

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON COMMUNITY SPORT

**SURVEY REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2021 UPDATE**



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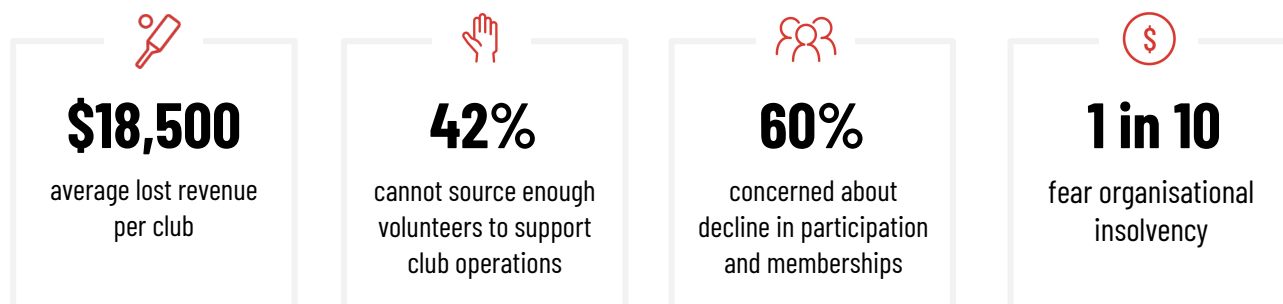
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Responses to this survey paint a vivid picture of the challenges faced by community sports clubs all over Australia due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey results raise serious concerns in three key areas; **devastating financial instability, declining participation, and declining volunteering**. Given that responses were received before the full extent of the recent Delta-related lockdowns in New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory became apparent, it is likely that the picture will continue to worsen in the weeks and months ahead.

Survey responses also showed that local sports clubs are deeply embedded in their communities, with many **going out of their way to support members suffering as a result of the pandemic** - either financially, or from mental health challenges.

This research aims to shine a light on the impact COVID-19 has had on sports clubs all across Australia. Following an earlier research study in May 2020, we sought to understand how clubs are faring 12 months on from the start of the pandemic in June 2021.



FINANCIAL IMPACT

- As prefaced in our 2020 report, the financial position of community clubs has been hard hit. Nearly **83% of respondents reported lost revenue**, with a **greater average decline than had been feared a year ago (\$18,500 compared with \$15,000 projected in 2020)**. Almost every revenue stream was negatively affected - including sponsorships, fundraising and membership income;
- Community sports clubs had little in the way of financial reserves to weather unexpected financial pressure due to COVID-19. As a result, **over 12% of clubs reported concerns around financial solvency** - indicating that around **9000 clubs** all over Australia are at risk of going under. There is no doubt that the current Delta-related lockdown will be adding to these financial pressures as each week passes;
- While different levels of government have stepped in to provide some support to the sector, responses showed that this had **covered less than a third of the revenue shortfall**, indicating much more support will be needed in the months ahead;



- Set against a backdrop of reduced revenues, it is concerning that **88% of clubs reported that running costs had either stayed the same or (in 47% of cases) increased**. The most common increased cost lines included new hygiene measures and extra equipment due to COVID-19 protocols, member refunds (due to shortened or abandoned seasons) and overheads, such as insurance which again increased despite a reduction in playing and participation; and
- Unsurprisingly **90% of clubs reported that their financial reserves had either decreased or stayed the same**, with only 10% of clubs able to improve their financial position in the last year.

DECLINING PARTICIPATION

- There has been a continued decline in participation across most sports, with **almost twice as many clubs reporting a decline in participation (43%)**, as those who recorded an increase (23%); and
- This decline was particularly evident among younger Australians, with **40% of clubs reporting a decline in participation among those in the 11-18 years age bracket**. This is particularly concerning given that this demographic is most in need of the social, physical and mental health benefits provided by sports participation.

DECLINING VOLUNTEERING

- Respondents also revealed the pressures on volunteers, without whom community sport would not be possible. **42% of clubs reported a decline in volunteering** - in large part due to an **increase in the workload, pressures and responsibilities of implementing COVID-19 protocols**;

Despite all these financial and social challenges, clubs frequently mentioned offering free or subsidised memberships as a way of **keeping families engaged in sport at these difficult times**, and of offering **mental health support** to their members - again underlining their vital role in social cohesion.

The Australian Sports Foundation believes that community sport plays a vital role in the Australian way of life, and will be critical to sustaining mental and physical health and the resilience of our communities as we face the ongoing challenges of this pandemic. It is clear that community sport needs more support if it is to survive, and we are determined to do all we can to assist.

THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS FOUNDATION SOLUTION

The Australian Sports Foundation helps clubs raise funds through its unique tax-deductible online fundraising platform. Since the onset of COVID-19 thousands of clubs have sought our assistance, but there are tens of thousands more in need of help, in every community in Australia.

Our community sports clubs have never been more in need of support:

- **Traditional fundraising methods have not been possible** during COVID-19 and the ongoing restrictions on community sport, along with lockdowns, will only exacerbate this problem.
- **It is vital that clubs embrace a culture of fundraising and embrace new forms of fundraising technology** such as the Australian Sports Foundation's online fundraising platform. This can enable sports clubs to **continue fundraising during this period of COVID-19**, and allow members, communities and the broader philanthropic community to help their clubs survive in these unprecedented times.

The Australian Sports Foundation is determined to play its part in helping clubs in need of support, and in advocating for more support to these important builders of social cohesion.

PLAY A ROLE IN THE RECOVERY

There are three ways in which those who value community sport can help:

1. Register your club for tax-deductible donations with the Australian Sports Foundation and create a fundraising project;
2. Make a tax-deductible donation to your local club; or
3. Donate to the Australian Sports Foundation Back to Sport Fund to support community sport's recovery from COVID-19.

For more information about how you can play an important role in the recovery, see page 28.

We call on all who value community sport to join us in this campaign and to assist in any way you can.



Patrick Walker

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER





OUR ROLE IN THE RECOVERY

Over the past 12 months, the Australian Sports Foundation leveraged its 2020 research to engage with relevant stakeholders to gain essential support for community sports clubs. In addition, the Australian Sports Foundation has:

- Helped Australian sports clubs raise over \$51 million in 2020-21, with over \$6.6 million alone raised for COVID-19 recovery campaigns; and
- Through the support of generous private donors and commercial partners, **distributed grants of cash and equipment** worth over \$250,000 to around 60 community clubs to help increase participation among young Australians most impacted by COVID-19.



PREAMBLE

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS FOUNDATION

The Australian Sports Foundation is Australia's national non-profit sports fundraising organisation and charity, and the only organisation in Australia to which donations for sport are tax-deductible.

Through our online fundraising platform and community sport grant rounds, in the past 30 years we have distributed over \$520 million to Australian sports clubs and athletes to help develop an inclusive and active sporting nation, and to strengthen local communities.

Sport is at the heart of every community in Australia. It has the power to enhance lives; it improves physical and mental health, and brings people together in a way that little else does. Sport is fundamental to the Australian way of life, and our mission is that everyone in Australia, regardless of background, ability or culture, has access to the health and social benefits of sport.

We are committed to an Australia where everyone can play.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

In May 2020, the Australian Sports Foundation opened a survey to collect detailed information on how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected community sports clubs, its participants and its volunteers. Our purpose in doing so was to shine a light on the emerging crisis among community clubs as they were dealing with the financial and social impact of the first wave of lockdowns.

We wanted to use the data collected to work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that community sport could survive and thrive into the future.

This survey painted a bleak picture, with clubs reporting **substantial financial losses** just three months into the pandemic, and forecasting **declining cash reserves**, as well as **reduced membership and volunteering**. The report was published in July 2020 and it's available to download at <https://covid.sportsfoundation.org.au/clubsportincrisis>.

A year on from the initial survey and **the COVID-19 crisis in Australia continues to ravage our community**. Ongoing lockdowns have once again shut down community sport in large parts of the country, and the ever-increasing uncertainty means that many community sport clubs continue to struggle.

So in June 2021, **the Australian Sports Foundation issued a follow up survey to check in with those community clubs** who responded to the initial survey. Their responses form the basis of this report and the information they provided paints a stark picture of the ongoing challenges they are facing - particularly the impacts on participation, volunteers and finances.

SURVEY RESPONSES

During the three weeks in which the survey was open (30th June–19th July 2021), we collected responses from 833 unique sporting organisations. 581 organisations (68%) completed the survey in full and there were 254 partially completed surveys (data from which is included in the analysis).

The data collected covers 94 different sport types (a similar level of representation to the 101 sports we heard from in the 2020 survey), ranging from sports with the highest number of Australian participants like football, netball and cricket, to smaller sports such as dodgeball and kendo.

In 2020, we segmented community clubs into two categories - Small Local Clubs and Large Local Clubs - categories we will continue to use.

Small Local Clubs are defined as local/regional sports clubs or associations with fewer than 1,000 members and with less than \$250k in annual revenue; **Large Local Clubs** are those that exceed 1,000 members and \$250k in revenue.



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON COMMUNITY SPORT

SEPTEMBER 2021 UPDATE





01 The anticipated impact of COVID-19 and how clubs are faring today

In 2020 we asked community clubs to list the major challenges they anticipated in the year ahead, and in this follow up survey we asked them to share with us what had actually transpired during the intervening year.

As might be expected in a rapidly changing environment, there are some aspects that played out differently to what was anticipated a year ago; however, on looking at the responses outlined in the chart below, **perhaps the most striking aspect is the way in which most of the anticipated challenges did materialise broadly as clubs predicted.**

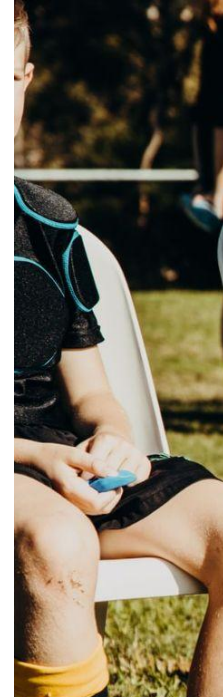
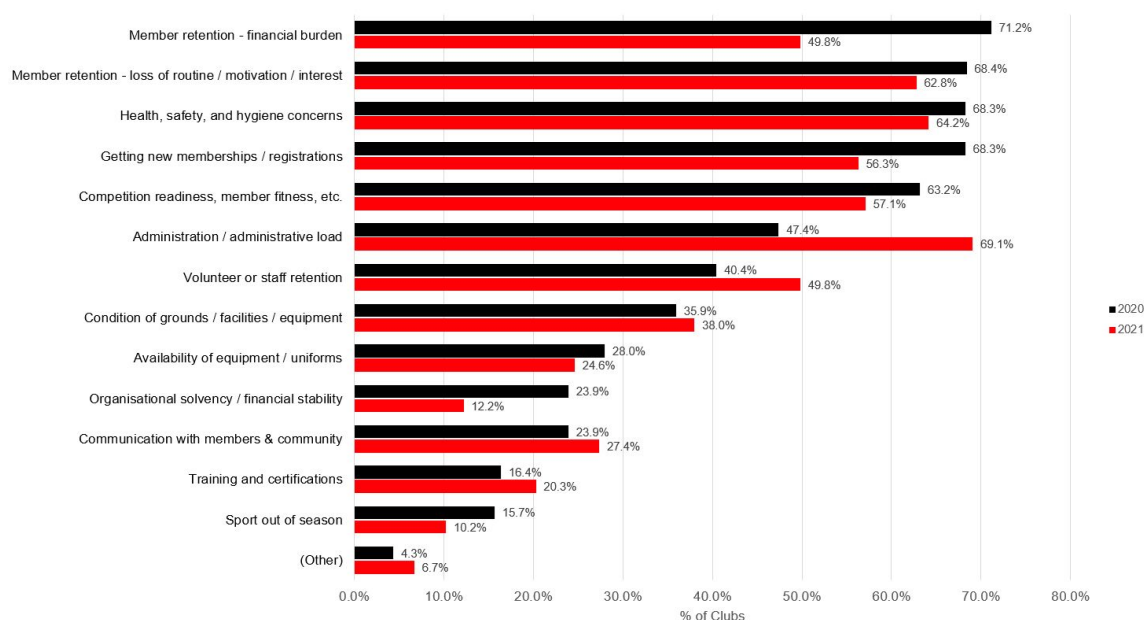


Figure 1 - Anticipated and experienced challenges due to COVID-19





- As expected, funding and finances remain major concerns. 63% of clubs list obtaining funds from fundraising, sponsorships etc as challenges, and **nearly 13% of respondents remain concerned about the financial solvency of their club**. While this is down from 24% in 2020, it still means that **an estimated 9,000 of Australia's community clubs are at risk** - and of course, the likelihood is that the picture has worsened considerably since the survey closed in July 2021.
- Overall, it appears that both **retaining and gaining new participants and members has been difficult** - with 63% and 56% of clubs respectively reporting challenges. This is a little lower than anticipated last year, when 69% of clubs reported this concern, perhaps due to the speedier than expected economic recovery, and the fact that community sport did return for a large proportion of the intervening year. However, with almost half of clubs still reporting that financial pressure on members remains a concern, and the extensive lockdowns now being experienced in much of eastern Australia, this still represents a very significant problem, and is one that will only be exacerbated as the economy takes further hits from the Delta variant; and
- The leading challenge clubs have experienced over the past year is the administrative load (68% of clubs) - driven by **the increase in COVID-safe procedures and health and safety protocols** (listed by 64% of clubs), together with greater than feared **difficulties in retaining volunteers or staff** (up from 39% to 48% since 2020). In other words, the increased workload caused by COVID-19 is falling on fewer volunteers, placing ever greater pressure on these individuals and the clubs and communities they serve.

Each of these themes are explored in more detail overleaf.



02 Clubs continue to experience severe financial losses

In our 2020 survey, respondents indicated that they had already suffered considerable financial losses - through a combination of reduced revenue (such as sponsorships, memberships and fundraising) and increased costs (additional hygiene measures and new equipment, for example). Furthermore clubs had projected further financial losses as community sport returned - respondents had indicated that an average of around \$15,000 in additional financial support would be needed in the coming year to cover forecast losses.

12 months on we can now see that if anything, these forecasts underestimated the negative financial impact of the pandemic. Overall, our respondents have **reported an average revenue loss of \$18,500** (\$11,000 among Small Local clubs, and \$78,000 among Large Local clubs). This is a significant loss for both Small and Large Local clubs in proportion to their annual revenue.



\$18,500

average lost revenue
per club

Figure 2 - Average change in income by club type



For a further breakdown of income lost / gained, refer to table 5 in the Appendix.



Reduced Revenue

Table 2 - Breakdown of sources contributing to changes in income by club type

	Club Type	
	Small Local club	Large Local club
Avg. Government funding revenue lost/gained	\$3,582	-\$4,750
Avg. Donations revenue lost/gained	-\$1,478	-\$1,286
Avg. Merchandise revenue lost/gained	-\$1,297	-\$1,833
Avg. Other revenue lost/gained	-\$3,678	\$1,556
Avg. Hospitality revenue lost/gained	-\$3,387	-\$16,524
Avg. Fundraising revenue lost/gained	-\$3,929	-\$7,132
Avg. Membership revenue lost/gained	-\$3,536	-\$30,211
Avg. Sponsorships/Commercial revenue lost/gained	-\$4,481	-\$6,490

As the table above shows, **almost every revenue stream was negatively affected** for both Small and Large Local clubs, with the most significant reductions seen in sponsorships, memberships, fundraising and hospitality (matchday canteens, etc). As would be expected, average losses were greater in Large Local clubs than Small Local clubs, with the largest revenue decline in this category coming from memberships (\$30.2k).

The only source of revenue that increased in the past year was government grants. While it is positive to see the important role that different levels of government have played in supporting the sector to date, clubs reported that **government grants only covered less than a third of their lost revenues**, leaving a significant shortfall still to be faced.



In summary, both Small and Large Local clubs have suffered losses, but in slightly different ways. Small clubs lost membership revenue, and relied more on fundraising, hospitality and sponsorship revenue which were all reduced; matchday canteens could not run, traditional 'sausage sizzle' fundraising was impossible, and sponsors were unable or unwilling to continue their support during the economic downturn.

Large Local clubs also saw reduced income from these streams, but were more significantly impacted by reduced membership fees/registrations.

It appears that a number of clubs reduced or discounted membership fees to assist families to continue with sport during the pandemic, showing the close bond between these clubs and their communities.

Due to COVID-19, we have been significantly impacted by a reduction in the amount corporate sponsors are able to provide, and have seen our taking from weekly raffles held at our local club significantly drop.

- Cricket Club, NSW

Sponsorship money is also drying up as local businesses are doing it tough. We have lost 5 sponsors in the last 12 months.

- Australian Football Club, QLD

Unable to run Raffles, Sausage Sizzles and Inter-Club Social Days.

- Croquet Club, VIC

Increased Running Costs

97% of respondents to our 2020 survey had forecast an increase in running costs, with the principal concerns being around the need to fund increased hygiene measures, increased equipment to minimise sharing and, in many cases, increased ground-hire costs due to the need to stagger training sessions.

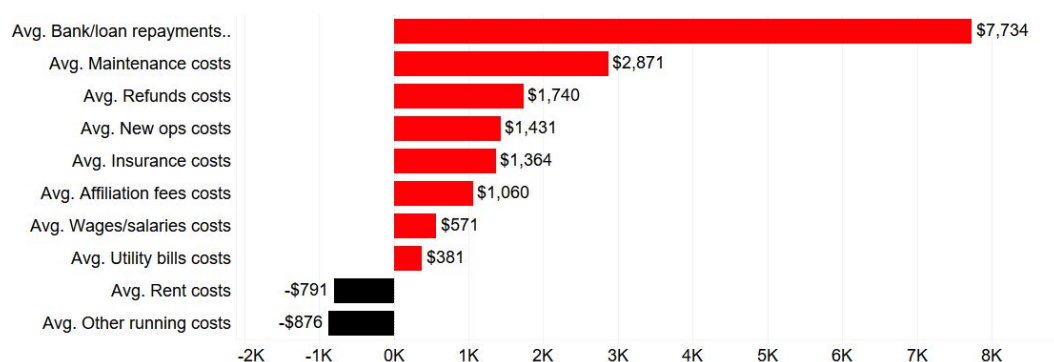
Figure 3 - Changes to running costs



A year on, the picture in this regard appears slightly better, with only 47% of clubs reporting an increase in running costs. However, looked at another way, **88% of clubs reported costs were either the same or had increased, a difficult picture when set against the reduced revenues reported earlier.**

While both Small and Large Local clubs reported some similarities in terms of cost increases, there were also differences that emerged in the type of costs that had increased.

Figure 4 - Breakdown of sources contributing to changes in running costs (Small Local clubs)



The increase in bank loan repayments indicates that many clubs were forced to borrow, either to make ends meet or to complete projects when anticipated funding streams were reduced by the pandemic. Refunds (to members for shortened or abandoned playing seasons) and setting up new ways of operating related to COVID-19 protocols were also significant, as were ongoing costs such as maintenance and insurance, neither of which seem to have reduced despite the reduction in sporting activity.



Had to spend more money on keeping everyone COVID-19 safe, hand sanitizers and social distance requirements signage & other requirements for COVID-19.



- Australian Football Club, WA



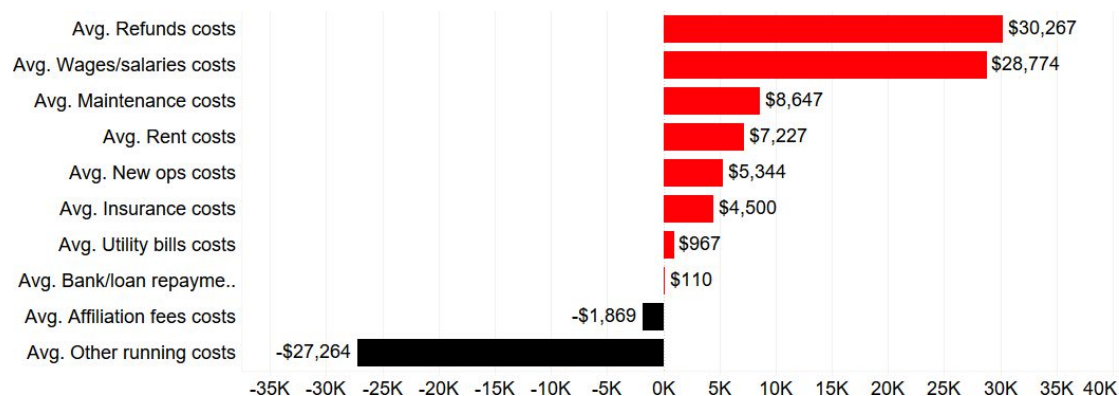
We bought a lot of extra playing equipment so that participants did not need to share gear.



- Softball Club, NSW

The only areas where running costs reduced were in rent - where it was pleasing to see many local councils offer rent rebates or rent holidays - and in 'other', which largely reflects reduced competition fees and costs.

Figure 5 - Breakdown of sources contributing to changes in running costs (Large Local clubs)



The main difference for Large Local clubs, apart from the numbers overall being larger, is that these clubs suffered more by way of refunds to members, and wages and salaries for staff also appear to have increased.

Financial Reserves

As would be expected, the combination of decreased revenues and increased costs has had an impact on clubs' financial reserves. 90% of clubs reported that financial reserves had either decreased (50%) or stayed about the same (40%), with only 10% being able to increase reserves over that period.

Figure 6 - Changes to financial reserves

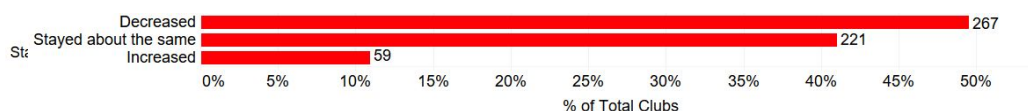
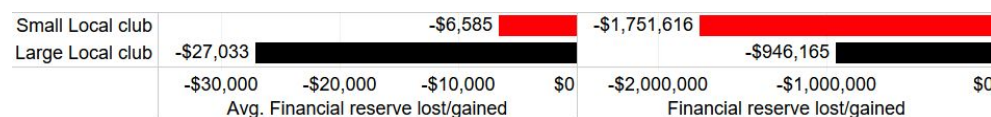


Figure 7 - Breakdown in changes to financial reserves by club type



As expected, responses showed that Large Local clubs' financial reserves had reduced by more on average (\$27,033), than Small Local clubs (\$6,585). However, as a proportion of small clubs' estimated reserves, even a decline of this scale is significant.



The huge impact that not being able to run our usual social activities and fundraisers has meant the club has had to eat away at our reserve funds to continue with normal programs.



- Cricket Club, VIC



The effects of COVID-19 has just about wiped out our clubs financial resources over the past 12 months with events being cancelled any opportunity to raise much needed funds were lost as well as the loss of our major sponsor.



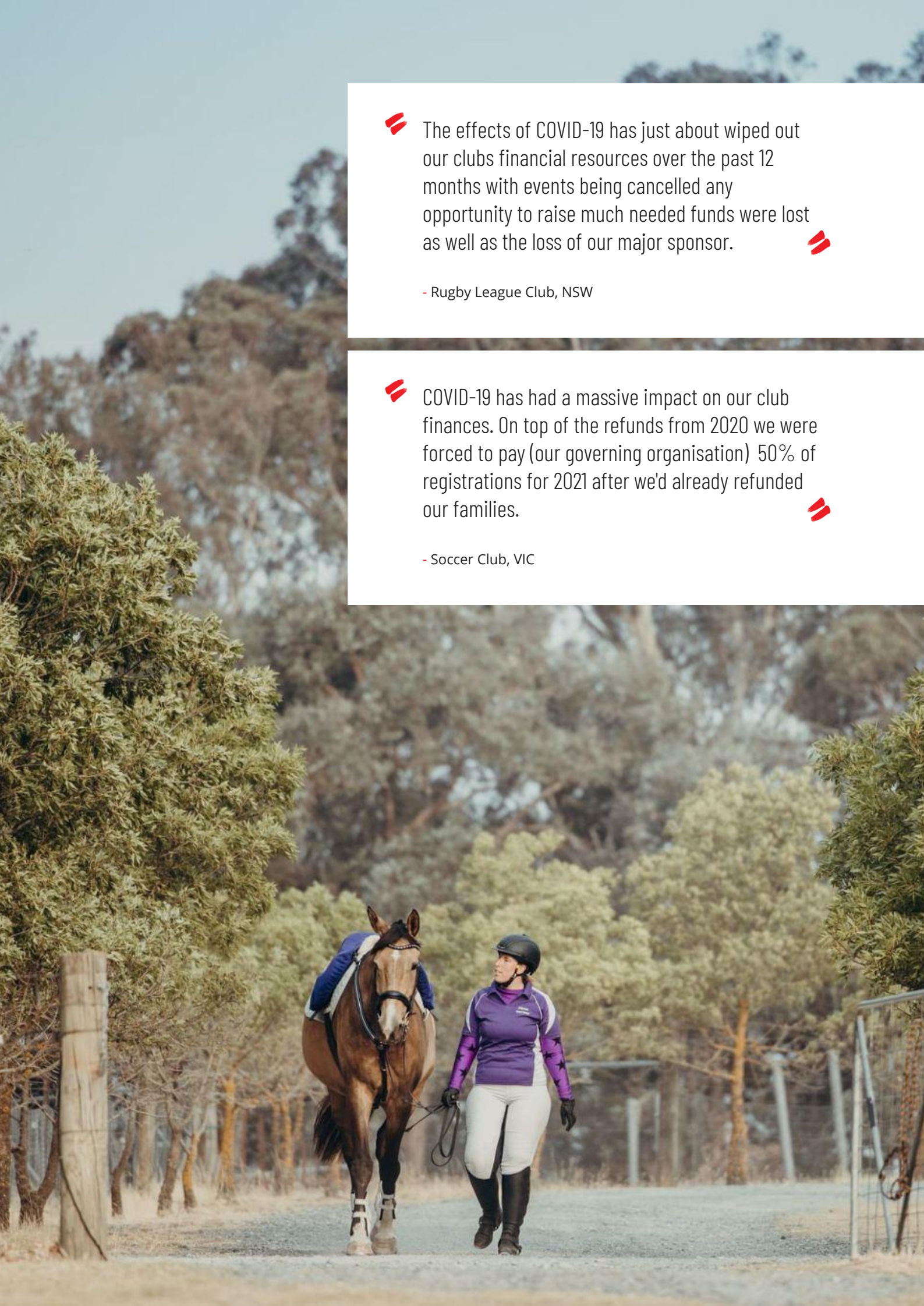
- Rugby League Club, NSW



COVID-19 has had a massive impact on our club finances. On top of the refunds from 2020 we were forced to pay (our governing organisation) 50% of registrations for 2021 after we'd already refunded our families.



- Soccer Club, VIC



03 The shutdown of community sport has had a profoundly negative social impact with participation continuing to decline

Participation in community sport brings so many benefits, not least to the physical and mental health of the participants themselves. It is therefore concerning that clubs are reporting an overall decline in participants during the course of the year.

Overall, **43% of clubs reported a decrease in participants**, and the response also showed that Small Local clubs fared worse than the larger, better resourced, clubs. Nearly 45% of Small Local clubs reported a decline, compared with 35% of Large Local clubs.

Figure 8 - Changes in participant registration

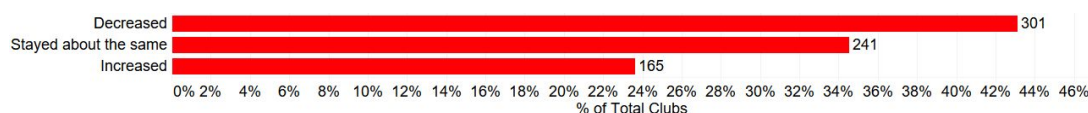
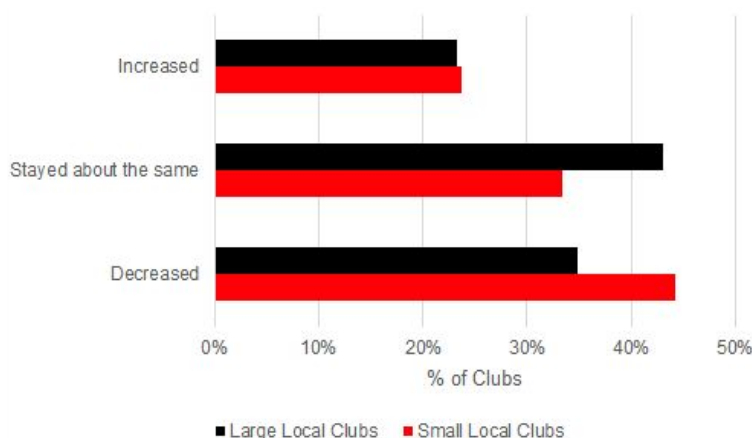


Figure 9 - Comparison of changes in participation for Small and Large Local clubs



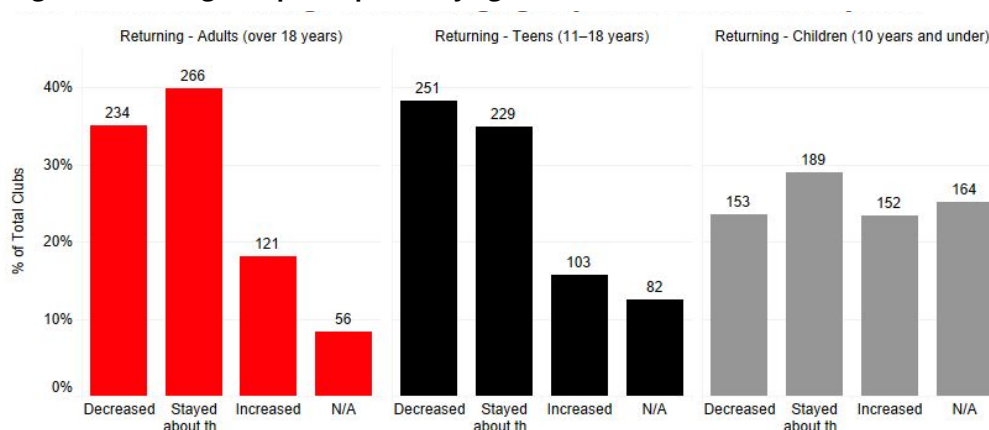
The ongoing disruption to competition led to some members just giving up & walking away, which contributes to short term & long term loss and (threatens) our financial & social stability.

- Hockey Club, QLD

Children and Young Australians' participation

The pandemic has hit the whole community, but the impact on children and young Australians has been particularly severe, with almost every aspect of their lives affected, including schooling, HSCs and university prospects. Sports participation has a huge role to play in keeping young Australians active and healthy, both physically and mentally, which is an important way to sustain and build resilience. It is particularly worrying, therefore, that almost **40% of clubs reported a decline in participation among teens (aged 11-18 years)** - this is consistent with the recent [Ausplay data](#), which reported a significant decline in regular sports participation among under-18s. **Nearly 25% of clubs also reported a decline in children's participation (aged 10 years and under).**

Figure 10 - Changes in participation by age



COVID-19 impacted our families' financial viability for their children to attend extra curricular activities. They do not have the finances to do it like they used to.

- Gymnastics Club, VIC

Players are allocating funds to daily costs of living instead of participating in community sports.

- Volleyball Club, VIC



Participation by gender

When reporting on participation by gender, clubs have outlined a broadly similar picture, but there is evidence that females have been more likely to return to sport post the first series of lockdowns (22% increase compared with 14% for males).

It has been pleasing to see Australians' willingness to return to sport, however this will no doubt be impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 lockdowns.

Figure 11 - Changes in participation (males)

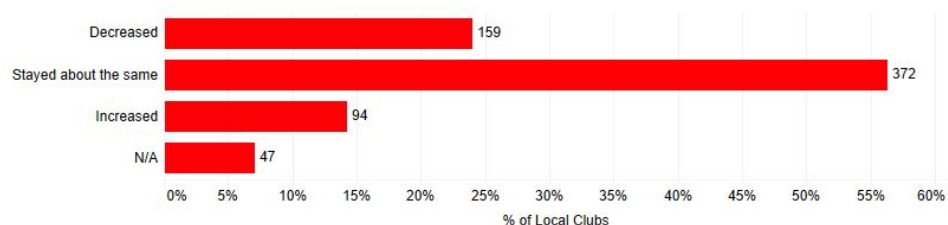
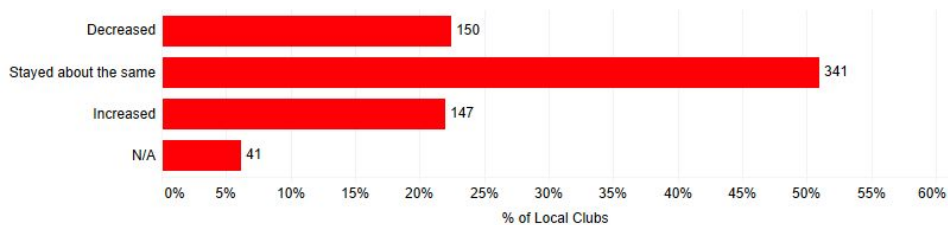


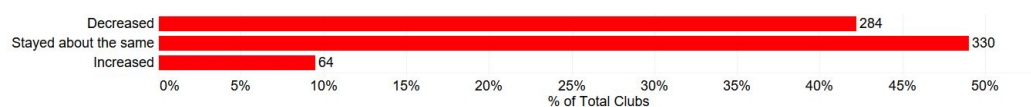
Figure 12 - Changes in participation (females)



04 The crisis is impacting volunteers who are the lifeblood of community sport

As we outlined in our 2020 report, community sport rests on the shoulders of Australia's army of 3 million sporting volunteers, without whom local sport as we know it could not continue. As foreshadowed in our earlier report, the pandemic has led to **nearly 42% of clubs reporting a decline in volunteers.**

Figure 13 - Changes in volunteer numbers



While most volunteers are still doing their best to support their local clubs, survey responses indicated that there are a number of contributory factors to this decline, including:

- increased COVID-19-related administrative burden falling on fewer volunteers;
- pressures and concerns among volunteers about the responsibility of correctly conveying and monitoring COVID-19 protocols;
- poor treatment from members/parents when volunteers or staff seek to ensure COVID-19 protocols are followed; and
- impact of the pandemic on volunteers' own mental health.

Given that volunteers are critical to the future of community sport, we call on the sporting community to look at ways to encourage and support those who do give so freely of their time, and to ensure they are treated with appropriate respect by participants and parents.



We have some great volunteers, but the longer the COVID-19 restrictions are in place the more fatigued and overwhelmed they are becoming and we feel the drop off could be concerning.



- Cricket Club, VIC

Clubs' role as a vital cog in their communities

While the survey was intended to uncover the impact of COVID-19 on participation, volunteering and financials, response after response from clubs showed just how important they are to their local communities. For example, **many clubs went out of their way to offer free or discounted memberships to those doing it tough.**

“ Families in financial difficulties were provided payment and reduced fees... the club is obligated to continue to financially support members in financial difficulties for mental health reasons and retaining social, community interaction in a rural area. ”

- Cricket Club, WA

This was considered by clubs to be an investment in their communities, and in most cases resulted in reduced income for the clubs concerned. However, some clubs reported an unexpected outcome:

“ We discounted our membership fees to ease the financial burden on our members, however we doubled our membership overall, so ended up with increased membership fees overall. ”

- Outrigger Canoe Club, QLD

Clubs are proving to be resilient and adapting, finding their own ways to make ends meet.

Frequently clubs also reported on the impact of the pandemic on members' mental health, and emphasised the importance of sport in fostering improved mental health. Indeed, many clubs reported offering mental health and wellbeing sessions to members - again underlining their position as a vital cog in community health and resilience:





Mental health days and sessions are now a very normal part of operation but like all things this is costing us financially!



- Volleyball Club, ACT



We also noticed a decline in social men's crickets 4th and 5th teams who use the club as a social hub. Many of these men had been put out of work and that can be a difficult thing to stand around and talk about with mates.



- Cricket Club, VIC



Our club has worked hard to keep unity and upbeat to all our members. When we can train we have upbeat music and try and ensure the players are training in a stress free environment where they can forget what is happening in the outside world.



- Netball Club, VIC



There are a number of older members who are experiencing mental health issues as the Rowing Club is a major component of their lives.



- Rowing Club, NSW



05 Traditional fundraising methods have not been effective during COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions on community sport

As outlined above, community sports clubs reported a sharp decline in fundraising revenue caused by the pandemic. The term “fundraising” has a broad definition in this sector. It typically includes, for example:

- Raffles
- Events such as club dinners
- Sausage sizzles
- Chocolate drives

In many cases, clubs also view seeking grants and sponsorships as forms of fundraising.

COVID-19 impacted almost all traditional sources of fundraising that clubs would normally turn to to address revenue shortfalls. Events and sausage sizzles are either difficult or impossible, as is the traditional Friday night meat raffle.

The current series of seemingly endless lockdowns will only exacerbate this problem. **It is vital that clubs embrace a culture of fundraising** and embrace new forms of fundraising technology such as the Australian Sports Foundation online fundraising platform. This can enable them to continue fundraising during COVID-19, allowing members, communities and the broader philanthropic community to help their clubs survive in these unprecedented times.



We are in a state of suspension in every aspect of the word. We cannot currently fundraise and our operating expenses have increased.



- Rugby League Club, NSW





THE AUSTRALIAN SPORTS FOUNDATION SOLUTION



\$12,000

raised per club through the Australian Sports Foundation online fundraising platform

The Australian Sports Foundation offers an online fundraising platform, freely available to all community clubs. It enables clubs to seek tax-deductible donations from their members and communities to help cover revenue shortfalls, to fund purchases of vital uniforms and equipment, or simply to help cover overheads and operating costs so clubs can continue to function. The platform itself is backed by our dedicated Fundraising Support Team, who can guide and encourage clubs through the process.

While this facility has been available for many years, the onset of COVID-19 produced a greater need for funding among community sports clubs than ever before. In the same way that the pandemic has driven clubs to explore new ways of engaging and communicating with their members - via webinars or Zoom or Teams meetings - it has driven an increase in adoption of this alternative and more efficient form of digital fundraising.

Since the start of the pandemic, some 2,000 new community clubs have signed up to use the Australian Sports Foundation's platform, and collectively clubs have raised in excess of \$6 million in COVID-recovery campaigns via our platform. **Clubs responding to this survey that have used the Australian Sports Foundation platform reported average funds raised of \$12k** (see Figure 17 in the appendix) - a massive help when set against the reported losses that clubs have disclosed.



While those clubs that are using the Australian Sports Foundation's facilities have been greatly helped, our surveys show that there are tens of thousands of the estimated 70,000 community clubs in need that have not yet taken advantage of this opportunity.

The picture painted by this survey, and the preceding one in 2020, show that this has to change if our community club sector is to survive and thrive in the years ahead.

This change is not really about helping clubs recover their financial losses; it is about helping clubs make sport available to their communities, or helping people who have fallen out of sport, or who can no longer afford sport for themselves or their kids, to participate and improve their physical and mental health.

We are therefore launching a campaign to assist our community club sector, and there are three ways in which we can all help:

01 LAUNCH A FUNDRAISING PROJECT

Register your local sports club for tax-deductible donations with the Australian Sports Foundation. Almost everyone in Australia is connected to a community sports club in some way - either through their own participation or volunteering, or through their kids or another relative or friend.

If your local club is not already engaged with Australian Sports Foundation, simply ask them to visit [our application page](#) to connect with us and start the ball rolling.

02 DONATE TO YOUR LOCAL CLUB

Make a tax-deductible donation to your local club. The Australian Sports Foundation fundraising platform showcases thousands of community clubs that are already seeking financial support to help them get through these unprecedented times.

Please visit our [Donate to Sport page](#) to search for your club or a club from your community. Every little bit helps, and even a small donation can make the difference between someone being able to participate in sport or not.

03 DONATE TO SPORT

The Australian Sports Foundation is launching a campaign drive for donations into its Back to Sport fund to support community sports recovery from COVID-19.

If you would like to help these vital community institutions across Australia survive, you can make a tax-deductible donation to the Australian Sports Foundation at our [donation page](#).

Money donated will be allocated to community sports clubs via the Back to Sport fund grants to support them through this crisis and to help grow participation in their communities.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a damaging impact on community sports clubs over the past 18 months. It has led to a decrease in participation - particularly among young Australians - and a worrying decline in volunteering. The combined financial impact of lost revenues, increased costs and declining financial reserves mean that **an estimated 9,000 community clubs nationally are at risk of closure.**

Whilst this is a crisis in and of itself, the implications are particularly severe when considering the important role that community sport can play in rebuilding mental health and resilience as part of the recovery process. Experience has shown that some of the most important factors in recovering from disasters include re-engaging with social activities, rebuilding connections within the community and of course, increasing physical and recreational activity. Community sport addresses all of these factors, and it is vital that our clubs survive so they can play a key part in helping our communities rebuild and recover from the challenges we have all faced during this pandemic.

The Australian Sports Foundation is determined to play its part in helping clubs in need of support, and in advocating for more support to these important builders of social cohesion. We have outlined above ways in which those who value community sport can help, and we call on all who want to help to do so, or to contact us to find out more and explore other opportunities to provide much-needed support.

For media enquiries, please contact Jodie Artis at Progressive PR (jodie@progressivepr.com.au)

The Australian Sports Foundation

September 2021

Our club is of the view that \$1 spent will save \$10 in terms of community connection and reducing social dislocation. Agencies have a major task in ensuring that clubs are viable moving forward and people connected to them stay connected.

- Cricket Club, VIC





Sport is an investment for our community and is extremely important when it comes to health and well being, physically and mentally.

Any funding that is available should go towards assisting sporting clubs and making sure that they can continue to provide these services as they are not a cost, they are a long term investment to our economy.



- Gymnastics Club, SA

APPENDIX



COMMUNITY SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

According to the Clearinghouse for Sport (Australian sport's knowledge-sharing platform), there are at least [70,000 community sports clubs](#) around Australia, and the Sport Australia [AusPlay results](#) for 2019 indicate that 15-16 million Australians (adults and children) play sport each year. Over 3 million adults also participate in sports in non-playing roles, such as volunteer coaching, administration, and support roles.

Community sport directly or indirectly touches the lives of almost all Australians.

Survey response numbers by sport

Table 2 - Top 20 sports by number of unique club respondents

Sport Name	# Clubs
Australian Football	71
Cricket	66
Football (Soccer)	59
Equestrian	49
Rugby League	39
Swimming	39
Netball	33
Tennis	29
Rugby Union	26
Bowls	25
Golf	25
Hockey	18
Lawn Bowls	18
Multi-Sport	18
Gymnastics	16
Croquet	14
Basketball	13
Rowing	13
Shooting	13
Baseball	12

By Location

We heard from clubs in all states and territories, and from both metro and regional Australia (darker areas represent a higher number of clubs responding from that area).

Figure 14 - Map of respondents by location

Club Locations

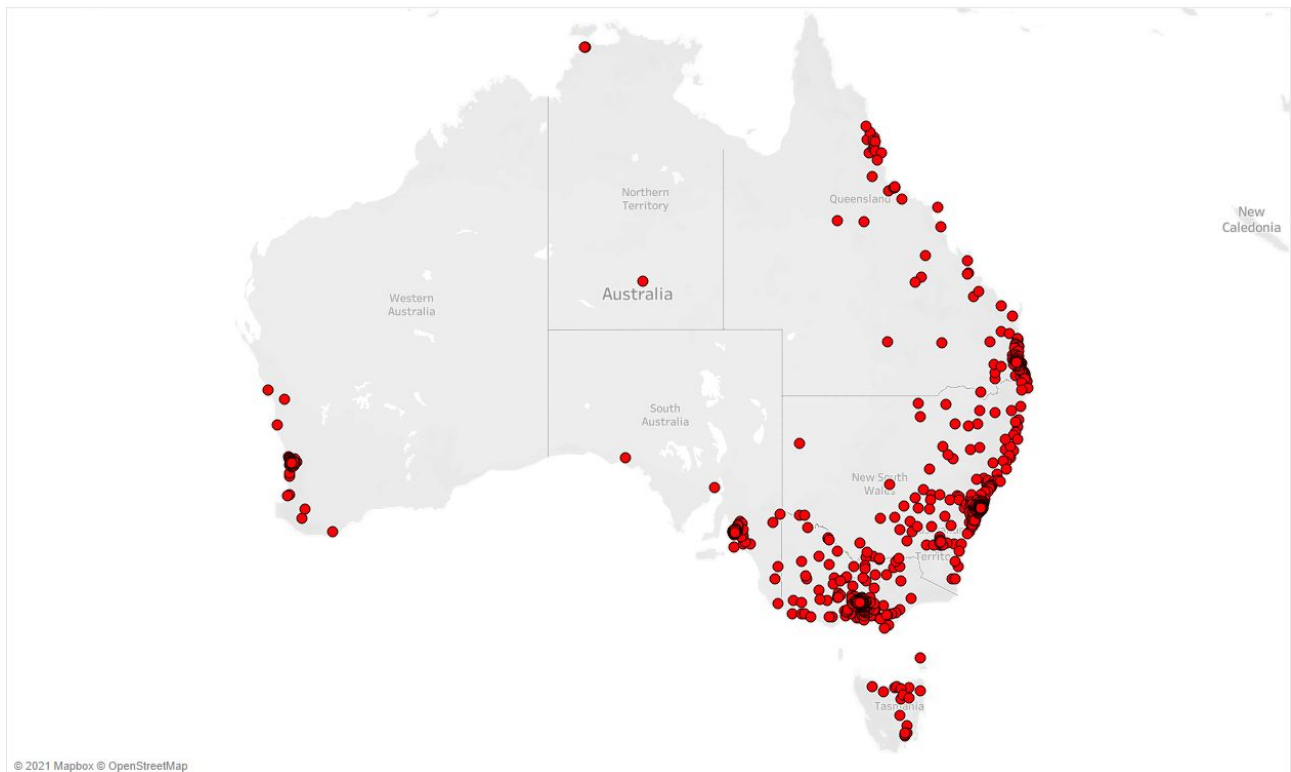


Table 3 - Clubs by state (excludes 7 clubs which did not disclose location)

State/Territory	# Clubs
ACT	13
NSW	286
NT	3
QLD	158
SA	51
TAS	33
VIC	237
WA	53

By Club Type

Just as in 2020, we received responses from a variety of different types of sporting clubs, but our primary focus will remain on community sports clubs. In the previous report, community sports clubs made up 91% of respondents. In the clubs we heard back from in 2021, they made up 87% of respondents. About 8% of clubs could not be reliably classified due to missing data in their survey responses, which may have contributed to the reduction in community sports clubs in this sample. Regardless, community sporting clubs remain the vast majority of sporting clubs in Australia, so our focus will remain on them.

In 2020, we segmented community clubs into two categories - Small Local Clubs and Large Local Clubs - categories we will continue to use. **Small Local Clubs** are defined as local/regional sports clubs or associations with fewer than 1,000 members and with less than \$250k in annual revenue (or with no annual revenue data available in the current sample); **Large Local Clubs** are those that exceed 1,000 members and \$250k in revenue. In the previous report, this gave us the opportunity to understand the general landscape of community sport in Australia.

Table 4 - Estimated total clubs in Australia (Australian Sports Foundation, 2020)

	% local/regional clubs in sample	Estimated total clubs in Australia
Small Local Clubs	67%	47,147
Large Local Clubs	33%	22,853
Total Local Clubs	100%	70,000

In this survey, 634 clubs (76%) from our sample were classified as **Small Local Clubs** and 90 clubs (11%) were classified as **Large Local Clubs**. 46 (6%) respondents were from **other** kinds of sporting organisations, such as professional sports clubs, national sporting organisations, and schools. 63 clubs (8%) **could not be reliably classified** (were 'Unidentified').

Figure 15 - Clubs by Type

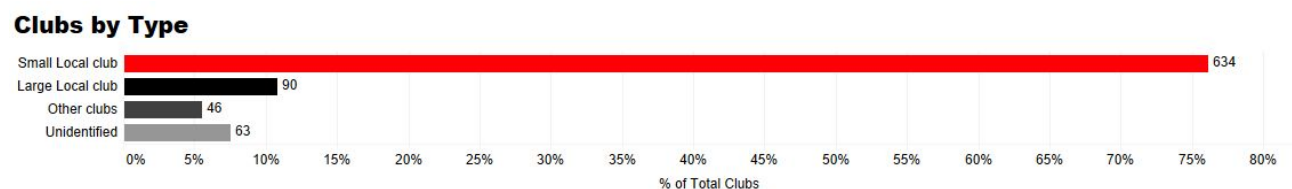


Figure 16 - Proportion of club type for each state

Clubs by Type - State

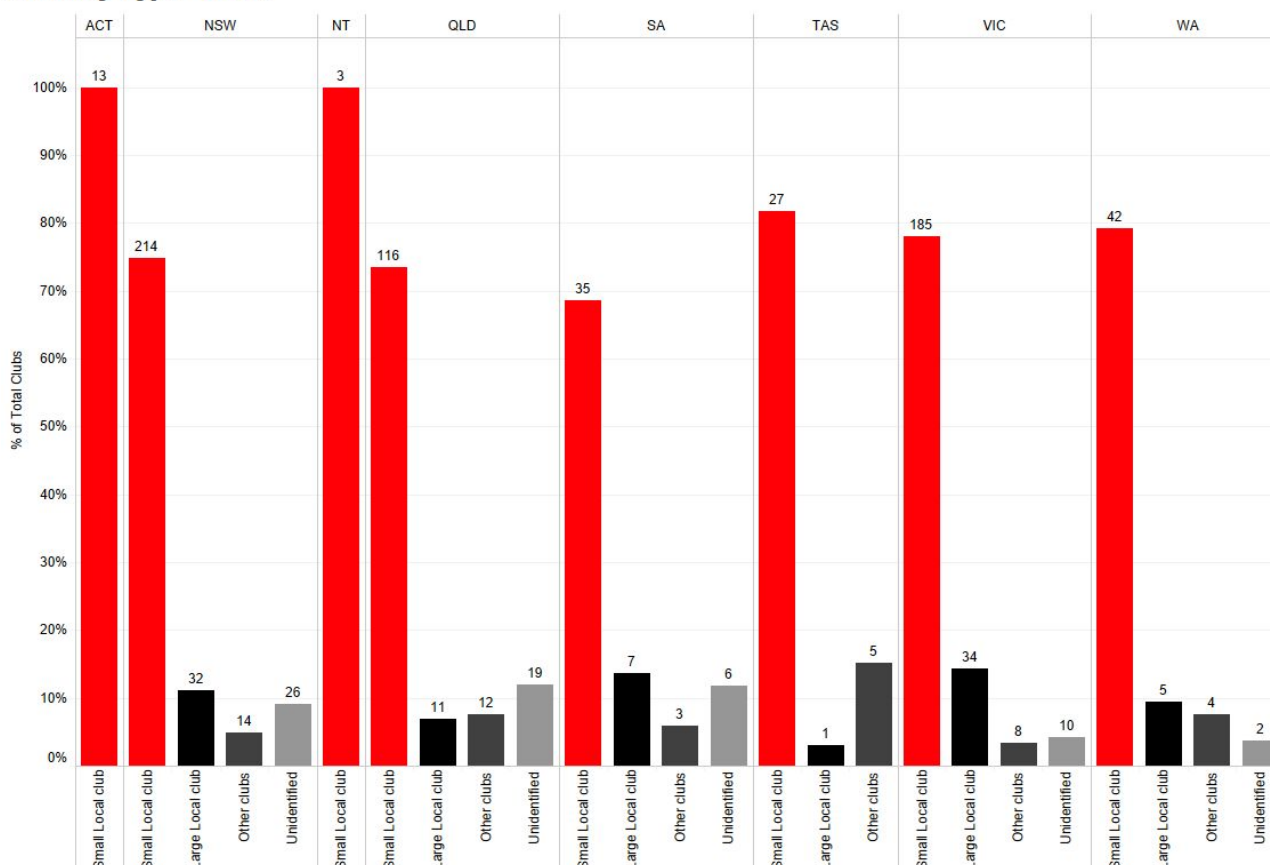


Figure 17 - Average funds raised from various sources

Avg. Fundraising Income (Small & Large Local clubs)

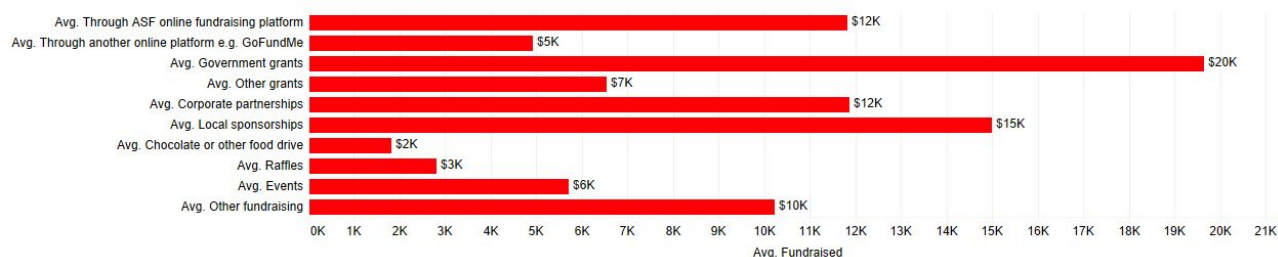


Table 5 - Breakdown of income question respondents

Income Lost/Gained

	Small Local club	Large Local club	Grand Total
# clubs responded to question	347	43	390
Clubs lost income	291	31	322
Clubs gained income	56	12	68
Club income lost/gained	-\$3,908,034	-\$3,334,594	-\$7,242,629
Avg. Club income lost/gained	-\$11,262	-\$77,549	-\$18,571

*Excludes outliers.

HOW YOU CAN HELP



Launch a fundraising project

Register your local sports club for tax-deductible donations with the Australian Sports Foundation. Almost everyone in Australia is connected to a community sports club in some way - either through their own participation or volunteering, or through their kids or another relative or friend.

If your local club is not already engaged with Australian Sports Foundation, simply ask them to visit [our application page](#) to connect with us and start the ball rolling.



Donate to your local club

Make a tax-deductible donation to your local club. The Australian Sports Foundation fundraising platform showcases thousands of community clubs that are already seeking financial support to help them get through these unprecedented times.

Please visit [our Donate to Sport page](#) to search for your club or a club from your community. Every little bit helps, and even a small donation can make the difference between someone being able to participate in sport or not.



Donate to the Australian Sports Foundation Back to Sport Fund

The Australian Sports Foundation is launching a campaign drive for donations into its Back to Sport fund to support community sports recovery from COVID-19.

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Information for Media

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