



HARMONY
IN CRICKET

Cricket Victoria Community Consultation

Introduction

On Monday 9 September 2013, Cricket Victoria (CV) hosted a community consultation meeting at their offices at 90 Jolimont Street, Jolimont from 6.00pm to 9.00pm. The invitation list extended to over 60 people representing an assortment of ethnic groups throughout metropolitan Melbourne including the Chairman of Celebrate India, President of the Federation of Indian Associations Victoria and the President of the Victorian Metropolitan Cricket Union with a common focus on playing and promoting the game of cricket. Addendum 1 is the formal invitation list but due to privacy purposes cannot be released publicly.

The aim of this meeting was twofold. First, was to obtain feedback and information on the issues facing these community groups in establishing cricket clubs ranging from ground hire/availability, insurance and how they attract and recruit players. Secondly was to see how (CV) could communicate and work closer with these communities through CV's Harmony in Cricket program and existing member cricket associations throughout the State and, in particular metropolitan Melbourne, with the view of having a more formal and structured alliance.

Findings

Cricket Victoria devised a number of specific questions which were discussed openly and frankly within the invitees to the consultation meeting and tabulated the feedback, comments and suggestions. Please refer to Addendum 2. The series of questions included:

1. Why form your own club?
2. Why join another club
3. Has your organisation considered the career path for juniors from grassroots to elite level?
4. What does inclusion mean to your organisation?
5. What are the major issues/obstacles facing your organisation in joining another club?
6. Have your organisation considered issues such as:
 - a. Ground availability
 - b. Clubroom
 - c. Insurance
 - d. Risk Management/OHS and liability for injuries.

The findings from these questions have been tabled in Addendum 2 and will be discussed in the section below.

Most common Issues Faced

Ground Availability

This was a common theme amongst most of the community groups. The main complaint being that some teams hire grounds for a Sunday from their local council only to find other clubs/players using the ground they had booked. Because it is a Sunday there is no one from the council that they can contact in order to move the incumbents who have simply turned up earlier and decided to use the ground for their cricket match.

Many of these community groups also stated that they were not allowed access to the facilities of established cricket clubs as such clubs were already utilising their ground over the summer months. In some instances, they were allowed limited use on a Sunday but there was no structure or coordinated process in place to use these grounds on a regular basis on Sundays.

Another emerging trend is that such community groups wish to play cricket throughout the year whereas the traditional format set in place is for cricket to cease by the end of March and not to recommence until October.

There are large participation numbers from the Asian community who are not interested in the historical Australian winter sports including soccer preferring to continue to play cricket throughout the winter months and indeed throughout the entire year. This has become a common thread between all of these communities and the trend over the past few years has seen a significant increase in participation of cricket . mainly in the form of Twenty/20 . in the winter months. Participants in such competition now number in the thousands.

Cricket Victoria needs to address this issue if it wants to move forward in establishing a bond with these communities with the view of having them as members and under their umbrella of cricket members.

The consensus is that whilst some sports are used by other sports, there are also some who are fighting to keep their grounds and would welcome the opportunity to speak to Cricket Victoria to see if something can be worked out or at least consider a pilot project with a community club interested in utilising their facilities of other sports during the winter months.

Insurance/OHS/Risk Management

Most of these community leaders appreciated the necessity of having public liability insurance cover whilst conducting cricket matches. In fact this was one of the main reasons they contacted Cricket Victoria.

What was clearly evident was that most of these community leaders did not appreciate the other risk elements such as personal injury cover and Occupational Health and Safety measures by way of a Risk Management Plan. For example, checking the ground for broken glass, needles and syringes, ensuring there are no pot holes in the outfield and ensuring cricketers were wearing adequate equipment, especially minors not to mention Cricket Victoria's guidelines on over-bowling young bowlers etc.

Cultural Issues

This was, by far the biggest issue with these community groups as expressed by their leaders.

Most of these communities cited the cultural difference between the established clubs and their ideologies as the single biggest factor in preventing their members from joining an established club.

Such established clubs had a regimented structure where they play two-day matches where one team bats all day on the first and the second bats on the second day. In addition there is a limited one-day competition and Twenty20 competition. Victorian Premier Cricket do not play enough matches in this format, especially the Twenty20 matches, to attract the players from these community groups.

There also appear to be issues where the culture in such clubs is to serve alcohol post-match. Some leaders of the community groups expressed concern that they would feel uncomfortable in such an environment and would be reluctant to bring their family to the club.

In some circumstances there was also the issue of food such as ham and bacon sandwiches served as part of the afternoon tea routine. Also the traditional post-match BBQ where the meat is not halal.

It is evident that there is two sides to the cultural issue factor. First, there is clearly a barrier where the more established clubs need to be educated on inclusion and welcoming new and diverse groups of cricketers and part of the education is to understand and appreciate their cultural background and how to welcome them into their clubs. Part of this welcoming process is to facilitate their needs not just by way of food, drink and religion etc. but in the type of cricket they want to play.

For example there are very few Saturday/Sunday two-day matches in Victorian Premier Cricket competition this season. Victorian Premier Cricket Club could consider the opportunity to form a relationship with one of these community groups and schedule a system where they could train either alongside the established club's players or on an alternate date. Give the community group use of their ground on the Sunday and hold joint functions where a mutual benefit could be made. For example, we will serve alcohol in a restricted area but all our meat for the BBQ will be halal etc.

Consideration needs to be made for the established clubs to ensure that they do not make all of the concessions. The community leaders need to educate their members that they also need to negotiate concessions as this is part of the integration process into Australian society. Sport, in particularly cricket, is a terrific way to break barriers and to filter in and become part of the fabric of Australia. Both newly established community cricket clubs and the long-term established clubs can embrace each other and work on a way to making the club house and structure of cricket matches work for each other . even if it means allowing the newer communities to play Twenty20 matches on days when the established club's ground is available with the hope of persuading and encouraging such cricketers to perhaps come and try playing the established structure.

Conversely, community clubs have also been identified of exclusion where their members are exclusively from one ethnic background. Some community leaders have recognised this issue and have changed the name of their club so as to not reflect religion, creed, race or

country of origin. Such clubs could consider the additional step of promoting their club as welcoming to the %locals+and catering to local needs.

Inclusion

Whilst %inclusion+is part of the above sub-heading, I have given it a separate sub-heading because many of the community groups felt that ~~±~~traditional Australian clubs are welcoming if you have ability+ but their players are %ignored if of average ability+. Other community groups felt that there were selection issues where it seemed their players had to perform over and above that of players already at the established club to move into the higher grades.

Other feedback included traditional clubs are not inclusive and don't make an effort to welcome new players. I feel that this is a two way thing and dare say some, if not most, of the community clubs also are not inclusive and don't welcome players not from their background.

Cost prohibitive. Annual subscriptions and match fees are too high and make it difficult for the younger players and students to join established clubs. The time commitment and training sessions is another factor preventing members from these community groups from joining.

My Cricket Website

There seemed to be a concern with the use of the My Cricket website and in particular the problem where many of the Asian community have exactly the same name and this tended to distort the My Cricket data base.

Some community leaders expressed a concern that they did not fully understand the concept of the My Cricket website and how it worked. In particular the insurance concept and the significance of being part of the Cricket Victoria umbrella for such cover to come into play.

There clearly needs to be some form of education by way of seminars or workshops with these community groups so they can make an informed decision on My Cricket website, its value and how it is connected to Cricket Victoria.

Succession Planning / Pathways Program

Interestingly there are a number of clubs who have only the one side which is run by a passionate member of their community. I raised the issue of future planning and succession to these leaders enquiring what would happen if they suddenly lost interest, got posted to another State through work or in the unfortunate circumstance where something may happen to them incapacitating them from running the club. It was alarming to hear that the response in most cases was that the club would fold.

There also seemed to be no clear structure in place re governance and management or even a small committee to conduct current management issues or to plan ahead. Whilst such clubs didn't have strategic and business plans, there was no clear path way to recruit juniors to the club or provide a clear pathway for current players who may want to go on and play a more structured brand of cricket or even be part of the elite pathway that Cricket Victoria so effectively provides.

The Cricket Victoria pathways program does not seem to be well understood by a majority of these groups and it is recommended that Cricket Victoria educate these community leaders or at least their personnel who organise their cricket matches on the pathway program and options available to these players.

Immigration Trends and Student Visas

In 2011-12 there were 60,712 permanent additions to the Victorian population. The main birth places of these new immigrants were India (9,251), China (8,776), New Zealand (6,548), United Kingdom (4,368), Sri Lanka (2,855) and Sri Lanka . all, with the exception of China, traditional and established cricket playing nations.

The substantial growth in overseas born residents is changing Australia's ethnic composition. In the past 15 years the number of China-born Australian residents has more than tripled. Tellingly, this growth rate has been surpassed by the number of Indian born residents which increased four-fold over this same period.

Further there are approximately 30,000 student visas granted to students in India. A large proportion of these students study in Melbourne and of these many look to these community groups to not only play cricket but for guidance, companionship and acceptance.

Cricket Victoria need to find ways to cater for these newly arrived immigrants and students either by infiltrating them into the established clubs or by working with these community leaders to integrate their cricket clubs into association members or merging with an established club.

Conclusion

It appears that the key obstacles these community leaders and their respective club face are:

1. Ground availability
2. Insurance/risk management
3. Cultural and inclusion issues
4. Succession planning . too many one-club, one-side with no junior development
5. Pathways to elite level
6. MyCricket education

Cricket Victoria needs to keep working with these community groups and leaders in working with and persuading them that we all have a common goal in playing the game of cricket in a structured and safe environment, irrespective of the form of match.

Cricket Victoria has now addressed half the solution by getting together to identify the issues and obstacles. The next steps need to clarify these with community groups and try to find solutions to the issues.

Children

It appears that there is no clear or defined structure to develop the children from community group and this is an issue which has been identified by most of those in attendance.

Matches appear to be centred on the adults by way of Twenty20 competitions and tournaments and there are no matches or competitions in place for the children.

Young children need to be coached the basics of batting, bowling and fielding by qualified coaches in order to hone their skills and progress through the pathway. Other educational factors such as the importance of wearing the correct equipment, hat/cap and applying sunscreen need to be imprinted in them as with the importance of playing the game in The Spirit of Cricket. This information is being regularly and consistently imparted by the Cricket Victoria Regional Cricket Managers and coaches and must become more accessible to the junior community and their parents.

Females

There also appears to be little or no consideration given to participation of females in cricket matches either at adult or junior level.

Given the emphasis placed on increased participation of females from Cricket Australia and Cricket Victoria, this is a significant area where Cricket Victoria can work with community groups to provide suitable and appropriate options for females from young children to adults to participate in this great game.

Students

As mentioned above, there are over 30,000 Indian students studying in Australia and a large percentage of them are looking to play cricket. Most find their way to one of the competitions organised by community groups through a personal contact, word of mouth or recommendation from fellow students or students who have been involved in these competitions and have since returned to India.

Solutions

Some solutions were offered throughout the consultation. Cricket Victoria could consider devoting resources into researching where students are playing and perhaps creating competitions to facilitate the needs of students and newly arrived immigrants.

Cricket Victoria could consider marketing and branding to attract community groups to join a Cricket Victoria affiliated competition or merge with an established club. Some benefits would include:

- Coaching courses
- Umpiring courses
- Access to coaching and scoring sessions through Cricket Victoria's Regional Cricket Managers
- Assist community clubs that form their own club with succession planning, and the options available to their players, females, students should their affiliate with one of Cricket Victoria's member associations.

Conducting umpiring courses may be a way to entice students looking to earn some money, as they are entitled to under their student visa. Instead of driving taxis or packing shelves in Coles, they could earn an income by umpiring on a Saturday and/or Sunday or umpiring one day of the weekend and playing on the other.

There is a shortage of quality Indian umpires where currently there is none on the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires who officiate in Test matches. This is something the International Cricket Council through their Umpires Manager (Simon Taufel) is working on in India. If some of these students go through our Level 1 Umpires course, gain experience in umpiring in our

competitions and subsequently goes back to India and continues umpiring they may well get picked up on their pathway to elite umpiring should they so desire.

Scoring was suggested as another way of getting people from community groups, especially females, into cricket. It could well be the basis or a starting point into playing the game. Some advice received was that there are plenty of mothers who would be happy to score if only they knew how to.

Recommendations

- Cricket Victoria to work with local councils to determine what grounds within their shire are available for winter cricket.
- Cricket Victoria to work with local councils to see what other grounds are available for Sunday and if possible provide a contact number where grounds have been double booked or there is a dispute as to who should be using the ground.
- Cricket Victoria to consult with other State Sporting Associations such as Baseball Victoria and Softball Victoria to determine the feasibility of utilising their grounds during the winter months to accommodate community groups who wish to play cricket all year around.
- The feasibility of a pilot project with one of the Softball Victoria clubs in playing cricket at their venue in the winter months.
- Working with traditional cricket clubs where cricket is played exclusively at their ground and arranging the possibility of a community club merging with them in order to start a less formal cricket competition and one that runs throughout the year.
- Running workshops/seminars on the advantages of utilising the MyCricket website and ways to avoid problems of similar or same names being entered for different players.
- Running workshops on insurance issues such as public liability, personal injury, OH&S and risk management plans.
- Providing more information on succession planning and pathway programs from grass roots to elite level cricket.
- Research, study and consider the immigration trends and number of international students who arrive in Victoria and are playing cricket and with who and where. Then work out a way to include them in Cricket Victoria programs such as playing, coaching, umpiring and scoring. Working with identified community groups to facilitate the integration of such people into Cricket Victoria's system.
- Work on the many cultural and inclusion issues raised at the meeting and come up with a solution that would be mutually beneficial to all parties. This is by far the biggest obstacle facing Cricket Victoria and the community groups and there may be more than one solution. For example a pilot project with the merging of more established clubs with clear guidelines of what will happen and how competitions, will be run. A second solution is to assist community groups to form and run clubs efficiently but as a member as a Cricket Victoria affiliated association.

- Such inclusion should also take into consideration programs to increase the participation numbers of females, children and international students. For example, GLoBALL and Harmony in Cricket.
 - Conduct a second meeting with community groups formulate a working plan for the future.
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