

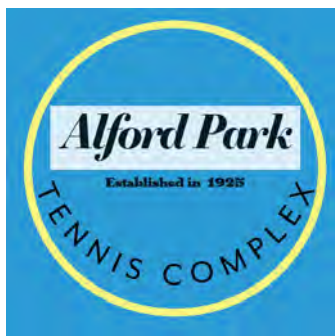
Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Submission No:	338
Submitted by:	Alford Park Tennis Club Inc
Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Queensland Government Volunteering Inquiry

Due to volunteering participation by more than 10% in the previous three years, the inquiry closed on Friday, 28 February 2025 and focuses on five areas:

1. Restrictions on volunteering caused by legislation and regulation;
2. Current government support for the sector and opportunities for improvement;
3. Barriers to volunteering for non-volunteers;
4. Current restrictions adversely limiting active volunteers;
5. Opportunities for diversification in the volunteer workforce.



www.alfordparktennis.com

Submission by Alford Park Tennis Club Inc

In Toowoomba, Queensland, Alford Park Tennis Club Inc has managed to survive and thrive for the last 100 years thanks to the tireless efforts of volunteers over many decades. This allows our current members (120+) to take stock on our current state of contributions from volunteers. Most of our club member are non-volunteers in our Club, and apart from several committee members who carry the burden on work on a day to day and week by week basis. Most committee members are older but we encourage participation of younger members. The contributions of some past members were outstanding and comprised of many decades of volunteering for the love of tennis and the Club. We express our gratitude.

Qualitative research in the form of focus groups and interviews carried out in February 2025 at the Clubhouse at Alford Park has provided the following insights, grouped into emerging themes. Volunteers also offered their experiences from involvement in other local clubs.

- 1) **The motivations for volunteering** include personal growth and the satisfaction derived from providing giving back to the community, as well as learning new skills or upskilling in areas such as administration, club management, teaching, and accounting. Volunteering is invariably ingrained in a person's life and presupposes financial security of volunteers.
The Statement by our President, Kel Vickery, represents the gold standard regarding an exceptional commitment towards lifelong volunteering & outstanding club leadership.
- 2) **Numerous barriers prevent non-volunteers from participating:** there is a lack of awareness about volunteering opportunities and what they entail, a lack of information about the different types of volunteering and their benefits, and what these might mean

for each individual. Retirees and those with sufficient financial means seem the most willing and able to volunteer.

- a) Most of our members, especially younger ones, do not engage in volunteering due to economic and time constraints; they often prefer paid work. As one younger member mentioned, “I would rather be paid for my work” and see financial benefits for their efforts. An older member stated, “I would never volunteer but happy to talk about it,” and only volunteered for a few months to cover for an absent volunteer.
- b) Concerns were raised about health and safety risks associated with volunteering. Parents worry about their children being exposed to threats or dangers, as seen in previous reports of harassment and sexual harassment of young female athletes in tennis.
- c) There is ambiguity around how volunteers are covered in case of accidents and a lack of reimbursement for costs such as petrol, personal administrative equipment, printing expenses, and internet use. While our Club offers an honorarium, it is customary to refuse it. If there were no discussion or pressure to refuse such a minimal annual payment, it might attract more members to assist voluntarily.
- d) Some volunteers also expressed concerns about their health and whether they could perform their roles adequately.
- e) A concerted effort by the government is needed to offer shared resources and develop a sustainable pathway to volunteering that addresses barriers for various members of society, including women and girls, culturally diverse people, and both younger and older individuals. Better pathways from volunteering assisting transition into the workforce should be promoted.
- f) We question whether there are expectations that volunteering will involve more than just offering time but also paying for related costs, providing unpaid professional services, and performing domestic tasks (cleaning, serving, cooking). This is unappealing to potential female volunteers, who have historically undertaken such unpaid tasks in their homes. As one female volunteer remarked, she does not wish to do these kinds of unpaid tasks, as they are not desirable roles women want to continue throughout their lives.
- g) Volunteering can be a thankless task, particularly if a committee does not adequately appreciate the volunteers' efforts. In the worst-case scenario, when all the work in a club falls onto one person, often the president or secretary, and other committee members have few duties other than attending occasional meetings, it can lead to personality clashes, perceived injustices, and stress that makes continuing to volunteer untenable in the long term. Some volunteers have resigned amid disagreements and turmoil between local clubs and community groups, where small groups have split into even smaller subgroups and could not continue.
- h) The financial stability of a club depends on the hard work of volunteers and the committee's ability to ensure financial stability. There are opportunities for committee members to mismanage finances, pay for services that cannot be afforded in the long term, and distribute income due to vested interests and conflicts of interest, to friends and family who are paid by the club for specific services.
- i) Funding for clubs is essential so that they can offer to maintain, repair and upgrade existing facilities essential to attract volunteers and members. As a Club we are not aware of all funding opportunities and we are not informed of the success rate. There is a lack of transparency. It takes many hours of work for a grant submission by

volunteers and the guidelines are not clear on the main criteria for success and electronic forms lack functionality.

3) A VOLUNTEERING PERSPECTIVE

My name is Kel Vickery, my role at Alford Park Tennis Club Inc is President, a position I've held since 2011. I was taught to play tennis at the present complex by a Mr Darcy Bianchi at age 10 years. It was the only way I could be taught tennis, because Darcy didn't charge for coaching. He taught me up to the age of 15, when I chose another sport offered also free of charge, called Rugby League.

It was the 1st year of Junior Rugby League run by a large group of parents who were volunteers. I continued to play rugby League for a further 20 years always volunteering to raise money and assist the enormous group of volunteers running our Club in many ventures. From bingo to catering for weddings, and discos for entertainment. Today I'm a member of an Old Boys group of Rugby League players who meet regularly to assist our many old boys who have fallen on hard times from ill health to bad financial decisions.

We struggle to see our mates battle dementia, Parkinson's disease, depression and many other ailments of a sport we thoroughly enjoyed but had absolutely no knowledge of how our lives would be affected later in life. We raise money in the best way we can but it is never enough. Just recently we raised \$17,000 approx. for an implant to assist our mate with Parkinson's disease to ease the tremors he was dealing with.

In 2004, I rejoined Alford Park Tennis Club at the request of my old-time coach Darcy Bianchi. On Darcy's death I saw the need to give back something of what I had received at Alford Park Tennis Club and at my father's request with some strict rules to adhere to, "Listen to all members but do **not** engage your thoughts. Listen hard and then move on keeping the peace always." We are fortunate to have a very small number of volunteers to hold necessary committee positions, but who are unable to complete the maintenance and other needs required. So, this is left to only one or two members, similar to Darcy Bianchi's situation for nearly 50 years where he maintained many tennis courts in Toowoomba himself, free of charge.

Today we have nearly 200 older citizens of Toowoomba using our facility, not for the need to play tennis but the need to socialise in the name of tennis. This need is growing in momentum and on some weekdays our facility is packed with willing participants.

Whilst the need for more volunteers is growing, the costs involved is making it difficult for many. Also is the need for more opportunities for older people to engage in a social manner under the name of sport be it an *Old Boys Club* or a *Tennis Club*. The need for funding is paramount to the success of these ventures, together with the need to advertise the fact that this social opportunity is available to all in all regions of this Country.

Kelvyn Vickery, President,
Alford Park Tennis Club Inc