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# Learning & Development Review

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## Findings & Recommendations

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Purpose Driven Performance  
Colin Brown Consulting  
March 2020

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## Introduction

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) engaged Purpose Driven Performance and Colin Brown Consulting to undertake an independent review of their learning and development and club support (Every Club) programs.

This report presents the Findings & Observations, Opportunities and Recommendations into the future delivery of Learning and Development for the Western Australian sport and recreation industry. Specifically, it addresses the following objective:

1. *Review the current Learning and Development Strategy (2018-2020) deliverables and consult with industry to inform the development of relevant and contemporary learning and development opportunities for the sport and recreation sector (specifically clubs, regional associations, State level boards/staff, coaches and officials) going forward;*

This document has been informed by responses to the consultation period held between January to March 2020 with feedback collated into a series of findings, observations and opportunities. This report sits alongside a discussion paper into club development roles and responsibilities, and a review of the departments current Every Club program, also prepared as part of this review. Collectively these reports provide a strategic assessment of the departments learning and development support and a framework for future delivery.

The deliverable from this paper, as per the Request for Quotation documentation from the DLGSC, is to provide feedback and recommended options for future delivery of the Learning and Development Program.

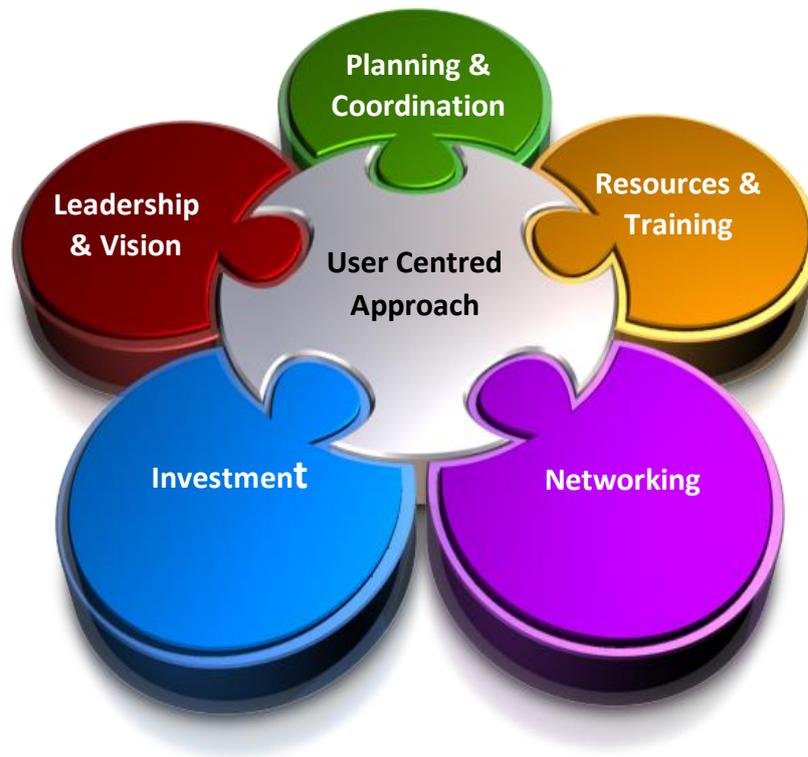
The process used to arrive at the final recommendations after the data collection phase of the project was to:

- group the feedback into key areas;
- articulate a number of key findings, observations and potential opportunities from each area; and
- generate relevant recommendations for each area.

Throughout the consultation, a consistent theme emerged; that the model of support for learning and development needs to be clearly focussed around meeting the needs of the end user with a solution focussed approach. The framework is built on the Guiding Principle of a User Centred Approach supported by five 'enabling' pillars:

1. Leadership & Vision
2. Planning & Coordination
3. Networking
4. Resources & Training
5. Investment

**Figure 1: Framework of Learning and Development Support**



### Findings/Observations and Opportunities

The Findings/Observations and Opportunities section of the report is broken into three key focus areas, namely;

- Overarching themes / principles
- Industry Need
- Delivery Options

### Area of Focus One: Overarching themes/principles

A central theme to the delivery of all learning and development support is that it must be developed and provided with the needs of the end user at the forefront. This should be the cornerstone; whether the learning and development is focused at the State Sporting Association board or management level, volunteer coaches, officials or club committees, or anywhere in-between. This becomes the guiding principle for the creation of a framework for the delivery of learning and development throughout the sector.

In the 2017 Sport and Recreation (WA) survey (*Learning and Development Strategy 2018-2020, Consultation & Key Findings, DLGSC*), of 765 sport and recreation clubs and 66 state sport and recreation organisations, 89% of organisations view learning and development as either really important, or important, and make a conscious effort to invest in and develop their workforce. This clearly demonstrates an acknowledgement of the importance of developing their workforce and a demand for learning and development opportunities. It also highlights that the provision of learning and development opportunities is based on meeting the needs of sport and recreation organisations. Importantly, delivering solutions that are customised to address needs at an individual organisation level will deliver the best results and have the greatest impact in improving organisational performance.

Planning at an organisational level will facilitate the understanding of end user needs. In the same survey mentioned above, only 29% of State Sporting Associations and 57% of Industry Representative Organisations indicated they had a workforce development plan in place. A lack of capacity to develop a workforce plan was identified as the main reason why organisations did not have one. The situation with the board's of SSAs and IROs was similar with 37% and 61% respectively having development plans for their directors. In order to better inform and understand the needs of the end user, supporting the development of workforce and board development plans should be a high priority.

The department has an important role to play in supporting the setting of the strategic direction for learning and development as well as funding the implementation of programs and solutions. This role should be coordinated in close consultation with the industry, and consideration given to the changing nature of the relationship between the department and the industry as was highlighted in the Strategic Funding Review (SFR). Findings from the SFR specifically addressing this issue were:

*SFR Finding 4: There are a wide range of expectations of the role of the department in supporting the industry, with a shift of focus towards facilitating outcomes rather than leading the delivery.*

*SFR Finding 5: The department needs to continue to build the capacity and capability of organisations, recognising there is significant variation within the industry. How this occurs may require a different approach and relationship with the industry, including greater engagement and partnerships.*

In line with these findings, the department should consider how it can engage with industry and other key stakeholders in providing learning and development support to the industry.

At a sport and recreation organisational level, there is a high degree of commitment to providing learning and development opportunities. Results from the 2017 Sport and Recreation (WA) survey indicate most SSA's (87%) and IRO's (91%) with a paid workforce offer learning and development opportunities. 92% of organisations promote learning and development opportunities from external providers to develop their staff, with 64% offering in-house training and 58% offering mentoring / shadowing opportunities.

While there is a relatively high proportion of SSA's providing learning and development for their workforce, with some 70% budgeting for learning and development, the quantum of budget allocated to the task is between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per annum (*DLGSC 2018-2020 Learning and Development Strategy, Consultation & Key Findings*). This demonstrates a need for the department to continue to invest in learning and development to support sport and recreation organisations with limited capacity to invest in themselves.

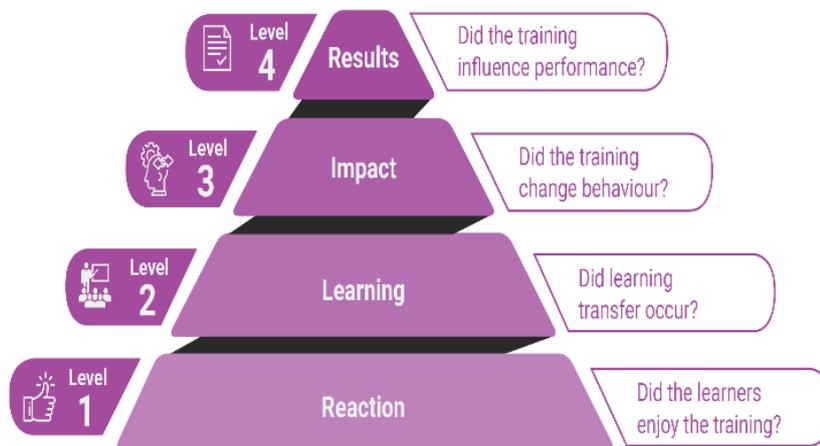
The DLGSC 2018-2020 Learning and Development Strategy for Sport and Recreation has been informed by a number of existing documents, feedback from industry members and key organisations as well as a '15-year historical review of learning and development course delivery'. The document highlights the key element of evaluation, stating;

- 'Robust process and impact evaluation with quantitative and qualitative measures'.
- 'Continuously improve and refine service delivery in line with industry needs'.

While the commitment to the second statement can clearly be demonstrated, the aspect of impact evaluation is less evident and much more challenging. Developing a strategy/program based on the identified needs within the industry is important, but it is fundamental that the impact of the strategy is evaluated.

Donald Kirkpatrick, past president of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), pioneered what is referred to as the four levels of evaluation for training programs.

**Figure 1**



While the first level is measured in most if not all the training that is delivered, subsequent levels become more challenging and are often ignored. But if the reason for undertaking learning and development programs is to change behaviours, it should become an integral component of the strategy.

## Key Findings, Observations & Opportunities: Overarching Themes/Principles

Key Finding / Observation	Opportunity
<b>Finding/Observation 1:</b> A central theme to the delivery of all learning and development support is that it must be provided with the needs of the end user at the forefront of all planning and decision making.	Adopting a common framework based on learning and development addressing the needs of the end user will assist organisations develop a strategic approach towards supporting the development of both paid and volunteer personnel.
<b>Finding/Observation 2:</b> It is important that sport and recreation organisations have a clear understanding of their learning and development needs.	Improved adoption of board and workforce development plans by state sport and recreation organisations will better identify their specific learning and development needs.
<b>Finding/Observation 3:</b> The changing nature of the role of the department and its relationship with industry requires the department to reconsider its approach towards the provision and delivery of learning and development support.	By partnering with the industry in the setting of strategy and designing the processes for learning and development, the department will ensure greater collective ownership, collaboration and coordination within this area.
<b>Finding/Observation 4:</b> There are relatively large numbers of sport and recreation organisations providing learning and development opportunities to their paid workforce.	The department should continue to invest in learning and development opportunities for sport and recreation with limited capacity to invest themselves.
<b>Finding/Observation 5:</b> There is not currently an evaluation framework that measures the impact of the learning and development strategy of the department.	The department should take a lead role in developing and implementing a comprehensive evaluation framework to measure the impact of the learning and development strategy within the industry.

### Area of Focus Two: Industry Needs

Workforce planning can be defined as the systematic identification and analysis of what an organisation requires to achieve its objectives in terms of its size, type, experience, as well as the knowledge and skills of its workforce. Workforce planning is an important step in the process of understanding the specific needs of an organisation and being able to develop solutions in order to address specific challenges it faces.

A coordinated ‘whole of organisation’ planning approach will deliver the best results and have the greatest impact in improving organisational performance. This involves understanding and adopting learning and development opportunities for the board, through to paid staff

and to volunteers, coaches and officials. As noted previously, only 29% of State Sporting Associations and 57% of Industry Representative Organisations indicated they had a workforce development plan in place with a lack of capacity to develop a workforce plan identified as the main reason why organisations did not have one.

Governance continues to be a high priority area of need for the industry with sport and recreation organisations noting the challenges associated with upskilling both new and existing board members. In the 2017 Sport and Recreation (WA) survey (*Learning and Development Strategy 2018-2020, Consultation & Key Findings, DLGSC*), a high proportion of SSA's reported having accessed individual board member training with 77% having done so in the previous 12 months. There was a large difference between SSA's with paid staff (89%) and volunteer run SSA's (53%) accessing individual board member training.

Priority areas for board development identified from consultation with SSA's were understanding the role of the board, developing strategy and managing risk, while board evaluation was another area where SSA's indicated they need support. Some SSA's noted that while it was generally easier to engage new board members in training, it was often challenging to get existing board members to participate as there is a sense that they have 'already done it' and didn't need to refresh or update their knowledge or skills. It was suggested that re-packaging content into new formats with new topics is vital in order to make board member training attractive to existing board members.

State Sporting Association leadership staff reported the greatest need in the following areas:

- Strategic planning
- Working with the Chair & Board
- Understanding self and leading others.

This is largely consistent with the findings from the 2017 survey (*Learning and Development Strategy 2018-2020, Consultation & Key Findings, DLGSC*), which reported strategic planning, and 360-degree management / leadership evaluation tool as the highest priorities followed by project management, financial and budgetary management and principles of effective human resource management.

Frontline management skills were reported as the greatest need for management and coordinator level staff across SSA's. In particular, the following were noted as the highest priority:

- Managing staff
- Project management
- Finance for non-finance managers

This is supported by the findings from the 2017 survey, along with feedback from the CEO of the Australian Institute of Management who reported that these frontline management skills continue to be the areas of greatest demand for manager and coordinator level employees typically across all industries.

A further area identified by SSA's is a need for industry specific training such as marketing to grow participation and membership and event management. It was suggested by several participants that either customised workshops or industry lead delivery accessing expertise that exists within the sector were two possible ways to provide this form of support.

SSA's also reported challenges in meeting the learning and development needs of regional staff, both paid and unpaid. These challenges fell into two categories; firstly, accessing the opportunities as these are mainly offered in the metropolitan area and secondly the relevance and application of the experience to the needs at the regional/local level. Solutions that focus on a network approach, involving partnerships across multiple stakeholders were seen as important when delivering learning and development support in regional areas.

The primary responsibility for the learning and development of coaches and officials sits with State Sporting Associations in conjunction with their National Sporting Organisation, which generally set the coach and official development framework for the sport. It was noted during the course of this review, the release by Sport Australia of a project to update the Coaching & Officiating Framework. Feedback highlighted the need to develop a broader workforce strategy to service and support the sector, organisations and individuals. A key focus area identified, is the need to develop a modernised coaching and officiating framework, to assist in providing a more holistic, participant / player focused approach to servicing individuals needs and learning and development requirements. The optimal output is to provide quality, safe environments for participants, players and athletes to thrive, based on their desired engagement in sport and activity, and to better support coaches and officials to do this.

The Coaching and Officiating framework will be underpinned by the Physical Literacy Framework and will be mapped with four levels of engagement.

1. **Learn** – Provides coaches and officials with the confidence and competence to support participants learn the basics required to successfully participate in the play stage;
2. **Play** – Provides coaches and officials with the basics to support social activity as well as modified formats;
3. **Compete** – Provides coaches and officials with the knowledge and skills to develop participants that are in a competition with the key objective of winning. This area would encompass initial talent identification; and
4. **Perform** – Provides coaches and or officials with the knowledge and skills to support players/athletes in the talent pathway and/or high-performance competitions.

Sport Australia will work with NSO's and SSA's to refine Coaching and Officiating frameworks across each sport. The role of DLGSC should focus on understanding how they can best support SSA's deliver on coaching and officiating needs, which will include supporting networking and the facilitation of professional development opportunities.

The Sport and Recreation Industry Snapshot, released by FutureNow in November 2019 stated, "A large volunteer workforce is essential to support sporting activities. This is especially so in regional areas and those employed in the sector need skills in training and managing the volunteer workforce to ensure this contribution is used effectively." While clubs are assisted in developing their volunteer management plans, the issue of developing the

skills of those working within the sector to train and manage the club volunteer, will require attention in the future.

### Key Findings, Observations & Opportunities: Industry Needs

Key Finding /Observation	Opportunity
<p><b>Finding/Observation 6:</b> There is a relatively low uptake of workforce development plans amongst sport and recreation organisations. A lack of capacity to develop a workforce plan was identified as the main reason why organisations did not have one.</p>	<p>Increased support for sport and recreation organisations to complete a workforce development planning exercise will improve their understanding of and planning for their development needs.</p>
<p><b>Finding/Observation 7:</b> Governance education remains a key priority for the boards of sport and recreation organisations. Priority areas for development include <i>understanding the role of the board, developing strategy and managing risk</i>.</p> <p>The value of board evaluation processes was noted however the follow up and implementation of identified improvements was an area boards require assistance.</p>	<p>Ensuring that governance education content is re-packaged and updated is considered important to reach experienced board members who may be reluctant to undertake training.</p>
<p><b>Finding/Observation 8:</b> The highest priority needs for executive &amp; leadership teams are strategic planning, understanding self and leading others, and working with the chair and board.</p>	<p>Supporting sport and recreation organisation leaders to access development opportunities that address priority learning needs in strategic planning, understanding self and leading others, and working with the chair and the board should be continued.</p>
<p><b>Finding/Observation 9:</b> The priority learning and development needs for management staff are project management, finance for non-finance managers and managing staff.</p>	<p>Supporting sport and recreation organisation management staff access development opportunities that address priority learning needs in project management, finance for non-finance managers and managing staff should be continued.</p>
<p><b>Finding/Observation 10:</b> Industry specific training such as marketing to grow participation and membership and event management training has been identified as an area of industry need.</p>	<p>The industry should consider opportunities to deliver industry specific learning and development training and customised content to meet the specific needs of the industry.</p>

<p><b>Finding/Observation 11:</b> Developing regionally based staff, both paid and unpaid is challenging for sport and recreation organisations due to challenges around accessing opportunities and suitability of content to address local development needs.</p>	<p>The industry should take a network and partnership approach to work with relevant stakeholders to deliver learning and development support in regional areas.</p>
<p><b>Finding/Observation 12:</b> Sport Australia is updating the Coaching &amp; Officiating Framework to assist in providing a more holistic, participant / player focused approach to servicing individuals needs and learning and development requirements.</p>	<p>The department should support the coaching and officiating needs of SSA's including the development of appropriate networks and professional development opportunities for the industry.</p>
<p><b>Finding/Observation 13:</b> Whilst there is a linkage between those employed in a sport and the volunteers who give up their time to contribute to their club/sport, there are differences in why they are involved and what they want from the experience. There is a need for those employed within a sport to develop the skills in training and managing the volunteer workforce.</p>	<p>Specific upskilling in understanding, training and managing the volunteer workforce can be developed and offered to those employed in the industry and involved in delivering training to volunteers.</p>

### Area of Focus Three: Delivery Options

It was clear throughout the consultation process that there is no one size fits all approach to the delivery of learning and development training. A flexible approach that offers a variety of delivery options is critical in providing solutions that meet the needs of the end user, whether that be a large SSA or small local community club.

Within these broad aspects, there were several trends and emerging approaches that were identified. Training that offers 'bite size' components is a growing trend. The Australian Institute of Management (WA) has evolved several programs to meet growing demand for this form of learning. They will shortly be introducing a '*mini MBA*' which will deliver the core components from an MBA across a five day course. This type of course aims to provide participants with learning outcomes associated with longer-term higher education degrees across a practical and efficient 5-day setting. While there is no formal accreditation resulting from the program, it addresses issues of cost and the time taken that is often a barrier associated with longer forms of learning.

This is further supported by FutureNow. Within the Sport and Recreation Industry Snapshot, released by FutureNow in November 2019 it was stated "sport and recreation organisations are heavily reliant on a large volunteer workforce. Industry reports that training activity targeted at specific volunteer outcomes are met through statements of attainment in specific units of competency, and to a lesser extent, skills sets, rather than full qualifications".

Examples were provided during the consultation process where training that was delivered at a whole of organisation level, (the board, management team or all staff) lead to better overall outcomes for the organisation. This is consistent with the broader theme of working at a more personalised level with an organisation. SSA's reported that while individual board member training is an important part of the education mix, the ability to bring the whole board along the development journey offered enhanced development outcomes for their board and organisation. Similar benefits were applicable to the paid workforce of organisations where the adoption of learning at a team or whole of organisation level were considered to deliver enhanced performance.

While face to face is the preferred learning method of 87% of sport and recreation organisations, digital and online training is seen as an important part of the mix to meet the needs of the workforce of the future. Respondents considered that digital and online worked best when:

- providing relatively concise information and in short packages;
- addressing a specific problem or issue;
- providing compliance-based information and/or training for a specific process that needs to be followed e.g. club registrar training for membership database system; and
- used in conjunction with a traditional face to face delivery formats.

While digital or online training is seen as providing flexible options for learning and development, several limitations were also recognised. Benefits of online learning include the increased availability into regional or remote areas, and the potential for participants to learn at their own pace or a time suitable to their individual needs. Regional and remote areas noted the limitations of poor internet connectivity, which often compromised the quality of the online learning experience and in some case deterred people from attempting this form of education again. While digital and online was suitable for some short form training (generally no more than 30-45 minutes) the medium was generally not considered suitable for longer forms of training, particularly where a lot of the learning came through group discussion and interactions.

The Australian Institute of Management (WA) have taken a 'blended' approach to the use of technology within some of their courses. While they don't deliver complete courses online, they are increasingly incorporating technology within the delivery of a course. This might involve the completion of pre-course work online or utilising technology within the classroom to provide the presenter with real time feedback to address issues that participants want to explore in further detail.

A wide range of sources and delivery partners are accessed to provide learning and development opportunities to the industry. These include peak industry bodies, consultants, DLGSC and other government agencies, Sport Australia, National Sporting Organisations and private providers such as AIM WA and from within the State Sporting Association itself. Larger SSA's are developing enhanced in-house capabilities to deliver internal training and incorporating mentoring and coaching capabilities to enhance the development of internal

staff. The opportunity for enhanced industry lead, peer-to-peer learning should be further explored.

**Key Findings, Observations & Opportunities: Delivery Options**

<b>Key Finding / Observation</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>
<b>Finding/Observation 14:</b> There is a growing trend towards training being provided in 'bite-size chunks'.	New training options that package content into smaller parts should be developed.
<b>Finding/Observation 15:</b> While individual board member training is an important part of the education mix, the ability to bring the whole board along the development journey offers enhanced development outcomes for their board and organisation.	The department should consider additional opportunities to engage the board as a whole in improvement processes such as board education and performance reviews.
<b>Finding/Observation 16:</b> While digital and online training is seen as an important form of learning and development, face-to-face is still largely seen as the most preferred method of training.	Learning and development which blends online learning with face-to-face can enhance the learning experience and outcomes for participants.
<b>Finding/Observation 17:</b> A wide variety of providers are accessed by sport and recreation organisations for their learning and development needs with larger SSA's increasing their in-house capability to develop their teams.	Enhancing industry lead learning and development including mentoring opportunities will assist the development of the industry.

## Recommendations

This report identifies seven key recommendations. These have been developed from the findings, observations and opportunities discovered through the data collection phase of the project, involving consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and sources of information from across the industry.

### **Recommendation 1: Common Strategic Framework** (See Finding/Observation 1 and 2)

That a common strategic framework for Learning and Development within the sport and recreation industry is adopted. The framework is built on the Guiding Principle of a User Centred Approach supported by five 'enabling' pillars:

1. Leadership & Vision
2. Planning & Coordination
3. Networking
4. Resources & Training
5. Investment

### **Recommendation 2: Workforce Development Plans** (See Finding/Observation 2)

A focus of any future learning & development strategy needs to have an emphasis on the development and adoption of workforce development plans by state sport and recreation organisations.

### **Recommendation 3: Role of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries** (See Finding/Observation 2, 3, 4 and 5)

That the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries continues to support the sport and recreation industry by:

- a) providing support to state sport and recreation organisations to develop workforce development plans.
- b) partnering with the industry in setting the strategy and agreed processes for learning and development.
- c) continuing to invest in learning and development opportunities for sport and recreation organisations with limited capacity.
- d) developing and implementing a comprehensive evaluation framework to measure the impact of the learning and development strategy within the industry.

**Recommendation 4: Governance Improvement** (See Finding/Observation 7, 15)

That governance improvement continues to be prioritised for industry support noting the following areas for improvement;

- a) Ensuring that content is refreshed and re-packaged to continue to engage current directors / board members.
- b) Implementing opportunities to engage the full board in governance improvement activities, in conjunction with individual director training and education.

**Recommendation 5: Learning & Development delivery methods** (See Finding/Observation 14, 16)

That the delivery of learning and development continues to focus on meeting the needs of the end user, utilising a variety of traditional and contemporary methods including:

- a) Packaging training options into smaller parts that can be more easily accessed.
- b) Effective utilisation of digital and online learning.
- c) The complementary use of digital and online learning to enhance face-to-face learning where appropriate.

**Recommendation 6: Collaborative approach** (See Finding/Observation 10, 11, 17)

That the industry takes a collaborative approach to better support the learning and development needs of the industry, including:

- a) Accessing industry expertise to address specific learning needs.
- b) Working with industry partners and stakeholders to enhance regional learning and development delivery.

**Recommendation 7: Volunteer Workforce** (See Finding/Observation 13)

That those responsible for managing the volunteer workforce within sport and recreation organisations are appropriately supported and developed to perform this role.