

## Presidents Report – AGM 2021

2021 has been another year of ups and downs for Grafton Hockey Association.

Having only stepped into this new role in the last few months, I will touch on a few themes from the season which I would like to highlight, and incorporate them into how I would like to see us progress in the future.

Before that I would like to thank all of our members. Without members there wouldn't be a GHA and I am always grateful for the support we receive as an association. Thank you to every player, supporter, umpire, technical official, staff member, committee member & volunteer who has supported us in any way this season.

The three points which I will speak about as my concerns are our juniors, flexibility of our membership, and transparency across our committees.

Our juniors are a big concern of mine after seeing the decline in numbers in the past few years. I understand that we live in a COVID climate, however it is not solely responsible for the decline. People have raised questions about how we can improve our numbers in the future and as far as I see it, there are no direct answers, but it has to begin with our senior members. Our volunteer base is nowhere near as strong as it could be for the size of the association. Programs for these junior players are a crucial step in their development. People talk about school programs, support, and carnivals for these kids. The bottom line is that all of these things take organisation. We have a consistent group of volunteers to make some of these things possible, but not to the scale that we could have. From here I see a need for larger groups of volunteers to help retain these kids. After talking with representatives from Hockey NSW I now understand how player retention is the main issue, with a need to provide for young players to retain their membership for the years to come. A little flexibility within some of our members is needed to help provide for the future, whether it's in a voluntary capacity, or an indirect way such as changing your playing days to allow for carnivals etc.

Please do not underestimate the emphasis I would like to place on the word future. Without a strong junior base, the association crumbles. We do not focus enough on the future, instead invest too much time in the now.

Leading into the next theme, I would like to touch on flexibility of our membership. To put it bluntly, we do not have anywhere near enough people put their hand up for roles within our association, for the amount of people that criticise how the place is run. The decisions made by the relevant parties are always with the best interests of our future in mind. I understand that we will not get it right 100% of the time, however a lot more willingness to

work with the structure that we are trying to provide, would be very beneficial to our membership. These decisions are not made out of spite, they are made in conjunction with Hockey NSW and after discussion with the executives of many other associations who all experience similar problems to us.

The last point I would like to touch on, is something that I can offer on behalf of our Board. Many times this year, I have heard statements in respect to the transparency of us as leaders of the association. The fact of the matter is that often decisions are made and communicated through many different avenues before they meet their final destination, the members. I am here to offer 100% clarification on our actions should they be requested appropriately. This is not something which is new to us, it's just something that people often don't utilise correctly. We are really quick to criticise other people's actions without first taking a step back to find out all the details. Be aware when you are making comment on other's decisions, & ensure that you are exhausting all of your avenues to find out all the details. If you want to know something, all you have to do is ask the question to the appropriate people.

Don't get me wrong, it's not all doom & gloom. These are just a few areas in which I would love to see improvement in the next 12 months.

We have had a number of positives come out of the year. Our representative hockey has been strong in playing the game, officiating the game, and in our team management areas. We have held two successful state championships, and we thank everybody involved in the operation of these. We held a successful 'Doing it for Holly Round', which demonstrated the possibility of an electric atmosphere at the fields. We have big plans for the operation of our facility, including the Bascule Building, for next season & beyond, we have plans for a summer comp which hopefully will be released shortly, and much more to work through between now and next year.

I feel that as an association we are definitely in a place which we are ready to move forward once again. With a little bit of luck, and a lot of hard work, we can do bigger and better next year.

Regards  
Toby Power  
GHAJ President