



Wimmera Southern Mallee Community Sport– securing the future of community sport through Covid-19 and beyond



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Wimmera Development Association acknowledges the work of project manager Vernetta Taylor, along with Matt Currill, Peter Myers, Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly and Wayne Street of Street Ryan and Associates Pty. Ltd. Photos courtesy of The Weekly Advertiser.



Executive Summary:

The effects of Covid-19 has been widespread, and the sporting sector has not been immune. Very early in the Covid-19 period, concerns were raised in regards to the impact on Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) sporting clubs and the responsibilities that fell on their committees of management, particularly in regards to the financial management and the potential impact on the long term viability of clubs.

Wimmera Development Association (WDA), recognising the economic and social importance of thriving sporting clubs to the region, collaborated with the Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly (WRSA), and participated in a number of activities and investigations, as detailed in this report, to gain insight to the current situation of WSM sporting clubs.

Our findings and recommendations, as detailed, recognise that most commonly, sporting club committees of management consist purely of volunteers and that sport plays a significant role in the WSM economy contributing more than \$18 million to the region . Our findings show that many sporting clubs have an annual revenue in the range \$50,000 to \$350,000+ and as such, a significant financial responsibility falls on the volunteer based committees on management. The report also recognises that sporting clubs are an integral part of WSM communities and contribute many positive aspects in regards to the regions liveability. Sporting clubs provide a strong sense of community and belonging for people of all ages and backgrounds, in many different ways ranging from sport participation to volunteering and spectating. Sporting clubs can also provide a social hub for regional and rural communities that promotes social connection, resulting in positive mental health impacts to the region.



Recommendation 1: Strategic Planning

“Wimmera sports clubs should invest enough time every three years to develop a strategic plan for the club and commit to a brief update of the plan each year”.

The plan should be prepared by, or in close consultation with, the club committee and circulated to members for their information and engagement.



Strategic planning is a formal process which:

- Sets a long-term vision on what the club hopes to achieve and its place in the community or region.
- Considers any issues that affect how the club operates in its current environment and what issues might emerge in the future.
- Establishes goals which will help the club move towards its vision.
- Spells out how the club will go about making progress towards each goal during the 3-year period: These are the objectives.
- Decide what sort of resources (money, equipment, people/volunteers) can be put towards each step in implementing the objective. These become the proposed actions.
- Put it all together and it is the strategic plan.

WDA believes the onset of COVID 19 and the unparalleled restrictions on sporting clubs, and cancellation of many competitions and events, in 2020 heightens the importance of strategic planning for clubs. Of course, the specific nature of the COVID 19 pandemic was unforeseen and it is most unlikely that the lockdown which resulted from the virus could have been a consideration in any club strategic plan. So, ideally a club strategic plan should include some consideration of future scenarios which could occur (like new funding streams, diversification of the club’s activities, forming partnerships with other organisations, falling membership and even the possibility of mergers with other clubs), even if they are scenarios that the club does not want to pursue. Having ‘thought through’ possibilities and how to react to them will ensure the club remains flexible and agile to make the most of any positive or negative situation.

A strategic plan can be useful in many ways. For example,

- It is a reflection of the professionalism of the club when making a case to sponsors (and, as an extension, indicating why a sponsor would want to be involved with the club).
- Setting targets for events and fundraising.
- Documenting how a club might intend to:
 - o Recruit new members
 - o Support volunteers
 - o Manage the succession of key people (committee, coaches, officials, etc.)
 - o Building alliances with other clubs in the same town (or in the same sport in other towns)
 - o Building alliances with other community organisations (particularly in recreation and tourism sectors)
 - o Making bids or applications, or applications, to potential funding bodies (sport peak bodies, Councils, Government or philanthropic organisations).

When a new committee is elected (often following the retirement of long-time volunteers who nurtured the club as their 'baby') they tend to start with a blank-script, even if the club has a strong history or a strong culture. A strategic plan, with its vision and goals can overcome this potential problem and ensure that new people 'sign on' to a broader plan.

Recommendation 2: Financial Management:

"Wimmera sports clubs should ensure their financial management systems and reporting are clear, transparent and consistent from year to year, despite changes in volunteers responsible for this function".

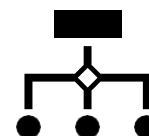


Approaches, methods, systems used for financial management in sporting clubs often change whenever a new treasurer is elected. Sometimes this makes sense if a higher skilled financial practitioner is the new person, but it still means the financial history of an organisation can be disjointed and inconsistent and this can be a disadvantage if the club needs to provide evidence of responsible management to a funding body, sponsor, auditor or financier.

Many sporting clubs in the Wimmera are now of a size equivalent to significant businesses in Wimmera towns, with annual revenues in the range \$50,000 to \$350,000+. At this scale of operations, engaging a local accountancy or bookkeeping firm to help with club's financial systems, on a regular basis or at least to provide an end of year profit and loss and balance sheet statement, would be a highly valuable decision for clubs that do not already do so. Some accountancy businesses with a close relationship to the club may offer some support on a pro bono basis.

Recommendation 3: Diversification:

"Wimmera sports clubs should regularly review avenues to diversify their revenue base, as part of the club strategic plan and in response to opportunities which arise from the local community or the sport's peak bodies".



Like any business, having a diversified range of income streams gives much greater security than relying on just one or two sources of funds. In sport, clubs may argue this is not relevant because the motive for running a club is a love of the game or passion for the sport, not making money. This motivation is fine, and may even be a core part of the club's vision, but a strong diversified club with multiple revenue sources has a better chance of being able to keep the game/sport operating than one which just relies on membership fees and charges. Some examples of how this can work, include:

- Several Wimmera football clubs earn additional income from farm, produce or trades related activities.
- Golf and bowls clubs earn revenue from catering, bar and restaurant activities in their clubhouses.
- Tennis and fishing clubs run major revenue earning tournaments and competitions
- Clubs which join new, entry level, or social programs developed by the state or national body in their sport (e.g. barefoot bowls, cardio-tennis, AFL9s, MyGolf, Aussie Hoops, NetSetGo, Hookin2Hockey) find a rich source of new participants, future members, and ongoing fans of the sport.

Additional to these examples, connecting with members and social participants through digital platforms is likely to be an increasingly important form of diversification (some producing new revenue and others helping to retain and engage existing stakeholders). The digital platforms could include newsletters, promotional offers, online challenges/competitions, and fitness/health tips or programs.

Recommendation 4: Volunteer Management

“Wimmera sports clubs should continue to find meaningful ways to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of their volunteers and to ensure the club offers a welcoming environment for new volunteers to participate”.



Volunteering is critical to the functioning of Wimmera sports clubs and it is important that clubs offer a welcoming and organised way of encouraging volunteers and finding their right niche at the club. The club strategic plan should include some consideration of a succession plan for volunteers.

By definition, volunteers do not receive remuneration for their time, but modest gratuities, honorariums to cover expenses, and small events or awards to honour the volunteers should all be considered from time to time.

From the volunteer’s perspective, there can be very important social and health benefits from a lifelong connection to a sport’s community, reducing social isolation and improving mental and physical wellbeing of the volunteers, especially in their older years.

BACKGROUND

Sporting clubs are often referred to as the heart and soul of a community, and this is certainly true for the Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM). Thriving sporting clubs is an essential part of what makes living in our region great. Wimmera Development Association recognised a need and has worked collaboratively with the Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly to ensure that our clubs are supported so that they can remain vibrant and sustainable throughout COVID-19 and beyond.

Through our work in this space we have identified that the majority of the sporting clubs in our region are run by Committees/Boards of Management that consist purely of volunteers dedicating countless hours to their respective clubs. Many of these clubs are significant businesses within their own right, with the average football and netball club turning over \$304,000 a year, ranking among the top 40-50% of businesses in many towns of the Wimmera and Southern Mallee and in total contributing more than \$18 million to the region. Several other sporting codes also offer significant economic contributions including golf, contributing \$5.803 million per year to the WSM and basketball which contributes \$15.5 million per year to the Grampians region (statistics provided by Wayne Street of Street Ryan and Associates Pty Ltd). Their continued success post COVID-19, along with the many other sporting codes and community groups that operate in the region is critical on both an economic and social level.

Our work in this space included an in-depth interview with experienced community sports leader Mr. Peter Myers, who spent seven years on the board of the Northern Football Netball league and is the current treasurer of the Kew Golf Club, which provided many insights to successful sporting club management, including that “gone are the days where you go day-by-day or season-by-season. You have to have a long-term purpose for the club” and that “it’s important that clubs put a lot of effort into strategic planning”. From this discussion, WDA developed a document titled ‘Sporting Club Conversations’ (attached), that encouraged board/committee members to engage in discussions on key areas to help ensure that their club not only survives the COVID-19 shutdown but emerges better-positioned for a sustainable and viable future. This document has since been distributed to all 20 Wimmera and Horsham District League football and netball clubs.

Working in partnership with the Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly (WRSA), WDA engaged the services of Mr. Wayne Street of Street Ryan Associates Pty Ltd who, as part of the WRSA COVID-19 Webinar Series, gave two separate presentations to the sporting community (attached). The first, delivered on 15 May 2020, focused on the Wimmera and Southern Mallee based football and netball clubs, providing insightful statistics and benchmarking figures in regards to participation, fixed and variable costs and revenue streams, which was attended by over 30 club representatives.

The second webinar presentation was held on 15 June 2020 and again provided information relating to participation and fixed and variable costs for a range of sports in our region that included golf, bowls, basketball, cricket, tennis, ruby league, soccer and hockey.

Following the initial webinar, we reached out to the Presidents of the Wimmera and Horsham District League football and netball clubs, and through our conversations, identified some common concerns regarding the current operations of the boards/committees of management and identified some key areas where all sporting clubs could benefit from additional support, which has helped form the foundation of our recommendations. These conversations also highlighted the importance of sporting clubs to the social fabric of our region, providing a critical outlet for physical engagement and social connection.

Wimmera Football Netball Clubs and the COVID 19 Pandemic

May 2020

Australian Football: A leader in Australian Sport

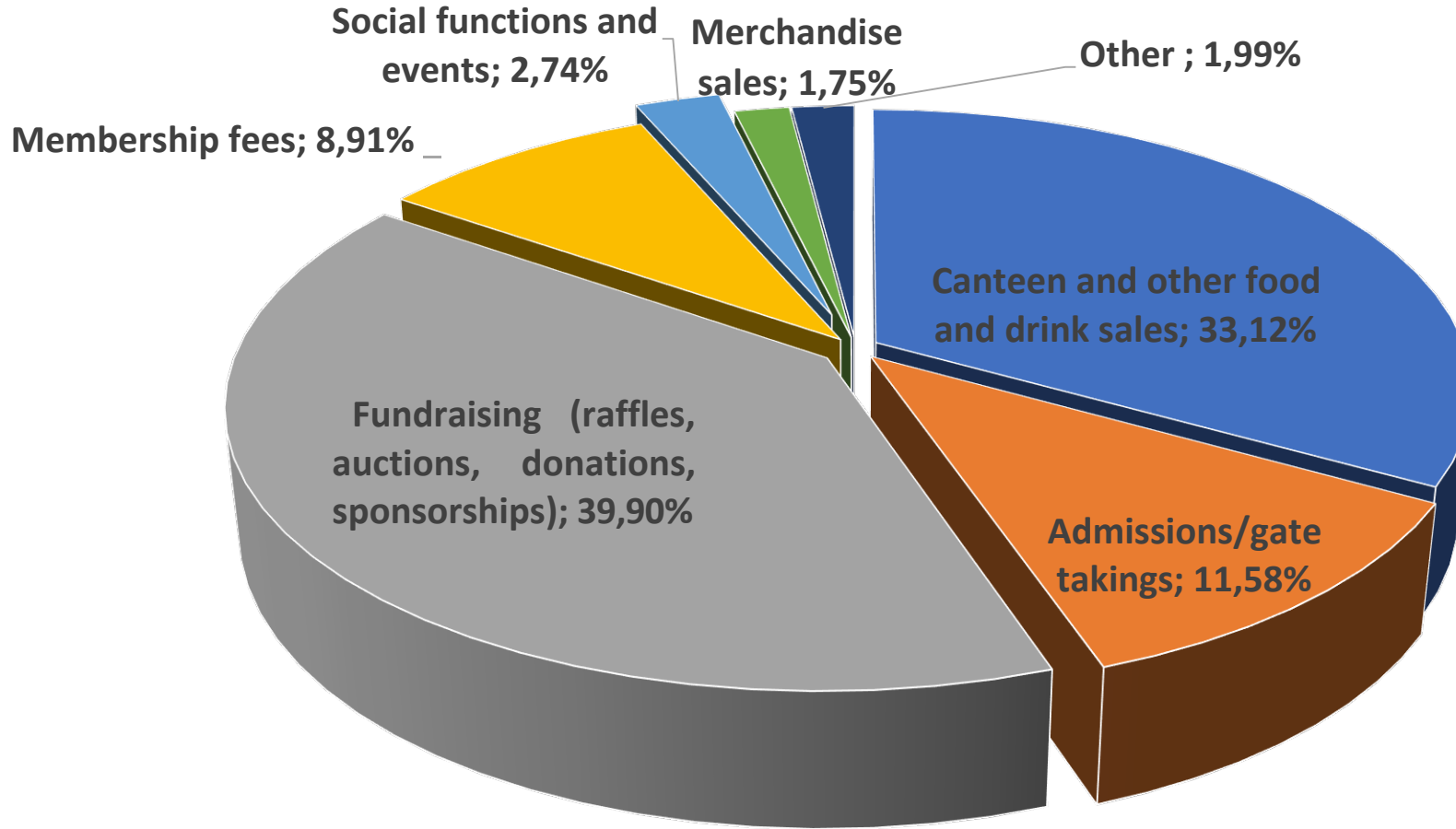
- Sport and recreation have always been important to Australia and Australians as part of the country's culture. During the past few decades 'sport and recreation' has emerged as a full-scale industry within the Australian economy, making substantial employment and financial contributions in all regions and at all levels (local, State and National).
- Australian Football is one of the major sports in Australia and is among the largest individual business sectors within the sports and recreation industry. This is reflected in:
 - *Number of participants* - Australian Football ranks third in terms of 'registered' players among all organised Australian sports, according to annual figures supplied to the Australian Sports Commission.
 - *Numbers of spectators* - Australian Football is the premier spectator sport in the country.
 - *Employment* - Australian Football peak bodies, leagues, associations and clubs employ 19,200 people (excluding players and umpires). A plethora of administrative, marketing, trades related, and catering jobs are directly created by Australian Football, and regular remuneration to players, coaches, trainers and other assistants has become accepted, across urban, regional and rural areas.
 - *Expenditure Generated*. There are 257 football leagues/associations, 2,685 Australian Football clubs and 16,424 club teams throughout Australia; each club is effectively a small business in its own right (and many are medium or large businesses).
 - *Volunteers*. An estimated 209,101 Australian Football volunteers contribute 16.54 million working hours per year, worth the equivalent of \$360 million in labour effort.

Country Victoria remains a heartland for Australian football

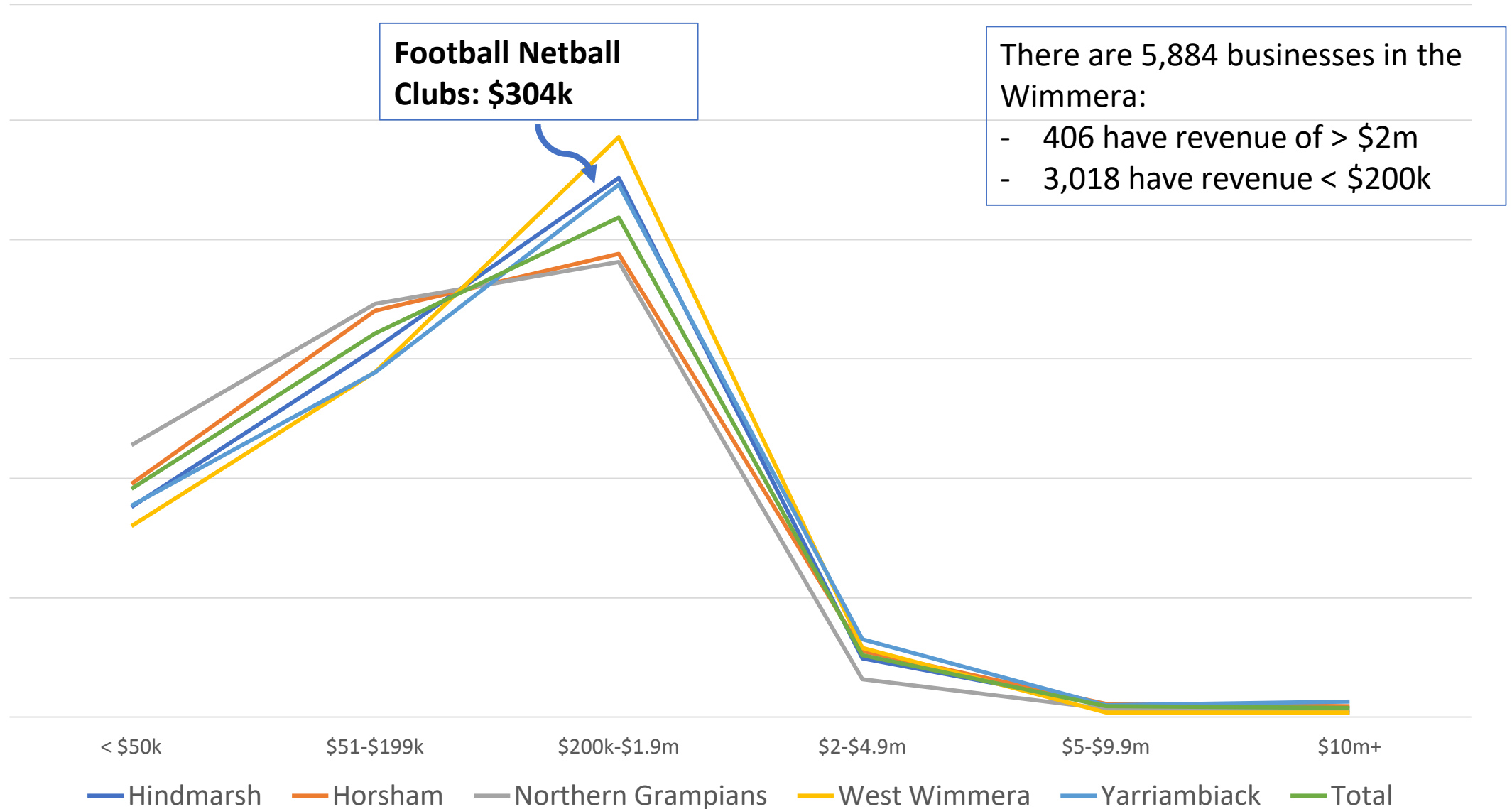
- Country Victoria has 6.7% of Australia's population but 12.3% of Australian Football participants (including competition, school, Auskick, AFL9s and other programs).
- Significantly Victoria has 44.4% of all football *club competition* participants and country Victoria has 22.3% of all *club competition* participants (more than 3 times its % population)

	Participants 2019	% of Aust in 2019	Resident Population	% of Australian Population
Victoria				
Melbourne Metropolitan Regions	271,530	15.82%	4,677,157	19.02%
Country Regions	211,262	12.31%	1,644,491	6.69%
Total Victoria	482,792	28.13%	6,321,648	25.71%

Estimated % Average Annual Income: Wimmera Football Netball Clubs (2019)



Wimmera Football Netball Clubs are in the top 40-50% of Regional Businesses



Wimmera Football Netball Club Average Fixed Costs



Fixed Costs	% Average FNC
Advertising/Marketing(inc. sponsorship)	1.33%
Accounting/Professional Fees	0.41%
Bank Charges/Interest	0.85%
Insurance	0.26%
Util/Post/Print/Stat/Teleph/IT	1.35%
Rates/Rent/Taxes	0.10%
Repairs and Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance	2.98%
Other Admin (including wages, honorariums, contractors)	7.03%
Sub-Total Fixed Costs	14.32%
Estimated Average Annual Fixed Costs	\$43,581

Wimmera Football Netball Club Average Variable Costs

Variable Costs (during COVID pandemic)	% Average FNC
Match expenses	1.05%
Player, coach, medical support, umpire payments	49.94%
Affiliation/transfer fees	8.07%
Social functions/clubs/fundraising	21.20%
Merchandise, uniforms, medical and training supplies	4.62%
Travelling and motor vehicles	0.48%
Trophies and prizes	0.33%
Sub-Total Variable Costs	85.68%
Estimated Average Annual Variable Costs	\$260,834

Link between Income and Variable Costs

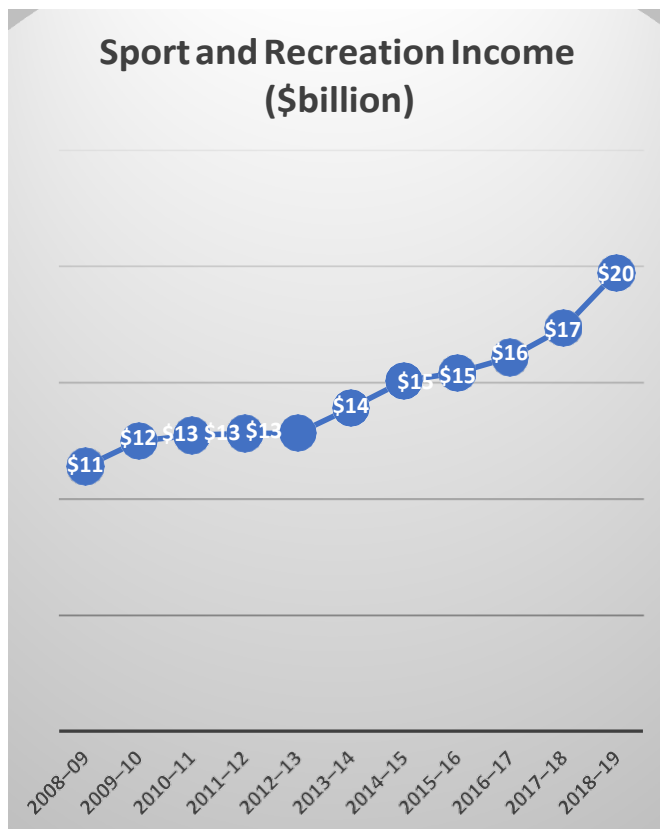


Wimmera Sports and the COVID 19 Pandemic

June 2020



Sport and Recreation: A Growth Sector



- Sport and recreation have always been important to Australia and Australians as part of the country's culture. During the past few decades 'sport and recreation' has emerged as a full-scale industry within the Australian economy, making substantial employment and financial contributions in all regions and at all levels (local, State and National).
- Until the challenges introduced through the COVID 19 pandemic, sport and recreation was a major Australian growth industry. The cancellation of sport during the pandemic, from the highest profile competitions and events (Olympic Games, AFL, NRL, etc) through to grassroots community competitions and programs, has been unparalleled in living memory.
- The sport and recreation sector increased its income from \$11 billion to \$20 billion in the 10 years to 2019 - 6% per year (ABS). It is likely to be 25-30% down in 2020.

Some sports comparable with a large % of the entire Wimmera Economy

- Home to 53,655 people (inc Buloke), Wimmera - Southern Mallee supports **23,360 jobs** and has an annual economic output of **\$6.501 billion**:
 - **\$2.170 billion in agriculture and manufacturing (mostly food processing)**
 - **Personal services \$0.998 billion.**
- For example
 - AFL has a direct annual economic contribution of:
 - \$2.728 billion in Victoria (equivalent to 42% of the WSM economy)
 - \$4.997 billion in Australia (equivalent to 77% of the WSM economy)
 - Golf has a direct economic contribution of:
 - \$0.850 billion in Victoria (13% of WSM economy)



Wimmera Region: A Traditional Sport Heartland

- A heartland for traditional sports:
 - Australian Football
 - Netball
 - Hockey
 - Rowing
 - Tennis
 - Bowls
 - Golf
 - Basketball
 - Fishing
- An adopter of smaller or emerging sports, such as:
 - Equestrian
 - Swimming
 - Sailing
 - Federation Football (soccer)
 - Rugby league
 - Dragon boating

Australian Football Player to Population Rates: Total

NON METROPOLITAN – Mega Regions	5-12 years			13-18 years			19+ years			5-39 years		
	Players	Population	Rate	Players	Population	Rate	Players	Population	Rate	Players	Population	Rate
Barwon Western District	14,034	42,898	32.72%	11,736	31,859	36.84%	5,126	105,234	4.87%	30,897	179,991	17.17%
Loddon	6,572	20,513	32.04%	7,506	15,561	48.24%	2,756	48,261	5.71%	16,834	84,335	19.96%
Central Highlands & Wimmera Mallee	9,645	28,454	33.90%	9,725	20,996	46.32%	4,087	67,609	6.05%	23,457	117,058	20.04%
Gippsland & Peninsula & South East	25,175	114,256	22.03%	18,301	78,852	23.21%	6,050	279,302	2.17%	49,526	472,411	10.48%
Goulburn & Hume	8,457	29,696	28.48%	8,072	21,945	36.79%	4,464	65,252	6.84%	20,993	116,892	17.96%
Total Non-Metropolitan	63,883	235,816	27.09%	55,340	169,212	32.70%	22,483	565,658	3.97%	141,706	970,686	14.60%
TOTAL Victoria	160,826	628,100	25.61%	149,874	448,509	33.42%	48,404	1,969,685	2.46%	359,104	3,046,294	11.79%
Wimmera Southern Mallee	2,245	5,467	41.06%	2,663	4,144	64.27%	750	12,277	6.11%	5,658	21,888	25.85%

Australian Football was discussed in detail at a recent Wimmera Sports Assembly forum: This table is included just to demonstrate the Wimmera's status as a traditional sporting heartland.

AusPlay Data

Difference between AusPlay data and a Sports Census?

- AusPlay is a survey of people (covers organised and unorganised)
- Sports Census is a count of participation under control of the peak bodies

ADULTS	AUSTRALIA		
	2016	2017	2018
	Estimate (000s)		
Walking (Recreational)	8,649.0	8,516.2	9,145.3
Fitness/Gym	6,479.6	6,764.4	7,131.9
Swimming	2,908.5	2,918.0	3,128.2
Athletics, track and field (includes jogging and running)	3,105.0	3,071.9	3,086.0
Cycling	2,325.6	2,250.9	2,381.0
Bush walking	1,198.5	1,158.0	1,165.6
Yoga	876.0	939.7	1,090.4
Football/soccer	1,143.6	1,108.5	1,006.2
Golf	1,024.9	978.6	955.9
Tennis	926.4	922.7	885.1
Basketball	689.2	707.1	700.8
Pilates	497.3	577.3	678.8
Australian football	499.9	468.6	584.9
Cricket	577.5	502.7	541.1
Netball	603.1	592.2	517.3

CHILDREN	AUSTRALIA		
	2016	2017	2018
	Estimate (000s)		
Swimming	1,410.1	1,497.1	1,654.7
Football/soccer	680.5	663.4	699.7
Dancing (recreational)	380.9	375.6	485.3
Gymnastics	351.7	359.4	484.1
Australian football	382.5	415.1	390.0
Netball	328.6	309.2	355.3
Basketball	291.2	343.0	322.7
Tennis	282.4	280.7	308.8
Athletics, track and field (includes jogging and running)	209.8	257.5	273.8
Cricket	260.8	256.0	257.7

Each Australian sport defines a regional structure to reflect (one or more of):



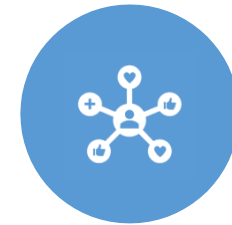
THE NUMBER OF CLUBS IN EACH REGION



NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS (NOT ONLY CLUB, BUT ENTRY LEVEL, SCHOOL AND PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS)



RESOURCES (GAME DEVELOPMENT STAFF, GROUNDS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE)



OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH (AND SOMETIMES FOR IDENTIFYING TALENT)

For some sports we'll refer to the Wimmera region but in many cases the region is broader, eg Western Vic, Grampians, Highlands and Wimmera

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION IN SPORT AND RECREATION

Round 1: DIRECT

NSO's, State Bodies,
Associations/Leagues

Unaffiliated Groups and
Organisations/Venue
Owners (eg Councils,
Multifunctional Centres)

Clubs

Round 2: DIRECT

Participants
Spectators
Supporters
Volunteers
Officials

Round 3: ANCILLARY

Examples:
Sports Retailers
Coaches/Trainers
Sports Health
Event Managers

Rounds 4+: INDIRECT

Businesses – Predominantly in key sectors
of:
Health
Accommodation
Food Service
Transport
Media and IT
Retail
Construction (for maintenance)

Direct

Indirect

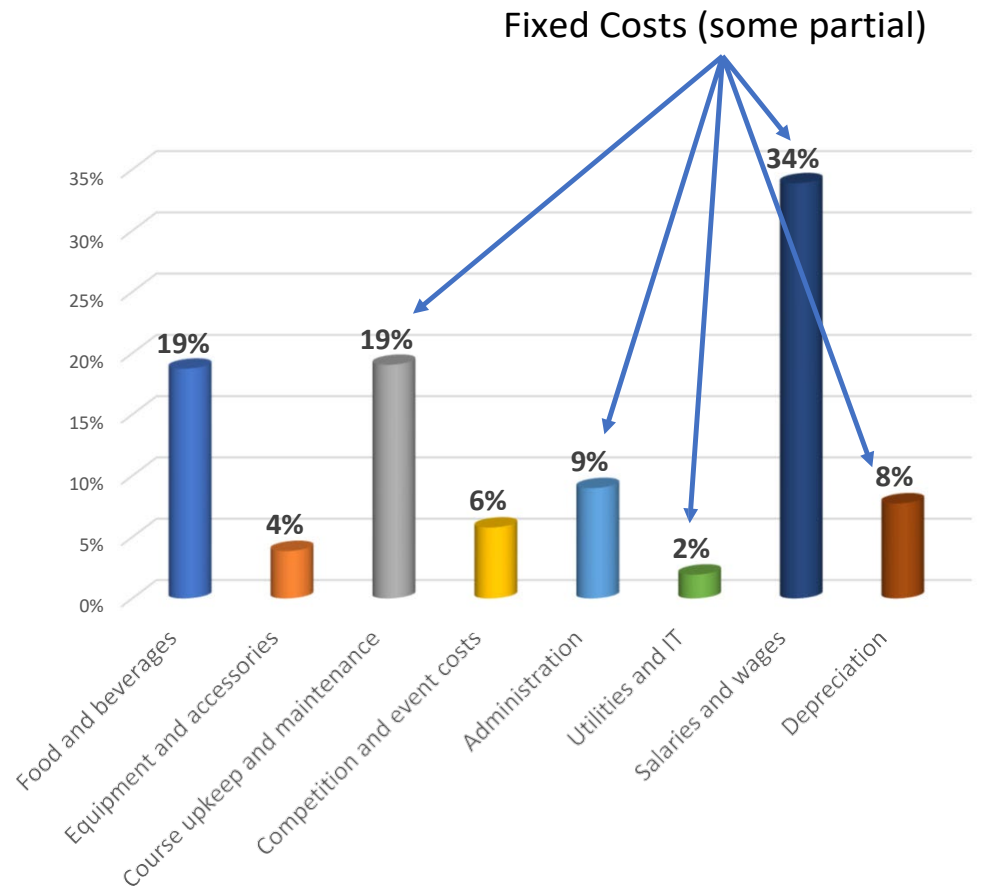
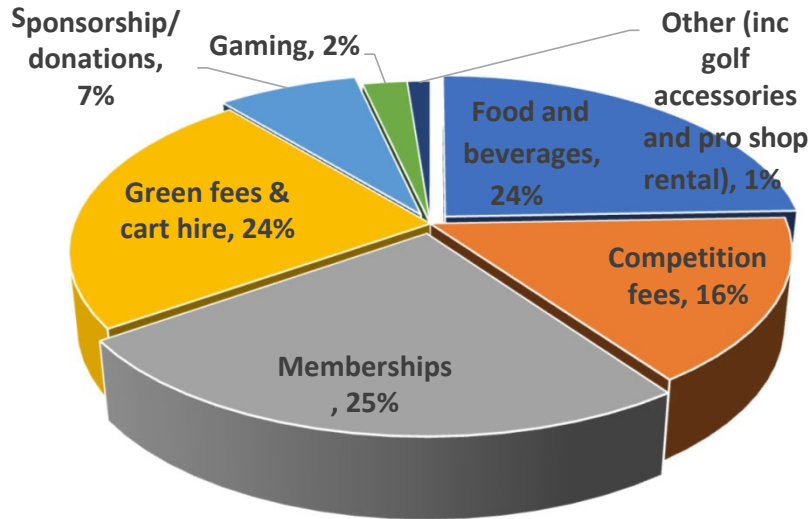
Golf in the Wimmera

- 32 courses: 6 x 9 holes and 26 x 18 holes
- Total direct economic contribution of golf clubs: \$5.803 million
- A vast difference between the top clubs and the others in economic contribution

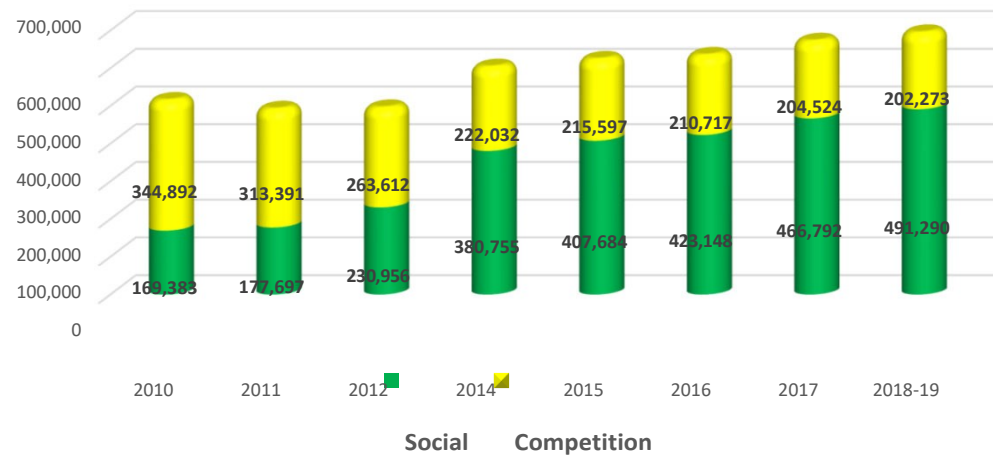
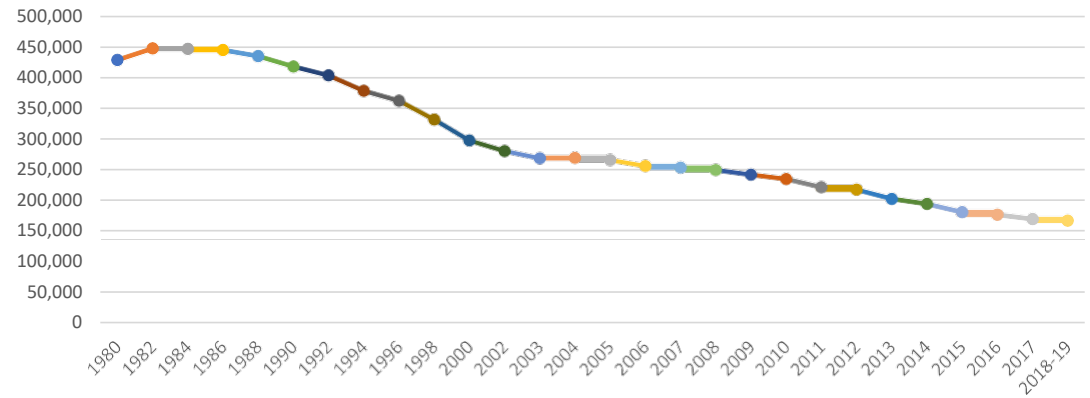


Hindmarsh	5	Courses
Horsham	6	Courses
Northern Grampians	6	Courses
West Wimmera	6	Courses
Yarriambiack	9	Courses

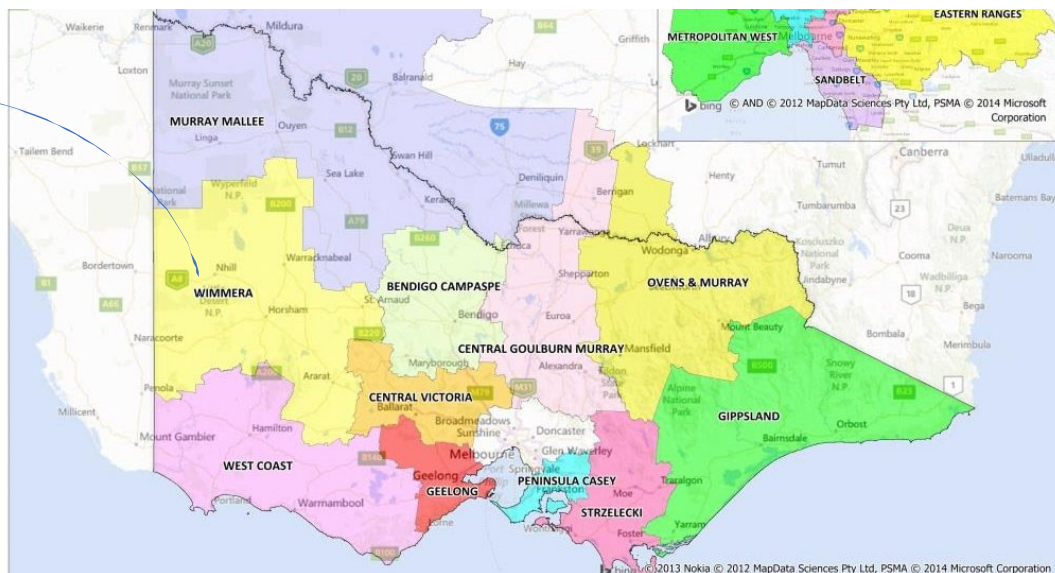
Golf Club Income and Expenditure



Bowls:
Traditional
bowls has
given way to
social bowls



Bowls in Country Victoria



Victoria	Competition Participants			Social Participants			Jack Attack Programs			TOTAL	
	Pennant	Tournaments/Other	Total Competition	Barefoot	Corporate	Other Social	Total Social	Jack Attack	Junior Jack Attack	Total JA and JJA	Participants
Country											
Geelong	2,700	2,545	5,245	203	1,015	2,883	4,181	185	333	518	9,944
West Coast	2,539	1,389	3,928	1,727	1,034	8,201	10,985	18	295	313	15,225
Bendigo Campaspe	3,452	2,057	5,509	457	1,982	12,492	14,989	1	359	359	20,857
Central Goulburn Murray	3,207	1,928	5,135	0	993	14,901	15,905	167	248	415	21,455
Ovens and Murray	1,644	1,135	2,779	7	1,293	5,772	7,103	0	257	257	10,139
Central Victoria	2,920	1,744	4,664	1,259	2,584	24,192	28,041	5	128	133	32,838
Wimmera	1,313	398	1,711	421	190	5,457	6,068	17	224	241	8,021
Murray Mallee	1,518	566	2,084	591	133	6,804	7,537	12	219	232	9,853
Strzelecki	1,057	616	1,673	516	312	3,433	4,261	35	328	363	6,297
Gippsland	865	435	1,300	392	209	2,966	3,568	32	82	114	4,982
Peninsula Casey	2,459	753	3,213	1,049	633	8,389	10,124	99	762	861	14,197
Sub Total	23,675	13,565	37,240	6,624	10,377	95,490	112,761	571	3,235	3,806	153,808

Wimmera Bowls Clubs

There are 27 bowls clubs in the Wimmera region (excluding Ararat) in:

Horsham – 6 clubs

Hindmarsh – 4 clubs

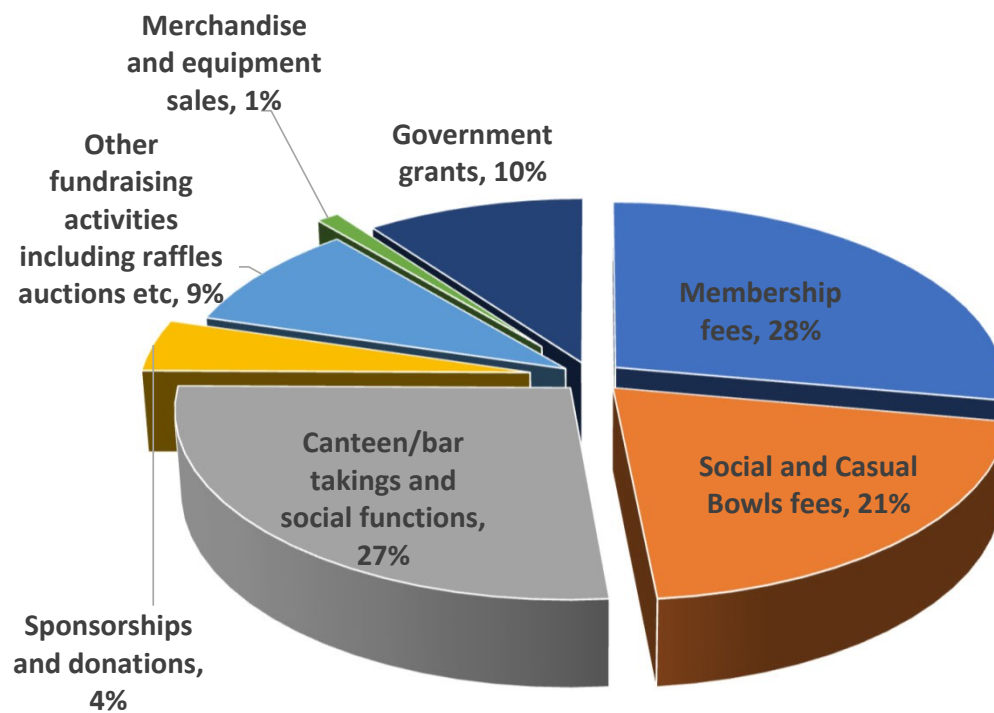
Northern Grampians – 5 clubs

West Wimmera – 4 clubs

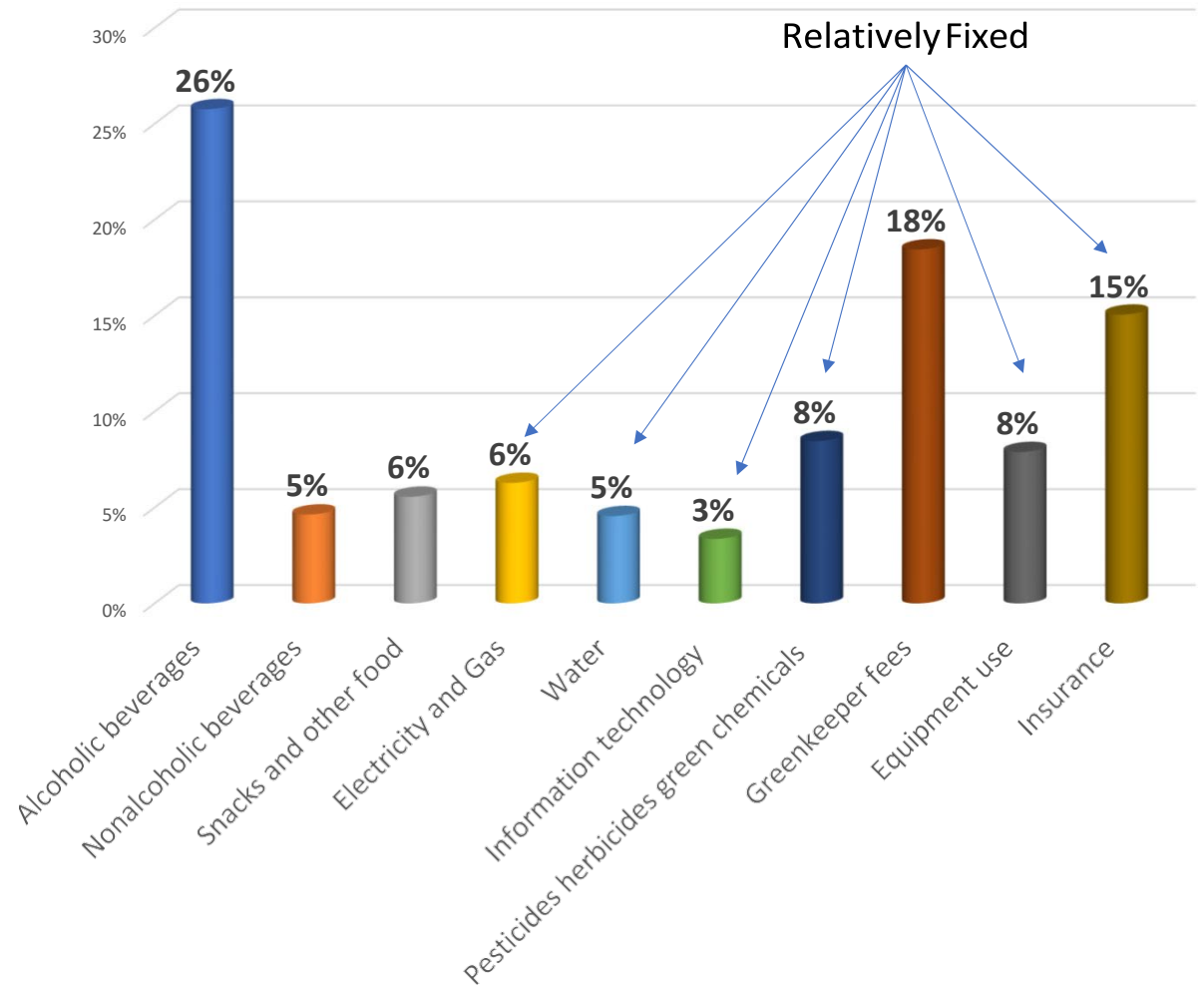
Yarriambiack – 8 clubs

Average income is \$55,000

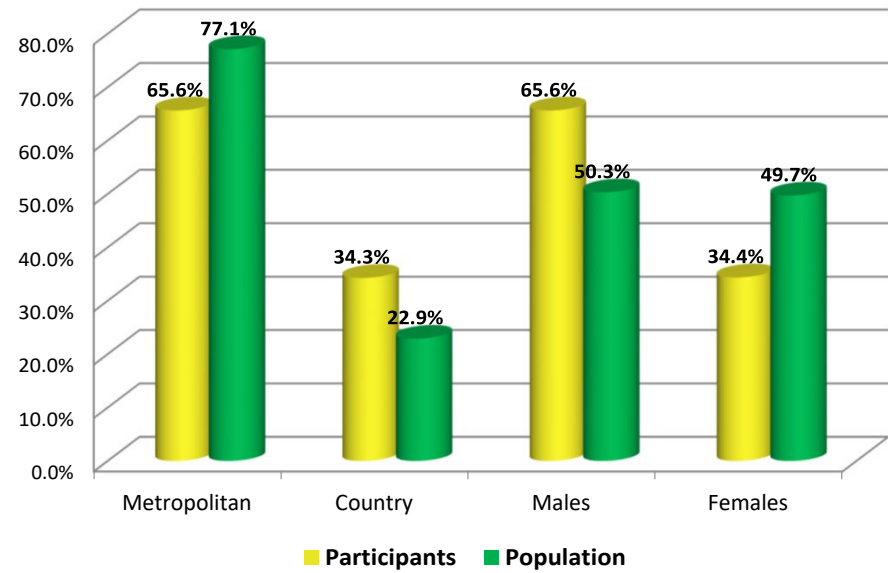
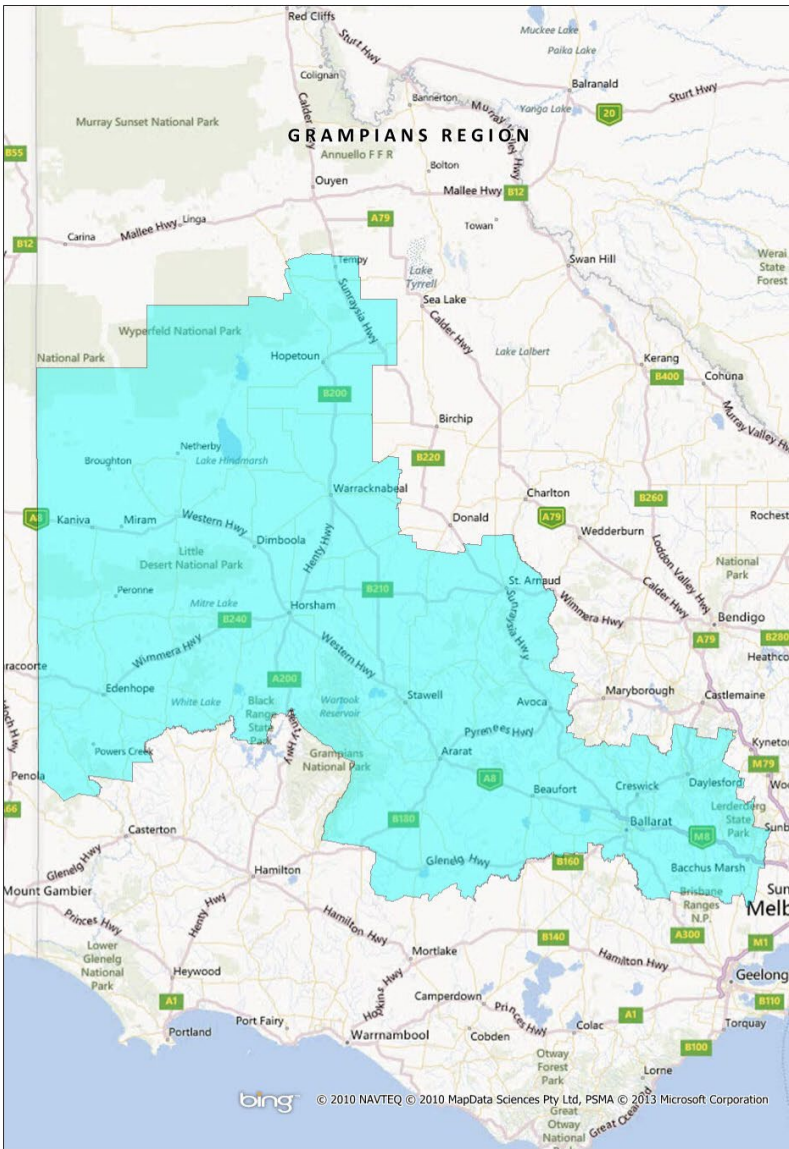
Wimmera
Bowls Clubs
Average
Income Split



Bowls Club Key Expenditures

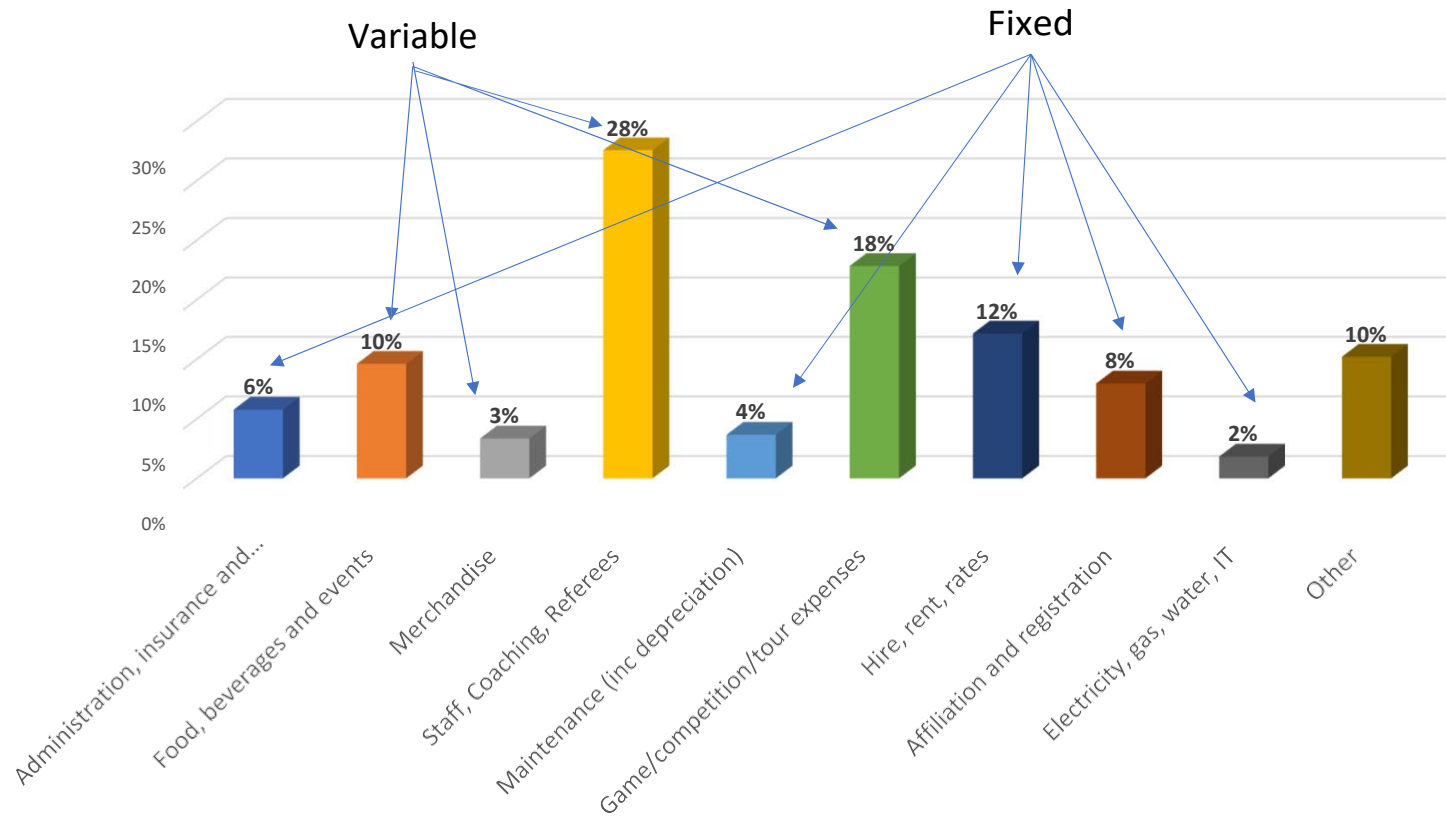


Basketball



Basketball – Grampians Region Economic Contribution about \$15.5 million

Average Club and Association Expenditure

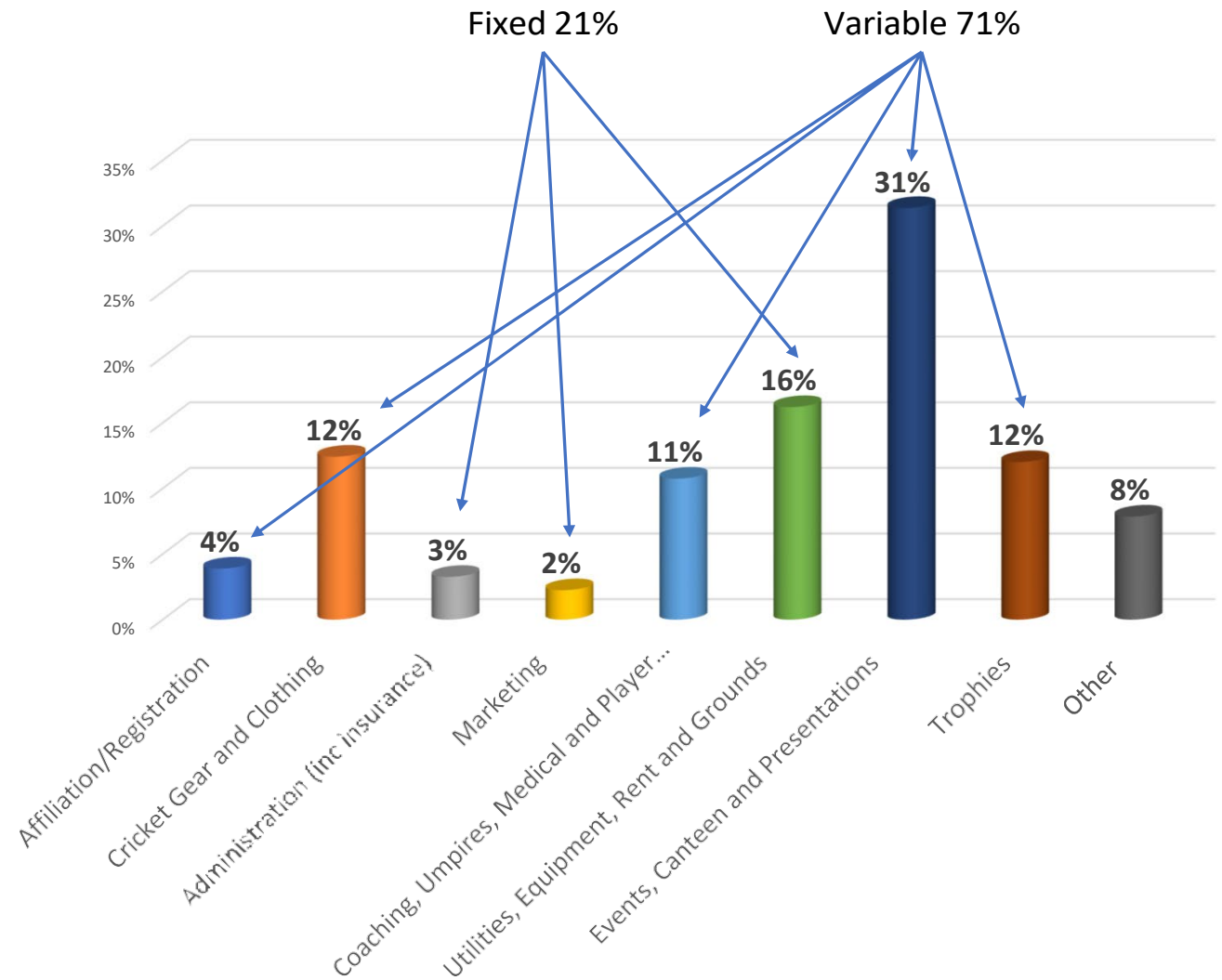


Regions and Club Cricket in Country Victoria



Region:	Assoc-iations	Total Clubs	Total Junior Teams 9-12	Total Junior Teams 13-18	Senior	Veteran	Total Teams	Average Teams/ Club
Northern Rivers (VIC)	8	88	103	115	237	3	458	5.2
Barwon (VIC)	4	67	45	157	239	5	446	6.7
Central Highlands (VIC)	8	86	40	184	193	3	420	4.9
Gippsland (VIC)	7	86	44	133	228	6	411	4.8
Western Country (VIC)	9	90	26	136	174	1	337	3.7
Mallee Murray (VIC)	5	35	26	50	102	0	178	5.1
North East Country (VIC)	2	27	32	49	89	2	172	6.4

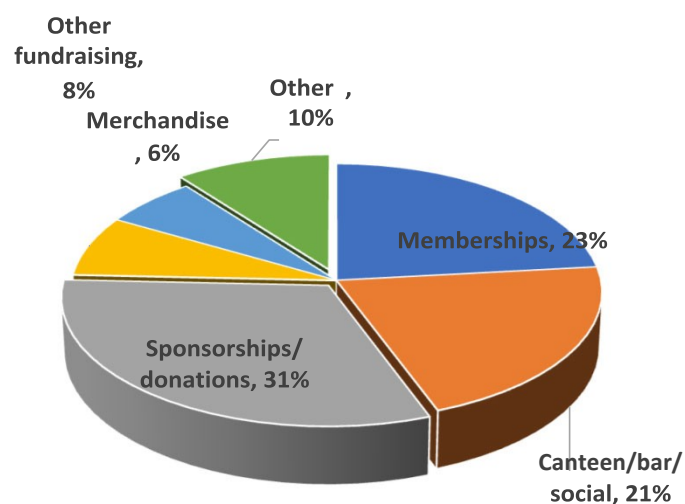
Country Cricket Club Average Expenditure



Tennis

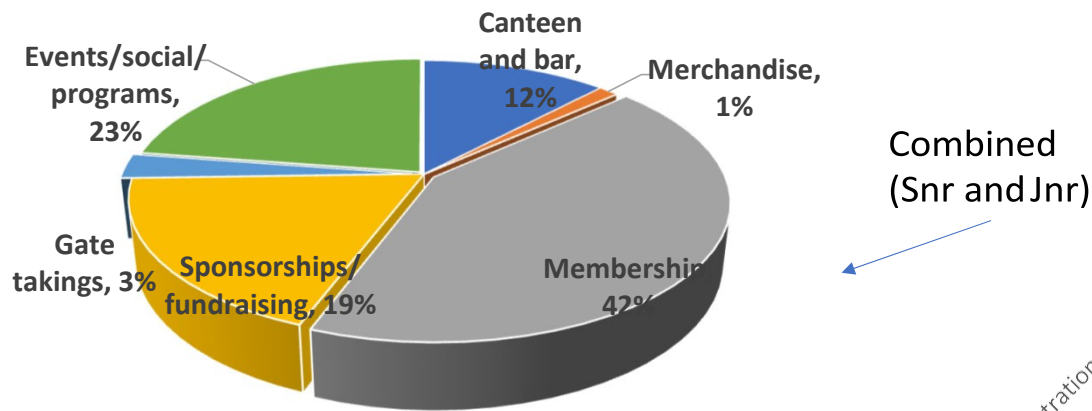
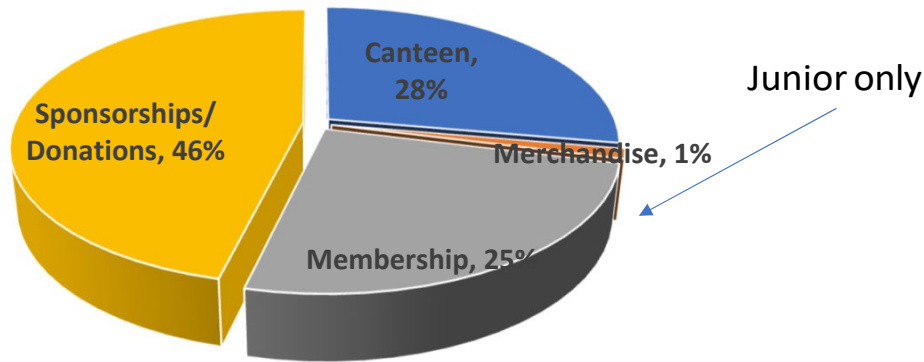
Average Courts	Tennis Club/Facility	Estimated Average Expenditure
20.3	Level 1	\$122,774
13.4	Level 2	\$75,348
8.8	Level 3	\$39,176
4.8	Level 4	\$18,704
2.2	Level 5	\$8,550

Rugby League

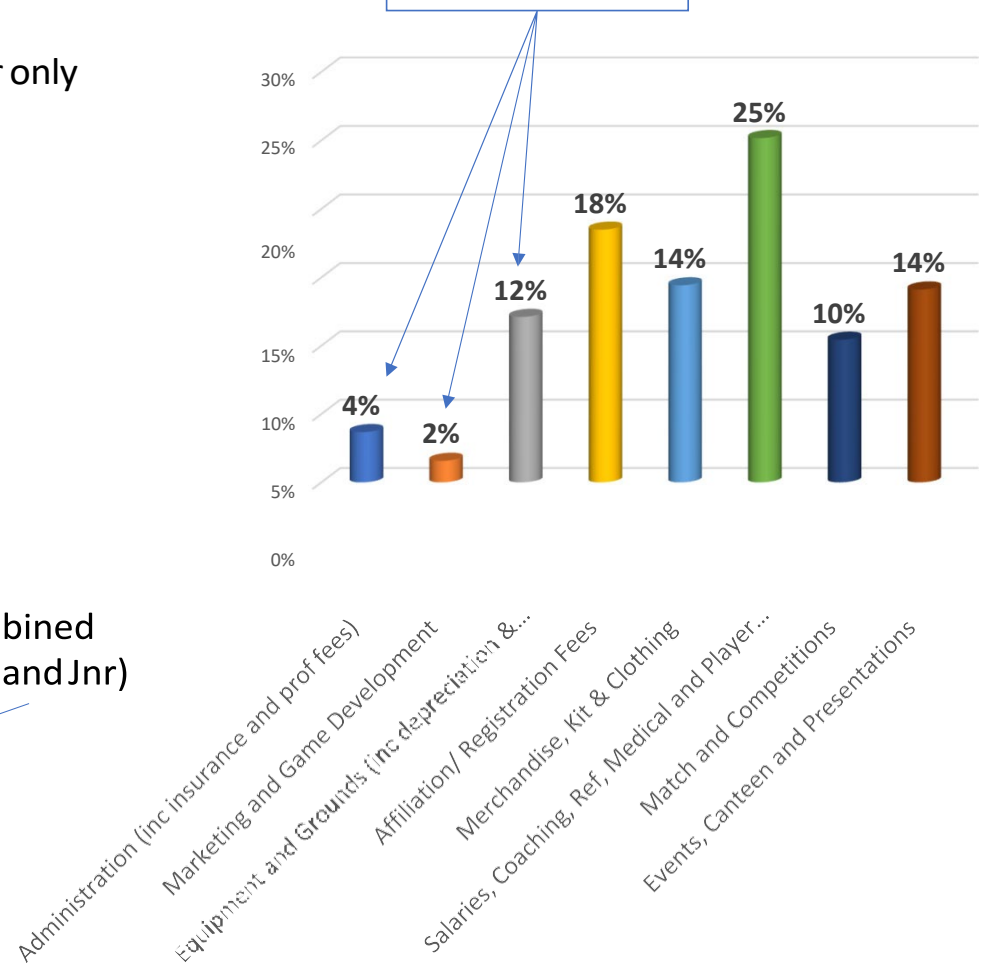


- Rugby League in Victoria has grown substantially since the inception of NRL Club Melbourne Storm in 1998 (and the more recent takeover of Touch Football Australia) with junior, senior, men's and women's competitions now across Melbourne, Geelong, North-East Victoria and Sunraysia. The Wimmera's only club plays in the Limestone Coast League – with clubs from Mount Gambier (1-2 clubs), Naracoorte and Warrnambool (3 clubs), so travel costs would be relatively high.
- Sponsorships and donations are the largest individual source of income for grassroots clubs, although expenditure by members, players and their friends and families, in total, contributes 50% of income (through fees, social, canteen/bar and merchandise).

Income and Expenditure: Soccer Club

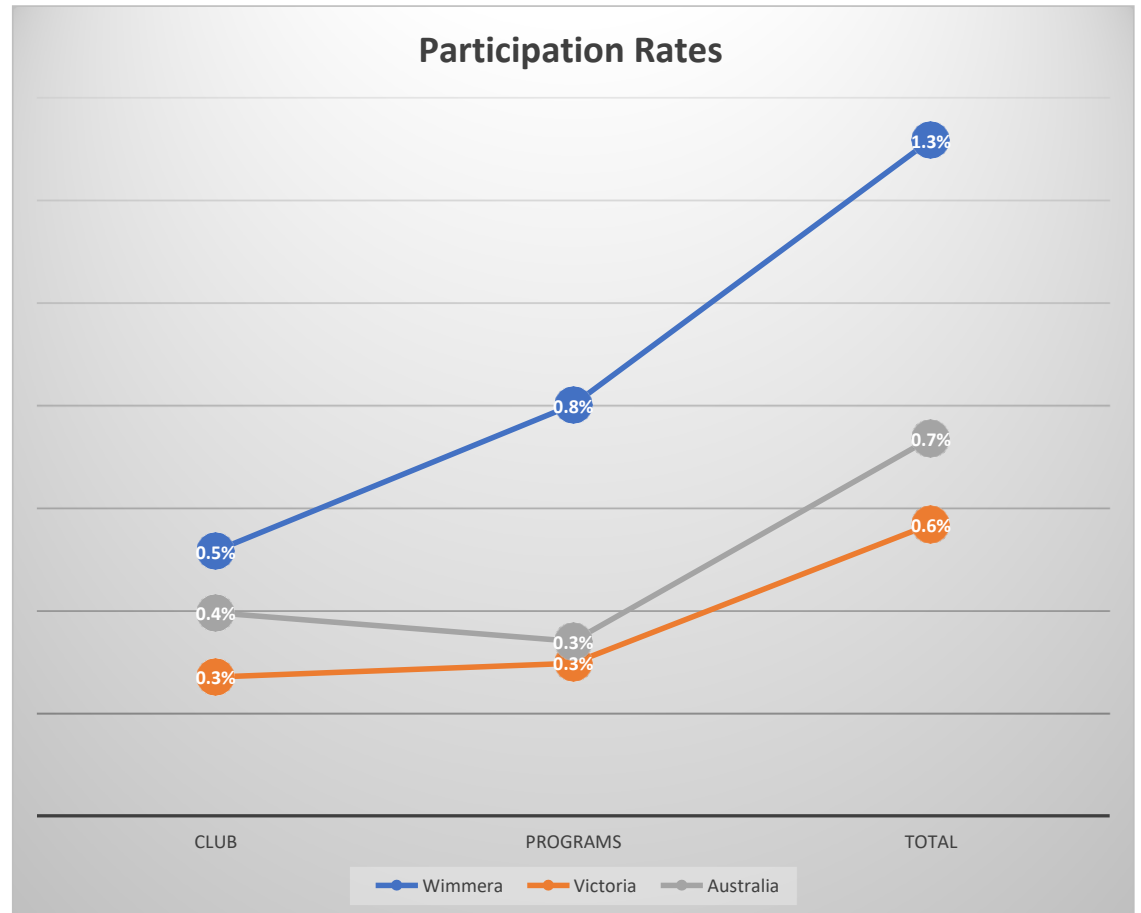


Fixed Costs: 22%



Hockey

Estimated Wimmera Hockey Participation



Sporting Club Committee Conversations

Football-netball clubs have long been the cornerstone of regional communities but now face an uncertain future as COVID-19 threatens the very fabric of community sport.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are well documented. A weaker economy will have an immediate impact on clubs that rely on the support of small businesses. At the same time, questions around what community sport will look like when it returns only amplify the pressure on a club's board/committee.

However, the break in competition offers boards/committees an opportunity to address their club's off-field position without the added pressure of on-field success.

These are areas of discussion board/committee members can engage in to ensure their club not only survives the COVID-19 shutdown but emerges better-positioned for a sustainable and viable future.

Governance

Good sports governance is a crucial component of any successful club, as it provides the foundation for clubs to minimise risks, improve performance and be sustainable.

- Review how your committee/board is operating in regards to good governance procedure and identify and address any shortfalls
- Assess the level of knowledge that your committee/board have regarding governance and invest in education and training if necessary

Finance

While the treasurer may be responsible for the day-to-day management of finances, all board/committee members must be informed of the club's financial position to make well-educated decisions when navigating out of the break in competition.

- Conduct an internal audit, so all board/committee members are aware of the club's financial position and understand the fixed and variable costs
- Assess what the club's main source of revenue are now may be in the future. Consider things such as sponsorship support, canteen sales, gate takings and fundraising events that may be affected by government restrictions.
- Review the club's budget and cash flow projection. With sport in hiatus, now is an opportune time to draft a budget, should your club not have one.
- Reduce any unnecessary expenditure.
- Determine what fixed costs are essential to run the club and negotiate what other payments could be delayed or deferred.
- Communicate with stakeholders (e.g. councils, peak bodies) about the financial pressure of any variable costs.
- Assess the viability of player payments in the short and long term
- Apply for relevant federal and state government support grants

Board/Committee Skills Audit

The board/committee should possess a skill set that addresses the areas needed to ensure a viable and sustainable club.

Skills that are represented on an effective board/committee may include:

- Financial management
- Legal qualification and/or knowledge and skills in governance
- Human resources or personnel experience
- Strategic planning
- Marketing experience
- Knowledge/experience in the relevant sport

Identify ways you can fill any skill gaps on your board/committee by:

- Approach members of your club who possess identified skills that may be receptive to joining the board/committee
- Investigate upskilling opportunities for current board/committee members and invest in their development

Strategic Planning

A well-developed strategic plan works to eliminate as much uncertainty as possible about the future by identifying a club's long-term ambitions and the actions within a board/committee's control to achieve them.

Thought must be given to the overall direction of the club, and questions asked about its long-term purpose:

- What is our club's mission?
- What is our club's purpose?
- What are our club's values?
- What are the club's goals in regards to finance, membership, on-field success, socially and facilities?
- What are the club's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?

A strategic plan should identify long-term goals that are:

- Specific to the club and the space it operates in and are measurable
- Achievable within a set timeframe
- Realistic given the club's resources and environment
- Time bound – plans need to have a 12 month to five year focus and be reviewed regularly

Sustainability

With the season on hold, now is a good time to review factors that may impact the growth and sustainability of your club. Consider the following:

- Does your club have a junior development policy?
- Does your club meet the Victorian Child Safe Standards?
- How does your club engage with existing Sponsors?
- What does your club do to actively seek out new sponsorship opportunities?
- Does your club conduct activities/events that encourage member participation and community engagement?
- Does your club offer an inclusive environment that is attractive to new and existing members of all backgrounds?

Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly can assist community sports clubs conduct a 'Club Health Check' and can be contacted via email at eo@wrsa.org.au.

The Leisure Networks ClubHelp portal (<https://wrsa.org.au/club-development/clubhelp/>) also offers resources to assist in club development.

Alternatively, you can contact Verneeta Taylor at Wimmera Development Association on 0419 114 274.