

Opening Doors to Yacht Clubs FACT SHEETS



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Attitude Awareness of club staff, members, committee and board

We all love sailing and know the many and varied benefits from being involved in a club and sailing for recreation, fitness, challenges and social interaction. It is essential that as a club, we encourage members, volunteers, staff and the committees to develop a desire to include people with a disability in the club to share the benefits around.

When successfully including people with a disability in your club and its programs, not only will your members and the person with a disability be reaping the rewards of participation in sailing, but your club will be directly benefiting as well! For example:

- More members mean more dollars for your organisation.
- Organisations like to have successful athletes as members and people with a disability may become elite-level athletes. Clubs that include people with a disability can benefit in areas such as publicity, motivation, coach development and sponsorship drives.
- People with a disability bring skills and enthusiasm to your club.
- Your club will be carrying out its obligation to anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation.

It is important to remember that the most physically accessible club in the world won't be welcoming to people with disabilities if the club's staff, members, volunteers, committee or board have a negative attitude towards people with disabilities and to including them in your club and its activities.

Not all the clubs that have a successful sailing program for people with disabilities are the best equipped or most accessible places but they are clubs where the people involved, when faced with a challenge, ask 'How could we do that?', "Is there another way?", "What would we need?" These clubs display a positive attitude and find ways to include their members with a disability in all activities.

Some people think that having sailors with disabilities around the club could pose problems in terms of coaches and officials not having 'special' skills and knowledge. People fear that they'll do or say the wrong thing. In fact, working with people with disabilities is no different to working with anyone else.

You might have to make a few adjustments to support individual needs (as with all members) but the principles of coaching, training, having fun and socialising remain the same.

The vast majority of experienced coaches of athletes with a disability say that coaching or instructing an athlete with a disability has made them a better coach. They have had to individualise programs to suit the needs of athletes whose physical and/or intellectual characteristics are much more diverse than in the past. This, in turn enables them to better support the individual needs of all sailors they work with.

Gaining the support of your club's board of directors (or equivalent) is vital to the success of any sailing program for people with disabilities. Your business and program plans will need to include an accurate estimate of the establishment and operating costs, and you will need

to indicate how the funds will be raised. Most clubs are constrained financially so the program will fail if there are surprise costs arising later and the club has liabilities as a result.

It's also important that the program be visible to the entire membership of the club and the programs achievements be communicated through the club's general communication channels such as newsletters and websites. This profile for the program will assist in educating the wider membership and assist in attracting new members.

According to Project CONNECT¹, increasing participation can be one of the most challenging aspects of running a sports organisation. A key to increasing participation in your club by people with a disability is the appropriate education of your members about the needs of people with a disability. Disability education can be a great start for a club that's thinking about whether to become involved in programs for people with disabilities.

The Australian Sports Commission runs the Disability Education Program. The *Opening Doors for Yacht Clubs*² program is an interactive workshop that assists clubs to develop strategies to attract and retain people with disabilities as members. In particular, it helps participants to understand the many advantages and benefits that adopting an inclusive approach can bring to their organisation.

To arrange attendance at an Opening Doors workshop contact the Disability Education Program Coordinator in your state or territory – see <http://www.ausport.gov.au/dsu/contacts.asp> for contact details.

References

1. Project Connect information web page www.ausport.gov.au/connect/index.asp
2. Opening Doors Workshop - www.ausport.gov.au/dsu/opening_doors.asp

2. Conducting a Physical Access Audit of your Club

The purpose of conducting an access audit of your facilities is to identify physical barriers which may restrict access to opportunities for people with disabilities.

An access audit involves a systematic look through your club with the help of a checklist to identify possible barriers to a person with a disability. Talk to and include staff and current members in the audit process, some who may have a disability, to discover what barriers they may have identified since being part of the club.

Each member, whether they have a disability or not, will have different needs and expectations of your club. You may need to consult with your members on a one-to-one basis to ascertain their individual requirements. Keep in mind that a small change for one person will most likely benefit all of your members!

Once barriers are identified, your club can work on eliminating them. This often immediately conjures pictures of expensive reconstruction work. In reality there are many things that can be fixed quickly and inexpensively, although obviously major reconstruction work becomes expensive.

There are many checklists available to assist you, such as the one from the Disability Education Program Opening Doors Work Book. The following points include some areas to be observed:

Physical Structures

These include physical things like paths, parking areas, doorways, steps and stairs. It also includes looking at the way some of these things work. A simple fix like changing the way a toilet door opens can be readily undertaken by someone with some carpentry skills.

Handrails along ramps and stairways, and also next to toilets and in shower areas can prevent falls by providing a steadying point if someone loses balance and by being an anchor point for someone to hold while transferring from a standing to sitting position or from a wheelchair to a toilet, for example.

The way furniture is arranged can be a barrier to some people. You can ensure that the walkways between and around furniture are sufficiently wide and also keep all halls and doorways clear of equipment, rubbish and other material to ensure everyone can get through as required.

Are the external pathways in good repair? Filling in a pothole could prevent a trip for a person with vision impairment or stop a wheelchair tipping. What about steps? Some non-slip treatment and a highly visible edge marker for each step isn't much work for the club but makes life much easier and safer for people with a disability, and incidentally for all people.

Access to information outlets and reception desks

When someone enters your club do they see a friendly face or a wall of a high reception counter? What could your club do to make this more welcoming?

If your events and club information hand-outs are also sitting flat on that reception counter, a person using a wheelchair won't see that information and could miss entry dates or social events.

Signs

If your club has adequate signs, people with disabilities can be more independent as they will have the information they need to access your club and its facilities.

Décor

If your club has the opportunity to redecorate, take into consideration how décor can impact on a person with a disability.

Non-visual guides to assist people with vision impairments

Look around your club to see where a non-visual sign might be of use.

Emergency evacuation procedures

Look at the ways in which your club alerts people to activities and emergencies both in the clubhouse and on the water, and consider including a visual system, such as a flashing light or waving flag, which would attract attention and alert someone with a hearing impairment.

Conclusion

Eliminating physical barriers will assist people with disabilities participate in all aspects of sailing. There are many simple and inexpensive changes that you can make to ensure your club can attract and retain members with a disability. Doing a thorough audit and then developing action plan can help with preparing a realistic budget for the more expensive changes that may be required. It will also assist in fundraising planning.

Assistance can be obtained through your State Sailability Groups which can provide advice, support & information. Making a few simple changes to accommodate the needs of individual members will support all of your members!

For more information and further reading on this area consult:

www.yachting.org.au – Disability Education Plan, Opening Door to Yacht Clubs module for information and audit checklists.

<http://www.sailing.org/disabled/sailingmanual/club.asp> International Sailing Federation Sailing Manual *Access in Clubs*.

3. Identifying a primary advocate or "champion"

A crucial factor in introducing sailing for people with disabilities is to avoid linking its success or failure to one person. This is actually quite difficult to do because many programs of this nature do start out or expand from the efforts of one person "championing the cause".

Think seriously about identifying a couple of people to be your club's advocates – a few people who are well known to the local community who can support and encourage your club in its journey (see succession planning fact sheet).

Having a primary advocate or champion, or even two or three champions, can mean that your club's efforts are given higher profile in the community than they might otherwise be given. Often champions are community leaders who can influence the agenda at community management levels. For example, this may help sway decisions in your sport or club's favour because you have someone being your program's advocate at a crucial meeting.

Sometimes a champion is just a fine person who is generally very well regarded and who may have some significant achievements in other areas of life such as community service, academic acclaim, current or high public office or sporting hero. The halo of goodness that this person carries spreads to your club's activities if that person champions your cause.

Role of a advocate or champion

There is no one "role description" as it depends on who is in the role, their skills and interests and their sphere of influence. Obviously it is great to have someone being your club's advocate at a council meeting where funding grants are being determined.

However, if your champion is not actually at that table, they may still be in a position to lobby the decision-makers who are. Your champion can get together a groundswell of support from the community through their media comments and other actions so that the decision-makers get to hear about your club's achievements and needs.

Some champions act as ambassadors for clubs. They might not be playing an advocacy role but in their day to day public commitments and general activities, they speak in high terms of what your club is doing and how proud they are to be associated with such a great program. This opens opportunities for discussions on sponsorship opportunities or volunteer recruitment, for example.

So roles for champions can include advocacy, lobbying, influencing, media spokesperson, fundraising contact and community relations.

This is by no means definitive and you will need to negotiate with your champions what it is they could do and what is not required of them. You should also clearly work out how much time would be devoted to their championing role and agree on what resources will be provided to the champion to do the role, if any.

If you don't take the time to work out what it is the champions are going to do and set out some realistic expectations, both the club and the champion might regret entering into the arrangement after a period of time.

If you and your champion are on different wavelengths and you haven't agreed on a plan of action or role description, you, your club or your champion could end up looking foolish or promoting incorrect information about one another – to the detriment of all.

Some pitfalls to be aware of

There is no doubt that the right champion can make a lot of good things happen in a short amount of time but if only one person has the role, then his or her departure can mean the program's main source of publicity and support disappears. The work of establishing another champion from scratch is hard, especially if your original one was terrific and had a high profile.

The halo of "goodness" goes if the champion actually leaves the role and some may even question why the champion has quit – was there something bad going on? Champions don't often quit but they can just drift away if the planning was not done correctly and the role doesn't suit. Even if the champion should die whilst in the role it is still difficult to regain momentum.

This is why not investing all your eggs in one basket might be worth considering unless you've managed to secure someone with such a high profile or status the risks are outweighed by the benefits of having such a great single champion.

Ensure that your succession planning starts at the same time as your search for a primary advocate or champion in order to avoid such a pitfall.

Communicating with program participants

There's a quote in the Yachting For Everyone Workbook¹ that says "only modify if and when you need to" and this applies to communications as well as all other aspects of sailing for people with disabilities. Think about the needs of your members with disabilities and an appropriate way to convey the required information.

Things that can be considered are:

- Using appropriate language for people with intellectual disabilities
- Repeating and reinforcing all steps for people with learning difficulties
- Exchanging information through signing or other non-verbal means
- Providing hearing loops where appropriate
- Becoming familiar with individual technologies that sailors use to assist communication²

Whilst sailing, think about what ways you could communicate - loud speaker, hand signals and walkie-talkies are just some ways that could be of use.

The ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual³ says to consider providing a signalling system (e.g. a flag) to enable a disabled crew to attract attention as some crews may have difficulty with the usual method of signalling - lowering the mainsail.

The Manual also has some detailed advice for communicating with people with visual or hearing impairment and people with intellectual disabilities.

It's important to make sure there's a notice board that people using wheelchairs can read.

Large print or Braille format can help people who are blind or visually impaired as can making an audio recording of the information for people.⁴ This could be placed on a recorded message on a dedicated phone number for such purposes.

Another way is to send information by email or on a computer disc – people with impaired vision or severe physical disabilities often use text to voice technology on their computers. This means that the computer reads aloud the text in a document to the user.

Racing

It's not uncommon for clubs to think that providing competition opportunities for people with disabilities will result in having to endlessly modify the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS).

There are sailors with disabilities for whom no rule modifications are necessary. Some of these people race in everyday races and some in races exclusively for people of a particular level of ability in the sport.

In a nutshell, rules will need to be modified if they present disadvantages to sailors with disabilities. You can imagine how a time limit normally imposed on sailors would be unfair to someone who can only move at half the speed of a person without a disability. Or,

consider how using flags alone to communicate race information would disadvantage someone who was blind.

Depending on the level of ability of your sailors it may be sensible for some rule modification to take place. This may be something like an extension of time for the race, different starting mechanisms, a change to penalty turns or something else that accommodates the needs and abilities of the sailors.

These modifications to the rules should not be made on the run but as part of the planning processes involved in organising any racing activity.

A Notice of Race is prepared for each race activity and this should include the RRS and any modifications planned to the RRS for a particular race. This enables everyone to be aware of the race rules and conditions prior to the start.

There may be sailors who require the Notice of Race to be communicated in a different way than simply tacking it up on a notice board in normal sized type.

Your race management committee should oversee any modifications to the RRS and this should take place in a forum where ideas can be discussed and the implications of proposals can be worked through.

References

1. Disability Education Plan, Opening Door to Yacht Clubs Workbook
- 2&3. Wittwer-Smith, C. and Bonnarens, W. (2003) *Developing Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans – A guide for Sporting and Recreation Organisations*. Office for Sport and Recreation, S.A.
4. ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual
<http://www.sailing.org/disabled/sailingmanual/default.asp>

5. Equipment

Clubs may worry that providing opportunities for people with disabilities will cost too much, imagining that an array of expensive equipment and specialised boats will be required.

There is no doubt that some specialist equipment that can be used to assist people with severe physical disabilities is very expensive. However the fact is that many clubs find that they need little additional equipment to accommodate the majority of sailors with disabilities.

Some of the boats used by people with disabilities are specially designed and others are existing models of boats that have been modified. The ISAF/ISDF Sailing Manual has several suggestions for modifying existing models of boats.¹

One of the most important things to note when adapting any equipment is that clubs must adhere to health and safety standards at all times.

Clubs are also finding that there are ways to access funding for specialised boats and equipment items if required (see fact sheet on fundraising). Sometimes adapting a boat to make it more accessible can be simple and not cost much at all whereas other modification can be more complex.

The need of the individual person with the disability should determine whether equipment needs to be adapted to suit. According to the Sailability Disability Manual (1998)² some of the things that need to be taken into consideration include

- balance
- ability to use boat controls
- ability to get in and out of the boat
- protection from the elements
- protection from hard and sharp surfaces
- ability to read, see and hear instructions, countdowns and explanations

Breaking equipment requirements down into those required for different stages of a sailing experience assists clubs in:

- evaluating the current equipment's adequacy, and
- identifying equipment that may be needed to better accommodate sailors with disabilities.

Clubs should refer to the Sailability Safety Manual and the ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual for detailed guidance in these areas. The following picks up on key points from the Sailability Safety Manual, and is offered as an overview:

1. Preparation for the water

All participants, including volunteers, must wear appropriate and correctly adjusted life jackets or personal floatation devices when on and near the water. Sunscreen and water should be provided or supplied by the club to all sailors and helpers and shade needs to be provided.

Your club volunteers will need to be trained how to set up all the equipment for the boats when the person with a disability is unable to do so and all boats must be checked to ensure that they are correctly rigged.

2. Getting into and out of the boat

Some people may only require minimal assistance, whilst others may need to be lifted from wheelchairs into the boats. Everyone involved in giving assistance, including lifting must be trained to ensure their own safety and that of the sailor. Sailors with disabilities or their carers are the best people to guide you as to what assistance they need.

Manual lifting should be avoided wherever possible. A number of lifting devices are available that have been specifically designed to enable people with restricted mobility to enjoy the pleasures of boating, giving them a safe and effective way to transfer on and off a boat.

3. Sailing

For many sailors with disabilities, a standard boat is perfectly adequate. Almost any boat can be sailed by people with disabilities however, it is clear that some boats are more suitable than others, e.g. Access Dinghy. It is also true that major adaptations can cost a significant amount, especially those made to compensate for lack of strength in the upper body.

The ISAF/IFDS Manual states that a basic "starter kit" to make any boat more suitable could include a camping mat, a plank of wood, some short lengths of rope and a roll of duct tape. With these items, it is possible to provide:

- A padded, non-slip seat
- Padding around sharp objects in the cockpit
- An additional thwart to assist transfer from side to side during manoeuvres
- Extra loops of rope to grip and maintain stability in the boat
- Extensions to sheets.

4. Putting the boat away

Volunteers will need to be trained how to securely store equipment after use, for each activity session. Volunteers need to report any damaged or malfunctioning equipment to the program coordinator so that it can be fixed.

References:

1. the ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual - <http://www.sailing.org/disabled/sailingmanual/default.asp>
2. From Sailability Safety Manual - Sailability Safety Manual <http://www.sailability.org/pdf/safety.pdf>
3. Sailability - Enabling ordinary people to do extraordinary things <http://www.ecu.edu.au/ses/educ/cware/special/sail.doc>

6. Fundraising

Providing programs for sailors with disabilities need not cost the earth. Many programs can be run with a few willing helpers, and either existing equipment or equipment that needs only a couple of modifications. Other programs may be more challenging to provide within current resource arrangements.

It may be that your club wants to obtain more suitable boats for people with severe disabilities or to install some access improvements such as ramps or lifts. You might even be considering purchasing a mechanical lifter to assist people with mobility impairments to transfer in and out of boats.

Many people with disabilities have limited incomes and can't afford to cover the full cost of participation, especially when specialised boats and assistive equipment are involved. Most clubs would never expect them to. So, where does leave you? Fundraising.

There are many demands made of the community in terms of providing direct monetary donations to various organisations and causes. Put simply, just asking anyone and everyone for donations may not be the most effective way for your club to proceed as it may not deliver the results you are seeking.

There is an excellent module on fundraising-related activities in the Australian Sports Commissions' Club Development Program – Club Management Program¹ that covers detailed information relating to this area. The following provides a basic overview.

Setting realistic goals

You will need to have your program mapped out with specific objectives stated, a plan of attack devised and a set of measurements to establish how you will know whether your program has met the original objectives – in other words you need a business plan. This is so you can see what it is you actually need and set realistic goals for fundraising.

You can imagine just being asked by someone to come forward with funding to pay for a sailing program for people with disabilities – it may sound worthy but unless your potential donor has more details about what you'll use the money for, and how it will benefit people with disabilities, they probably will pass by the offer.

If however, you have developed your business plan you be able to clearly state what it is you need and why you need it.

Break your funding requirements down into “chunks” – you'll have seen this with some campaigns that divide a major building fundraising project into different sized chunks. You can donate money for a single brick, a wall, a room, a floor, an entire wing or the whole lot! That's one way of structuring your program.

The key thing is to be realistic and set achievable goals. If your initial goal is too high to achieve in a set timeframe, your club members and volunteers will feel disheartened and support for your program may wane. Take small achievable steps that will build confidence in your fundraising program and encourage people involved with the program to continue their efforts.

Who should be involved?

Those closest to your club and its programs should be the most involved in your fundraising efforts. Ideally your club board should be fully supportive of the fundraising project as without top level support, the viability of your program is in question.

Your club board members, with their circle of influence in the wider community, are often the best positioned people to leverage their position to solicit large corporate donations or sponsorships. Those club members who enjoy sailing immensely and would like to see more and more participation in the sport are the next best positioned people to either donate or seek donations.

Support staff, sailors with and without disabilities and volunteers may be able to donate money but are more likely to be the foot soldiers when you are undertaking fundraising drives and related activities.

If you're thinking trivia nights, chocolate box sales and charity dinners you are in the "zone". People may turn up their noses at such suggestions but the reason they keep happening is that they often work!

One of these events or activities may just raise sufficient funds for the club to purchase a mechanical lifter to assist sailors with disabilities to transfer into and out of boats. This is both a realistic and achievable goal.

If there is resistance within your club to doing more for people with disabilities, achieving these realistic and visible outcomes will clearly demonstrate some of the benefits your program is delivering.

Where to apply for funding?

A recent report² makes several suggestions that should be considered by clubs looking to conduct sailing programs for people with disabilities. The following points cover several of these suggestions:

- You should approach state and national sailing bodies to see whether there are funding sources they know of such as government programs. Some funding bodies may be more prepared to grant funds when your club has the support of your state or national sporting organisation.
- All State/Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation offer a range of funding programs and schemes that may be of assistance to local sporting organisations
- Local government is another potential source of funding, especially if you frame your request in terms of making your club facilities more accessible to encourage as wide as possible participation in your programs – people with disabilities, older people, women, children etc.

- Investigate philanthropic support through your board members' contacts and also by making contact with service clubs in your area – board members may already be connected with some of these organisations.
- Consider partnering with other clubs to fundraise for resources that could be pooled.
- Can your program of accessible sailing for all be a profit making venture? Think about offering your program to corporate or government organisations as a team building exercise option and charge accordingly!

Sponsorship is also a major way of funding many sports programs in Australia. In simple terms this is when an organisation or company gives a club money in return for some kind of promotion by the club of either the sponsoring organisation's name or offerings.

With more and more focus on corporate social responsibility, many major corporations are looking for good sponsorship and philanthropic opportunities. These organisations don't just hand over money to anyone and they will want a comprehensive proposal and proof of ongoing and well managed programs. They will also want progress reports sponsors on a regular basis.

Most of the major corporations have their sponsorship or community support policies and application procedures on their websites. Ensure that you study the information carefully and structure your proposal accordingly.

There are many publications on fundraising and sponsorship and your local library should be able to set you on the right path. You could also investigate web sites such as the Australian Sport Commission fundraising webpage at www.ausport.gov.au/funding/fundraising.asp and www.ourcommunity.com.au for more ideas in this area.

References:

1. Australian Sports Commissions' Club Development Program – Club Management Program http://www.ausport.gov.au/clubs/documents/Club_Fundraising.pdf
2. "Planning for an Inclusive Future – making sailing more accessible" Sailability Victoria. 2005.
www.vic.yachting.org.au/site/yachting/vic/downloads/2005/Sailability%20Review%20Final%20Report.pdf

7. Growth Planning

Your club may need to consider growing the opportunities for sailors with disabilities in circumstances such as:

- your club is running one session a week for sailors with disabilities but there are twelve people with disabilities on a waiting list to join the program
- the participation targets set for the 12 month mark have been reached in the first seven months
- your club is running a program for people with mild to moderate disabilities but those with more severe disabilities have expressed an interest in being involved
- the people currently sailing as part of the program have progressed in skill and confidence development and want more challenging sailing experiences
- people from the support agencies are wanting to join in the learn-to-sail programs

Planning for the growth of your program should ideally be an integral part of your program planning at the commencement of the project, the same as succession planning. By thinking about possible need for growth as early as possible, your club will be in a position to manage growth demands more successfully.

One way of anticipating growth demands early in your project planning is to ensure you've done the research phase of your program set-up very thoroughly.

Your research should have given you a good indication of how many people with disabilities there were in your local area, what sporting and recreational activities are currently offered in the area, what the level of interest was in sailing programs and what your club's current capabilities were.

The other thing to do is to manage community expectations. You may approach several organisations catering to the needs of people with disabilities to ascertain the level of interest in your planned sailing programs only to find them all extremely enthusiastic.

It is at this point that you will need to be clear about what you may be able to offer in the short to medium term (e.g. sailing for people with mild to moderate disabilities) and outline what may be down the track should initial efforts be successful (e.g. people with severe disabilities catered for and specialist boats purchased etc).

Growth needs to carefully planned and all facets of program development need to be considered in the planning process including:

- management and administration
- marketing and promotion
- participation
- competitions
- development
- coaching
- umpiring/officiating
- facilities and equipment
- volunteers
- finance

Good planning and review processes at club level should clearly indicate what program development issues need to be prioritised. There are no hard and fast rules and investment in further program development should be tailored to the club's needs.

It will also be dependent on the success of the club's fundraising efforts. Some clubs find it easier to obtain funding for equipment such as a new boat than for personnel such as a coordinator. Clubs could consider pooling available funding to employ a district coordinator to assist in program management, planning and resources pooling across several clubs.

With many clubs struggling to maintain or build membership the thought of running programs for people with disabilities might at first appear burdensome. However, including people with a disability and their associates will open up new markets and attract new consumers to the organisation.¹

Good strategic planning is essential to the club's ongoing success. There are several resources available to assist clubs in this process including:

The ASC's club development module on club planning – see http://www.ausport.gov.au/clubs/documents/Club_ClubPlan.pdf

1. Wittwer-Smith, C. and Bonnarens, W. (2003) Developing DDA Action Plans – A guide for sporting and recreation organisations. Office for Sport and Recreation.

8. Insurance

Offering opportunities to people with disabilities should not cause your insurance premiums to rise. There may be economies of scale enabling clubs to benefit when operating programs for people with disabilities as a fully integrated part of the wider club's activities.

Insurance policies are a form of protection against risk and include:

- ⇒ public liability
- ⇒ sports injury insurance
- ⇒ coach / trainer professional indemnity
- ⇒ directors and officers
- ⇒ workers compensation
- ⇒ travel insurance
- ⇒ building and contents
- ⇒ other insurance that may apply in your specific situation

The NSW Department of Sport and Recreation website states that insurance is a common risk management tool, which may be used to minimise your club's liability. However, insurance is a reactive rather than a pro-active risk management tool. Other risk management strategies should be adopted in order to reduce the risk from occurring in the first place.¹

According to the Australian Sports Commission's (ASC's) guidance for clubs, clubs constantly need to identify any operating risks, put plans in place to deal with them and then check that those plans are doing the job. This is often known as risk management.

Risk management includes the process of identifying, assessing and minimising the various forms of risk that may be associated with how you operate.²

The ASC has a checklist and suggests some ways of reducing risk e.g. Your club having policies on:

- the wearing of safety apparel
- safety procedures such as checking water conditions and equipment before sailing activities commence
- procedures for handling cash
- warning signs around facilities and rules or behaviour guidelines preventing unsafe practices.

The ASC suggests the following contacts and websites to clubs to help them keep abreast of best practice.

General sites

[The Assistant Treasurer's website - for up-to-date press releases and publications related to insurance](http://assistant.treasurer.gov.au/atr/default.asp) - <http://assistant.treasurer.gov.au/atr/default.asp>

State/Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation sites

[NSW Department of Sport and Recreation](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au) - www.dsr.nsw.gov.au

- [Insurance fact sheet](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/industry/insur_insur.asp) - http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/industry/insur_insur.asp
- [Risk management and insurance area of website](http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/industry/insur_main.asp) - http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/industry/insur_main.asp

[Sport and Recreation Queensland](http://www.sportrec.qld.gov.au/) - www.sportrec.qld.gov.au/

- [Public liability insurance area of website](http://www.sportrec.qld.gov.au/sport_recreation_organisations/better_skills/public_liability_insurance.cfm) - www.sportrec.qld.gov.au/sport_recreation_organisations/better_skills/public_liability_insurance.cfm

[Sport and Recreation ACT](http://www.sport.act.gov.au/) - www.sport.act.gov.au/

- [Public liability insurance area of website](http://www.sport.act.gov.au/warticles.html#publiab) - www.sport.act.gov.au/warticles.html#publiab

[WA Department of Sport and Recreation](http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/) - www.dsr.wa.gov.au/

- [Insurance Update November 2002](http://www.dsr.gov.au/publications/resources/Insurance%20Update%20Nov%202002.pdf) (PDF, 135Kb) www.dsr.gov.au/publications/resources/Insurance%20Update%20Nov%202002.pdf

Other State/Territory sites

- [OurCommunity - risk management and insurance help sheets](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/insurance/insurance_main.jsp) - www.ourcommunity.com.au/insurance/insurance_main.jsp

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) commissioned Ernst & Young to conduct an insurance review of the National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) and National Sporting Organisations for people with a disability (NSODs) which are funded by the ASC. The review delved further into the insurance position for the NSOs and NSODs than research previously conducted by the ASC and aimed to provide a summary of the current position of the sports in relation to arranging insurance, their experiences as well as commentary on the current and proposed legal framework in each jurisdiction and factors to be considered in respect of a group buying / pooling scheme.

The single biggest initiative that the sports can adopt to reduce their premiums is to have an effective risk management program (including policies to mitigate risk) throughout all levels of their sport. The recommendations for clubs and National bodies can be found in the report.³

The IFDS requires a risk management plan for their events which is a very good guide as a checklist⁴. Although it is aimed at international level events it provides a good guide.

References:

1. Department of Sport and Recreation website (accessed April 2005) http://www.dsr.nsw.gov.au/industry/ryc_risk_insur.asp
2. From Australian Sports Commission website (accessed April 2006) <http://www.ausport.gov.au/clubs/members/documents/Checklist.doc>
3. Australian Sports Commission Insurance Report Jan 2003 Sport innovation and best practice - Insurance <http://www.ausport.gov.au/ibp/insurexec.asp>
4. <http://www.sailing.org/disabled/RMM2005.pdf>

9. Myths and Facts

Some people are apprehensive about involving people with disabilities in their club's activities. These feelings often centre on their fear of doing or saying the wrong thing in the presence of a person with a disability.

Sometimes the apprehension stems from a fear that having people with disabilities around might change the club in a negative way or put a huge impost on financial and volunteer resources.

The fact is that your club undoubtedly already has people with disabilities engaged in a variety of activities. There are many disabilities that are not visible disabilities. People may have diabetes, epilepsy, asthma and heart disease and you may not know it. Your club may already have modified things to accommodate people with such disabilities, like installing syringe disposal bins for people who require insulin.

People often think of a disability as one which is visible. The picture of a person in a wheelchair or who is completely blind is a common picture that comes to mind when people think about disabilities. A person with spasms caused by cerebral palsy, someone with an obvious facial droop from having had a stroke or someone with a white cane or guide dog are other examples of visible disabilities.

So although some people who have a disability that includes paralysis or severe muscle weakening do need mobility aids such as wheelchairs, and a small percentage of around five per cent of people with a vision impairment are totally blind, disability is not always obvious. It is good practice to ask a new member, even if they appear not to have a disability, whether they have any special access or health issues that need to be taken into consideration when sailing.

The fact is that just as people without disabilities differ in ability and aptitude, people with disabilities, even the same type of disability, will differ in ability and aptitude.

Here are some common myths that have grown up around sailing for people with disabilities. The reality of the situation is usually quite different!

Myth: We'll need a lot more rescue boats to go out when we've got people with disabilities out on the water.

Fact: The effective rescue is generally no different for comparable groups of able-bodied sailors in consideration of skill level and ability. An increased rescue provision is appropriate for sailors of any ability, sailors with an intellectual disability, unaccompanied blind or vision impaired sailors and unaccompanied sailors who suffer from epilepsy, asthma etc. Sailors using medical equipment that requires monitoring such as a ventilated quadriplegic should have a dedicated safety boat with medically trained personnel aboard. For racing circumstances, the IFDS Race Management Manual 2005 – 2008 states that each sailor on a ventilator/respirator should supply a suitable dedicated rescue boat and trained staff.¹

Myth: There'll be an increase in our insurance premiums if we start programs for people with disabilities

Fact: Insurance rates are based solely on the relative hazards of the club's operations and its accident experience, not on whether members have disabilities. There should be no change to your club's insurance premiums if you offer opportunities to people with disabilities. ²(See Factsheet no. 15 "Insurance" for more information)

Myth: No-one will know what to do if someone with a disability is unconscious and needs to be recovered into a rescue boat.

Fact: The rescue of an unconscious, immobile person is no different whether that person has a disability or not. If you don't rescue the person they will drown.

Myth: There would be no benefit to our club in providing sailing opportunities for people with disabilities.

Fact: In 2003 the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that one in five people in Australia (3,958,300 or 20.0%) had a reported disability. If your club offers opportunities for people with a disability you'll open up new markets and attract new customers to the organisation. Clubs can access sources of funding to make clubs more accessible. By eliminating any discrimination and improving physical access the club will improve existing services for all members.³

Myth: Access dinghies on sandbars – remove the centreboard to get it off the sandbar.

Fact: If you remove the centreboard from an access dinghy it will be unstable. The boats should always have the centreboard locked down. If a boat runs aground on a sandbar you do not remove the centreboard. The boat should be heeled over by someone sitting on the gunwale, that will lessen the draft, and the boat is then hauled off the sandbar.⁴

Myth: People with disabilities need to be protected from failing.

Fact: People with disabilities have a right to participate in the full range of human experiences including success and failure.

Myth: People with disabilities who manage to sail must be inspirational, courageous, and brave for being able to overcome their disability.

Fact: Sailors with disabilities are simply living full and active lives and are pursuing a recreational activity that they enjoy.

References:

1. <http://www.sailing.org/disabled/RMM2005.pdf>
2. Guidelines for Providers of Insurance and Superannuation, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. (revised 1995)
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/disability_rights/standards/Insurance/insurance_adv.html#4.4
3. Wittwer-Smith, C. and Bonnarens, W. (2003) Developing DDA Action Plans – A guide for sporting and recreation organisations. Office for Sport and Recreation.
4. Chris Mitchell, Access Dinghies. 2006. written advice

Involving support people, parents and other family members

The needs of people with disabilities are as individual and varied as for all the members of your club. As service providers, it is important that we don't stereotype or make assumptions about the requirements of our members with a disability.

Some people with disabilities require no support personnel in any aspect of their lives and can learn to sail independently or with minimal support. Other people will require a high level of support to sail.

Finding out what each individual wants and needs is the key to success when it comes to successfully including members with a disability in sailing. Talk to the person with the disability to ascertain what (if any) their additional needs are. You may like to involve their carer/s in the discussion if barriers to communication exist.

You may find that the person with the disability wants to use sailing to challenge themselves physically and mentally but that their carer is fearful of them being hurt or even disappointed. An important concept to be aware of as a service provider is that of the dignity of risk.

People with disabilities have the right to take risks, to get things wrong, to try and get things right and to have choices just like anyone else.¹

As with all your members, this doesn't mean that clubs should condone or encourage dangerous or inappropriate activities. Your duty of care doesn't change. It does mean though, that clubs should try to adapt equipment or programs to support individual needs and to encourage and enable members with a disability to participate equally in sailing activities.

Who should be involved and how?

Coaches need to be involved so that programs can be designed to fit with the individual needs of each sailor. Volunteers may be needed to assist with boat preparation and with putting away the boats.

Other club members with specific skills may need to become involved to help adapt some equipment. You will probably need to call for volunteers to help out on sailing days when the program is in full swing. It's all about everyone in the club adopting a positive attitude.

Carers may need to be involved, but not always. It comes down again to the needs of the individual. It might be helpful to involve a carer, as well as the person with a disability, in discussions about how to transfer into a boat, or protect limbs or handle spasm as often the carer might have extensive experience in all sorts of transfer manoeuvres and protection ideas.

Who shouldn't be involved?

The sailor with a disability is often in the best position to tell you this. Sometimes you might need to observe the dynamics between carers or supervising staff and the person with a disability to try and work it out – it isn't always clear cut.

Some people with very severe disabilities have learnt to sail solo. It might come down to a decision that carers are involved to the point of boarding the boat but then they step back and the coach and sailor work together.

It makes good sense to liaise with other clubs already offering sailing opportunities to people with disabilities. It's very encouraging to see a successful program in action and to talk to the people involved.

Volunteers and club members who are not comfortable around people with disabilities shouldn't be forced or coerced into participating. These members may benefit from participating in disability awareness education or by interacting with members with a disability in a more social and relaxed context. Refer to Fact Sheet on Attitude Awareness for more ideas to foster positive attitudes to inclusion amongst your members.

Should you make sailing opportunities available to support staff who accompany a member of your club with a disability?

Decisions regarding this come down to the resources available at each club and the supervisor should ensure that the program is not used as a babysitting service. A recent report ² has found that if the opportunity to sail is offered to all carers it is possible to encourage more participation – possibly even leading to carers volunteering at other events!

By not only including sailors with a disability in your programs, but also everyone in the process, you will be fostering an inclusive, social and healthy community of sailors in your club.

References:

1. "Willing and Able: PE & Sport for Young People with Disabilities". Australian Sports Commission. (1995)
2. "Planning for an Inclusive Future – making sailing more accessible" Sailability Victoria. 2005.
3. Sailability Volunteer Manual (1998) <http://www.sailability.org/pdf/volunteer.pdf>

11. Assessing the possibilities

A possible plan of attack is to:

- ask who within the club would be interested in forming a working party to investigate how the club could run some programs for people with disabilities – ideally get people from across all levels of the club i.e. board, administration, coach, official, sailors, supporters
- Once you've got a few people together make contact with some Sailability programs and go and ask if your working party members could spend some time with them. See what they do and how they are run, ask questions and take notes.
- Talk to the Disability Education Officer in your state or territory about your working party members doing the Opening Doors program¹. Visit <http://www.ausport.gov.au/dsu/contacts.asp> for contact details. This workshop will equip you with some more information about putting your program together and making your club welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities. Two of these programs, Opening Doors & Inclusive Coaching, have been modified for Sailing and are available through the DEP network. .
- Make contact through your community services networks which assist people with disabilities, service clubs and local council and invite people to a meeting to discuss possible paths forward.
- State Sailability Organisations can help with information and resources and can put you into contact with clubs already involved with Sailability.
- Get some indication of support for a “Come and Try Day” – is this going to be a day just for people with disabilities or a day when anyone who has ever wondered if they'd like to sail can come along?
- Research programs that other clubs are running, read online all about Sailability², the ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual³ and newsletters of clubs that are successfully integrating programs for sailors with disabilities .e.g Royal Perth Yacht Club⁴
- Take this information back to club management and aim to get all out support for the day. Start small and set achievable goals within the available resources. Get a few runs on the board before trying anything too ambitious.
- You may find that after talking to potential stakeholders in the program that you tap into a group of people who you hadn't even thought of as participants or volunteers. This may open up the possibilities for a program that you hadn't originally considered but one that you could run quite easily within your current resources.
- Schedule your “Come and Try day” and get as many people as possible to come and help. Make the working party's aim of the day to find both participants in a potential future program and also volunteers who'd like to help out and even learn to sail along the way.
- Develop your initial plan to cater to beginner sailors with disabilities taking into account the issues raised in the fact sheets. Your initial program will be one that you can run within your current resources i.e. modifying existing boat fleet as needed and having enthusiastic coaches and helpers who are willing to give it a go.

Why do all this?

- Offers equality of opportunity to try sailing to a broader section of the community's population
- Expands your club's participation base and taps into a growth area for bringing more members and skills to the club – more members and revenue
- Broadens the experience of coaches and officials – most report becoming better in their jobs through working with people with disabilities.

References:

1. Opening Doors Module Information - http://www.ausport.gov.au/dsu/opening_doors.asp
2. Sailability Clubs across Australia - <http://www.sailability.org/au/australia/>
3. the ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual - <http://www.sailing.org/disabled/sailingmanual/default.asp>
4. Newsletters Royal Perth Yacht Club - <http://www.rpyc.com.au/index.php?id=58>
5. “Planning for an Inclusive Future – making sailing more accessible”
Sailability Victoria. 2005.
<http://www.vic.yachting.org.au/site/yachting/vic/downloads/2005/Sailability%20Review%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Preparing the ground: preparing your club physically

Most people with disabilities aim to be as independent as possible and participate in life as fully as any other person. A club that has made physical modifications to accommodate people with disabilities has made it easier for people to achieve this aim of independence and full participation.

The desire to make recreational facilities for persons with disabilities is recognized in many countries. It is also being recognized that disability access is good practice because it improves accessibility for all persons.¹

When your club has made physical modifications or changed procedures to better cater to people with disabilities, don't hide what you've done. Use signs, maps, information sheets and other items to assist in letting people know about your club's facilities.

Imagine that your club has a front entrance with stairs but that you've provided disabled access at the side or rear of the club. By placing a sign at the front entrance that clearly states where the access for wheelchairs is located, you'll avoid having someone stuck out the front wondering where to go.

If you have a reception or information desk, put a clear sign up saying "Information". Many modern design trends use quite subtle techniques for signs such as raised glass or metal lettering on a backplate of similar material – elegant perhaps but it doesn't offer much in the way of contrast for people with visual impairment.

If you've modified some toilet or shower facilities, as well as the "ladies" and "mens" signs, use a disabled access sign. Don't just put these on the doors but also use a sign to point the way. You can imagine how frustrating it could be following a general indicator sign to the toilets but finding when you get there that the accessible toilet is on the other side of the club.



This sign on a toilet door indicates that it is accessible for people who use wheelchairs



This sign in a clubhouse indicates that the toilet accessible for people who use wheelchairs is located next to the rear door

Consider putting up a map of your club that clearly marks facilities for people with disabilities on the wall at a height where someone using a wheelchair could see it.

Instead of having the centre point of the map or notice board at the eye level of an average height man when standing, consider positioning it so that the top of the map is at this level. This means that by looking down slightly, or looking up slightly, everyone can see it, including people using wheelchairs, children and shorter people.

If your club has put together information on programs for people with disabilities, think about the best way to present that information. Don't print out a flier for an event in black ink on red or dark-coloured paper. Keep the contrast very obvious by using white or pale coloured paper.

Think about the size of the print – a person with a visual impairment might readily read type that is larger.

For example, what about a training manual or safety manual printed out in large print? In the example below, the font size on the left is Arial 11pt, which is pretty standard for publications. The font size on the right is Arial 20pt – you can see how it would be much clearer to someone with visual impairment. Someone might be able to learn independently and not need someone to explain or read instructions to them if the larger print is used.

Small print

Large print

If you have a folder of large print resources, make sure you clearly mark it as the large print folder. Or use a symbol in your welcoming information that clearly shows that large print resources are available.



Place this sign on a folder that contains large print information or place it at the bottom of an information sheet that is in normal sized type to indicate that the same material is available in large print.

Ensure you clearly label equipment items or storage areas to assist people with disabilities. You'll probably find that good signage and labelling helps everyone in the club!

Always ask someone with a disability or their carer if there is anything the club could do that would make it easier for them to participate in activities. There is more information available on access signs for boating facilities in the Disability Access Guidelines for Recreational Boating Facilities.²

Include in the club's general information that suggestions for improving access for people with disabilities are always welcome. Ensure that the contact information for the person welcoming such suggestions is given.

References

- 1&2 Disability Access Guidelines for Recreational Boating Facilities – Report of Working Group 14 of the Recreational Navigation Commission. Version 2.2. January 2004. PIANC.

13. Program Ideas

Examine the equipment and expertise your club has to hand at the moment and see what programs your club could run now. What about running a “Come and try” day? The ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual¹ has some great tips for this and a recent report² has indicated that come and try days are the best way to ascertain interest in Sailability programs.

You may find that your immediate response after looking over this matrix is that your club couldn’t do anything right now but after a couple of people from the club have attended an Opening Doors workshop³, they’ll be much better able to see a way forward.

With coaches who are willing to give it a go and a couple of people willing to volunteer to help, you’ll be providing opportunities for sailors with disabilities in no time.

Use this matrix as a guide – tick off what you have now and use the bottom table to jot down where the things you don’t have fit into your planning.

	Equipment	Access	Club Skills
People with visual impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audible and vibrating alarms and alerts • Large print directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs with clear large contrasting print 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches who are willing to give it a go • Volunteers who are positive people
People with hearing impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual or vibrating alerts and alarms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements and instructions in readable formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches who are willing to give it a go • Volunteers who are positive people
People with paraplegia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoist • Supported seating • Lower limb protection • Consider specialist equipment e.g. Access dinghy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramps • Toilet facilities • Showering facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches who are willing to give it a go • Volunteers who are positive people • Trained lifters
People with quadriplegia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoist • Supported seating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramps • Toilet facilities • Showering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches who are willing to give it a go

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower limb protection • Consider specialist equipment e.g. Access dinghy 	facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers who are positive people • Trained lifters
People with cerebral palsy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoist • Supported seating • Lower limb protection • Consider specialist equipment e.g. Access dinghy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramps • Toilet facilities • Showering facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches who are willing to give it a go • Volunteers who are positive people • Trained lifters
People with intellectual disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements and instructions in simple language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches who are willing to give it a go • Buddies
People with mobility impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoist • Supported seating • Lower limb protection • Consider specialist equipment e.g. Access dinghy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramps • Toilet facilities • Showering facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches who are willing to give it a go • Volunteers who are positive people • Trained lifters

Not down things you didn't tick in terms of the resources required to provide them.

Could be provided – few resources needed	Could be provided – significant resources required
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References:

3. ISAF/IFDS Sailing Manual - www.sailing.org/disabled/sailingmanual/default.asp
4. "Planning for an Inclusive Future – making sailing more accessible" Sailability Victoria. 2005.
www.vic.yachting.org.au/site/yachting/vic/downloads/2005/Sailability%20Review%20Final%20Report.pdf
5. Opening Doors Workshop - www.ausport.gov.au/dsu/opening_doors.asp

14. Succession Planning

It's not uncommon for clubs to think about pulling together a succession plan as a key person is on the way out the door!

The ideal time to get succession planning on your club's agenda is now. Make it an integral part of your overall project planning for setting up your sailing program for people with disabilities.

A succession plan provides opportunities for potential leaders within the organisation to be identified and developed in readiness to move into leadership positions. Organisations that plan for smooth transitions of leadership positions are less likely to experience disruptions to their operations and can better position themselves to replace volunteers who vacate their current positions.¹

The Western Australian Department of Sport and Recreation puts forward these excellent notes on succession planning:

Do you ever ask yourself why it is always the same people who put up their hands to help out around the organisation? Why is it that the same faces always appear at meetings? When there is a meeting or workshop to be attended externally, why is it that the same person always attends?

What would happen if that person left your organisation tomorrow? What would happen if other committee members left the organisation tomorrow?

Succession planning is the process that can assist in ensuring that your club does not cease to operate due to one or several people relinquishing their commitment, and that the result of their work continues well beyond their involvement.

A good succession plan includes:

- **A business plan** – this does not have to be lengthy. It is a working document outlining the organisation's priorities, and should be consulted regularly throughout the year.
- **Position Descriptions** – this makes it easier to recruit new people to the position, and ensures that you know what jobs the vacating volunteer was responsible for.
- **Policies and Procedures manual** – this outlines the day-to-day tasks of your organisation, and who is responsible for carrying them out. It will also contain policies about selection processes, health and safety issues and volunteer management.
- **Reporting procedures** – these show the reporting lines back to the committee, either directly or through supervisors.
- **Education and development opportunities** – not only do these increase job satisfaction, but also they broaden the range of skills of each volunteer. This means that if someone suddenly leaves, you are more likely to have someone else ready to step into the vacant position.

Barriers to succession planning:

Consider how your organisation might tackle these obstacles:

- **The gatekeeper** – one person holding all the knowledge within a system only they understand
- **Believing they are irreplaceable** – considering that some members and volunteers are irreplaceable
- **Poor records** – a lack of formalised reporting procedures
- **Poor management** – a lack of volunteer management (i.e. recruitment, screening, orientation, training, recognition, replacement)
- **Senior members take all** – senior members taking all the administrative responsibility, restricting the development of juniors with an interest in the area
- **Time to go** – committee members who have served the organisation well for many years, but now may be reaching their ‘best before date’
- **Fear of change** – a fear-of-change culture within your organisation

How will you know when you have a successful succession plan in place?

The ideal succession plan should allow the existing administrators, management, coaching staff and volunteers to walk away from the club without being missed!

Source: http://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/clubs/volunteers/volunteers_retaining.asp

How to plan for the departure of your club’s primary advocate or “champion”

Look for “partners” as well as primary advocates and “champions”. At the beginning of your program consider seeking people or organisations to partner with your club to share the load and input their energy. Don’t turn away any offers of help even if you doubt what benefit they could bring at first. Often the first who join up are the most committed in the short to medium term.

Those who stand to gain from the sailing program being conducted are obvious targets to approach for being partners. Offer opportunities to all club members, volunteers and program participants and their support agencies and carers to participate in promoting and managing the program. Your club may end up with many supporters who can share program ownership and commitment to providing opportunities for sailors with disabilities.

If you develop your club’s partners right from the outset of your program you may find that from one of these will emerge your next “champion”.

References:

1. Queensland Department of Sport And Recreation (accessed April 2006)
http://www.srq.qld.gov.au/volunteer_succession_planning.cfm

15. Identifying and establishing a volunteer taskforce

There's no getting around the fact that in order to make a sailing program for people with disabilities work, especially in the longer term, your club is going to need volunteers. If you're like most other clubs, you're going to have to get into volunteer recruitment.

Volunteering Australia (www.volunteeringaustralia.org) states that

“volunteering is a reciprocal relationship – the community and individuals benefit from the efforts of volunteers, while volunteers themselves experience the satisfaction of giving, enjoy increased community involvement, learn new skills, build confidence and gain experience”.

According to the Australian Sports Commission (ASC)¹:

Recruitment is the process of attracting new volunteers to sport clubs and organisations. Personal contact with potential volunteers, whether through friends, family or individuals already involved in an organisation are amongst the most frequently cited ways that volunteers first became involved in voluntary work.

The ASC has excellent online resources on how to recruit, manage and retain volunteers through the Club Development Network, - see fact sheet 11 - Fundraising, for more information.

Sailability has an excellent Volunteer Coordinators Manual² which devotes a whole chapter to the recruitment and retention of volunteers. The chapter opens with:

Sailing is a high profile, attractive activity. Often passers-by, family, friends, carers etc. become enthralled by Sailability activities. Be prepared to obtain interested peoples' names and addresses to forward information and follow it up with a phone call. Anyone may become a volunteer. Sailability volunteers generally come from the areas of:

- *Sailing*
- *Family and friends of a person with a disability*
- *Community minded people*
- *Recreation workers in the disability field*
- *school children/uni students during holidays*

You can also consider approaching local scouting and guiding groups to volunteer on an ad-hoc basis or with special events

If your club is considering offering sailing opportunities to people with disabilities, you should consider appointing a volunteer coordination committee or nominate a person as the Volunteer Coordinator. Clubs need to make sure if they have a single coordinator that the person is very well supported by all levels of the club so that burn-out doesn't become an issue.

The Sailability Volunteer Coordinators Manual has some excellent recommendations that clubs should consider doing to boost their efforts to get volunteers. These have been incorporated into the practical exercise below.

It also discusses how volunteer recruitment needs to focus on how the experience of volunteering for your club will fulfil the volunteers' personal needs. If you focus just on the needs of your club you won't appeal to the social, emotional, health and career motivators that make people want to volunteer.³

It states further that your volunteers are very special people, that clubs must ensure they are treated as such and recommends recognising volunteer efforts with suggestions such as:

- Recognition certificates
- Personal praise while on the job
- Writing letters and postcards of thanks
- Giving identification pins, T-shirts
- Acknowledging them in branch newsletters
- Presenting volunteer awards at the AGM
- Awarding life memberships
- Holding events in honour of volunteers
- Acknowledging efforts during committee meetings
- Farewelling people when they move away from the area
- Providing sailing time at the end of a day. This ensures that volunteers finish their day with pleasant thoughts and also builds a sense of camaraderie between each other.

Although these ideas are aimed at Sailability programs they are valuable considerations for all sailing programs. A recent report⁴ recommends that training for volunteers in areas such as first aid, instructor/coach, boat handling and manual handling should be offered and that volunteers should be involved with all aspects of program management.

It's worth noting that clubs should take care that volunteers from outside their membership do not dictate inappropriate terms to the club and that they always comply with club rules and procedures.

As a start, look at completing this worksheet. It will give you an idea of the types of skills you'll be looking for. Also, don't forget that people with a disability are often only too willing and able to assist with running their own programs.

Practical Exercise One:

Make a list of skills that your volunteers need to have. Not all volunteers need to have sailing experience, but it certainly helps.

Volunteer activities related to:	Volunteer skills required
1. Preparing for the water	<input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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2. Getting into and out of the boat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____○ _____	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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	<input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
5. Administration and marketing	<input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____ <input type="radio"/> _____	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Practical Exercise Two – relates to recruitment⁵

Activity	Who within the club could take on this responsibility?	Additional resources required e.g. people, funding, skills?
1. Producing volunteer information kits.		
2. Checking past and present membership lists.		
3. Organising		

“recruitment” drives using current volunteers		
4. Using local and community newspapers – letters to the editor, feature articles, editorials, classified ads etc.		
5. Producing posters, pamphlets and flyers that promote Sailability, its activities and its role in the community. Distribute to local supermarkets, community & school notice boards and sailing clubs.		
6. Organising community notices on the radio.		
7. Approaching local community organisations eg. a. Scout Movement – including Sea Scouts, Rangers, Venturers etc. b. Church groups c. Service clubs – Rotary, Lions etc. d. Educational colleges		

References

6. Australian Sports Commission - Club Development Network - Volunteer Management Program webpage (accessed April 2005)
http://www.ausport.gov.au/clubs/volunteer_prog.asp
- 2, 3&5. Sailability Volunteer Coordinators Manual (1998)
<http://www.sailability.org/pdf/volunteer.pdf> Chapter 6.
- “Planning for an Inclusive Future – making sailing more accessible” Sailability Victoria. 2005.
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16. Welcoming Program

Welcome to our club – you’ve fixed up some access issues, made the reception counter more approachable, developed some better signs and acquired some equipment through obtaining a grant – but does this say welcome?

It certainly goes a long way towards it! You just need the finishing touches. Remembering to welcome each individual sailor and not a group of people with disabilities is paramount to making people feel welcome.

Someone seeking membership of your club is usually looking at a longer term relationship with the club and is seeking the mutual benefits that the membership brings.

For the individual sailor it’s about wonderful recreational opportunities, skills development and social network expansion, maybe leading to strong friendships.

For the club it’s about expanding the membership base, offering opportunities for coaches to develop additional skills, satisfaction that new programs are being introduced, social network expansion and overall skills development.

So how do you truly welcome a new member? There are a couple of specific things your club can do to make the experience of being a new member welcoming - in many cases such practices should ideally be adopted for all new members, with or without a disability.

Being part of a new club can bring a mixture of excitement and apprehension to the member. If the club doesn’t take some early steps to ensure that the new member feels welcome and fits in, the new member could become disillusioned and could leave.

That can leave a bad taste in everyone’s mouth – it disheartens the person trying to be involved in the club but also is bad for morale at the club. This is especially so if you’ve made efforts to improve access, trained volunteers and acquired equipment – you’ll be asking yourself what went wrong?

Consider what any new member to the club needs and then think about what this new individual person, who happens to have a disability, needs.

Everyone needs a good orientation program and this is more than doing the paperwork and shaking hands with a few people.

Initial Orientation

It is very important to have a structured orientation program for your club and adapt that to meet the needs of people with disabilities. An orientation program can be a formal presentation session or a series of self-directed exercises, or ideally a combination of both. A great idea is to have a new members welcoming night where people can get to know one another and commence their orientation program.

Think about including information about the structure of the club, who’s who and what they do, a physical tour of the club and facilities, general safety information including emergency and fire procedures, specific safety issues such as safe handling of equipment or club rules regarding being out on the water.

Orientation shouldn't just be something that happens on one morning, it's an ongoing process of education and settling in. Something that can really help is allocating a "buddy" to each new member.

Buddy program

Instigating a buddy program at your club, or extending an existing one to accommodate people with disabilities, will assist in the effectiveness of the initial orientation and then give the new member all the "inside information". This can include telling the new member about club resources, day to day procedures, where to get refreshments and provide tips on generally getting along at the club.

A buddy system will only work if it has the full and open support of the club as a whole. In a club where teamwork is valued and people really want others to succeed the buddy system can deliver great outcomes.

If a buddy is introduced to the new member during the initial orientation stage the buddy can assist that person right from the start and help them feel at home from day one.

The buddy, by getting to know the new member with a disability, can help the club find ways of adapting to meet the new member's needs. It might be something simple like starting to leave the lights on during the day in the boat storage area to assist someone who has some vision impairment. It might be something much more involved that is only revealed to the buddy initially, something the new member might never have spoken of in a larger group of new people.

When selecting a buddy, make sure that the person is motivated and happy to perform that role. The person should know the club very well, be well regarded, a skilled sailor, know the rules, be of around the same age and possibly have something in common with the new member. A buddy will need be able to communicate well and be committed to seeing new members succeed in the club.

Your club should provide training to people interested in being a buddy that includes disability awareness, an overview of their role and responsibilities and an understanding of the orientation program. Ideally there should be a buddy coordinator who buddies can go to with questions or support, or even just to bounce around some ideas.

And what does a buddy get out of the experience? It helps them become a more valued member of the club, sharpens their knowledge, lets them gain satisfaction from sharing their expertise and gives an opportunity to gain enhanced insight into themselves.