

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitter Comments:

I have held committee positions with several local sporting clubs in recent years, including as President, Vice President, Secretary and general committee member. Both clubs are heavily focussed on youth sports - basketball and tennis. Both clubs have been incorporated associations. In all cases that I have been involved in, the vast majority of committee members are dedicated parent volunteers who have become involved as a way to contribute to the club that our child/ren are involved in, so that they can continue playing a sport that they love. Many of us fall into the roles out of necessity, to avoid the very real possibility that the committee positions wouldn't otherwise be filled and the club would either cease to exist or not be able to function as it needs to. Families of youth sports volunteers often have two working parents and are trying to juggle a very busy schedule of work, school (and its increasing time impact on family life), extra curricular activities and sports. When the considerable time that is needed in order to properly operate, govern and lead an incorporated association is added into that already busy schedule, I can understand why many of us leave after only a short time in the role. Whilst there is a lot of information published to assist committees in running their associations in a compliant manner, it can be difficult to find straight-forward information that is relevant to your circumstances in a single location. We have often had to reference multiple sources and sometimes conflicting advice in order to be confident with the direction being taken, and this can be very time consuming. I have never come across a scenario where the committee members 'don't care' about doing the right thing, however the administration required can be a barrier to the rules/requirements actually being met and we would often be wondering whether things had indeed been documented correctly or whether we had followed the 'rules' correctly in a particular situation.

Treasury/banking practices were also considered overwhelming to many, and finding someone who was willing to take on the role of Treasurer (and be able to carry out that role satisfactorily) has always been difficult. To assist with the time required in keeping financials under control we did utilise an accounting program (particularly with one of the associations that had a small canteen and took payment in cash on the day for participation in fixtures, and therefore had a high amount of low cost transactions) but the cost associated with the program continues to rise and rise. Both associations I have been involved with (and held the position of President for both) have been fully insured of course and operated with the best of intentions. However, myself and the other committee members always felt uneasy about the liability we were actually exposed to and whether our attempts at policies and procedures were sufficient and actually complied with requirements. Although resources such as the model rules exist, we were reliant on legal and accounting professionals providing us with low cost/free advice so that we had confidence that we were compliant, or otherwise we would spend a great deal of time researching the information and conferring with each other in order to present properly to the committee. That advice was generally given freely as a way for those professionals to contribute to their community but given the amount of community associations that are fully relying on well-intentioned (but sometimes unknowing) volunteers, it seems like some of the advice given must surely be repeated over and over and a stream-lined, central location for association committees to obtain advice and assistance would be beneficial. It is my experience that the day to day running of a community association is, and should be, all about the members and their experience playing the sport/participating in the activity that the association is set up to facilitate. The committees I've been a part of spend a great deal of time preparing for sporting seasons, ensuring that uniforms and equipment are available, preparing submissions for grants and funding, organising fundraising and participation events,

training coaches and upkeeping facilities. But the additional administrative burden of records, policies, ATO, etc just adds to that and in my opinion, is the main concern for those who are considering putting their hand up. This means that those who hold committee positions often feel 'stuck' and obligated to keep going, as someone has to do it. Bringing on new committee members is always difficult, and the significant time required to run a community association is, in my experience, often done by the same small groups of people year after year.

My suggestions for improvements:

- I think that a central resource centre/portal that can be utilised by associations and committees to fulfil all of their legal/financial obligations simply would be very advantageous. This could also provide simple ways to keep meeting minutes for the main different meeting types if the statutory requirements were laid out and easily completed.
- Templates for letters to banks to change banking access, notices of meetings to members, wording for different resolutions etc could be part of the portal, along with online submission of different notices for new committee members, the name change process, etc.
- The Club would set up their account in the portal with information that was automatically filled into forms. This could therefore provide access to historical records and information and could be handed over to new committee members to ensure that information was accessible into the future.
- A free call helpline that provided informed advice on legal, financial and other statutory requirements would also help committees feel confident that they are following the requirements and ease some of the liability felt by committee members.

I also think that some sort of centralised insurance scheme for the independent associations would be hugely beneficial, as that is often a major cost for smaller associations who aren't incorporated under a 'parent' association.