

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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## GLADSTONE AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL CLUB INC.

ABN: 30 745 255 774.

### Tim Sparkman

President

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28 February 2025

### Queensland Parliament

#### Committee – Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

Cnr of George and Alice Streets, Brisbane, QLD, 4000

#### **Subject: GAFC Submission for the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland**

Dear Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity for sporting clubs, such as the Gladstone Australian Football Club, to provide a submission on our perspectives of volunteering at our Club.

#### **Gladstone Australian Football Club**

The Gladstone Australian Football Club was founded in 1972 as the Gladstone Mudcrabs. In 2018, the Club decided looked to a new exciting direction, rebranding as the Gladstone SUNS. Since our area is located within the Gold Coast Suns catchment zone, whose staff work in the area with development opportunities, Auskick programs and in-school programs, our alignment with this brand sought the club to reform as the Gladstone SUNS. AFL offers a team sport for all children 5 years old through to senior grades. We insist on 'Inclusion, Opportunity & Support'. Furthermore, we are one of the more cost-effective sports provided in the region across the major codes.

The Gladstone Suns have two Men's teams, a Women's team, and six fantastic junior teams ranging from U7's through to U17's. Girls can participate in U13's until a maximum age of 15 before moving up to Women's. We also run our own Auskick program, allowing children from 5-12 to participate in a fun, dynamic path for starting off in AFL and sports. Over the last five years, we have averaged nearly 2000 members joining our club as returning consecutive members or as new players/members to the game.

As a snapshot of our current volunteers, our Management Committee for 2025 is made up of nine individuals, responsible for a wide range of portfolios and responsibilities. These include, but not limited too, Presidential duties, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Presidents (Juniors/Youth and Seniors (Men/Womens), and four General Committee Members. For 2025, I have joined the Committee as a new member, never volunteering as a President of a sporting club before, and the experience overall has been positive but also at times, challenging. I hope that this letter in response to your inquiry provides an alternative experience from someone new, as opposed to a season veteran of leading a community club.

I have often volunteered extensively in my previous experiences as a player at different sporting clubs; providing water, coaching, raffles, or ad hoc duties when needed. I have seen that the state of volunteering, wherever you go, always incurs the same returning people that continue tirelessly to raise their hand to help. For 2025, our Club has a fresh, younger committee than years prior. Something that I am already really proud of, allowing those veterans of the club to take an



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opportunity to rest. Although I could never cast doubt on previous people's volunteering, I have often found myself questioning and understanding decision making of people from the past – perhaps that they were ill equipped to leading an organisation in the modern world of compliance, liability, and constant upkeep.

### **Cost and Saving from Volunteering**

As a snapshot of our volunteering requirements, this is an average of the time commitment of our volunteers throughout the season and separately for our hosting duties at Home Games. Note that this is an average and many volunteers could easily do a lot more work and also take on multiple roles. Volunteering at our club can be quantified against the minimum wage (\$24.10):

- Time during the week (avg.)
  - Consistent Volunteers:
    - Coaches: 10 coaches across all grades (approx. 4hrs commitment) = 40hrs
    - Management Committee: 9 members (approx. 9hrs commitment) = 81hrs
  - Cost saving: \$2,916.10 for the week (operating seasons is approx. 32 weeks, resulting \$93,315.20 in labour).
- Match Day (0800 – 1900 for 8 home games)
  - Game Day Volunteers
    - Coaches & Other Staff <sup>1</sup>: approx. 44hrs of total volunteering.
    - Hospitality<sup>2</sup>: approx. 55hrs of total volunteering.
    - Other necessary volunteers<sup>3</sup>: approx. 66hrs of total volunteering.
  - Cost saving: \$31,812 saved in labour costs for the Home Game season.

At our club, we are aiming to increase our volunteering engagement; we are focused on our youth through assisting with our senior teams and also across the lower grades for umpiring and coaching. We see this as strong player and personal development, with a focus on building your community. In the past I have seen how schools have encouraged and rewarded this behaviour and dedication for their students. The most difficult part is persuading the many younger adults playing at our club to also assist volunteering in key roles amongst the junior and youth grades.

Furthermore, for our Management Committee, the purpose of including four General Committee Members was to open the door for volunteers interested but hesitant on the commitment that their lack of experience and expertise was needed to fulfill the role (e.g. a Treasurer being an accountant for example). We have managed to fulfill these roles within the Committee, with many of the General Committee Members taking on ad hoc responsibilities and supporting others with specific portfolios.

### **Sponsorships**

Sponsorships are a vital form of income for our Club and primarily allow us to subsidise registration fees for those unable to pay and also goes towards the significant overhead expenses we have around sport licencing fees, club facilities, and insurance. My experience of sourcing sponsorships is mixed; with small and medium size businesses doing an excellent job in sponsoring and large businesses taking advantage of their social licence to operate and providing very little support to their wider community.

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<sup>1</sup> Sports Trainers, Water Carriers, Team Managers, Assistant Coaches

<sup>2</sup> Canteen and Bar

<sup>3</sup> Gate takings, Ground Marshal, Linesmen, Timekeeper and other roles.



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Within Gladstone, for small businesses, the support we have received for player-based sponsorship (registration fees paid by a business for a player) and branding/advertising sponsorship has been excellent. Small businesses are truly supportive to their local community. Furthermore, medium size businesses in Gladstone also provide great support through sponsorship, grant funding for IT equipment, and other much needed resources.

As Gladstone is a major industry hub in Queensland, with the location of the port and large industrial players, I would say that the difficulty in sourcing sponsorship and grants is very difficult. This is quite a shame for these companies, particularly when a large subset of our player and membership base work at these large industries. Although many do grants, their process is drawn out, very niche, and not very transparent when awarding these grants. Furthermore, the lack of feedback to learn from is also disengaging. Overall, this is a shame when the social licence in which they operate with as part of the Gladstone region and community does not show them as valuable members.

### Innovative Volunteering Models

Our Club would also like to highlight to the Committee of the innovative model that the Not-For-Profit House (NFP House) has provided across the Gladstone region. They have been incredibly supportive to myself, our Management Committee, and our Club in provided a wide variety of services. Without these services, our Club may have experienced significant reputational and non-compliant issues.

They provided expertise in the process of running a proper Annual General Meeting – with many experienced Club Members noting that this is how it always should have been run but the experience and know-how in previous years was unclear. They also provide health checks and strategic planning. I implore the Committee to review such innovative models within the volunteering sector to see how else they could be supported or emulated. Although there are for-profit ventures and consulting firms that provide very similar services, these are incredibly expensive, with one quote I have received of nearly \$35,000. This is unsustainable for a large majority of community clubs that want access to better services of governance and strategic planning to grow their club.

Thank you for taking the time to read this submission and furthermore, thank you for taking the time to lead an inquiry into the state of volunteering in Queensland. I hope that the Committee can find innovative ways to increase the volunteering pool and reduce the barriers that community clubs experience.

Best regards,

**Tim Sparkman**

President

Gladstone Suns AFL Club