



TWO-YEAR CLUB MEMBERSHIP RECOVERY PLAN

Summary

This Recovery Plan is a simple document for a club committee to adopt, with clear actions, targets and responsibilities rather than another strategic document.

From 2026–2028, the objective is simple. Stop losing members, keep the people we have, attract new people and turn newcomers into active, long-term club members.

A practical Two-Year Membership Recovery Plan for Victorian & Tasmanian Gliding Clubs

This Recovery Plan is a simple document for a club committee to adopt, with clear actions, targets and responsibilities rather than another strategic document.

2026–2028

The objective is “Simples”!

Stop losing members, keep the people we have, attract new people and turn newcomers into active, long-term club members.

1. The Club's Membership Goal

Every club should establish its own baseline and set a two-year target.

The starting point

Measure	Current	Year 1 Target	Year 2 Target
Total members	_____	_____	_____
New members	_____	_____	_____
Members retained	_____%	_____%	_____%
Female members	_____	_____	_____
Members under 25	_____	_____	_____
Former members returning	_____	_____	_____
Active flying members	_____	_____	_____

Recommended club target

Aim for:

- **Year 1 – Stabilise**
Stop the net membership decline and achieve **at least 5% growth where practical**.
- **Year 2 – Grow**
Achieve **another 5–10% growth** while maintaining strong retention.

The target should be realistic for each club's size and circumstances.

YEAR 1 — STOP THE DECLINE

2. Know Why Members Are Leaving

Before trying to recruit more people, understand why existing members aren't staying.

Within the first three months:

Contact members who:

- Did not renew
- Have stopped flying
- Have not participated for 6–12 months
- Have indicated they may leave

Ask three simple questions:

1. **Why have you stopped participating?**
2. **What would encourage you to return?**
3. **What could the club do better?**

Don't assume the answer is cost.

People leave clubs because of many factors:

- Lack of time
- Difficulty accessing flying
- Club culture
- Feeling unwelcome
- Lack of progression
- Lack of social connection
- Volunteer expectations
- Family commitments
- Cost
- Moving location
- Loss of interest

Club action

Create a **"Members at Risk" list** and personally contact those members.

Target: Contact 100% of members who don't renew.

3. Introduce a "Welcome to the Club" Program

The first few months are critical.

Every new member should have a person who takes an interest in them.

The first 90 days

Day 1	• Personal welcome • Introductions • Club orientation • Explain how things work
First month	• Check they are getting flying opportunities • Introduce them to other members • Explain training/progression
60 days	• Ask how things are going • Identify problems
90 days	• Personal follow-up • Ask what they want to achieve • Encourage continued participation

Appoint a: New Member Buddy

This doesn't have to be an instructor.

It should be someone friendly, approachable and interested in helping newcomers feel part of the club. This can be a Social Member who would like to be more involved. This could be a staff member initially.

4. Make Every New Member Feel They Belong

Recruitment is wasted if newcomers don't feel connected.
Clubs should deliberately create opportunities for new members to meet people.

Simple ideas

- New-member morning tea
- Monthly social BBQ
- "Meet the Members" activity
- New-member flying day
- Club briefing for newcomers
- Introduce newcomers at morning briefing to members
- Introduce newcomers to instructors and experienced pilots
- Encourage experienced members to fly with newer members

The question every club should ask:

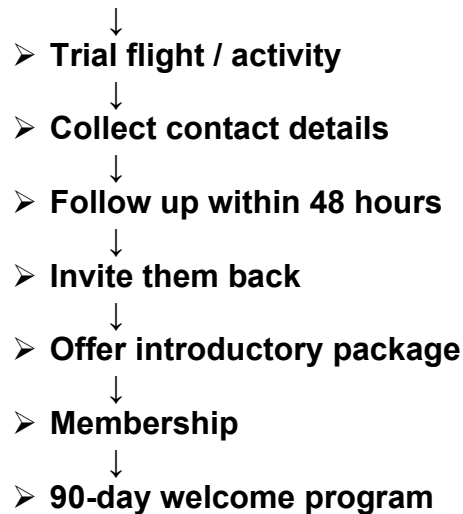
"If I joined this club today, would I feel like I belonged?"

5. Turn Come & Try Days into Membership

A Come & Try day should not finish when the visitor leaves the airfield.

Create a simple follow-up process:

Visitor



Club target

For every recruitment event, record:

- Number attending
- Number flying
- Contact details collected
- Follow-ups completed
- Membership enquiries
- New members
- Members still active after six months

6. Recruit Beyond the Traditional Gliding Market

Clubs should deliberately seek people who may never have considered gliding.

Priority groups

Women

- Women in aviation
- Women's community groups
- Mothers/parents
- STEM networks

Youth

- Schools
- Scouts
- Guides
- Air Cadets
- STEM groups

Aviation

- Powered pilots
- Former pilots
- Aviation enthusiasts
- Paragliders

Community

- Rotary
- Lions
- Service clubs
- Community groups
- Multicultural organisations

Experience seekers

- Families
- Adventure seekers
- Gift-flight customers
- Festival visitors

7. Make Women and Youth Part of the Normal Club

Don't create programs that make people feel like they are being treated as a special category.

Instead ask: **"What would make our club more attractive and accessible to women and young people?"**

Club actions

- Use images of women and young people in advertising.
- Identify female and youth mentors.
- Encourage female instructors and role models.
- Run youth-friendly activities.
- Offer family-friendly social events.
- Ensure newcomers are welcomed regardless of age or experience.
- Review whether club practices unintentionally discourage new participants.

Suggested targets

By the end of Year 2:

Female membership: Increase by at least 25–50% from the club's current baseline.

Youth membership: Establish a measurable and growing youth pathway.

8. Bring Former Members Back

Former members already know what gliding is.

They are therefore one of the easiest groups to approach.

Run a: **"Come Back to Gliding" Campaign**

Contact former members and say: **We'd love to see you back at the club.**

Offer:

- A social visit
- Refresher flying
- Re-introduction to the club
- A buddy
- Assistance getting back into flying
- A conversation about what stopped them participating

Target

Aim to recover **5–10% of recently lapsed members** over two years.

Introduce a: **Loyalty or Reward Card**

Club Rewards – “Fly • Contribute • Belong”

Earn recognition and Club Credits by:

Flying – participate and progress

Helping – volunteer and contribute

Growing – introduce new members

Belonging – participate in club life

Supporting – mentor and encourage others

And the underlying message:

“Every contribution counts. Whether you fly, teach, tow, mentor, organise, welcome newcomers or simply lend a hand, you help keep gliding strong.”

The biggest benefit isn't actually the rewards.

It changes the culture from **“What do I get for my membership?”** to **“What can I contribute and how the club recognises that?”**

The Loyalty & Rewards is one of the **five core elements of the two-year membership recovery program**, alongside recruitment, retention, women/youth participation and community engagement.

Details of the Loyalty and Rewards Program can be found in [Appendix I](#).

YEAR 2 — BUILD GROWTH

Once retention and the welcome process are working, Year 2 should concentrate on expanding recruitment.

9. Establish One Major Recruitment Activity Each Quarter

Every club should undertake **at least four deliberate membership activities per year**.

Examples:

Quarter 1	Come & Try Gliding Day
Quarter 2	Women & Aviation Day
Quarter 3	Youth / Schools Gliding Experience
Quarter 4	Community Open Day

The actual events can vary by club. The important point is that **Membership growth needs to become an activity on the club calendar, not something that happens accidentally.**

10. Create a Membership "Funnel"

Clubs should know what happens to people after their first contact.

The Membership Journey

- **SEE US** - Advertising / social media / community event
- ↓
- **VISIT US** - Come & Try / open day
- ↓
- **EXPERIENCE GLIDING** - Trial flight / simulator / ground activity
- ↓
- **COME BACK** - Introductory package
- ↓
- **JOIN** - Membership
- ↓
- **PARTICIPATE** - Flying + social activities
- ↓
- **BELONG** - Friendships + club involvement
- ↓
- **STAY** - Long-term member
- ↓
- **CONTRIBUTE** - Volunteer / instructor / committee / mentor

This is the REAL membership cycle.

11. Don't Overload New Members with Volunteering

Volunteering is important to clubs, but demanding too much too soon can discourage newcomers.

Instead provide a range of opportunities:

15 minutes - Help with a BBQ.

1 hour - Assist with an event.

Half a day - Help with ground operations.

Regular - Join a club working group.

Long-term - Become an instructor, coach, committee member or key volunteer.

The message should be: **"How would you like to contribute?"**
rather than: **"You need to volunteer."**

12. Appoint a Club Membership Champion

Every club should have one person responsible for keeping membership growth visible.

This does **NOT** mean they personally recruit everyone.

Their job is to coordinate:

- Membership enquiries
- Follow-ups
- New-member welcome
- Former-member contacts
- Come & Try activities
- Membership reporting
- VSA funding opportunities
- Club membership targets

13. The Club Monthly Membership Check

A committee should spend **10 minutes every month** reviewing five numbers:

Measure	This month
Current members	
New members	
Members lost	
Prospective members	
Members at risk	

Then ask: **"Who needs a phone call?"**

This simple question can prevent members quietly disappearing.

14. Use VSA Funding — Don't Leave It on the Table

Where VSA funding is available for membership growth, clubs should actively use it. Funding can support:

- Advertising
- Come & Try events
- Youth programs
- Women's programs
- Junior development
- Rookie programs
- Community engagement
- Local promotional activities

Club principle:

If funding is available to help us grow, we should have a plan for using it.

15. Two-Year Club Action Calendar

Time	Action	Responsibility
Months 1–3	Establish membership baseline	Committee
	Contact lapsed members	Membership Champion
	Appoint New Member Buddy	Committee
	Establish targets	Committee
Months 4–6	First Come & Try activity	Membership Team
	Begin female/youth recruitment	Membership Team
	Introduce 90-day new-member checks	Buddy
Months 7–9	Former-member campaign	Membership Champion
	Community partnership	Committee
	Review results	Committee
Months 10–12	Second major recruitment event	Club
	Year 1 membership review	Committee
	Set Year 2 targets	Committee
Year 2 Q1	Expand successful programs	Club
Year 2 Q2	Women/youth campaign	Club
Year 2 Q3	Community/aviation recruitment	Club
Year 2 Q4	Review, retain and consolidate	Committee

16. The Club Membership Scorecard

MEMBERSHIP

Criteria	Number
● Current members	
● New members	
● Members lost	
● Net change	

RETENTION

Criteria	Number
● Renewal rate	%
● Members contacted	
● Members recovered	

RECRUITMENT

Criteria	Number
● Enquiries	
● Come & Try participants	
● Introductory flights	
● New members	

DIVERSITY

Criteria	Number
● Female members	
● Youth members	

ACTIVITY

Criteria	Number
● Recruitment activities completed	
● Funding utilised	\$

The Three Rules for Clubs

1. Don't lose the members you already have.

Retention is cheaper and easier than replacing people who leave.

2. Don't just recruit — follow up.

Every enquiry, trial flight and new member should have a next step.

3. Don't wait for membership to happen.

Every club needs a deliberate plan, someone responsible and measurable targets.

The Club Challenge

Every club can make a difference to the future of gliding.

The objective over the next two years is not to become a bigger club at any cost. It is to become a **healthier, more welcoming and more sustainable club.**

- **Keep the members we have**
- **Bring some back**
- **Welcome new people**
- **Broaden who participates**
- **Give newcomers a reason to stay**

If every club achieves that, the overall membership position of your club, the Victorian Soaring Association and Gliding Australia will change.

Membership recovery starts at club level

It Starts with Your Club

It Starts Now

APPENDIX I - LOYALTY AND REWARDS PROGRAM

What is often overlooked is that members contribute value to a club in many ways - not just by flying.

Loyalty and Reward programmes should be **simple, visible and achievable**, rather than creating a complicated points system.

EXISTING MEMBER LOYALTY PROGRAM

“Fly - Contribute - Belong”

The program should reward three types of behaviour.

Area	Members could earn rewards for:-
FLY	Flying regularly, completing training, participating in competitions or coaching
CONTRIBUTE	Volunteering, helping on working bees, instructing, towing, helping at events
BELONG	Bringing a new member, attending club activities, helping newcomers, participating socially

Membership Loyalty Rewards

Recognise members who stay with the club.

For example:

- **1 year** – Club recognition / welcome-back reward
- **3 years** – Small flying credit or club merchandise
- **5 years** – Recognition certificate + flying credit
- **10 years** – Special recognition + larger flying credit
- **20+ years** – Lifetime contribution recognition

The important thing is that long-term membership feels valued, rather than simply resulting in another annual renewal invoice.

Volunteer Rewards

Volunteer Rewards can be the most powerful component. Rather than saying “*you have to volunteer*”, the message becomes “**The more you contribute, the more the club gives back.**”

Club Credits

Members could accumulate **Club Credits** for activities as below:

Working bee	2 credits
Helping at a Come & Try Day	3 credits
Helping with a club event	2 credits
Ground operations	1 credit/session
Towing – credits based on contribution	
Instructing – credits based on contribution	
Mentoring a new member	2 credits
Committee/administrative work – agreed credits	
Bringing a new member who joins – bonus credits	

Credits could then be exchanged for things that have genuine value to glider pilots.

Club Credits =

- aerotow credits
- glider hire
- training flights
- coaching sessions
- competition entry
- club merchandise
- guest flight
- reduced event fees

That makes volunteering feel less like an obligation and more like earning something back from the club.

“Bring a Friend” Reward - This deserves its own initiative.

Bring Someone to Gliding - A member who introduces a new person who subsequently joins could receive, for example, **\$100–\$150 Club Flying Credit**

The new member could also receive a small welcome benefit. This creates a positive cycle:

Member introduces friend → friend experiences gliding → new member joins → existing member is rewarded.

It also makes recruitment a shared responsibility rather than something left to a membership officer.

NEW MEMBER LOYALTY PROGRAM

The first 12 months are particularly important. The introduction of a “**First Year Flight Path**” rather than simply signing them up, the program gives the new member a trajectory and feeling of belonging.

First 30 Days

- Welcome and club induction
- Introduced to several members
- First flying goal established
- Club mentor allocated

3 Months

- Check-in with member
- Flying progress review
- Invite to social/club activity

6 Months

- Progress recognition
- Small reward
- Encourage participation in a club activity

12 Months

- First-year achievement recognition
- Renewal incentive
- Ask: “What would make you want to stay for another five years?”

This directly addresses **retention**, not just recruitment.

Recognition Awards

Not everything needs to have a dollar value. A monthly or quarterly “**Club Contribution Award**” could recognise the following:

- Volunteer of the Month
- New Member of the Quarter
- Community Champion
- Women in Gliding Achievement
- Outstanding Contribution to the Club
- Most Improved Pilot
- Best Mentor
- Behind-the-Scenes Hero
- Junior Achievement

Recognition at a club BBQ, newsletter or annual dinner can sometimes be more meaningful than a \$50 voucher.

A SIMPLE POINTS SYSTEM

Club Flight Credits

Contribution	Credits
Attend a working bee	2
Help at club event	2
Help at Come & Try Day	3
Mentor a new member	2
Bring a guest to the club	1
Introduce a new member	10
Regular operational volunteering	1–3
Special project	3–5
Significant volunteer contribution	5–10

Credit Value =

10 credits = \$50 club value

20 credits = \$100 club value

30 credits = \$150 club value

The club could cap annual redemption if necessary.

The program should not reward only flying. This is important.

If rewards are based primarily on flying hours, the program will favour the already-active pilots.

Instead, follow the criteria below and deliberately create rewards based on -

Flying + Volunteering + Recruitment + Mentoring + Community + Participation.

That means a member who flies only occasionally but spends weekends helping the club can still become one of the most highly recognised members.

That supports the culture you are trying to create.

“Every contribution counts. Whether you fly, teach, tow, mentor, organise, welcome newcomers or simply lend a hand, you help keep gliding strong.”