
VICTORIAN SOARING ASSOCIATION (VSA)

INSTRUCTOR INSIGHTS SURVEY



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VSA and Contacts

The Victorian Soaring Association (VSA) is your gliding regional body. We represent Victorian and Tasmanian gliding clubs and their members. VSA advocates on behalf of members and clubs to the Gliding Federation of Australia, Victorian and Tasmanian Governments. Through the GFA we advocate to federal sporting organisations ie SIA and federal aviation organisations ie CASA.

Your thoughts and experiences in gliding are what this sport is about. We are always interested in your stories, especially to share with the region's clubs and members through an article in the VSA magazine. We each learn from what others have found - positive, negative, strange, funny, ridiculous, dangerous, overlooked, aspiring, inspiring. People make the sport and the sport receives benefits in the process.

You can reach out to the VSA committee by email ([<glidingvictas@gmail.com>](mailto:glidingvictas@gmail.com)), or have a chat at the club and reach out to one of us.

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INSTRUCTOR INSIGHTS SURVEY

Background

The current economic climate and social pressures on business and householders, are affecting gliding as a sport. Gliding competes with other discretionary pursuits for expenditure and time.

COVID has had an impact in unexpected ways. A shift in social interaction and the time commitment for engagement is apparent. Manifesting in the increased use of technology to connect to community, importance of social interaction, awareness of mental health and acuity, and reluctance to commit to Things.

There has been a shift in the way we relate to leisure. People are time poor and financially challenged, with their attention split over more matters and pursuits. They strive to do more in less time with fewer funds.

Also, the requirement that policies embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are increasingly demanded by State and Federal governments, especially when funding sporting and leisure groups.

Furthermore, gliding Instructors are volunteers whose ability to “be there” 24 /7 is compounded by “life getting in the way” from time to time. When combined with an ageing Instructor base, the future of gliding within the Victorian / Tasmanian region may be in jeopardy.

The Victorian Soaring Association (VSA), as the regional representative body, has concern for both the changing membership base and it’s effect on instruction and training in the region.

Data obtained from this survey will inform and support VSA’s planning and ability to be agile when actively promoting the sport, especially into potential but non-traditional groups ie female, junior, those of diverse backgrounds.

In the longer term, it would enable VSA to plan and develop a future instructor base that could be more representative of various abilities, backgrounds, and diverse groups. This would better reflect a changing and emerging membership base in the sport.

Aims

VSA sought unvarnished response from participants. To this end, all responses are confidential, with data being aggregated for analysis and evaluation. Only those who undertook the discussions with respondents have access to the raw data.

The survey aims are to -:

1. Meet the expectations of gliding members, clubs and instructors going forward.
2. Provide sufficient gliding Instructors for all levels of pilots, from first time student to those undertaking more challenging aerobatics and cross-country flights.
3. Stem the expected decline, due to ageing, in available and active Instructors in the region that will adversely affect gliding training and instruction.
4. Alleviate the workload of the current Instructor base, especially at the higher levels.
5. Meet increased training demands expected to follow active promotion of the sport at both the national and regional levels ie ensure sufficient instructors.
6. Identify and assist vulnerable clubs in the region to meet their expected instructor demand.
7. Ensure a future instructor base is re-invigorated while better representing the membership base.

Sample Selection

The VSA sought input from regional club instructors responsible for planning, implementing and guiding their club’s training, coaching and instruction programs ie club CFIs.

Although the sample size is small, CFIs were selected as they synthesised views and opinions of Instructors within their respective club. Their insights gained from Ops meetings to on-field observation and discussion, place CFIs in an ideal position to know the “warts and all” at the coal-face of instructing, training and coaching pilots of various skills and abilities.

A summary of the sample selected and resultant respondents is contained in Table 1: Sample Size and Respondents.

<i>Sample Details</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Proportion of Sample</i>
Sample Size	12	100 %
Respondents	10	83 %
Contact on Call 1	7	58 %
Contact on Call 2	2	17 %
Contact on Call 3	1	8 %
Non-Respondents	2	17 %

Table 1: Sample Size and Respondents

Methodology

A set of specific questions about numbers of current and active instructors were asked first (quantitative data), followed by more general questions about club instruction and training, instructor course delivery and comments regarding them (qualitative data)¹.

In May / Jun 2024, all Vic / Tas regional clubs were contacted via telephone to encourage co-operation and openness. Participants were contacted up to 4 times before being categorised as a “non-respondent”. Most conversations were between 30 and 60 minutes.

A response rate of 83% resulted. Due to a 17 % non-response rate, it is expected that the survey quantitative data (questions 1 – 4) will not correlate with that held at GFA /Regional Operations².

The qualitative data (questions 5 & 6) can be relied on for insights into gliding practices and provide a firm basis for planning within the region. These responses inform the answers to the first quantitative set of questions.

¹ It was anticipated that comments additional to Instructor feedback could be forthcoming ie the new Training programs plus implications and implementation of MOSPs.

² As the figures from non-respondent clubs could not be incorporated into the survey results, an expected discrepancy exists with the official number of the region’s Instructors and Coaches held at VSA / GFA / Operations.

Findings

Comments received from respondents covered a diverse range of topics and issues. The diversity of results includes the specific to the more mundane aspects of clubs, training insights, instructor work-loads and expectations about the future of individual clubs and the sport of gliding.

All clubs expressed support for the survey and valued the contact from their regional body, the VSA. Respondents were pleased to be able to express satisfaction and concerns, provide feedback, inform about membership changes, advise the impact of instructor changes and elucidate their views on gliding into the future.

Instructor Contingent within Clubs

Some clubs had sufficient Instructors at each level to offer members a full training schedule, while other clubs had insufficient Instructors to meet member expectations or to grow their membership base. One club has no Instructors and for specific training days, relies on the co-operation of other Instructors to come to their club and "lend a hand". Other operations are seen as commercial and were not included in the sample.

The time devoted by regional Office Holders to gliding is all voluntary. The number of instructors at each level is affected by the individual's commitments to family, work and other leisure pursuits, as evidenced by the 66% actively instructing (refer to Table 2: Survey results – Instructors in the Vic / Tas Region).

Also, the figures show there is a scarcity (4 %) of Level 3 Instructors compared to the other instructor and coaching levels – AEI, Level 1 and Level 2 and Silver Coach (16%, 23%, 33% and 24% respectively). This is concerning, especially when Clubs look to the Regional Panels on implementation guidance for complex matters ie ITP changes and new MOSP with their support documents.

Question 2: <i>How many instructors do you presently have?</i>	Current	Proportion Instructors	Proportion ALL	Active	Proportion Active
Air Experience Instructors (AEI)	15	21 %	16 %	12	80 %
Level 1 (L1)	22	31 %	23 %	15	68 %
Level 2 (L2)	31	43 %	33 %	22	71 %
Level 3 (L3)	4	6 %	4 %	2	50 %
Total Instructors in Region	72	100 %	76 %	51	71 %
Silver Coach	23		24 %	12	52 %
Total Instructors and Coaches in Region	95		100 %	63	66 %

Table 2: Survey results - Instructors in the Vic / Tas Region

The most active group of Instructors is the AEIs, where 80% are involved in training and instructing at their club. The next most active group is the Level 2 Instructors (71%), which is not unexpected given the need for competent Duty Instructors / CFIs running club operations on the field and the scarcity of Level 3s in the region.

The integration of the Silver Coach into the instructing field is still "settling in" for the region after it's introduction with the new ITP, followed by the new MOSPs and support documents. Respondent Clubs have concerns over the scarce information from the GFA or the region's Operations Panel about implementation processes and procedures³.

Instructor Courses

Instructor training courses are operated and run by the RMO and Regional Instructor Panel. The AEI / L1 course structure is a full week where Level 3s instruct both the theoretical and the practical aspects of that specific AEI / L1 course.

An annual 5 day course was run in March 2024, catering to a quarter of the clubs in the Vic / Tas region, with a non-attendance rate of 17%. The non-attendance was due to car trouble when driving over 500 km to the course

³ When the survey was conducted, the MOSPs and their support documents were modified and posted to the GFA website, with little notification to Clubs and members of these amendments.

venue. Most of the attendees (80%) were from clubs in very close proximity to the venue (<50km) while the final attendee travelled between 200 km and 400 km (See Table 3: Aggregated Instructor attendance March 2024).

Question 1	Numbers	Proportion	Comments
Did you have any instructor candidates for this year's instructor course ?	Yes (4 clubs)	25 %	Clubs in region
How many?	6	100 %	Booked
Were they able to make it?	5	83 %	Attend
If not, Why?	1	17 %	Non-Attend (Car Trouble)

Table 3: Aggregated Instructor attendance March 2024 NOTE: Needs to be compared to GFA data, affected by non-respondents.

Significant costs to an attendee can arise, especially when their home club is some distance away from the training venue. Course attendees bear the attendance cost to / from the designated Bacchus March venue ie fuel, vehicle running costs, accomodation, meals, time off work (reduced earnings), and intangibles (absence from family, less leave for personal use).

Home Club Proximity to Bacchus Marsh Venue	< 50 km	50 – 100 km	100 – 200 km	200 – 400 km	400 – 500 km	> 500 km
Distance to travel by car (All 12 clubs)	3	0	2	4	1	2
Proportion of Clubs	25 %	0 %	17 %	33 %	8 %	17 %
Number of Candidates (6)	4	0	0	1	0	1
Proportion of Candidates	67 %	0 %	0 %	17 %	0 %	17 %

Table 4: Proximity of Attendee Club to Training Venue (Bacchus Marsh)

Over half the clubs (58%) in the Vic / Tas region are further than 200 km from the designated Bacchus Marsh training venue, with only 25% being under 50 km. It is not surprising that the majority of course attendees (83%) for the March 2024 course were drawn from the 3 clubs that operate from Bacchus Marsh (see Table 4: Proximity of Attendee Club to Training Venue (Bacchus Marsh)).

It is apparent that Home Club proximity to the course venue has a significant positive correlation to the clubs from which attendees are drawn.

Home Club Proximity to Instructor Venue

Just on a quarter of clubs (24%) are located more than 400 km from the designated Bacchus Marsh training venue, whilst a further third (33%) are more than 200km away. Only 42% are closer than 200 km (refer Table 5: Home Club Proximity to Bacchus Marsh training venue).

Proximity has a distinct and measurable advantage, or disadvantage, for clubs in the region. The study showed that the clubs located at Bacchus Marsh have the strongest Instructor correlation. It is apparent that proximity to the training venue correlates significantly to a higher number of instructors within those clubs, when compared to the instructor base at clubs further afield.

Home Club Distance to Training Venue (Bacchus Marsh)	< 50 km	50 – 100 km	100 – 200 km	200 – 400 km	400 – 500 km	500 – 600 km	> 600 km	Total Clubs
Distance to travel by car (All 12 clubs in region)	3	0	2	4	1	1	1	12
Proportion of All Clubs	25 %	0 %	17 %	33 %	8 %	8 %	8 %	100 %

Table 5: Home Club Proximity to Bacchus Marsh Training venue

Additionally, a strong correlation exists between close proximity to the instructing venue (Bacchus Marsh) and attendees at the March 2024 instructor course (AEI → Level 1).

Further, closer clubs have instructors at each of the three levels plus Silver Coaches, one club having all their instructors qualified as Silver Coaches. Those clubs further away typically have 2 – 3 instructors *in total* ie L1 or L2 levels, with some relying only on 1 or 2 instructors in total.

These findings are unsurprising when the extra course attendance costs for those further from the venue are taken into account. Especially affected are those whose Home Club is far from the Bacchus Marsh venue ie Tasmania or along the north west borders with NSW and SA. A round trip of more than 1,000km and one that also includes a sea journey, can be financially prohibitive.

The personal financing of such a trip on younger members interested in becoming Instructors appears to adversely impact their decision to enrol in a course.

Clubs with the most instructors can provide more diverse training for student pilots and enable them to flourish. Clubs with fewer or no instructors are severely impacted in their ability to provide basic training, let alone extend their student's training to more advanced skill acquisition for their pilots.

The Instructor Base – Club Losses

The reasons for losing instructors are varied, but can be divided into two groups, expected and unplanned.

Most respondents (67%) raised concerns at the ageing cohort of Instructors and their likely retirement or reduction in time allocated to instructing over the next few years (see Table 6: Predicted Aggregated Loss of Instructor Contingent in Vic / Tas Clubs).

Question 3	Responses	Numbers	Proportion of Yes	Proportion of Regional Instructor Base (95 reported)
Are you losing instructors?	Yes		67 %	
If so,	(6 clubs)			
how many left last year?		4	44 %	4 %
will any leave next year?		5	56 %	5 %
<i>Total</i>			100 %	9 %
do you know why?	<u>Expected</u>			<u>Unplanned</u>
	Retiring / Ageing			Illness of self or within family
	Increased personal gliding time			Death of Instructor
	/ decreased Instructor load			No Instructor candidates
	Leave Gliding			No suitable candidates
	On Sabbatical / temporary annual absence			

Table 6: Predicted Aggregated Loss of Instructor Contingent in Vic / Tas Clubs

The region lost 4 instructors in the 2023/2024 year (44%), with another 5 instructors expected to reduce their commitment or retire completely from instructing during the next year (56%).

Clubs have lost instructors and expect more to leave / reduce instructing in 2025, accounting for 9% of those currently trained. At the annual March 2024 course⁴, 5 new instructors were trained, representing 5% of the region's instructors.

As loss from unplanned events is likely but cannot be predicted, further loss should be anticipated. When viewed with the rate of actual and predicted loss, 9 over 2024 and 2025, the region's instructor base is shrinking.

4 The survey does not take into account instructors trained after the March 2024 AEI / L1 course.

The Predicted Need for Instructors

All clubs keenly felt the importance and critical need to increase their active instructor base. All respondents answered “yes” or “always” when questioned about their club’s future need to train instructors and at what required levels⁵.

Most clubs actively review their need to “bring on” instructors at a rate to support their club, which is not always possible for a variety of reasons (see Table 7: Club Aggregated Instructor Forecasts for in the Vic / Tas region).

Some respondents provided no forecast for any instructor level (33%). The remaining 67% of respondents forecast their Instructor needs over the next two to three years.

No Silver Coaches were predicted over the next few years. Silver Coach is a designation that does not require any instructor training, but enables a non-instructor to provide coaching within their club⁶.

Respondents providing forecasts indicated that the region requires 27 new instructors over the next few years – as AEI, L1, L2 and L3 (respectively 14.8%, 33.3%, 40.7% and 11.1%).

Club instructor forecasts for L2s represents 40.7% of the total forecast, while the number of L3s required by clubs is 11.1% of all instructors forecast.

<i>Question 4</i>	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Proportion</i>	<i>Comment(s)</i>
<i>Does your club need more instructors?</i>	Yes / Always	100%	All clubs aspire to continually train up new instructors at varying levels.
<i>If so, at what levels? How many?</i>	No Forecast	33.0%	Training and experience to be achieved before moving onto the next level – a long process.
	Forecast Given	67.0%	
AEI's	4	14.8%	Base level – training limits apply
L1	9	33.3%	AEI credential not required to attain L1
L2	11	40.7%	
L3	3	11.1%	
Silver Coach	0	0.0%	Augments the instructor training.
Totals	27	100.0%	
How many per year?	Needed NOW		As soon as possible

Table 7: Club Aggregated Instructor Forecasts for in the Vic / Tas region.

The predicted increase of 27 instructors represents a 28% increase in the region’s instructor base⁷. Additional demand for instructors can be expected from the clubs that did not provide forecasts, likely encompassing every level. Each respondent expressed concerns about their club’s ability to meet expected demand for training current members, let alone when new members are acquired.

AEIs currently provide basic instruction to new / student members and provide Air Experience Flights to prospective members. But, an AEI accreditation is not required for a person to train as a L1 instructor. This may prove a viable pathway to quickly increase the number of L1 instructors within the region and quickly meet club expectations for 9 more L1 base level (33.3% of forecast instructors) within one / two years.

⁵ Training up instructors is subject to the new instructor gaining experience at that level before progressing to the following level, the process is continual and must be planned over a number of years.

⁶ The coaching framework sits outside the instructor framework. A Silver Coach cannot replace an instructor. But, a Silver Coach can be associated with any level of instructor to enhance that instructor’s skill-set by incorporating coaching.

⁷ These figures do *not* account for club Instructor training requirements where the respondent gave a general “yes” or “always” answer.

The Future for Club and Regional Instructors

Typically, respondents which provided firm predictions (67%) for their club's required number of instructors at each level, are clubs further from the training venue at Bacchus Marsh. (See Table 8: Club Instructor Forecast by Distance from Training Centre).

<i>Home Club Proximity to (Bacchus Marsh)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>< 50 km</i>	<i>50 – 100 km</i>	<i>100 – 200 km</i>	<i>200 – 400 km</i>	<i>400 – 500 km</i>	<i>> 500 km</i>
<i>Instructor Level</i>							
AEI	4			2	2		
Level 1	9			3	3		3
Level 2	11			6	3		2
Level 3	3			1	1		1
New Instructor Total(s)	27	0	0	12	9	0	6
Proportion of Total	100.0%			44.0%	33.0%		22.0%
Silver Coach	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 8: Club Instructor Forecast by Distance from Training Centre.

Clubs that need to increase their instructor base are further than 100 km from the training centre (100%), with over 50% being further than 200km and nearly one quarter (22%) being located more than 500km from the training venue⁸.

Additionally, it is expected that instructor training will be required within clubs not giving forecast figures over the predicted forecast period. Demand will be greater than that predicted in Table 8, so course provision will need to account for increased unpredicted attendee numbers associated with these 37% of respondents.

All respondents spoke of the need to increase the number of instructors *at all levels* and to implement a planned increase across several years. This would feed into a broader instructor base in the VIC / TAS region. Consequently, the instructing work-load would be spread across more people and more clubs, which may entice more pilots to become instructors.

Most felt diverse venues are needed, a couple supported the status quo (Bacchus Marsh and 5 day course) while one respondent suggested a specific, more accessible Training / Instructor "school" be established. Some suggested better support of each other through more co-operation and co-ordination between clubs ie sharing instructor(s) / tug pilot(s).

⁸ As the correlation is very strongly positive between location of the training venue and close proximity to attendee home club, further research is required to established whether a causal relationship exists.

General Discussion

Two general discussion questions were asked -:

- Q5. Do you have any thoughts or suggestions on how VSA can help your club build instructors (eg on-line courses over a period of time, etc.)?
- Q6. Any other comments for VSA on instructors and training?

Replies ranged over a wide variety of topics. Comments were broader than just the quantitative questions about Instructors and the region's instructor training program.

These diverse "other" comments are included so the VIC / TAS region can consider them, identify actionable issues and prioritise them.

Duties of Coach and Instructors

Several respondents (30%) raised the Silver Coach training⁹ and how it sat within the instructing environment at their club or more generally in gliding.

Two main areas arose -:

- The Silver Coach fit with club operations:-
 - ❖ presumptuous of GFA that clubs do not know cross country (10%)
 - ❖ instructors more experienced than coaches – a confusing cross-over (20%)
 - ❖ where a Silver Coach teaches GPC student(s), a systemic issue arises (20%) ie non-instructor(s) doing part of GPC syllabus
- The Silver Coach relationship to Instructors -:
 - ❖ Silver Coach ought be an option *not* mandated for Instructors (30%) – should be valid for each club to assess need for a coach
 - ❖ not all clubs can comply with Silver Coach criteria – needs more flexibility for on-going application after initial accreditation (30%)

Course Structure and Delivery

The majority of respondents (80%) felt courses must be more flexible to meet attendee changing expectations around learning. Especially of importance when aiming to attract a younger and more representative instructor demographic at all levels of instructing (AEI through to L3).

Most respondents (60%) stated that provision of courses closer to clubs and attendee localities, would enhance attendance numbers at the course, especially for "distant" clubs ie Tasmania and those along the NW border(s) of NSW and SA¹⁰.

The generalised responses about instructor training courses provided a range of comments, some incompatible with another. Respondents felt that instructor courses ought -:

- make better use technology (90%) – distance education ie on zoom, account for changing learning preferences, material better aligned to GFA units, use on-line exams, incorporate simulators, match lesson to student learning styles, lodge student accomplishments on-line (dispense with Log Book)
- rural access to internet can be problematic for course delivery (20%)
- on-line theory of 2hrs each unit (20%) ie zoom, rather than classroom mode of delivery
- occur more frequently ie increase number of courses offered annually (90%)
- be divided into practical (airfield) and theoretical (non-field) modules (60%), and provide theoretical non-field modules to attendees before the course
- use club instructors to better effect by pre-preparing course attendees (50%) – takes work-load off L3s
- take account of those who work – delivering course(s) out-of-work hours ie not as 5 days during one week but broken into sections/modules over weeks and months (80%)

9 The training of a Coach, as distinct from undertaking a coaching role with student pilot(s).

10 The relationship between club / attendee locality and course venue is correlated, but no causation has yet been determined.

- conduct over 1 week to consolidate and reinforce the lessons (30%)
- change training location (70%) ie different venues closer to “home” club(s) of prospective attendees
- move around the region as demand ebbs and flows (30%)
- extend the advice of up-coming course(s), both for instructors and attendees (40%), as neither group can be expected to “drop everything” for a course in 2 – 3 weeks ¹¹
- acknowledge experience in other aero pursuits ie GA instructor and provide exemption for associated modules of instructor course(s) (30%)
- good to see VSA at clubs at least once annually (10%)
- smaller clubs need help with IT systems, “new” media communications methods ie social media strategy, web site development and maintenance, establishment and access to reliable internet for training (20%)
- AEI accreditation now more onerous to achieve – fewer interested (30%)

Cost Implications

The costs associated with attendee proximity to training venues and instructor travel and accommodation costs¹², must be weighed and balanced against the number of expected attendees should the venue proximity¹³ remain at Bacchus Marsh.

An increased internal cost of course provision may be better spent if it increases attendance and completion of the course. The region needs more instructors and, as the one level feeds into the next, all levels will benefit.

Implementation and Compliance – Training and MOSPs

The majority of respondents (80%) commented on the lack of support from GFA and Regional Managers with the roll-out and development of the changes (to both the new training programs and the new MOSP and support documents). The general feeling is that more consultation with clubs in the document development phase would have resulted in improved implementation and support for changes due to better appreciation of the rationale for such change(s).

Most clubs raised issues around implementing both the ITP and the MOSPs within their club, especially the extra time commitments on already time-poor Instructors and CFIs. Rather than rely on clubs interpreting the documents individually, which may result in disparate application/implementation within and across regions. The respondent expectation is for better communication on implementation, resulting in consistency within gliding across regions.

Some respondents (30%) suggested prior experience in other aero sports / areas be acknowledged and accounted for in the training and accreditation of trainee instructor's ie GA Instructor,

Over half the respondents (60%) felt a need to highlight and provide to Clubs all crucial changes to Training Program(s) and MOSPs. Clubs remain ignorant of changes due to lack of advice of their occurrence¹⁴. A specific concern of those who perform more than the CFI role (60%) within their club¹⁵.

Some respondents (20%) raised the issue of responsibility or liability should an incident occur, as legally the current document(s) would apply ie latest version and as at the date of effect (MOSPs being January 2024). The implication was that operational imperatives may not have been identified, so not implemented at the airfield by the club.

¹¹ People are busier than in the past. Must give at least 10 weeks notice so can arrange time-off work, re-arrange family commitments, book accommodation etc..

¹² The Vic / Tas RMO stated that an AEI / L1 5 day training course requires a *minimum* of 3 L3s for the on-field practical component of the course.

¹³ Causality needs to be established between location of the training venue and close proximity to attendee home club, as the correlation is very strongly positive.

¹⁴ The club may be referencing a previous document version issued by the GFA, being unaware the document has been amended and a newer version now supersedes the one being used.

¹⁵ As club's membership base reduces (smaller clubs), the necessity for an individual to undertake more roles increases. One person may become the CFI, an Instructor, and an executive (President, Secretary, Treasurer) or committee member. Many have a role in multiple panels ie operations, airworthiness, safety, airspace and avionics, and instructing, training and development etc..

Some felt (40%) that a CFI ought to be equivalent to a Level 3 instructor for clubs without a L3, which is most clubs. Subsequently reducing the work-load on current L3s. They saw no real benefit of an L3 signing off a student (40%) when a CFI could do so. But an inter-club arrangement for CFI sign-off, could be put in place to ensure integrity, compliance or decision independence.

Log Book – Matters Raised

Issues were raised concerning the Log Books (50%) :-

- sturdiness
 - ❖ covers fall off;
 - ❖ better binding needed
- completion time extensive at end of day (10 – 20 mins required) (50%)
- now too onerous to complete (50%)

Volunteer Reluctance to become Instructors

Respondent comments related to a less willing contingent of younger members to take on the role of Instructor. Some respondents spoke about the perceived heavy work-load of instructors coupled with a corresponding reduction in personal gliding time.

Other respondents attributed this volunteering reluctance to the societal changes since the COVID19 pandemic¹⁶ ie increased emphasis on “personal time”, reduced time for each leisure activity, greater importance placed on friends and family, upheaval in work-life balance, changed work patterns and “new” work arrangements etc.

There is a volunteer shortage in the region which is becoming more problematic.

Membership – Retention and Buoyancy

Half the respondents (50%) raised retention of members as an on-going issue. Again comments were divergent :-

- Younger members are :-
 - ❖ difficult to retain after going solo (20%)
 - ❖ gliding seems to be a “bucket list” goal (20%)
 - ❖ divergent younger student member base – issue down track (10%) ie < 15 years or > 35 years
 - ❖ good at keeping Air Experience people after flights but only if live locally (10%).
- Older members are :-
 - ❖ reducing flying time at the club (50%)
 - ❖ retiring from active volunteering (80%)

But, others (30%) discussed an increase in members from :-

- 20% expressed strong conversion to members of those on Air Experience Flights (10%-15% rate)
- attracting more diverse members (10%) – more women, youth, first nations, cultural backgrounds etc
- contract with educational body(s) (20%) to integrate flight into curricula and provide those students with gliding training. Usually, this junior member conversion rate varies between clubs.

Club Viability

Over a quarter of respondents are concerned for the immediate future of their club. If they cannot instruct members when required, then members will not stay in the club or even the sport. One club is amalgamating with a commercial enterprise to remain viable.

Several (40%) commented on sufficient instructors being directly related to retention ability of new member(s). But a membership drive is foolhardy without sufficient instructors – a classic Catch 22 situation.

An ageing Panel is of concern to two thirds of respondents (60%) and expected to worsen as fewer young people are interested in becoming instructors.

¹⁶ Volunteering around the world has decreased over the last decade or so. It has become worse since the pandemic. Volunteering has been identified as a generational issue with younger people taking it up at a lesser rate. Governments in Australia and overseas are assessing the impact. State governments have undertaken research and provide support for organisations reliant on volunteers ie through funding, access to research findings and “attraction” strategies.

Conclusions

All clubs have concerns about the future of Gliding as a sport. Many are aware of the competing time pressures, social obligations and financial difficulties, both of current members and prospective members.

While planned retirement and time reductions are inevitable, various “occurrences” are likely to reduce the instructor base further due to the unexpected ie health issues, family emergencies, death and personal / work changes. The current predicted attrition rate (9% of instructor base) is out-stripping the annual acquisition rate of instructors (4% of instructor base) – the region’s instructor base is shrinking¹⁷.

Of concern to clubs is the increased work-load directly related to both the new ITP and implementation of the MOSPs documents. Clubs look to the Ops Panels at both GFA and Regional levels for implementation guidance on both of these complex matters.

A bottleneck occurs at the Level 3 Instructor training level, whose work-load is compounded by the new processes and procedures required by CASA compliance. Given the pressures on the Level 3 group to support Clubs to understand the implications and implementation of the new procedures, it is a matter of urgency to increase this valuable L3 resource within the region and at Clubs.

The current Level 3 cohort are also the sole providers of courses to qualify instructors in all other levels. The relatively small number of L3 instructors limits the provision of annual training to a single course run¹⁸ in the same period annually. This impacts attendance numbers for instructor training.

Furthermore, another drain on L3 voluntary time and ability to personally “go fly” as opposed to “instruction flying” is likely to result in burn-out for the few L3 Instructors in the region, compounding their ability to deliver courses.

Several respondents mentioned a lack of younger members wanting to commit to an instructor role, citing study, family, career establishment and financial reasons. Other respondents noted that younger members are reluctant to spend a whole day on the field awaiting completion of their gliding log book, as most clubs Instructors undertake the activity at day’s end.

Several respondents related that fewer members are seeking to become instructors, than in the past. Additionally, younger members are more reluctant to commit to instructing due to diverse reasons ie financial, family, study commitments, burgeoning career, consolidation etc.. When taken in context with the current global social and economic changes, it is impacting the instructor base both of the region and clubs.

Progressing instructors through the levels from AEI to L3, will need to be carefully prioritised and meticulously managed to meet predicted demand from regional clubs and members. The frequency of courses and delivery of course material via creative presentation, needs to be reviewed in light of this identified and expected demand for more instructors within the changed societal structures.

Any campaign to increase membership numbers, either regionally or at Clubs, will need to be supported by a strong and active group of Instructors and trainers at all levels. Planning this expansion of the instructor base will be critical to retaining those new members and preventing attrition of current members.

¹⁷ The attrition rate does not take account of unplanned attrition.

¹⁸ AEI and L1 course.

Critical Issues and Priority Setting

Below are the more critical issues for Victorian Soaring Association (VSA) consideration following completion of the Instructor Insights Survey.

- Issue report to CFI's and Club Presidents
- Issue below recommendations to club presidents for changes, additions and overall support for a set of actions:
 1. Prioritise the creation of an L3 for every club to reinstate the capability of clubs to create and sign off AEI's and create balanced club representation of operational leadership team
 2. Implement alternative instructor training methods that favour agility and cost effectiveness in the modern world - e.g. club L3 can train new instructors in house augmented with online training videos - potentially creating a continuous pipeline of in club instructor development and culture.
 3. Immediately increase the instructor base at all levels ie verify and then encourage L1 to be undertaken without first doing AEI until sufficient to progress to L2.
 4. VSA RTOP to interact with clubs beyond operational audits to promote active instructor development pipelines and targets within clubs
 5. Prioritise VSA RTOP diversity including targeting 40% female representation
 6. Prioritise inclusion of VSA RTOP youth representation to foster and encourage the next generation of participants.
 7. Implement Sports Integrity Australia training for VSA RTOP members (replaces Play By the Rules training).
 8. Implement advanced calendaring and broad promotion of all instructor training to maximise opportunity to be attended by other club members.
 9. Implement a program of roving instructor opportunities to assist clubs, reinvigorate and provide additional opportunities to instructing crew, build inter-club relationships and collaboration and cross pollination.
 10. Investigate opportunities to reduce instructor workload - e.g. a change to the system of filling out student logbooks at the end of the day could be simplified, briefings could be done by centrally created videos, etc

It is a starting point for discussion. Other comments, actions or strategies can be added. Likewise items deleted.
→ Priorities need to be established.

NOTES

INSTRUCTOR INSIGHTS SURVEY (VSA)



CONDUCTED: MAY / JUNE 2024

INTERVIEWER / RESEARCHER: BEV ALDEN



Victorian Soaring Association (VSA)