

Inverloch Windsurfers Club & South Coast Boardriders

“Summer on the coast... Sun, sand and surfboards. Wetsuits, waves and windsurfers. It’s quintessential Australia”



Attracting a crowd

From Inverloch’s Andersons Inlet to the famous ‘National Surfing Reserve’ on Phillip Island, the coastline here offers up some of the most spectacular scenery in the world. Taking advantage of this natural asset are two local sports clubs: The Inverloch Windsurfing Club and The South Coast Boardriders.

What is interesting about these clubs is neither has a home base: no club room, no kiosk, no change room, and no facility at all. Whilst this presents a challenge to both clubs, it hasn’t stopped them joining the VicHealth Healthy Sporting Environments (HSE) program, and being recognised for the important role they play in creating healthy, connected communities.

Both clubs have formed a solid membership base different to that of other local clubs. Bass Coast is a tourist destination for thousands of holiday makers and day trippers. By the very nature of their activity, potential new members are drawn to these sports on any given day. The clubs have attracted a strong membership base of locals and visitors alike. Whether it is a come and try day, women’s only classes or a competition, these clubs have created an environment where everyone is welcome.

GippSport program coordinator, Gene Parini, said that he has learnt a lot from working with these clubs; *“it is amazing to see what clubs can do even when they do not have access to facilities and their members are not based in a single local community. They have embraced technologies like Facebook to promote healthy messages like Sun-Smart, first aid procedures and safety. Facility based clubs put up posters on their club-room walls; these clubs just post it and in today’s world that is probably a more effective way of getting your message to your members.”*

Joining the Level 0 Good Sports program, both clubs were assisted by GippSport to look at the way in which they conduct social events even though there is no bar facility as such.

“The windsurfing club joined the program because they wanted to ensure that the club was offering a healthy, family friendly environment”, said club President Mick Green.

Through this process the club identified the need to develop their own Strategic Plan. A key strategy of this plan was the development of a website and the use of social media as their main form of communication to club members. Given the club has a high percentage of members who do not live in the local area, social media has become an important communication tool to promote Smart play / safety information, clubs news and to promote events. In 2014 the ‘Come and Try’ events were extremely popular, attracting over 40 participants. Women only events and ‘Discover Sailing’ programs have steadily built the membership of those who are traditionally underrepresented in this sport.

Like the Windsurfing Club, the South Coast Boardriders have based their membership model on tourists and visitors, without forgetting the locals. The successful junior development program on a Friday night provides families with a starting point for their young ‘surf groms’. There are opportunities to become an accredited club coach or first aider, an annual Wilsons Promontory Weekend Camp and a long list of social events to bring club members together. This is definitely a club providing opportunities for everyone to join in. Over the past few years, the club has been very successful in its ability to attract external funding; firstly a *Uniform Grant* to purchase UV Rash vests to improve awareness around UV protection, then an *Active Club Grant* to purchase new beginners equipment. In addition to raising funds, the club has worked hard to improve meeting procedures and the governance of the club, in particular in the area of first aid and injury prevention.

Club president Paul O’Neill says, *“the focus for the club is on creating a safe environment because the surf can be unpredictable and we need to plan and control as much as we can.”*

Both of these clubs have been highly successful in adapting to suit their environment. The challenge for both clubs is how to maintain, and grow a club without a ‘home’ facility. All club activities occur on public beaches. Whilst there are obvious benefits to this, (no maintenance, no building issues, no leases or licences and no cleaning), both would dearly love their own facility. There are surfboards and boats, safety equipment and wetsuits, rash vests and ropes to store. There are fundraising events, social nights, award functions and coaches courses to be held, not to mention a warm space to feed the masses after a cooler day on the beach.

The (HSE) program has given these clubs a helping hand on their way to building a healthy club environment for everyone who comes into contact with them. Facility or not, both these clubs are in it for the long haul. After all, who hasn’t got surfing or windsurfing on their bucket list?