaching, like volunteering, lack of time (30.49% of respondents) was the major reason while 30.04% stated they had no interest in being a coach or instructor. Not knowing what is involved (14.35%) and lack of confidence (13.90%) were also key barriers to coaching.

FEEDBACK FROM TECHNICAL OFFICIALS AND EVENT VOLUNTEERS

Of the 433 survey respondents, 44.16% had undertaken a technical official or event volunteer role at a club, state or national level. 58.46% of respondents stated they had been undertaking their role for over 4 years with 46.15% greater than 6 years.

31.30% of technical officials and event volunteers indicated they “Absolutely love it” while 57.25% “enjoy it but really do it to help out”. 14.50% “feel frustrated that it is always the same people”. While the satisfaction rating of technical officials is lower than coaches, 73.81% of respondents feel they are appreciated for the roles they undertake.

Development pathways for technical officials and event volunteers are an issue with 67.52% respondents stating they did not believe developmental pathways were clear. Again, there is very strong support for the development and provision of more training and support resources.

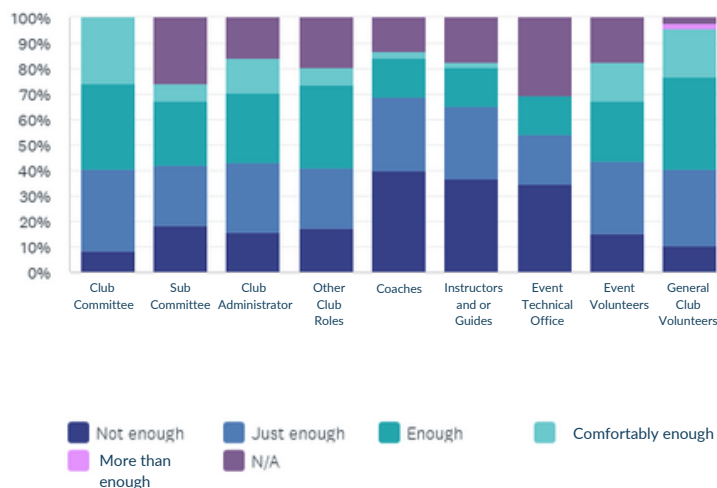
The following indicate what percentage of respondents who would value training and resources being provided for technical officials and event volunteers:

- 44.14% - Training videos
- 29.73% - Forums for clubs to come together and receive info
- 40.54% - On demand online training
- 48.65% - Resource Library – templates etc
- 33.33% - Live Webinar training programs

CLUB SURVEYS

Again, via state Paddle associations, surveys were sent to all clubs. 56 responses were received from clubs located in all states of Australia.

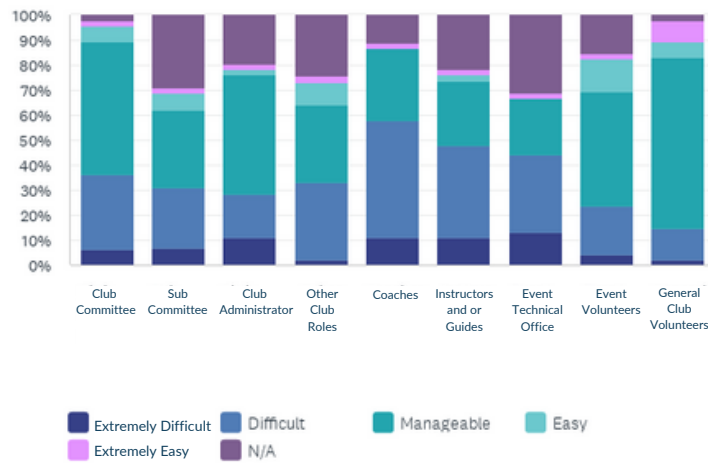
When asked “how would you describe the number of people undertaking the following roles at your club?” the answers highlighted the shortage of volunteers across all functions of volunteering. No club indicated they had more than enough volunteers for any function and alarmingly most clubs answered they had “not enough” or “just enough” volunteers to each of the functions:



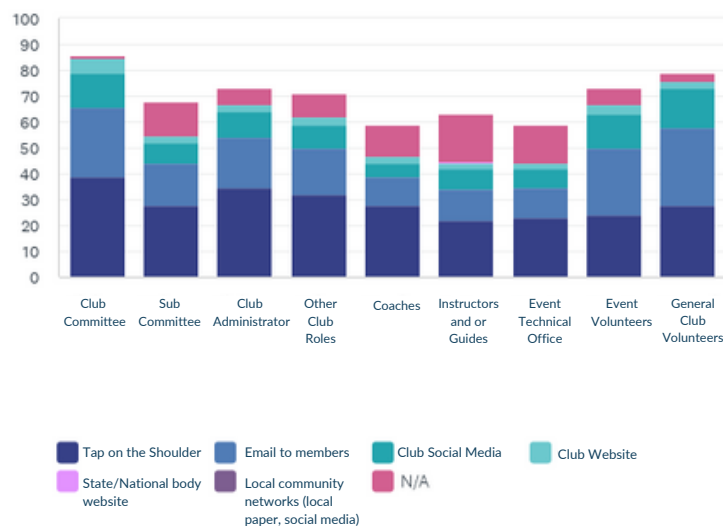
When clubs were asked “how they would describe their experience attracting people to undertake roles”, rarely did clubs answer “Easy” or “Extremely Easy”. Worryingly 58% of clubs stated it was “Difficult” or “Extremely Difficult” to recruit coaches and 44% answered the same when asked about their experiences recruiting technical officials.

When asked to select which are the most difficult roles to fill at their clubs, respondents nominated:

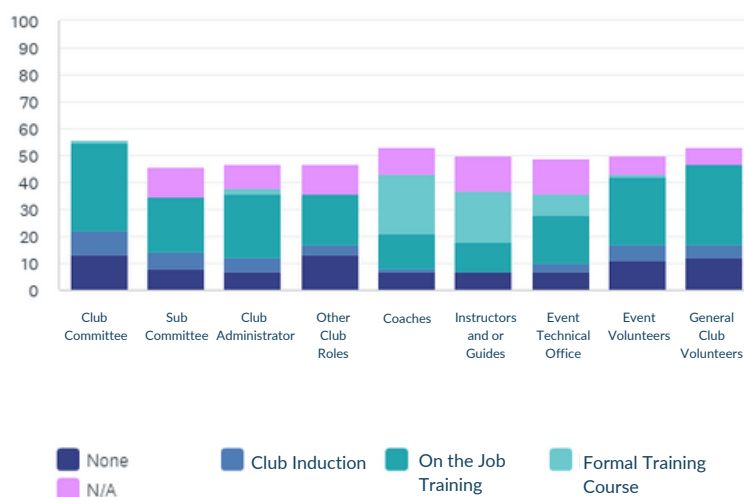
- 70.21% - President
- 70.21% - Treasurer
- 65.95% - Secretary
- 61.70% - Coach



When asked how they attract people to key roles, the recruitment strategy used by the majority of clubs was to “tap on the shoulder/personal recruitment”, emails, social media and websites were used to varying degrees but there was almost no attempt to recruit from outside each clubs community.



When asked “what training and/or induction does your club offer to those undertaking roles”, the majority of clubs provided “on the job training”. A small number offered formal induction training and only the coaches, instructors and official were offered formal training courses.

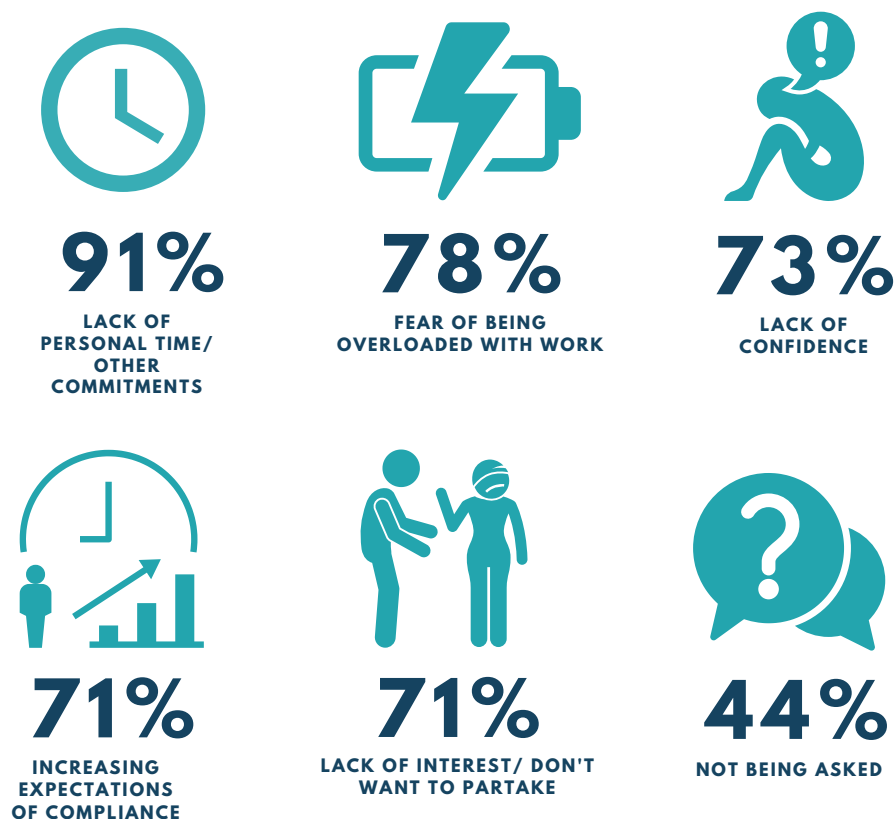


When clubs were asked “How would you describe the resources or formal training available through the organisation to help develop, manage or assist volunteers at your club” no club answered plenty and only 4 of the 53 responding clubs believed there were enough resources and formal training courses.

When asked to rate the value of different types of resources, training and support the clubs answered very differently to the volunteers, coaches and technical officials who valued the provision of training and resources far greater than the clubs as indicated in their answers below:

	NO VALUE	SOME VALUE	VALUABLE	VERY VALUABLE	ESSENTIAL	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
▼ Induction training workshops for new committee members	12.77% 6	44.68% 21	23.40% 11	14.89% 7	4.26% 2	47	2.53
▼ Induction training webinars for new committee members	17.02% 8	38.30% 18	23.40% 11	17.02% 8	4.26% 2	47	2.53
▼ Online, on demand, induction training programs for new committee members	10.64% 5	27.66% 13	36.17% 17	23.40% 11	2.13% 1	47	2.79
▼ Specific training for key roles with the club (e.g. Pres, Sec, treasurer, sponsorship, communications and social media)	10.87% 5	23.91% 11	30.43% 14	21.74% 10	13.04% 6	46	3.02
▼ An online resource library club related leadership and administration resources, checklists and templates	13.04% 6	26.09% 12	28.26% 13	17.39% 8	15.22% 7	46	2.96
▼ Online, on demand, training resources for event specific roles.	13.04% 6	23.91% 11	30.43% 14	19.57% 9	13.04% 6	46	2.96
▼ Forums for clubs to come together to network and receive the latest info?	8.51% 4	40.43% 19	23.40% 11	10.64% 5	17.02% 8	47	2.87

When clubs were asked the major barriers to attracting the next volunteers the following were nominated:



FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

To ensure a deep and comprehensive understanding of volunteering in Paddle were included in the PANVS, over 25 interviews and focus groups were held with stakeholders including:

- Paddle Australia board members and staff
- All executive officers from state associations and in several instances their Presidents
- Representatives from six technical committees
- Sport Australia

The ideas, thoughts and experiences from these interviews and focus groups, where possible articulated in the words used in the discussions, have been summarised in the following table:

THEME	COMMENTARY
Club Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are paddling away from clubs this reduces volunteerism in clubs • Clubs need to be strong to develop interest in the sport, commence volunteer involvement and nurture future officials and coaches/instructors. • Club = responsibility mindset, people intimidated by running clubs, can put people off joining clubs. • Compliance needs to be less overwhelming, processes streamlined, and clubs supported with resources and training, admin needs to be easier. • More resources, training, and support to create stronger club governance and management, different styles including on demand and visual. • Participation rates have increased, greater strain on club resources
Coach Recruitment, Training & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to grow qualified coaches, instructors and guides and have a reliable database of qualified coaches, need to know those aspiring to get qualified. • Pathways not clear enough to ensure natural progression. • Development of training needs to be a priority, utilise current resources and volunteer knowledge to write coaching qualifications. • Mentoring is lacking to support developing coaches. • Need competency levels for athletes and coaches, • Coaching not seen as important across entire sport. Recreational paddlers less likely to get a coach to develop them as paddlers. • Women need to be targeted to coach, lacking senior female coaches. • Underutilised resources at national level, high performance coaches should be utilised for video training and promotion of coaching. • Clarity required in some disciplines around who can conduct training of coaches. • More resources, more mentoring, conference, networking opportunities
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from other sports and organisations, international bodies request assistance to develop pathways, resources and training courses. • Seek other organisations experiences within paddle and outside of paddle
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of being an official, coach or active in clubs. • Celebrate volunteerism in the sport • Technology important need to be able to communicate with groups. • Sense of belonging, sense of team or community creates more willing volunteers, greater enthusiasm in clubs and more excitement for participation.
Critical Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to develop officials to have enough for Olympics, real concern that the sport is unlikely to be able to support this event. • Need to develop bigger pool of volunteers, rely on a few people, burn out, don't feel valued or feel there is an expectation to volunteer. • What are enough coaches, officials, volunteers? What targets would mean the pool of Paddle workforce is sufficient?

Culture of volunteering & appreciation of volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers should be respected for the time they contribute, needs messaging to build culture. Volunteers should ensure they are always respectful. • Lack of respect for volunteers, abusive behaviour should not be tolerated within the field. Recourse is required if abuse occurs. • Promote the benefits of volunteering for individuals, people do like giving back and feeling a sense of accomplishment. • Ensure there is value for people who give up their time to help. • Culture change by the organisation valuing volunteers, time and effort, some volunteers feel a sense of expectation that they will help out. • People will volunteer because they want to help, help them to feel comfortable when undertaking roles, training, cheat sheets, running sheets • Structure of the organisation needs to embrace volunteer knowledge and skills and empower them to create opportunities for officials and volunteers. • Approach volunteering from the volunteer's view.
Data & Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralised accessible lists that are available to all levels of the organisation to enable volunteers and staff to efficiently and effectively do their job. • Ability to track volunteer years, contributions, involvement would help to recognise and reward. • Data and technology required to better understand the business of paddle, better deploy resources, and grow the sport in all areas (volunteers, coaches/instructors, club officials, volunteers and participants). Visibility of workforce is low. • Lack of data limits promotion, communication and engagement with volunteers, officials, and coaches. • Create connected paddling community through database and technology. I.e.. Facebook style community hub, online networks. • Use technology as a training platform to increase volunteer skills and confidence to undertake roles or perform tasks. • Measure and track volunteers, understand the ebb and flow that same as participant membership. • Event management more difficult due to lack of a volunteer database, not able to target those who show interest in volunteering time. • Better technology to decrease work for volunteers and increase ease of access to events and activities in paddle. • Training in technology required to ensure current systems are utilised by clubs and members.
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board/Committee development and training required at all levels. Induction pack for committees and state boards. • Face to face training should still exist, helps to creates networks however online and on demand training should also be utilised. Make it easier for people to access the training they need when they need it. • Goal of the organisation should be to have ICF level officials

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase preparation time, training, and support of less technical volunteers, let them know the job they will be doing and give them information to help them undertake the role. • Nationally driven officials' development program increase comfort for volunteers. • Ensure volunteers enjoy the job, the roles are fun and easily learnt, not onerous. • Not enough support, training, development pathways to effectively draw people through the organisation. Qualls need to be streamlined and easy. • Senior roles harder to fill, these roles require more skill and knowledge, puts pressure on the volunteers doing these jobs to attend events • Train the athletes in officiating they need to know the rules too. • Training is required, no idea of what their roles is about, confidence for volunteers is extremely important. Training of officials should happen at events, need enough events for this to be possible. • Utilise expertise, online videos, share expertise.
Empowerment & Utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegation of authority lacking for volunteer committees and roles. • Volunteers need to know how to act so they can do the job. Recognise their skills, abilities, and value of their time. • Budget helps to give capacity to operate for technical committees, give scope of authority and the ability to achieve set goals. • Frustration over limitation of ability to operate, empower volunteers to implement the strategy for disciplines. • Technical committees feel they are not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the development of their specific sport. • Empowering volunteers gives greater capacity to manage sport less frustrations at inability to act for volunteers giving their time. • Value volunteer passion, expertise and knowledge and ensure the organisation utilises it. • Technical committees would like to be seen as a part of the management team helping to grow the sport.
Grow sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bigger the sport more people more potential volunteers. • Next generation of volunteers a concern, ageing volunteer population • Greater coverage of all disciplines to increase profile and the opportunities that exist in paddle.
Individual sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual nature of the sport can make clubs less attractive or seen as less useful. • Less club interactions and less desire to create club environment, may depend on disciplines.
Invest in volunteering and officiating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge and highlight the significance of volunteer/workforce pathways. • Focus on long term outcomes not short-term gains. • Make elite volunteerism & officiating something the organisation strives to achieve. • Plan to develop and promote volunteers and officials to the highest levels, the same as athletes and coaches.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haven't invested in volunteering. Expect it will look after itself.
Mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring needs to happen across the board from club officials, coaches, officials, and event volunteers. • Make mentoring a role to ensure the next generation of volunteers are developed. • Travelling experienced coach to mentor and develop new coaches.
Networks & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to bring people together at competitions, more disciplines to celebrate paddling and see other types of paddle activity. More multi discipline events to create better atmosphere. • Non-competitive, recreational events to capture all paddlers, engage in the paddling community. • People more likely to volunteer when they know someone, feel like they are part of a team, bigger events more like to build a community. • Use technology to build community (eg. Registered Technical Officials in WotsApp Group aids communication and community) • Sense of belonging, community important for buy in, people enjoy the community and are more likely to volunteer when they have a sense of belonging. • Network for coaches, volunteers, clubs, officials to create community and information sharing. • Create a community of people interested in the various roles that make the sport of paddling possible.
Official Recruitment, Training & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of officials well behind coaches. • Core group of officials currently only just enough to manage events, not enough coming through for the future. • International official's pathway needs to be developed and promoted. • Lack of structured training reduces pipeline of officials. • Needs to be fun, lack of support, low interest in getting qualified. Promotion lacking.
Olympic vs Non Olympic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity of representation in communications, resourcing • Non-Olympic sports don't feature in communication from PA • Diversity of disciplines needs to be celebrated to develop sport in all areas from participation to volunteerism
Pathway & Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role clarity for all jobs including smaller jobs helps to increase confidence to undertake jobs. Large roles are unattractive. • Development pathways (officials, coaches, instructors, club officials and volunteers) need to be clear with recognition of attainment of competency, easier and less onerous to achieve. • Pathways promoted with potential to increase interest, uptake and completion.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development pathways help to create a database of informed and trained volunteers/officials • Recognition of training is a part of rewarding someone. • Longer lasting qualifications and renewal process easier. • Help people to volunteer by making it clear how they can get involved. • Lack of pipeline reduces number of officials. • Clear pathway from beginner to ICF, support progression on this elite officiating pathway. More structured training previously brought people through the ranks. • Utilise technology to add value to coach training and athlete development • Knowledge needs to be spread to more people. Currently a lack of structure means information may be lost as it is sitting with one person.
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebration of volunteers and paddle workforce from bottom to top. • Promote volunteers regularly, people become what they see, ensure both long time and first-time volunteers are featured. • Seek interested individual inside and outside of paddle to undertake volunteer roles where possible • Advertise volunteer jobs, demystify, and sell the benefits of roles. • Opportunity to have an elite role in the sport without being an athlete. Potential needs to be advertised. • Volunteering/officiating can be as rewarding as the athlete experience.
Recognition & Reward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge volunteer skills and expertise developed due to connection with the sport but also through their professional lives. • Gaining qualifications is a form of recognition and reward. • Greater storytelling about volunteers in communications, annual reports, newsletters, helps others to identify too. • Dinners or events, formal awards, Life membership, Giveaway, benefits, special VIP treatment (car park), identifying volunteer status, gear T-shirt, cap, simple thank you or lunch. Simple hello at events, thank you email/letter, higher management attendance at events. Volunteer pins, certificates. • Formal/informal volunteer recognition (structured approach to informal recognition), simple awards to celebrate achievements and recognise the often silent efforts of volunteers • Educate clubs and event staff on how to manage and acknowledge volunteers. • Better database and technology to understand activity reward effort and commitment to aid recognition and reward. (eg. Park Run) • Promotion of many hands make light work • Recognition is key to ensure people value volunteerism. Word of mouth strong marketing. Fun and energetic volunteers created through good training. • Structure helps to support volunteers and enable them to get involved and see value in staying involved.

Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy lacking to find interested individuals, need to open the net and gather greater interest. • “Tapping on the shoulder” most utilised method of recruitment, method has the potential to be seen as an exclusive club, can be alienating. Can also be a good way to find suitable candidates. • Recruitment of volunteers limited to those inside the sport. Look outside the organisation for volunteers, review Penrith program. Past members and older members for volunteer roles have experience and time. • Need to test the membership to see who is interested, broader requests for help. Better promotion required. • Recreational nature of the sport impacts volunteerism, not competitive and not connected to a club environment. Seek opportunities to engage recreational paddlers. • Seek ways to contribute to volunteer skills for professional career or daily life. Understand what attracts people to volunteer • Talent ID of coaches, volunteers, officials, ear mark and invite to develop like athletes. • Transparency important, process should not be overly complicated to get involved. • Volunteers recruited by quota from clubs, filling numbers over recruiting interested individuals
Resources, support & training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralisation and collation of resources get all IP in one place, create great resources from here. Need to ensure IP is out of experienced volunteer, coaches and officials heads or hard drives. • Inadequate resources for officials, simple instructions, and training to commence training. Central repository of information, training, templates to reduce workload and help with compliance • Training should be available and on demand. Clubs tune in when they need help. • Make training free, intro session for new volunteers and ensure they know where to go for help. • Utilise many training methods, videos, mentoring, online webinars, online network meetings, Facebook groups • Funding of volunteers, officials, coaches to support their sport activity just like coaches and athletes • New volunteers should be sought out, thanked, and supported.
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear retention strategy • Expectation volunteers will just keep coming back • Seen as a renewable resource, someone always steps up • Volunteers are fatigued and feel obligated to help, need to keep a bigger pool.
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generational change a significant risk. Older population of volunteers • Ageing volunteer workforce need youth • Not enough volunteers to create a pool of people, only 2-3 people who can do some roles, risk management is an issue

Succession planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear plan to bring people through the organisation. • Lack of planning to identify and mentor volunteers for roles. • Succession plan is not in place for technical committees.
Value proposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unite the paddling community and show that there is value in membership with the organisation. PA needs to be seen as giving value to all who are a member, PA needs to add value to ensure people become and stay active with the organisation. • More participation events to increase profile of paddling and the joy of the sport. • People are incentivised to help if they get something for their assistance. • Shouldn't cost you to volunteer. • Perceived lack of interest in volunteering. • State and National bodies of little relevance to club officials and members • Volunteer roles should be a value add for professional CV.
Volunteer & Officials Coordinator/ Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater conversations around volunteer opportunities • Paid staff to develop officials and volunteers responsible for recruitment, development, reward, recognition, and retention. • Important that volunteers are looked after by someone, currently volunteers manage volunteers. Managing volunteers important to engage volunteers and retain them. • Development of officials and volunteers should be made a priority as it is with coaches and athletes. • Officiating not managed by paid staff needs to be seen as important as coaching and athlete development.
Volunteer models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be more creative and support volunteers to help, can be expensive to volunteer. Support costs. (Travel, accommodation). • Develop culture of "volunteer how you feel comfortable", fit the volunteer experience to the person not the person to the job. • Don't limit volunteering to people who are "tapped on the shoulder" put the call out widely to ensure all those interested can offer their help. • Volunteer roles too onerous, need to look at time commitments; build volunteer efforts to fit the volunteer experience. • Increase volunteer pool, ensure all volunteer are recorded like members and understand who they are volunteering. • Volunteering is more difficult, new model needs to be implemented to create an atmosphere that creates a fun volunteering experience, tap into other markets. • Paid staff in volunteer clubs' potential trend, paying people can ensure the service is provided however increase in participation costs. (eg. coaches paid to undertake participation programs.) • Some people happier to pay than volunteer, however payment needs to equate to a person to undertake the job instead of volunteer labour.
Water access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water access hinders the development of some disciplines. • Sport limited by water access, flow on effect to coaching, training, volunteers, health of clubs.
Youth focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior participants help to bring volunteers, need more junior members in clubs. • Develop family involvement, parents who paddle will stay longer with children. • Get young people volunteering early, create a love of working within the club.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATIONS

An important part of the consultative process was to interview the CEOs and, in many interviews, the staff of international federations including:

- Canoe Racing NZ,
- Canoeing Ireland,
- American Canoe Association,
- Canoe Kayak Canada,
- Danish Canoe Federation.

Each international federation was very generous with their time and very open about the strengths, weaknesses, and overall state of the sport in their country.

Driven by Australia's sport funding model, PA's energy and focus is weighted toward the high-performance side of the sport, with resources and training programs generally focusing on the technical aspects of the sport.

In contrast, and again generalising, the Irish and Danish federations were able to dedicate significantly more focus and resources towards supporting clubs and their volunteers. While much of this support was technical in nature the European federations placed a lot of emphasis on the interpersonal and the soft skills required for each role.

The American Canoe Association (ACA) between 1984 – 2017 was only responsible for the club, community, and recreational side of the sport with the elite and high-performance programs overseen separately. Without the conflicting focus of managing the high performance aspects of the sport, ACA developed exceptionally strong pathways for coaches, instructors, guides and officials for the many disciplines of paddle and an extensive library of training programs, videos and support resources.

Typically, each international federation's ability to create volunteer development pathways, training, resources, and support was driven by where they could access funding. Over the years each was able to access funding which produced a diverse range of programs and resources from the "Bridge the Gap" program in Ireland to the "Try, Learn, Explore" programs of Canoe Racing NZ.

Each international federation expressed a strong willingness to collaborate and potentially share resources into the future.

The Danish Canoe Federation (DCF) was already very collaborative in nature being one of eleven European Federations to come together to create the Euro Paddle Pass which is a framework of paddle sport competency in Europe for all kayaking/canoeing disciplines.

Another important learning from the DCF was for their major events, typically one third of their volunteers are recruited from outside the sport of Paddle. In contrast, Australia and every other international federation consulted recruit from inside their sport. The Danish experience is however consistent with Australian research, (explored in the previous chapter) which has identified people from outside sport are willing to volunteer at sporting events, whether they be club, state or national events.

The European and American federations have access to developed coaching, instructing and guiding developmental pathways, training programs, accreditation programs and resources. To a slightly lesser extent these federations also have a developed framework for officials but like in Australia, there seems to be very little support, training and resources for the other volunteer roles so important to the long term sustainability of the sport.



“A sense of achievement in working with players to lift skills and compete. Self learning - I learnt a lot about sport, people and my own paddling.”

-Survey response



LEARNING FROM SPORTS VOLUNTEERING RESEARCH

Two key research papers, both commissioned by The Australia Sports Commission/Sport Australia that have been used to inform the PANVS. The first is the Market Segmentation for Sport Participation – Volunteers 2012-2013.

The “Market Segmentation for Sport Participation – Volunteers 2012-2013” research was commissioned in 2012 by the Australian Sports Commission as “it identified a need to undertake research among the Australian population in order to develop targeted and effective volunteer recruitment and retention strategies. The primary aim of the research was to develop a needs based market segmentation model of Australian sport volunteers by understanding attitudes, motivators, needs and barriers that underlie a decision to volunteer in sport as compared to other voluntary activities.”

While this research was undertaken in 2012, its findings remain as valid today as they were a decade ago.

The second volunteer research paper informing the PANVS is the “Future of Australian Sports Volunteering”, published in 2021. Again, commissioned by Sport Australia, this report identified six “challenges” to sports volunteering, created a framework for change and identified six key areas for action.

While both are very different research, released nearly a decade apart, their findings and recommendations are very consistent. Both identify the significant opportunity to attract and retain sports volunteers into the future and both identify that to do so will require a significant change to the traditional volunteer recruitment and retention strategies.

To ensure those reading and bringing this strategy to life are fully aware of the key messages and crucial learnings of this research, a detailed summary and extracts from each research paper follows.

MARKET SEGMENTATION FOR SPORTS PARTICIPTION: VOLUNTEERS 2012-2013

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

This Market Segmentation for Sport Participation – Volunteers (MSSPV) research identified there was a very large group of people who were willing to volunteer in sports but not currently doing so, stating:

“23% of Australia’s aged 14-75 years stated they were likely or extremely likely to volunteer in club sports in the next 12 months....With three in four of those likely to volunteer in club sport in the next 12 months coming from those not currently volunteering in club sport.”ⁱⁱ

The MSSPV *“also found that one in three Australians aged 14-75 who were not currently volunteering in club sport, reported they would volunteer in club sport simply if they were asked to do so.”ⁱⁱⁱ*

VOLUNTEER RETENTION

The MSSPV also identified, of those currently volunteering, their future volunteering was linked to satisfaction with the current volunteering experience.

“The findings demonstrate that those current club sport volunteers who are unlikely to continue tend to feel as if their time would be better spent elsewhere, reinforcing that as volunteers they are giving their time, the key to keeping them is to ensure they feel their time is being used productively and that they are valued and recognised.”^{iv}

MOTIVATIONS AND CATALYST TO VOLUNTEER IN SPORT

The “Market Segmentation into Sports Participation – Volunteers” research identified that while there are three broad motivators for volunteering, it is clear also that an individual can have multiple motivations for volunteering.

EMOTIONAL MOTIVATIONS

Often these motivations are highly personal, may have an element of self-interest and often founded in altruism and their need to “give back” to support their club, friends or family members. These volunteers want a strong sense of belonging with the organisation or club and need to feel their contribution is recognised and valued.

EXPERIENTIAL MOTIVATIONS

Many volunteers, particularly event volunteers, want to create and receive an experience from the volunteering activity. That experience may include one or more of the following:

- A social experience
- Involvement in a community, an event or something bigger
- Seeing an outcome achieved
- Being involved in the lives of others e.g., their children or family members, athletes, colleagues etc

TANGIBLE MOTIVATIONS

A group of volunteers are seeking tangible, direct benefit from their volunteer activity which could include for example:

- Networking, either from a professional or personal level
- Learn or demonstrate a skill either for a professional purpose, self-development or personal goals
- Access, whether it be to an event, equipment, people or a facility
- Receiving recognition, awards and memorabilia that may come from volunteering, for example an event shirt, cap or pin

Importantly, the research identified that “*most people needed some initial catalyst to start volunteering.*”^v The major catalysts motivating volunteering in sport and club-based activities was predominately either personal connection with the club and the activity, either directly or indirectly through friends and family or the individual or those actively seeking out opportunities for personal or professional reasons. Other catalysts for sports volunteering identified were seeking additional credits or work experience or a lifestyle change allowing a person to utilise their time differently.

Importantly for Paddle, given it is such an event-based sport, the research also identified that “a personal connection to the sport itself through a family member or self-participation was not as prevalent among sports event volunteers. Those volunteering in events (including national state and local events)...demonstrated a broad, diverse range of motivations for volunteering. Different types of event volunteers included:

- Past participants who are unable to compete but still want to be a part of the atmosphere, enjoy the sport and want to be around like-minded people
- Vocational volunteers who volunteer to gain university or school credits or add skills and experience to their CV
- Experiential event volunteers who want the experience of a “major” event but are not necessarily sports minded but instead motivated by:
 - Being a part of the atmosphere
 - Bragging rights / prestige
 - Seeing elite athletes
 - Free entry
 - Socialising”^{vi}

BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT

When considering the barriers to sports volunteering, the Market Segmentation for Sport Participation – Volunteers research, identified there were both emotional and practical barriers to sports volunteering.

EMOTIONAL BARRIERS

Individual emotional barriers to volunteering can be quite significant for some potential volunteers. *“Fear, uncertainty and lack of confidence can mean many do not volunteer even if they want to do so. Fear can come from a number of sources, including of the unknown environment and what is expected of them, of doing something wrong and of other people they may have to deal with while volunteering.”*

Organisational perceptions were also identified as strong emotional barriers to some potential volunteers. *“There is a perception that existing groups of volunteers can make others feel unwelcome, the tight social groups that make it hard for others to feel they can enter. There is also a perception that these “inner circles” will reject the change that “newcomers” might bring to how the volunteer role or activity should be done.....Beyond^{viii} this potential volunteers also reported a reluctance to volunteer for fear of being criticised.”*

PRACTICAL BARRIERS

Commitment required is perceived to be too large

The MSSPV identified that “the level of commitment required as part of being a volunteer, real or perceived, was a major inhibitor to potential volunteers. Overall, there was a general association of volunteering requiring an extensive commitment.....This overwhelming perception led to many dismissing the idea of volunteering at the outset without finding out more information about what actually would be required....Further to this volunteers were often unable to commit to all the specified time for the desired role, as the volunteer role offered no flexibility.”^x

Lack of Knowledge

“It was found that lack of appropriate support and training to perform the volunteer roles could exacerbate volunteer’s feelings of inadequacy and anxiety about their ability to help and subsequently make them feel uncertain about the benefit of giving up their time”.^x

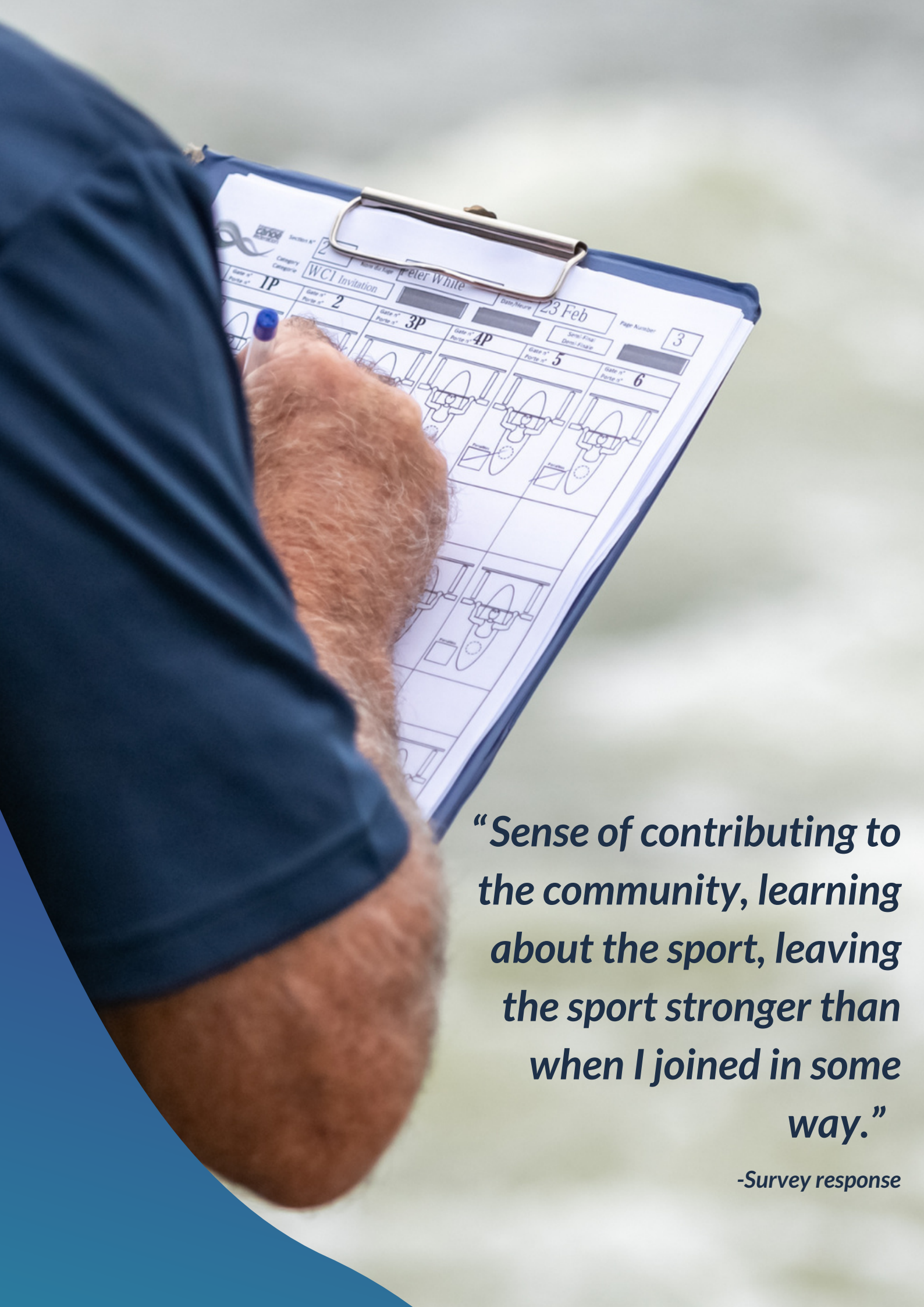
The research found that an “area for consideration for retention is in how people are recruited and their preparation for the role they take on. Club sport volunteers who are unlikely to volunteer in the future had a notably much lower satisfaction with the amount of information provided, the way they were recruited, and level of training and support provided. This demonstrates that while club volunteers want to help out, they are often left feeling unprepared once they take on the role. For many, this manifests itself as feeling they are unable to do the role well, or fearing criticism. This leaves them not enjoying the role and /or feeling their time could be better spent elsewhere.”^{xi}

Organisation and structure

The MSSPV also “indicated that lack of organisation and structure can be the greatest deterrent to volunteering, as well as being one of the major factors contributing to the loss of volunteers.”^{xii}

The research also identified other significant barriers to sport volunteering included:

- Communication – lack of role clarity including the time required, frequency, responsibilities, training and support and duration. Often this arose from the assumption that volunteers have a base level of knowledge that they often do not possess.
- Rules and regulations – “Increasing application of the workplace practices and legislation to volunteer activities opens the door for accidental breaches and greater opportunity to do something wrong”.^{xiii}



“Sense of contributing to the community, learning about the sport, leaving the sport stronger than when I joined in some way.”

-Survey response

THE FUTURE OF SPORTS VOLUNTEERING

The “Future of Sport Volunteering” (FSV) research considered volunteering from a whole of Australian sport perspective and is sports agnostic in nature. It considered the current state of sports volunteering, introduced a new vision for sports volunteering and a framework to facilitate change.

The vision defined in the FSV is:

“People from all walks of life, see and realise opportunities to contribute to individual, club and community goals in a way that suits them”

VOLUNTEERING CHALLENGES

The research grouped current volunteering challenges into six key themes which have been extracted below:

CURRENT STATE - ECO-SYSTEM

1. The sport ecosystem is highly fragmented and does not have clear roles and responsibilities.
2. The roles and responsibilities of each organisation often isn't clear leading to confusion, inefficiencies, and duplication of effort and resources e.g. each sport develops their own set of resources.
3. Clubs often feel as though they are left to their own devices when it comes to managing their volunteers.
4. There is an absence of a systems approach to sport, health and wellbeing and community building.

CURRENT STATE - COMMUNITY SPORT CLUB

1. Club cultures can inhibit participation.
2. Parts of the sport sector have entrenched ways of doing things, making them less adaptable to emerging volunteer needs and societal trends. Some sport clubs are resistant to new people, new ideas, and exploring new ways of doing things.
3. Sport clubs may not have the systems, tools and processes to effectively manage volunteers.

CURRENT STATE - VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

1. Sport volunteering is currently limiting the pool of potential volunteers
2. Volunteer roles tend to be time-consuming and rigid, making some people less willing to get involved. Volunteers often feel as though they are expected to be involved with the club for a long period of time, and there is a lack of casual or flexible opportunities. A lot of roles are functional and relate directly to the sport or competitions e.g., coaches, scorers.
3. The volunteer experience does not meet individual needs.
4. Volunteers are often left to undertake roles with little support or training. For many, this limits their ability to achieve personal and club goals. Volunteers need both training and support to a mix of functional e.g., how to do the role; and emotional e.g., how to get to know the club community.

FSV - FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

Realising the vision requires a change in how we think about the volunteer experience. Five elements have been identified that should underpin all volunteer experiences and are agnostic to the sport, club, role or individual.

The five elements are:

→ Make it feel like I belong

- Volunteers need to see themselves reflected and included in sport volunteering.
- Sport volunteering needs to be a place for inclusivity where everyone feels accepted and they have something to contribute and gain.

→ Make it easy to get involved

- It needs to be easy to find sport volunteering opportunities and signing up to get involved. Signing up should require no prior connection to the club. It should be easy to start, stop, change roles, and recommence volunteering depending on what else is going on in the volunteer's life.
- Making sport volunteering easy will enable people to more flexibly opt in and opt out of opportunities building more dynamic resource pools

→ Tailor roles to my needs

- Sport volunteering opportunities need to be aligned to the needs and expectations of individuals. Volunteers should be able to participate in a way that fits with their circumstances and motivations, and makes use of their skills and experience

→ Support me

- Sport volunteers should feel confident about what they are meant to be doing. They should have the training, tools and support to do the role, and achieve their personal goals e.g., social connection, altruistic outcomes.
- → Current sport volunteers will often join a club without being formally onboarded and without clearly defined responsibilities.
- → Many volunteers feel they would benefit from training to support them in the delivery of their tasks.
- Many sport volunteers suffer from burnout, as they accrue responsibilities over time and there aren't enough volunteers to help share the load
- Providing volunteers with technical and emotional support will contribute to quality outcomes for the sport club.

→ Create value for me, the club, and the community

- Sport volunteering should create value at the volunteer, club and community levels. Volunteers should have a clear understanding of how their work is contributing to the club's strategic objectives, and to broader social outcomes. At the same time, volunteers need to feel as though their own personal motivations for getting involved are being fulfilled.
- It currently feels one sided for volunteers who are asked to dedicate time and resources to the community sport club without a clear exchange of value.
- Volunteers don't expect much in terms of reward, but there is an opportunity for clubs to provide reward and recognition that are better aligned with individual motivations and goals.
- Volunteering needs to have a clear exchange of value that is well communicated

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“I felt that there was a lack of proper high level coaching when I was a junior, so I took the role of a junior coach to provide kids with the opportunity I lacked.”

-Survey response



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Paddle Australia Board		
Andrea McQuitty	Paddle Australia	President
Jeremy Moller	Paddle Australia	Board member
Sue McConnell	Paddle Australia	Board member
Simon Traynor	Paddle Australia	Board member
Paddle Australia staff		
Phil Jones	Paddle Australia	CEO
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Mark Thurgood	Paddle Australia	Participation and Recreation Manager
State Paddle Associations		
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Brett Johnstone	Paddle Tasmania	Executive Officer
Scott Sharples	Paddle QLD	Executive Officer
Mark Heggie	Paddle Victoria	Executive Officer
Peter Tate	Paddle NSW	Executive Officer
Andrew Hayden	Paddle WA	President
Rosalie Evans	Paddle WA	Executive Officer
Technical Committees		
Peter Newland	Technical Committee	Canoe Freestyle
Jerry Dunn, Bob Turner, Margi Bohm	Technical Committee	Canoe Marathon
Rob Watson, DJ DuBose, Laura Kleinrahm, Dale Tomlinson	Technical Committee	Canoe Polo
Sue Natoli	Technical Committee	Canoe Slalom
Ian Hume, Laura White, and Mark Bulmer	Technical Committee	Canoe Sprint
Greg Kaeding, Scott Cunningham	Technical Committee	Canoe Sprint
Karen Janiszewski	Technical Committee	Canoe Wildwater
International Federations		
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Moiras Ashton	Canoeing Ireland	CEO
Sport Australia		
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