

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitted by:	<div></div>
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Club volunteers are a mixed group due to individual perceptions of what their Club is, what the Club and they need, or where it might take them. Mostly, they just don't understand the business model and probably won't know within the first few years - if ever. New and even long-term members may have different opinions and understanding of a Not-For-Profit status, reasonable profitability or not understand that a Club or Association sometimes is actually a "normal" commercial business that uses volunteers as a workforce.

There are different Member types "learning" their way through a volunteer's school of both progressive and uncontrolled experiences. (a bit like the Bloom's Taxonomy model). It's a progression from basic to "expert" - if they choose to be involved.

- Remembering - user level; they come, they pay, they go home and maybe come back. Unsure, needs direction. Easily moves on elsewhere.
- Understanding - participates; helps set and pack up; becomes involved, semi-autonomous. Continues learning. Mostly competent.
- Applying - self-sufficient, helpful. Secure, volunteers at working bees.
- Analyzing - understands operations and Infrastructure. Confidence. Plans in Subcommittee.
- Evaluating - interprets problems and opportunities. Exploring options. Long term goals.
- Creating - Implements ideas. Champions programs, seeks results to benefit the Club.

Some progress faster and further than others depending on personal circumstances and if their nature is to volunteer, lead or teach...or just remain a user.

Younger sports participants are typically sold an unrealistic perception of a career in professional sports, mostly as a player. It is not within the scope of this submission to evaluate sports psychology and drivers, however most volunteers will be sourced from a generation who at one time strapped their boots on with delusions or high expectations. Some may be referees or other officials but these imported skill sets are uncommon and equally retired.

The primary source of Committee volunteers for a Firearms-related Club are (necessarily) Members due to

- Incorporated Associations Act (Model) rules
- Queensland Weapons Act and Regulations
- Queensland Police Weapons Licensing rules
- Association prerequisites
- Certain qualification prerequisites
- Member perceptions

Interestingly, the Queensland Weapons Act has almost zero responsibility or penalties for a shooter at a Range who breaches the Act, unless deliberately causing damage. Conversely, the penalties for the Range Operator (Committee) or Range Officers (volunteers) are severe, amounting to the range of 20 - 40 Penalty points (@ \$161.30 per point) and/or loss of licence for 10 years for (instance) forgetting to write a name. Perhaps it is therefore conceivable that the Executive are somewhat protective of surrounding themselves with a *Diversity and Inclusion* candidate who has the legal defence of "I didn't know". The Club must appoint an Activities Conductor (Responsible Person) who is responsible for the conduct of events at the Range; this Appointment is at the QPS - WL discretion and must be both a fit and proper person and suitably experienced.

While the Incorporated Associations Act and numerous government agencies do not preclude (and even encourage) younger persons to take on Executive and Committee roles there can be practical exclusions that make the election of "pale, male and stale" representatives a foregone or necessary

conclusion. Similarly, necessarily, Members cannot have any criminal history (whatsoever) in the last 10 years.

Queensland Police Weapons Licensing may preclude a person with more than 30 driving demerit points in a 5 year period from obtaining a Firearms licence for a 10 year period. While I don't propose specific comments about a "fit and proper person" definition perhaps this indicates the peculiar nature of sourcing volunteers from the wider community without requiring Police checks in an environment where Firearms and ammunition handling are a daily imperative of the business model.

Succession planning can be difficult if the Committee and established long-term serving volunteers are either reluctant to share knowledge or have prejudiced concepts of who can *ever* be an adequate replacement. Volunteers frequently take pride in being the only person that could ever be trusted to perform their special duties and tasks. They defend their years of reliability and dedication. They sometimes deliberately conceal instructions, guides and industry contacts. I fully acknowledge their competence but anticipate the risk of single responsibilities and resources. They can threaten to withdraw their services entirely if encouraged to share or are voted from a role. Succession is both tactical and tactful; respect for previous service needs to be acknowledged and "real"...but realistically there's plenty of irreplaceable people in the graveyard.

Cinderella nominations at an AGM are a cause for consideration. There needs to be some continuity and willing handover of certain Executive and operational roles/portfolios. My limited experience of cooperation over several years is indicated by complete accounting software changes annually (CashBooks >Excel >MYOB > Xero > QuickBooks, at each new Treasurer appointment, computers "initialized", zip files that are incompatible, inability to use "Cloud" share technology and hostile meetings. I don't suggest inappropriate financial management but any interference or assistance was considered "micro-management" and unwelcome.

The Queensland government and DTIS have given excellent Governance support and resources with the Club-IQ series of workshops. Getting older members to upskill is often difficult. It was easier to encourage new members to workshops and Zoom link-ups. The Microsoft Office suite for NFPs was great in concept but

- lacks user acceptance at club level
- introduces software incompatibility
- lacks .pdf editing
- difficult to set up accounts/users
- insufficient training for users

Governance training and qualifications are now almost imperative to ensure business security and integrity of management. The cost to gain even an undergraduate qualification is around \$4400 per individual. The risk to the Club is that same individual investment may get voted out of office the following year at an AGM. Our peak body has recently required that Executive Committee and Operations staff have a Queensland BlueCard which has caused personnel to resign their roles - not because they can't get a BlueCard but they are resentful of the new imperative. I observed similar reluctance with Rural Fire Brigade losing active personnel and eventually needing to extend the time limit imposed. It's evident there's a lack of understanding of adoption of imposed regulations in the wider community.

Novices rarely understand the Club they selected more than the apparent primary activity matches what they think they want to do. In the majority they have no idea of the Range, Protocols, Equipment, Officials, match technology but perhaps a preconceived idea from TV. When applying for Membership of (case in point) a Rifle Club they probably have no concept of the management committee, officials or operations. The decision to join a particular Club may be purely commercial that:

- the Membership and fees are cheap
- Come and Try options are affordable
- Regularity of access / hours open
- the Club is local
- Club has training for novices
- No specific membership requirements

Few new members are joining a Club with an expectation to do hours of work at home doing unpaid administrative *homework* and their spouses and families may not equate to their dedication to pay for Membership and weekly fees but somehow get little back - except occasionally scorn for their difference of opinion.

While it is certainly possible to onboard a new Member with established skills it's equally likely that an Accountant or Police Officer have no desire to export their employment skill to a recreational leisure activity. Governance roles are becoming increasingly complex; recent Queensland government changes (2020 - 2024) have taken certain liability protections from volunteers such that they may now be equally exposed to penalties as much as a paid business Director. This can be frightening for individuals and incumbent management particularly if the Club has various exposures to fines, penalties (including jail) and an identified increasing skills and technology gap.

In this case the National Peak body has recently committed to the Sports Australia National Integrity Framework (NIF). While I as an individual welcome the initiative the training and skills gap is immediately evident. The requirement that Clubs can achieve the lower tier "Indians" be equipped with no more assistance than a Policy change to:

- Retain and Upgrade Range officials to NIF
- Engage suitable MPIOs
- Get a BlueCard
- Change technologies
- Adopt and comply to new Model Rules
- Maintain First aid certification
- Maintain a licence and permits
- Maintain qualifications
- Have comprehensive knowledge of the Weapons Act, Regulations and Standing Orders

There should be a facilitated workshop series offering to engage with our group of specialist officials so they can understand the need and progress by choice rather than the blanket "just do it or piss off" currently proposed. These people have given years of dedicated time and acquired live-fire experience but they're confronted with an obtuse but *trendy* new concept. Adapt to an online interactive course at 65-75 years old without facilitation and support? I don't think so.... Right now somebody is thinking *needs analysis*...but they're 2 years behind schedule.

Prospective volunteers are often confronted by their own perceptions of "lack of expertise" and may confuse a competitor's field skills success with their ability to manage an Executive or Committee position. Their self-esteem and self-doubt are difficult to dispel. There's little correlation between batting a 100 Century and making bank accounts balance. Again, more introduction, training and support works. Do the *needs analysis*... but the NIF, BlueCard and liability burden requirement will lose skilled volunteers tomorrow while the statistics are collated.

My personal and professional experience as Instructor, Trainer/Assessor is most younger persons (15-25) are more readily adaptable to Policy change and prerequisite or optional learning than older demographic groups. By 55 years old there's reluctance to engage in new (or existing) methods of Governance, workshops, training and most importantly - a refusal to accept any Authority change.

Queensland Government recently changed the Annual Return report requirement for small business under \$300k. This was a potential annual \$500 - \$1000 saving to an NFP where the previous CPA audit or financial statements were now the responsibility for the Club President and Treasurer. For two years running we've paid \$500 for an accountant to verify accounts because the Treasurer felt ill-equipped to take responsibility. To a great extent the pressure not to change from a regular practice defeated the financial advantages.

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This submission's focus is the potential for Stress, Anxiety and Financial hardship that may be caused by entering a volunteering role - particularly for new and even returning Committee Executives in rural or remote areas. The real risk is that even in following the normal procedures and protocols of the Incorporated Association Act (Act) that the newly elected Executives may be burdened by significant personal and financial stress - partly due to new Rules imposed by Australian Government on financial institutions in relation to Anti-terrorism and money laundering.

My observation is the bank or financial institutions may be ill-equipped to service the needs of Associations or volunteers to become newly appointed signatories. The statement of concern to me by the bank person is that the particular institution (bank) services the bulk majority of NFPs because the other banks are unable to cope with demand.

The IA (Act) requires that (normally) the Committee resign at the Annual General Meeting and the new Committee and Executive are elected and appointed by Membership vote. The individual Club or Association may have Rules about Appointment tenure duration, however, typically this is an unavoidable but normal, legal annual procedural occurrence. In the case of incumbent re-election the difficulties may be avoided but not in all cases.

This is particularly highlighted when the incumbent Secretary or Treasurer combines the 2 roles for the following year. The Act requires three (3) persons in Executive so there must be another Executive role and person to comply with three individual people requirement.(Act).

Normally, it goes like this:

The Executive and Committee are elected at AGM.

The Minutes of the AGM are recorded and may be distributed to members..

The Minutes are not ratified until the future AGM which normally will be the following year.

The Annual Return is lodged with the Office of Fair Trading including Minutes and Financial Report. Executive roles are declared and changed in the Return (as necessary) and the Return may be used as evidence of Executive appointments with the financial institution (bank).

The financial institution is notified of the change of Executive if

- any new persons are appointed
- new signatories are appointed
- to establish new signatory access

Here is where it goes sour.

Contacting the bank or institution may be difficult.

It is exceptionally hard to use email or phone to contact a local branch; in rural areas it may require a visit to the bank (200 kms and time) to make a later second CRN appointment which may not be the final appointment.

The Club's access to bank accounts for administration purposes may be *frozen* until the bank or institution has established:

1. the resigned Executives
2. newly appointed persons

The financial institution / bank may require a volunteer to establish a client identity (CRN)

This may require the volunteer to visit the institution in person for an appointment.

The appointment may take 2 - 3 business days to establish and a further number of days to occur, depending on party availability (both bank and volunteer). In regional and remote locations the volunteer may need to travel 200kms to visit in person.

Banks do not provide a guide of the process or required documentation to on-board a new signatory.

The volunteer(s) may not have established a CRN with the bank.

If the volunteer does not have a CRN this may delay the procedure one week, potentially longer if the bank staff are away or it's a public holiday in Tasmania. (This Inquiry is in Queensland and so is the Association.)

The next bank process is to validate the volunteers as being legally appointed to the Executive.

The bank or institution may not be satisfied with the veracity of the Minutes of the AGM.

Some institution staff may be unfamiliar with the Act and:

- decline to accept un-signed / not yet ratified AGM Minutes
- refuse that previous year Executives have resigned from their role
- require documentary evidence of the resignation of the previous signatories
- require a Committee meeting and Minutes to ascertain that the new Executive are aware of the requirements of the bank

The bank may also refute the veracity of the Office of Fair Trading Annual Return receipt.

The volunteer may be required to sign loose blank forms for the bank to fill in details later.

This blank but signed document will be Certified at some later time by bank staff but the volunteer does not know what details will be added nor receive a copy for records.

The new (novice) Executive volunteers must convene an urgent Committee meeting - however they may not be tech-savvy and able to conference call or Zoom meet so there may be some driving involved.

The banks may then:

- Decline the veracity of the presented hard-copy Committee meeting minutes because the document is not ratified

This is procedural so that the Customer Declaration Form (CDF) may commence to be executed by a branch somewhere in Australia that has *excellence* as a name.

The volunteer may leave the bank dazed and confused - ready for a long drive home.

After about 1 week the volunteer may receive a phone call from the *excellent* branch - possibly from Tasmania.

The caller ID may show the caller as **Potential Fraud** (which may deter the volunteer from answering a fairly crucial phone call).

The volunteer may receive an email later advising they missed the appointment and instructing them to call for another appointment.

The number called is an automated service with menu selection.

The volunteer is required to follow verbal instructions from the recorded message to connect to an extension.

The volunteer may be calling another Australian state where it's a public holiday and thoroughly wasting their time.

The extension is unanswered but a recorded service directs the volunteer to follow the "detailed instructions" set out in the email - however there are no instructions on the email.

After a few more days and emails in desperation to contact "Tasmania" it is determined that it was a public holiday there and the bank person handling the CDF had a nice day off.

The bank is aware that their Caller ID is **Potential Fraud** but insists this is the service provider's error.

The CDF may be forwarded to the volunteer for Approval to check for errors.

The Club may not have (Bank) account access to;

- Verify bookings
- Make payments for goods or services
- Enter into Contracts
- Establish trading accounts

The access to funds and accounts may be disrupted for a number (up to 4) weeks while the financial institution verifies and finalizes details. Debit cards will be longer. The bank cannot commit to a time-frame and the volunteer is not reassured.

Consequently, the Club may not have access to EFTPOS systems administration for adjusting pricing of fees, products or services such that pricing may not readily be updated for POS sales. Effectively, the Administration delay can cause loss of income by delaying the changes to services administration of other functions. The Club is unable to confirm booking to Staff and similarly to clients or members.

Pointed question: How would a Supermarket or Retailer react to loss of sell price adjustment control?

The volunteer may receive numerous calls from unpaid suppliers demanding payment. NFPs have limited credit history and late payment is reputation damage. The volunteer has no control in this process and had no indication prior that it was more complicated than a comprehensive knowledge of the Act.

The volunteer may be left stressed and in a state of anxiety that there is little that can be done to avoid reputational damage to the Association, loss of income, selling below cost, inconvenience to members or embarrassment to themselves.

The Office of Fair Trading annual return fee remains unpaid.

The new Certificate of Incorporation cannot be purchased by funds and Certificate may not be displayed at the place of business (Act)

The Association has lost business and unable to track approximately 2-3 weeks.

It is unlikely that loss of business, bookings or profits can be readily recovered in an NFP.

It is equally unlikely the Treasurer can report bank balances to Committee monthly as required by the Act.

The *trap* for the new volunteer is that they may feel compelled to pay personally for items and debts to keep the Association viable and avoid delays or loss. This just further complicates pressure on a petty cash tin balance that's unable to be reconciled with bank transactions for a number of weeks. Volunteers are under a lot of scrutiny from Members to perform adequately.

It's abnormal that a Treasurer cannot know the finances nor use the accounting software for a protracted period of time. I cannot understate that the loss of control of finances has potentially lost a full year of nett profit, lost a few clients, disrupted maintenance and operations and already has me dipping in my own pocket to continue operations.

This is all happening now. Tonight. That's volunteering. No color-glossy promotion.

This is 1/12th of a trading year.

I've started smoking cigarettes and run out of Nitrolingual.