

## Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

**Submission No:** 141  
**Submitted by:** Holland Park Hawks Football Club  
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### Submitter Comments:

I am writing on behalf of Holland Park Hawks FC to contribute to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland. As a community football club, we greatly rely on volunteers to ensure smooth operations, yet we have faced ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers over the past 5-7 years. A significant trend we have observed is a shift away from volunteer coaches. Due to increasing work commitments and the financial burden associated with playing football, many of our members prefer experienced, paid coaches rather than volunteering their time. This expectation has made it difficult to engage parents and community members in coaching roles. Beyond coaching, we struggle to attract volunteers for events and committee positions. The majority of club responsibilities are managed by a small, dedicated group of six to eight individuals. This limited volunteer base leads to burnout and places an unsustainable workload on these few individuals. We acknowledge that the government has implemented various incentives and we have actively tried our own (eg. volunteer fee discounts). Despite these efforts, volunteer participation remains low. The changing landscape of community sports, coupled with increasing personal and financial pressures, has made it more difficult to engage new volunteers effectively. Key barriers to volunteering at our club include:

- Time constraints:** Many potential volunteers juggle work and family commitments, limiting their availability. This is of course also true of the 6-8 regular committee and event volunteers.
- Financial pressures:** The cost of participation in football can deter individuals from offering additional unpaid time.
- Professionalisation of roles:** Increasing expectations for paid and accredited coaching have reduced volunteer engagement. We offer to fund accreditation courses which helps and we offer our own free courses, but still members seem to prefer experienced players/coaching staff in roles.
- Changing societal norms:** There is a growing trend where people expect services to be delivered rather than contribute as volunteers. We also believe that members take the view that as they are paying high fees they should not be required to volunteer. People seem to be more focused on players developing and less on having fun which we believe contributes to the expectation that we provide experienced coaches to all teams and age groups.

Increased legal and compliance - Volunteering has become more of a challenge with increasing legal and compliance frameworks. People are more worried that they will 'do something wrong' and fall foul of compliance matters with other parents, coaches, players and clubs. Even a volunteer match day official role includes the need to step in and deal with bad behaviour - this is not something people want to do on their weekend! Coaches and committee members are expected to uphold codes of conduct, provide a certain level of experience/wellbeing or liaise with state and local officials amongst many things, something they might do in their day to day job but might not wish to do in their 'free time'. To ensure we meet with expectations and compliance matters we have had to recruit more full-time and part-time staff all of which comes with HR issues (which is another legal and compliance workload on volunteer committee members) and comes with higher fees. Given these challenges, we suggest exploring alternative approaches to support volunteer engagement, such as:

- Greater collaboration between clubs and local businesses to offer workplace volunteering programs or incentives.
- Expanded grant opportunities to allow clubs to hire more full-time and part-time support/coaching staff to ease the workload on volunteers and provide a higher level of professionalism and support.
- Increased community education and awareness campaigns on the importance and benefits of volunteering.
- Streamlined administrative requirements to make volunteering roles less burdensome and more appealing with additional government support in the areas of HR and legal which is a constant challenge for community clubs.

We appreciate the

opportunity to share our experiences and encourage the committee to consider new strategies that will help community sports organisations sustain volunteer engagement. We would welcome further discussion on these issues. This is a challenge for us all. Thank you for your time and consideration. Yours sincerely, Sharon Flannery, President, Holland Park Hawks FC