**Sport,Fitness&Recreation :Environmental Scan 2014**   
by Service Skills Australia, Industry Skills Council for the service industries. Funded by Australian Government. Summary prepared by Rod Thomas for Albert Sailing Club committee, November 2014.

***A key trend for the sport, fitness and recreation industries is the continuing shift from organised sport and recreation activities to more flexible and unscheduled non-organised sport and recreation activities.***This has ramifications for sport and recreation clubs, which are accustomed to enjoying a strong base of members as well as volunteers willing to assist.   
  
Industry stakeholders identified that this trend is linked to broader social changes, with individuals demanding a transactional approach to sport and recreational activities in response to declining levels of discretionary time. There is a general concern that sporting clubs are not responding to this change, with many clubs offering inflexible membership models that act as a barrier to increasing participation.

***The key findings of market research were:***

***• People now want to play sport in different ways.***

***• Significant numbers of children and adults will play sport if it is presented differently.***

***• Too much of what is current delivery is within rigid schedules and is focused on competition***

***and performance, with insufficient focus on the fun and social side of sport and limited opportunities for varied or flexible participation.***

The increasing importance of growing participation and engaging targeted populations requires sporting organisations to develop the skills of their staff across a variety of areas to support this shift. The implementation of these strategies is also leading to the expansion of emerging job roles such as

‘inclusion officers’ and ‘participation growth officers’.

**Children**  
Many sports have actively targeted children in their strategies to increase participation in their sport.

This usually encompasses modified versions of the sport.

**The Ageing Population**

Australia’s population is changing; we are both an ageing and growing nation. Over the last two

decades, the median age has risen from 32.1 years in June 1990 to 37.3 years in June 2012.

This trend is set to continue,   
  
Currently, sport and recreation participation among older age groups is predominantly in lower impact

forms of activity. In 2011–12 the top six sport and physical recreation activities for those aged 65 and

over in terms of participation rates were: walking(27.5 per cent), fitness/gym (8.6 per cent), golf (7.5 per cent), swimming/diving (4.9 per cent), lawn bowls (4.8 per cent) and tennis (2.4 per cent).

In order to increase participation levels in this growing portion of the population, the format of many sports will need to be adapted to suit older age groups. This requires sport organisations to have an understanding of the needs of the senior population when undertaking physical activity.

**Technology**

Technology is changing the way Australians participate in sport. The widespread adoption of

social networking by the population is leading to the creation of informal, casual sport and recreation

groups—bypassing the traditional role of clubs and associations. The ASC has also identified the need for capacity building in using social media to promote sports and to leverage commercial opportunities, as well as using IT-based customer management systems to understand and support their participation base.

There is a risk that changes in the sport sector will increase the cost of providing community

sport, which will be especially detrimental for individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds and for children, in particular. a number of states and territories have introduced voucher schemes to ensure access to sport for children from disadvantaged backgrounds,

**Employee Retention**

Organisations in the sport sector continue to report high levels of employee turnover. Industry feedback to Service Skills Australia indicated that this is largely due to employees perceiving their role as a stepping-stone to higher-level positions, which are often not available within the organisation with which they started.

**Managing the Supply of Skilled Volunteers**

Volunteers are critical to the sport sector. According to the ABS, 72.1 per cent of volunteer-utilising sport and recreation organisations are fully staffed by volunteers.17 Additionally, it is estimated that over 80 per cent of the sport and recreation workforce is unpaid.   
  
Governance positions in most sport and recreation clubs and associations are usually filled by volunteers. It is estimated that 32 per cent (approximately 544,100) of the sector’s volunteering

roles are management or committee positions.

However, the majority of sport volunteers (54 per cent or 925,900) were involved in coaching, refereeing or judging. Finally, a significant proportion of sport volunteers were also involved in administrative and clerical roles (37 per cent or 637,200).

***Given the reliance of the sport sector on the volunteer workforce it is concerning to note that***

***the volunteer participation rate in organised sport has declined over time.*** To combat

this trend, it is critical that sporting organisations utilise best-practice volunteer recruitment and

retention strategies, including the use of skilled volunteer coordinators.

The primary concern of volunteers is that they are stretched due to a lack of resources,both financial and human. With regard to training,volunteers responded overwhelmingly positively

on the benefits that training does bring when it is provided to them. A preliminary finding is that

there may be a future problem in succession planning as a minority of volunteers is completing

disproportionate amounts of work.

**Work Health and Safety**

In 2012 and 2013, states and territories (excluding Western Australia and Victoria) adopted harmonised work health and safety (WHS) laws. The crucial aspect of these laws is that all jurisdictions are now required to extend their duty-of-care to volunteers, with the exception of wholly volunteer-based associations.