

29 May 2023

Together More Active Assessment Panel

Sport and Recreation Victoria

Via online application portal

RE: *Together More Active 2023-27*: Regional Sports Assemblies

Dear Together More Active Assessment Panel Members,

Regional Sport Victoria (RSV) enthusiastically and wholeheartedly provides support to our member Regional Sports Assembly, Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly's submission to stream 2 of *Together More Active* funding.

Regional Sport Victoria is the peak body for sport and active recreation across regional and rural Victoria. Through collaboration with our nine members, the Regional Sports Assemblies, our reach across regional Victoria is without peer. As a collective, the Regional Sports Assemblies service 48 local government authorities, covering a population of over 1.45 million rural and regional Victorians across 8,500 community sport and recreation clubs.

Our vision is to build a stronger regional Victoria through sport and active recreation.

Investing in the Regional Sports Assembly framework enables direct benefits that no other sporting organisation can deliver, namely:

- Volunteers are beyond capacity in a highly regulatory environment. The recent *Australian Sports Foundation* research indicated that "volunteer losses are coupled with an increased administration load for 61% of clubs. (Which has) ...led to even greater pressure on remaining volunteers and committee members." (p17)¹ RSA provide direct support to volunteers to help reduce this burden.
- Place based approaches and solutions to issues -bringing in local expertise and partners to support/prevent issues escalating.

¹ Australian Sports Foundation, *Clubs under pressure research findings*, May 2023, <https://fundraise.sportsfoundation.org.au/our-research>

- Small to medium sports are less likely to have the resources, local connections, ability to build capacity of local clubs. The genesis of Regional Sports Assemblies almost 40 years ago was to provide localised support for clubs and associations.
- Significant distance to support clubs in regional areas –accessing support from local, trusted sources to lead to positive outcomes.
- Established local presence – 39 years of connections and relationships.

The Regional Sports Assemblies can play a key role in the delivery of the desired outcomes of the *Active Victoria 2023-27 strategy*. The potential areas that RSA can impact have been outlined below (although may not be able to be achieved within the current funding allocations) via:

Active Victoria Objective - Connecting communities:

| Active Victoria outcomes | RSA potential impact |
|--------------------------|---|
| Sustained participation | Meeting the demand of the ways community want to participate in sport and active recreation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSA deliver this through understanding the current landscape, assessing the feasibility of initiatives, creating sustainable participation opportunities developed in collaboration with community. • Focus on cohorts who participate less. |
| | Access for All Abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing increased support to more Clubs to improve their inclusive practices. • Smaller clubs limited in capacity to service their local community – despite a desire to do so. RSA can provide direct support to do so. • Larger clubs are focusing on this space, and increasing participation –potential negative of not having competitors to participate against if more clubs are not engaged. • Supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of participants. |
| Infrastructure | Participation plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering participation plans to improve usage and connection with community. • Collaboration with Local Government to reduce duplication of effort. • Connection with the Fair Access Policy Roadmap. |
| | Informing potential for multi-use collaborations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of potential facility sharing opportunities. • Providing direct support to clubs/organisations affected to facilitate the challenging process of changing facilities, negotiating sharing arrangements. |

Active Victoria Objective - Building value:

| Active Victoria outcomes | RSA impact |
|--------------------------|---|
| Sector capability | Supporting the skilled workforce (paid & unpaid): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Victoria accurately describes the complex challenges faced by volunteers. RSA are increasingly asked to support complex issues, and are currently not resourced to fulfil all requests, including Constitutional reviews. • Assisting organisations who have not fulfilled their compliance obligations. • Conflict resolution. • The intent is to provide in depth support to clubs to fulfil their obligations – and to enable volunteers to do so with ease. |
| Good governance | Translating best practice into practical actions for grassroots organisations. Expanding existing support in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality/board diversification. • Compliance and policy development. • Engagement with underrepresented communities –providing safe environments. |

Over the past 12 months, RSV has been working collaboratively with our Members to re-imagine how we operate to generate efficiencies and create sustainable income generation for the Network. This has extended to the individual applications of *Together More Active* funding, where the 10 organisations have identified three projects that will involve a coordinated and collaborative approach within the nuance of localised context. These projects are:

1. Data collection

A key feature of this project is the analysis of trends to inform new initiatives and advocate on behalf of our regions and regional Victoria as a whole. The project involves a collaborative approach to capturing local community sport sector data together with the RSA network. A benchmark of consistent datapoints addressing key issues will be agreed through consultation across the Network to enable benchmarking trends to take place at predetermined intervals. There will also be the ability for individual regions to add additional queries to cater for the local context.

2. Communications

This project focuses on building the reach and engagement of each individual organisation's communications channel. Each participating RSA's increase in reach and engagement will then assist in the ability of RSV and RSA to advocate for regional-wide issues. This will benefit regional clubs and associations via increased knowledge of the support available, and ability to leverage campaigns. The extension of the *Stride into Sport* campaign to increase participation in organised sport will be the pinnacle of this initiative.

3. Inclusion – club assessment and readiness

The intent of this project is to work collaboratively to identify a process/resource to assist in a consistent determination of club/association readiness to engage underrepresented groups. This

project complements the 'data collection project' in providing a granular analysis and benchmark per club and providing a consistent approach to analysing inclusion practices to enable RSV/RSA to tell the story of social inclusion practices. The intent is that structures are created to enable continuous update of the data by RSA as work with a club evolves.

With Victoria 2026 fast approaching, we highlight the importance of investing in place-based organisations to capitalise on the enthusiasm for sport participation. "Australians 18+ who had started or shown interest in a new sport or becoming more physically active said they had been inspired by:

- watching sport on TV or live (60%)
- an Australian athlete being a good role model (57%)
- Australians succeeding internationally (56%)
- seeing / hearing about Olympic, Paralympic, or Commonwealth Games sports/athletes (56%)."²

It is likely that this same interest will be generated with the preparations and staging of the 2026 Commonwealth Games. It may also be likely to generate greater interest in regional Victoria with elite athletes descending on our backyards.

We are committed to working collaboratively with the Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly and all member Regional Sports Assemblies to support a stronger regional Victoria through sport and active recreation.

Yours sincerely,

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Executive Officer

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¹ Community Perceptions Monitor Annual Report 2021-2022, *Australian Sports Commission*, (August 2022); quoted from Clearinghouse for sport, https://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au/major-event-impact-and-legacy/community-and-social-engagement#sport_participation

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