



# ***LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Mr JP Lister MP—Chair  
Mr AJ Baillie MP  
Mr MA Boothman MP  
Mr MPT Healy MP  
Mrs ME Nightingale MP  
Ms JE Pease MP

**Staff present:**

Ms K Guthrie—Acting Committee Secretary  
Mr Z Dadic—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Monday, 4 August 2025**

**Gold Coast**

## MONDAY, 4 AUGUST 2025

**The committee met at 9.59 am.**

**CHAIR:** Welcome to this public hearing on the Gold Coast for the committee's inquiry into volunteering in Queensland. I am James Lister, the member for Southern Downs and chair of this committee. With me today are: Margie Nightingale MP, the deputy chair and member for Inala; Mark Boothman MP, the member for Theodore here on the Gold Coast; Adam Baillie MP, the member for Townsville; Michael Healy MP, the member for Cairns; and Joan Pease MP, the member for Lytton. It is great to have everyone here today. I believe that Rob Molhoek, the member for Southport, will be joining us at some stage. It will be great to have Rob here.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in these proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and my direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the Queensland parliament's website or social media pages.

### **HORDERN, Ms Alexandra, General Manager, Regulatory and Consumer Policy, Insurance Council of Australia (via telephone)**

**CHAIR:** If you wish you may make an opening statement, after which the committee will have some questions for you.

**Ms Horder:** Thank you for the opportunity to attend today's hearing and particularly for the flexibility provided to allow me to appear via telephone today.

The Insurance Council of Australia is the representative body of the general insurance industry. ICA members provide a range of general insurance products, including public liability insurance, professional indemnity insurance and workers compensation. As outlined in several of the submissions to this inquiry, cost pressures, including the cost of insurance premiums, continue to impact volunteer groups and organisations. Insurance premiums across multiple insurance lines have increased significantly in recent years, particularly in terms of public liability insurance. This has impacted small businesses and not for profits as well as community and volunteer-based organisations. This inquiry therefore presents an opportunity for all levels of government to consider how the challenges faced by volunteer-based organisations, including access to insurance, can be addressed.

As outlined in the Insurance Council's submission to this inquiry, there are a number of actions governments could take that would assist businesses, volunteer groups and other organisations address challenges they may have in accessing insurance. Briefly, these options include: removing taxes and levies on insurance products; providing volunteer organisations and groups with opportunities to undertake risk management training; ensuring that any mandatory public liability insurance requirements imposed on volunteer organisations are reasonable and proportionate to the activities being undertaken; reviewing current civil liability settings to ensure they remain fit for purpose; and promoting greater public liability insurance availability and affordability for community and volunteer-based organisations. In particular, reforms to laws that reduce the underwriting risk for volunteer-based organisations and their volunteers could help improve access to insurance for these organisations. I welcome any questions the committee may have.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Thank you for appearing before us today and for the work you have done in your submission. I am interested to understand more of what you mentioned in the submission relating to increasing insurance costs, particularly around government costs, taxes, levies et cetera. Could you please outline what those are, specifically with a Queensland focus?

**Ms Horder:** Governments around the country levy a range of taxes on insurance products. The Queensland government currently charges a flat rate of nine per cent stamp duty on general insurance policies. That duty is calculated after GST is applied, so people in Queensland purchasing a general insurance policy are effectively being double taxed every time they take out a policy. Just to provide some perspective, the revenue raised by the Queensland government from insurance Gold Coast

taxes is more than what they receive from gaming machines, the waste levy and fines and forfeitures. The Productivity Commission has found that insurance taxes are highly inefficient and discourage people from taking out insurance. There have been similar findings across a range of reviews into taxation, including the Henry review. A very effective way of immediately reducing the cost of general insurance to consumers, volunteer organisations and small businesses in Queensland would be to consider removing that stamp duty.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Thank you for taking the time to attend today. In your submission you mentioned reducing capacity in the market and you did highlight that, when it comes to insurance payouts, unsustainable gross losses are now going above premiums. What strategies should be put in place to turn that around and stop reducing capacity in the market? What could be done to create additional capacity?

**Ms Hordern:** It is a reasonably complicated problem. To boil it down to its simplest form, insurance prices risk. When we see a market where premiums coming in to insurers are less than or insufficient to pay the claims that are going out, that is a loss ratio of over 100 per cent, so insurers are obviously losing money for every dollar they bring in. Recently in the public liability market we have seen loss ratios of 120 per cent, so an insurer would be paying out \$1.20 for every dollar they take in in premiums. It is quite obviously not sustainable for insurance companies to continue paying out more than they are taking in in premiums.

The most effective way to reduce that is to reduce the level of risk that exists in the marketplace and bring those loss ratios down to a sustainable level, at which point insurers will reconsider deploying additional capital into those markets. Obviously, when those loss ratios remain unsustainable it is difficult for them to continue deploying more capital into those markets.

In terms of what can be done to reduce those costs that are flowing through, you would have seen a number of those recommendations in our submission: making sure that volunteer organisations and community groups are effectively managing the risk that is being presented by the opportunities they are offering to the community and the activities they are undertaking; making sure that all volunteers are effectively trained in risk management techniques and capabilities; making sure that those organisations have very thorough tracking and monitoring of the risk management they are doing—and really good quality recordkeeping is absolutely critical—and making sure that the mandatory public liability insurance requirements imposed are proportionate to the activities being undertaken. Often we see mandatory requirements of \$20 million in public liability cover, which can be excessive for the nature of the activities being undertaken by some of those volunteer organisations. Making sure those requirements are proportionate and making sure that governments, including local councils, are reviewing their contracting and insurance requirements arrangements, particularly in light of recent insurance costs, are also important.

Finally, in the submission we touched on reviewing those current civil liability settings to make sure they remain fit for purpose. That is important as well. It is absolutely critical to balance the need to ensure that people who are injured are adequately compensated and supported in recovery, but making sure those payments are reasonable and that we are reducing the risk and reducing the payout as much as possible within a reasonable framework is also important.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** When it comes to the actual amount of payouts, can you give us some data on that so the committee can be better informed about what payouts have been made over the last couple of years so we can have a good understanding of where there are shortcomings and where we can look at improving?

**Ms Hordern:** I will need to take that one on notice in terms of the payouts. It may be a little bit challenging. We will see what the members can provide us in terms of payouts. We may be able to provide some aggregate figures. Getting detail into the figures and providing numbers for individual payouts may be quite challenging, but we will see what we can provide.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** That is fine. It just gives us a bit of an overview of what type of shortcomings are out there and how potentially we can look into it and rectify it.

**Ms PEASE:** Thank you very much for your submission and presenting today. I want to clarify your comments around payouts being greater than insurance policies coming in. Is that particularly in the not-for-profit sector? That is what we are reviewing here today. We are talking about volunteer organisations; that is what we want to understand. Can you clarify that? Does that relate to all insurance or is it just specific to volunteer, not-for-profit organisations?

**Ms Hordern:** That is specifically in relation to civil liability public liability insurance. We look at that as a class, and that will apply to organisations, not for profits, but also small businesses and small-profit businesses operating, for example, in the tourism area. That is the entire class of public liability.

**Ms PEASE:** I think the member for Theodore asked a similar question. Given that this inquiry is into volunteer organisations and not for profits, are you able to provide clarity around payouts for not-for-profits and volunteer organisations in that class of insurance?

**Ms Hordern:** Again, I will need to take that on notice. It is possible that our members will be able to provide that, but I am not 100 per cent sure how granular their capacity to provide us with information about the type of business that has been making the claim is. We can certainly take that on notice and come back to you.

**Ms PEASE:** One of the reasons it is particularly important to this inquiry is that if insurance costs are going up for not-for-profit and volunteer organisations, yet they are not making claims in the civil liability space but they are still being impacted because across that particular class of insurance other organisations are making bigger claims and not for profits are not, it is an important piece of information that would be very useful for this inquiry.

**Mr BAILLIE:** Thank you so much for joining us today. I have similar questions to the previous members. Do you have any visibility on the number of policies taken out by volunteer organisations across Queensland versus the number of claims? Are there any particular fields of volunteering that are more likely to make a claim? I will give you a little bit of background. We have been around a fair bit of the state so far and the topic of insurance comes up pretty regularly. Many of those organisations claim to have never made an insurance claim, but they do hold insurance and pay the premiums on a regular basis. Do you have any stats or visibility that may help provide some clarity there?

**Ms Hordern:** Unfortunately, again I will need to take that one on notice and just see what our members have in terms of different types of organisations that are more likely to make a claim. I do appreciate the frustration of volunteer organisations and community organisations that have not made a claim but see their insurance premiums going up each year. It is something that we hear quite consistently from various small business sectors as well as volunteering organisations and community groups. That does go to the nature of pooling in an insurance market. Often what we see is businesses that have very strong risk management capabilities and processes and procedures in placing frustrated because they do sit within that broader ecosystem that presents a significant risk. I will pop back to the members and see what information we can find in terms of the types of volunteer organisations that are more likely to make a claim.

**Mr HEALY:** Thank you very much, Chair; it is great to have you back. Hello everybody. If you are looking for a warm holiday come to Cairns; it is beautiful there. You are doing a fantastic job as the representative for the Insurance Council of Australia. Many insurance companies in our part of the world are questioned a lot by people as a result of natural disasters and things along those lines. I think your reference about cutting some taxes is a great start—well done—and the profitability of insurance companies, which I do not expect you to explain to us anyway.

Thank you for your submission. It is quite detailed. It is along the lines of what we have already been discussing. I would be interested to know how many not-for-profit organisations you have been engaging with who have put claims in. Also, you have made a number of recommendations in your submission in relation to training. In which key areas does training need to be improved? I understand the economic viability of insurance companies. I understand they are like banks and they are making good money at the moment, so I will not go into the details of how that works. I would be very keen to know where the insurance industry can help us by saying, 'Let's increase the efficiencies of not-for-profit organisations at minimal cost.' Do you have a line item or a couple of items that you would prefer insurance companies to pay attention to when they are dealing with not-for-profit organisations?

**Ms Hordern:** Your first question was around the engagement that we have with volunteer organisations and community organisations. We run what we call a business advisory council and we engage with a number of advocacy bodies that represent businesses, not-for-profits and community-based organisations. We are constantly engaging with those groups to understand what is happening in their sector in terms of insurance, where the challenges are for them and what training they need to address some of the issues. We also have a consumer advisory committee, so consumer advocacy representatives can come and have similar conversations with us about the challenges that they are seeing across consumer groups and in different parts of the community so we can try to

have targeted responses. We have a pretty good outreach at the Insurance Council, but, as always, we are happy to talk to other community groups or volunteer organisations that may need a little bit of support.

In terms of your second question about areas that need to be targeted, the bulk of the challenges are in areas where children are involved, unfortunately. That can be for a range of reasons. Children are often a bit more vulnerable to risk of injury. Often they will be running around outside, climbing trees, falling out of trees and that kind of thing. All of the things that children do have a level of vulnerability to injury. Activities that involve children do present a higher underwriting risk for insurers. There is also a higher standard of care involved when providing services and activities to children in terms of the kind of supervision that needs to be provided. Of course, injury claims involving children can also be quite a bit more expensive and take much longer to finalise. That is one area that does present a lot of challenge.

Another area that presents a challenge is what I would put in the bucket called 'the fun things to do', such as horseriding and surfing—all of those things that Australians love to do. You will have a great time, but they do present higher risks in terms of injuries.

**Mr HEALY:** That is why they are so much fun!

**Ms Hordern:** In terms of volunteers and training, we would like all organisations to have quite comprehensive training regimes to make sure their volunteers understand the risks being presented by certain activities and to make sure they have very clear guardrails in place to manage those risks. It is also critical to have a record of the risk management and the activities that have been put in place to mitigate the risk as much as possible. Recently, we have been working with the Australian Live Music Business Council on a risk management framework and a way that they can ensure their members are accurately recording and managing those risks. That has been a success in their sector because they are now able to better articulate the risks to insurers and have more detailed conversation about the coverage being provided.

**Mr HEALY:** Alexandra, I can see why you are the general manager. That was very thorough. Very quickly, are there any potential benefits for not-for-profit organisations that do a lot more in relation to training and are less likely to put in any financial claims? They are fundamentally not-for-profit community organisations. If they are going to a lot of trouble to ensure they are training, what sorts of incentives or benefits would the insurance industry be able to provide? I know you are only the general manager and you would not want to be making any broader decisions. Does that happen anywhere in the insurance sector?

**Ms Hordern:** The benefits that accrue to businesses that do that risk mitigation activity really well are like the health benefits that accrue to people who eat their vegetables, moderate their drinking and get eight hours of sleep at night. As potentially boring as that sounds, those risk management activities are absolutely critical to ensuring the businesses, first of all, do not have the injuries and the risks coming through their business. That is really important, particularly if you are a volunteer organisation or a community-based organisation. The last thing you want while you are out doing good in the community is to have people being injured or to have to deal with a claim. You get an enormous amount of benefit by minimising the likelihood of that happening.

Dealing with a claim can be incredibly stressful for these organisations. They are complicated. They can run on for many years. In some instances the volunteer organisations and community-based groups feel that the claim that has been brought against them may not be particularly fair. That can be very challenging for those organisations to deal with. Making sure they do not even have to make a claim in the first place presents an enormous benefit.

**Mr HEALY:** Particularly to the insurer.

**Ms Hordern:** Those organisations that have very thorough risk management processes and procedures in place, particularly when they are working with a new insurance broker who is really skilled and has a good understanding of the risks of the sector, can get some really good outcomes in terms of an appropriately priced premium. If they can show the insurer the risk management framework and the compliance mechanisms that are in place which reduce the risk for that organisation, a number of benefits would accrue. We would encourage all of those organisations to make sure those frameworks are there.

**Mr HEALY:** Thank you, Alexandra. That was an outstanding response.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Ms Hordern. That concludes our time with you. Thank you, again, for your submission as well. I understand that you have taken three questions on notice. It would be appreciated if you could respond to the committee secretariat by 14 August. The secretariat will be in touch with you so it is clear what those questions on notice are. Thank you very much, indeed.

**Ms Hordern:** That is fabulous. Thank you, Chair, and thank you, committee.

**KRUEGER, Mr Scott, Manager, 2032 Games Coordination, City of Gold Coast**

**RYAN, Mr Mark, General Manager, Disaster and Emergency Management, City of Gold Coast**

**CHAIR:** Welcome, gentlemen. It is great to have you here. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before the committee asks you some questions?

**Mr Ryan:** Thank you for the opportunity to provide our submission and answer questions today. The City of Gold Coast relies on volunteers for our nature-based programs, our environmental programs, our heritage programs, Neighbourhood Watch and also disaster and emergency management, which is my realm. As we pivot from the 2018 Commonwealth Games, my colleague Mr Krueger and I are looking at the 2032 target and how we embrace that and the legacy, which Scott can talk to today. In some respects, our volunteer numbers are lower than the average across the city. We are seeing a bucking of the trend around the State Emergency Service and the Rural Fire Service. As a whole, we are a bit lower than the national average, and it is something that we would like to increase into the future.

**CHAIR:** Did you have something you wished to say, Mr Krueger?

**Mr Krueger:** From our perspective, there is a really good opportunity to leverage the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. From a volunteering perspective, I personally think there is an opportunity for this to be one of the top three legacy outcomes. It takes appropriate resourcing and appropriate funding to do that as well as a really good framework. We need to start as soon as possible. This is not just an opportunity to get people to volunteer for the games—a lot of people will do that because it is exciting. What is the legacy opportunity? How do we leverage the games to deliver more volunteers leading into and out of it, not just for those sports that are participating but also for the broader community?

**CHAIR:** It is about a renaissance in volunteering.

**Mr Krueger:** That is 100 per cent right.

**CHAIR:** Thanks very much.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Thank you for appearing today. I am interested in the legacy idea following the Commonwealth Games. A lot of hope has been placed on the idea that the Olympics will generate a whole new generation of volunteers. If your volunteer numbers on the Gold Coast are lower than the national average, was there any benefit to the volunteering sector in terms of the numbers of volunteers and the maintenance of the numbers of volunteers as a result of the Commonwealth Games?

**Mr Krueger:** There was a legislative issue that we had in terms of privacy. The volunteers for the Commonwealth Games were through the organising committee, Goldoc, so there was an issue in our being able to get the information of those volunteers and move them forward. There were a couple of linkages that did not really work in that space. We expect that about 50,000 volunteers will be needed across Queensland. Some of them will be games volunteers and some of them will be city volunteers who will need to assist with the obligations we have under our agreement as a games delivery partner.

There were certainly supported areas within that. We could look at the opportunity to develop a national volunteer passport, which has been spoken of—it is in the national volunteer strategy. There are frameworks like that, but it is a greater scenario than just looking at your sport volunteers, your coaches and those types of people. We are really looking at what opportunities we have to bring people who do not normally volunteer into the system who could volunteer not only for sporting organisations but also for community organisations.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** You were unable to contact those who volunteered for the Commonwealth Games post that event to see if they could volunteer in any other capacity. Did you find many volunteers were self-motivated? Did you see an uptick in anything following the games but then a gradual decline? Could you unpack that a little bit?

**Mr Krueger:** In some cases there were, particularly in the sports space. There would be other volunteers who were outside the venue and we did not necessarily see that transition.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** And they were not self-motivated to continue volunteering?

**Mr Krueger:** Some may have. The Commonwealth Games were on the Gold Coast, but a number of people came from outside of the Gold Coast specifically for that volunteering opportunity as well.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Thank you.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Mark and Scott, I was watching you before when we were listening to the Insurance Council representative give their submission. In their submission they talk about claims and risk factors. When it comes to risks and claims throughout the Gold Coast region, is there any information you can give us about any event you guys are part of and the common issues when it comes to insurance claims for public liability et cetera? Obviously your roles are here on the Gold Coast so you should have a wide and diverse knowledge of that.

**Mr Ryan:** From a disaster management perspective, one of the biggest gaps has been spontaneous volunteering. Certainly through the last couple of events—our Christmas storm event and then TC Alfred—the community are our first responders. They will obviously respond first, followed by the uniformed services, and then there is a desire for spontaneous volunteering. There has been a gap in insurance liability in that space, and we have had the most success when we have plugged into coordinated networks. We have done a bunch of work with Volunteering Gold Coast, who I know are also appearing today, and we have tapped into the multifaith sector. We are working with organisations that already have structures in place. I attended a meeting last week and it was indicated that Volunteering Queensland are working towards a solution and having pre-identified insurance. That is from a spontaneous volunteering perspective. Some of our other uniformed services are insured through the state government and others, but that is probably the biggest gap that I have seen.

**Ms PEASE:** Thank you for all the great work you do looking after volunteers and building that capacity. My husband was a volunteer in the Commonwealth Games. We are from Brisbane so he would bus down. He loved the experience. Interestingly enough, there seems to be a cohort of people who travel the world and are members of that volunteering organisation. It is interesting that there are people like that around the world. I want to expand on the requirements for organisations that use your spaces. In your submission you talked about the number of leased properties that you have where volunteering and not-for-profit organisations operate their business or activities and venues where there might be an outdoor event. What are your requirements in terms of insurance for those organisations that make use of your facilities?

**Mr Ryan:** I would probably have to take that on notice. I do not have with me the detail on that specific question but I am more than happy to provide that through to the inquiry.

**Ms PEASE:** Is that okay, Chair?

**CHAIR:** Yes, that is fine.

**Ms PEASE:** It would be interesting to find out, given that a lot of people and many not-for-profit organisations utilise council properties, and not just the Gold Coast council but everywhere.

**Mr Krueger:** I can probably provide that. Under the lease scenario, they need to have building insurance and they also have public liability insurance to a certain value. I think it might be \$10 million or \$20 million.

**Mr HEALY:** I think it is \$10 million.

**Mr Krueger:** Certainly from an event perspective, each organisation, whether they are a not-for-profit or a business, does need to provide insurance for that event as well.

**Ms PEASE:** The Insurance Council made a recommendation that potentially, for councils and government owned buildings, the requirement for public liability insurance should be shouldered by the actual owner of the property—that is, the council or the government. Do you have a position on that?

**Mr Krueger:** We are currently going through a lease review framework. We are actually self-insured in terms of the City of Gold Coast so we are a bit different. That is certainly one of the things that we would look into in terms of that dual insurance activity that sometimes happens.

**Mr BAILLIE:** I can see from the submission that the Gold Coast City council is focused on and appreciates the contribution from volunteers. You have some great statistics and obviously measure these things. Within the Gold Coast City council, do you have any idea of the resources that you put into managing volunteers or encouraging volunteerism? What is the number of FTEs?

**Mr Ryan:** We would be more than happy to provide that. Council supports a lot in kind. We are in partnership with the state government around the provision of the State Emergency Service facilities and vehicles. Council does collect a \$2 levy that goes directly to the rural fire groups to fund equipment, in addition to what the state provides. We would be happy to provide that as a rolled up figure. I am more than happy to take that on notice.



**Mr BAILLIE:** That would be great. Particularly when we see councils that are so engaged with volunteer organisations and driving volunteering, I am really interested in how that works.

**Mr HEALY:** Gentlemen, firstly, I think our friend from the Insurance Council did a great job. There are no benefits, obviously, if you are going to work a little bit harder. It is a little like feeling sorry for someone who owns a bank. I appreciate your insurance challenges. I still think there is a lot to be done in that space. I think state and federal governments have a key area of responsibility where things can be changed because the system is not working and I think there needs to be improvements.

My question is on the blue cards, acknowledging that the general manager of the Insurance Council touched on how anything to do with kids understandably should be an area of high protection and close attention, particularly in light of some of the news coming out of Victoria and other areas. As an entity, do you have any issues with blue cards and your staff? Do you have any data on the number of people who come to work or come to volunteer with you but then cannot because they do not have a blue card or it takes too long? Do you have any data around that? Scott, you might have something on that?

**Mr Krueger:** We will have to take that on notice as well. We do have scenarios where we have staff within our aquatic centres and community centres and things like that where we certainly would require that blue card. In terms of the statistics, we will need to come back to you on that one.

**Mr HEALY:** You are a big entity. You have a critical mass down here. I think that sort of data goes to inform us to be able to make recommendations and say where improvements can be made or streamlining and increasing efficiencies. That would be appreciated.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** I have a quick question that is probably something you may also have to take on notice. Can you do a breakdown of where you are going strong with your community groups? You were talking about an overall decline and obviously you cover a lot of different community groups like sporting, environmental et cetera. Are there any areas where you are going quite well? Maybe that is something you can get some data on.

**Mr Ryan:** We know we are seeing a strong increase in the State Emergency Service and that seems logical for us based on the last couple of major disaster events. We are having an issue with retention of State Emergency Service and I think that goes to a service that is not modernising, in my view, as quick as its membership. I do not know the exact number but I know it is around 25 per cent of jobs from the Christmas storm were not able to be done by Queensland SES but only by Victoria and New South Wales because they have those greater skill sets and, I guess, a better service offering. We are seeing certainly an increase in that.

We are seeing good numbers in surf lifesaving as well. What we are seeing with surf lifesaving, for example, is them emerging into alternate markets. We proudly have them out doorknocking in the hinterland when our beaches are closed when disasters are on because they want to get involved in that. There are pockets where we are seeing that. We are seeing strong numbers across the Rural Fire Service as well. As for the city groups, I am more than happy to take that on notice and provide that through to the committee.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for your appearance today and for your submission. You have agreed to take three questions on notice. If you could have the answers to those questions to the secretariat by 14 August, that would be great. That concludes the period for the examination of the Gold Coast City council.

**COOPER, Mr Brad, Chief Executive Officer, Volunteering Gold Coast**

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your submission. Would you like to make an opening statement before we have some questions for you?

**Mr Cooper:** Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak and to be part of this process. Volunteering Gold Coast welcomes this inquiry. It is significant. It is super important. Yes, we face real challenges, but we also see a tremendous opportunity to reinvest in volunteering and rebuild a more connected, more resilient Queensland.

Volunteering Gold Coast was established in 1998 by our founder Peter Mark who still serves on our board. Volunteering Gold Coast has supported more than 60,000 volunteers over the past almost 30 years here on the Gold Coast. Today we serve around 100 member organisations and not-for-profits and actively recruit for around 200 roles for those organisations. Despite this scale, we have received no Commonwealth or state funding for our volunteer matching activity for the past four years. Still, just last year, 2,100 people turned to us for help to get involved in volunteering. Just over 40 per cent of those people, just over 800 people in that group, required in-person support and came into our service to navigate their way through the volunteering system. We also operate as a volunteer-involving organisation with a hybrid workforce of staff and around 180 volunteers delivering services to our customers each fortnight. In 2024 alone, our volunteers contributed 52,800 hours of volunteering across community transport, aged-care visitation and our inclusive beach access programs.

This dual role of supporting both volunteers and organisations gives us a unique view of the volunteering ecosystem. You have already heard about the 11.4 per cent drop in volunteer participation statewide and that is significant, but we are still seeing strong intent. People still want to help; they just need better ways to connect. That is where scale and structure matter. Hyperlocal initiatives, those that are based at the neighbourhood level, are going to be too fragmented and too costly to implement and centralised state-led approaches feel too distant to volunteers. What we need is coordinated place-based infrastructure that supports volunteers where they are in our regions. Our volunteer drivers, for example, do not think about the Commonwealth Home Support Program or program funding; they just think about the people they want to support here on the Gold Coast.

To explain the current challenges we use the analogy of a water system where volunteers are the rain and this rain is both valuable and also irregular. Without dams to collect and without pipes to channel and without taps to deliver, the goodwill does not reach the people or the places that it could help. I have a blow-up of the lovely image from page 9 of our report to depict that. I really want to push this image for the committee to look at because I think, whilst you are caught in the detail and the minutia and some of the rabbit holes around volunteering, I want you to leave with the message that having a picture of the whole system in its connectedness is absolutely critical.

**CHAIR:** For the record, Mr Cooper is showing the committee a pictorial representation of the volunteering ecosystem. I am sorry to have interrupted proceedings.

**Mr Cooper:** To finish off, the current status of volunteering right now is that our dams are not full. We are not replenishing our volunteers as fast as we can. Our pipes are actually unsupported so the local infrastructure like volunteer resource centres is unfunded and vanishing. Our taps are not flowing so our systems are stretched trying to connect people effectively. The good news is that this is all fixable. We have put forward 12 practical recommendations and four of those I want to call out.

The first is using the Gambling Community Benefit Fund to sustain some of those core services; establishing a ministerial advisory panel to co-design solutions from those who are in the sector who know it well; prioritising Queensland-based organisations to lead volunteer recruitment for the 2032 games, which should not be outsourced to an international company; and launching a statewide public campaign to revitalise participation. We all see the Olympics as a key opportunity but legacy does not come from short-term bursts of enthusiasm; it comes from capacity. If we want a volunteer workforce worthy of the games and of Queensland then we need to start to build that capacity now. Without capacity, there can be no legacy.

Volunteering is not just an act of charity; it is an essential community infrastructure. I urge the committee to repair and strengthen the system now so that volunteers can contribute to flow where it is needed most, reliably, sustainably and with purpose.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Mr Cooper, thank you for your wonderful pictorial representation. I find it quite enlightening. I have a question about the idea of central onboarding. You mentioned that a number of volunteers require person-to-person support. We have certainly heard, particularly in our Gold Coast

regional and remote communities, that the idea of centralised onboarding is great but there is a need for one-to-one support. How would you see that playing out? From your perspective, what would be the best option to address that?

**Mr Cooper:** I think the solution for communities is going to be blended. Our experience has been to make some strategic investments to create a volunteer-centric online pathway for people to navigate their own way through as best they can. Around three years ago, there was a strategic investment from Volunteering Gold Coast to make that shift to a very volunteer-centric model of onboarding through those pathways. That aside, on the regional model and this scale of having people able to go to a centre within the regions, I often think alongside our colleagues in other volunteer resource centres and Volunteering Queensland about those regions that are not fortunate enough to have an organisation like a Far North Queensland volunteers or Sunshine Coast volunteers or the like. I think the function is important. I am not necessarily wedded to the label of whether it is a volunteer resource centre that does it, but it is building that capability of having strong leadership embedded within an organisation that wants to champion volunteering in a region and watching that emerge and grow as volunteering steps up in the regions to become a far more volunteer-centric organisation. I think that is what success looks like in that space.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** In your submission you talk about a well-planned public campaign highlighting the benefits of volunteering. I was at a CWA meeting last week—an AGM—and one of the ideas was to try and get young people involved through a card, like an A-B-C for kids or something like that. Could you elaborate on your thoughts on how you could do a well-planned public campaign? Also, as a second part to that question which is completely different, do you do surveys? If so, I am just wondering if you can elaborate on your surveys.

**Mr Cooper:** Sure. In terms of reaching out to the community and talking about the value of volunteering, we know from our colleagues in other parts of the country that the most powerful way to inspire people to come into volunteering is through storytelling. People respond more powerfully to the individual experience of, 'This is how I came to volunteering, what I got out of it and what I'm doing within those spaces.' I would be supporting a campaign which highlights those individual stories with cross-sections of the community where we want a targeted increase in terms of representation to come through those sorts of storytelling but also for organisations—whether it be the CWA, Volunteering Gold Coast or many of the other volunteer-involving organisations that are here today—to find those gems and tell those stories themselves. In our organisation we have found that to be really powerful. We have seen our volunteer driver numbers increase by almost 100 per cent in as little as 12 months in the last year—going from 58 to 108 volunteer drivers—and a lot of that is about our internal expertise around marketing and targeting those journeys for people, making it really simple for people to come on board and creating a volunteer-centric way for people to come through.

If I think about the surveys that we have been doing over the last year in particular, we have been looking at doing that with a net promoter score survey across all aspects of our service delivery, including volunteer experiences. Our scores are generally pretty high—they are in the sort of 50 to 60 range—and we are extremely happy with those results. We can see that, like many organisations, as volunteer journeys come through our organisation and then people may be placed in another volunteer-involving organisation it may become a little bit difficult to track and follow what those outcomes are, but we have become routine surveyors of our populations that we serve to understand how they feel about our service.

**Ms PEASE:** Thank you very much for coming in today and thank you for all of the great work that you have done on the Gold Coast with Volunteering Gold Coast. I am interested to hear your thoughts about this, and I know you have answered a similar question from the member for Theodore: given our society has changed significantly from when you started as an organisation—both people in a family are working, they are busy doing things, kids are involved with a whole heap of after-school activities—have you altered the way in which you try to attract volunteers to meet their needs, because that is who benefits? We talk about the benefits of volunteering. It is the individuals who benefit from that. Millennials want different things than baby boomers, for example, and all of those issues. Have you altered your thoughts and plans to cater to the changing market, which is who you are trying to attract?

**Mr Cooper:** Yes, and this is a great question. It is absolutely a volunteer-centric market right now and organisations that are not making adjustments to respond to those changes will find themselves with gaps in their rosters and people who need their services missing out on services. If I go back about five years in Volunteering Gold Coast and think about the transport service that we operate, once upon a time we would have been flushed—probably pre COVID—with enough volunteers to be able to, if you wanted, set the requirement for people to come on board and that

surplus of volunteers would have meant that we could pick and choose and filled a roster really easily. In our world, the simplest solution is to find one person to drive one vehicle for one day, and that activation is simple from a rostering point of view.

These days when people rock up and say they want to volunteer, rather than us saying, 'We need someone for all day on Friday,' we simply ask the question, 'What is it that you can offer?' and then we engineer that backwards to run our fleet and our vehicles and our services—all of our services—in the same way. It means we carry and embrace those rostering challenges of instead of having one person in a vehicle having two people in a vehicle and of carrying some of those costs of dead running time and putting that into our financials, with the luxury and the benefit of having nearly \$1.6 million of donated labour coming through our volunteers to underpin that service last year. Volunteers are showing us and telling us what the future looks like, and for us it is incumbent, particularly as Volunteering Gold Coast, to try and take a leadership position in this community and show what a volunteer-centric response looks like.

**Ms PEASE:** Thank you very much for that.

**Mr BAILLIE:** Thank you for joining us today, Brad. Often when we are looking at trying to solve problems or improve situations we focus on the future and do not necessarily evaluate or celebrate the successes we have had already. You mentioned the onboarding tool—that is, the volunteer-centric online tool. There are still a lot of organisations in parts of Queensland that do not have that tool and would benefit from it, so I wonder if you cast your mind back: can you quantify what type of uplift you experienced when using that tool versus before you had it?

**Mr Cooper:** Yes, I can recall the discussion that we were having as an organisation looking at different solutions. One of the criteria we examined was what would be the organisational improvements we would see, and we quantified that the benefit of going to this particular platform was to take about eight hours of effort out of onboarding each volunteer. I think at the time it moved it from around 12 hours down to three or four hours, so a huge improvement in terms of internal productivity and also, if I think about the experience of the volunteer on the other side moving through, getting a resolution much faster.

**Mr BAILLIE:** Did you notice an increased percentage in volunteers who started the onboard process finishing the process? Was that improved?

**Mr Cooper:** Yes, but it has gone in cycles. In terms of preparing, I looked at the data for the last four years. Four years ago, our dropout rate from initial inquiry through to dropping out was around 39 per cent. The next year it dropped down to around 26 per cent and then it went up to 29 per cent, and last year it is down to 24 per cent. I think it speaks to this nature that unless the system is working for volunteers then volunteers do not stick with the journey. There is a handful of people who have what I would call some Saturday night bravado—that is, those who put their hand up who want to volunteer—and they are a percentage of people who do not necessarily intend to come through, but we need to be driven by this performance data of, 'Are we meeting the expectations of people who want to give their time freely and exciting them about coming through the journey and getting placed in those roles?'

**Mr HEALY:** Thanks, Brad. That was a good submission; I love the pictorial, mate. It states it for some of the dyslexic people out there, myself included. It makes a lot of sense. I have a quick question, and I will go back to our lovely friends in the insurance industry. You are right in the meat of this. Are there any areas in the insurance space where it could be easier for you where you think there could be some changes? I note in your submission you have highlighted quite a few areas, and I think they are great. From an insurance perspective, is it a challenge? From my perspective, you are not doing this to make a living; you are doing this to help communities, so I think you should be saying to us, 'We think this is what the insurance should be around this scope.' If there is one thing you could do, what would it be in that space?

**Mr Cooper:** I would echo the comments this morning from the Insurance Council around building that capability of organisations to understand risk, mitigate injury and support volunteers. We have seen three years of insurance premium rises and then last year we saw a premium reduction. That is across all of our insurance products. I would say that if you are, in our world, good at managing risk and having good policy around your transport operations, that probably conveys as a general capability across the other aspects of your organisation. We probably carry one of the larger insurance policies, I would imagine, with regard to volunteers, so we are set up to cover 200 to 250 volunteers with lots of flexibility around spontaneous volunteering of extending that, and we can do that because of the confidence that we give our insurer around our internal policies and procedures, risk management, partnerships, exercising with council.

**Mr HEALY:** Because of the size of you, you have capacity to do that, whereas some of the smaller—

**Mr Cooper:** We are, but the other point I would make is: we have that capacity not because of the funding which is attached to us as a volunteer resource centre; we have that funding that we have made available and understand that risk because of our activities that we do as a volunteer-involving organisation. If I think of the other regions that have similar services to us, if you do not have that income stream then it highlights the fact that volunteer resource centres need to be supported with enough funding to be able to cover those types of costs.

**Mr HEALY:** Brad, how much do you invest in your training? You have just highlighted that training is pretty important.

**Mr Cooper:** We are putting a significant amount of resources into our training budgets. We also put a significant amount of resourcing into getting volunteers to come into our program. You would have read in our submission that we are also addressing those costs of people attending. No-one turns up to training unless we can help, from a volunteer's point of view, cover some of those sorts of. As an organisation we are kicking in between \$200,000 and \$250,000 to run a volunteer resource centre for this region.

**Mr HEALY:** Thanks, Brad, and good work. Keep it up.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** In terms of insurance again, those larger organisations may be aware of the opportunity for risk mitigation by lowering premiums. I would suggest that your average small community not-for-profit really has no idea about it and they may go with the first insurance scheme they come across. Do you have a role in supporting those organisations to obtain insurance or do you have any understanding of how those really small not-for-profits might be able to understand that risk mitigation space?

**Mr Cooper:** We do not have a formal role in terms of supporting the organisations to understand their insurance products and what that coverage might look like. We do support members with information about understanding what good coverage might look like and a general risk view of what it is to be an office-bearer in those sorts of spaces as well. You will run into the scenario where many not-for-profits might find themselves with their first paid employee. Often it will sneak in—it will be the canteen person who needs to be paid—and I am not sure that many organisations are geared up to understand that at that point they are then in WorkCover territory as well, so understanding fully what their risks are is critical.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** But not necessarily informing them that there is a way to reduce premiums by mitigating those risks? I think that is probably a big gap in the knowledge of a lot of organisations.

**Mr Cooper:** From time to time we have certainly had brokers or organisations and service providers that are connected with different parts of the sector present a webinar or be part of a forum—maybe a council forum—where we are talking to a range of providers around those sorts of things as well, so we can help those things to happen.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. That concludes the time for your presentation. Thank you, Mr Cooper, for your submission and for coming before us today.

**Mr Cooper:** Thank you.

**COLLING, Ms Genevieve, Vice-President, Psychological Health, Serving Our People Inc.**

**MATBOULY, Mr Yas, President, Serving Our People Inc.**

**CHAIR:** Would you like to make an opening statement, please, after which the committee will have some questions for you.

**Mr Matbouly:** Genevieve is our vice-president for psychological health and she is also an executive coach with us. She has been with us for the last five years. Thank you for the opportunity for our organisation, Serving Our People, to make a submission to the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland. Volunteering contributes significantly to Queensland's wellbeing yet declining participation, increasing frequency of natural disasters and demographic shifts threaten this sector's sustainability. Despite these trends and challenges, Serving Our People had grown to over 6,000 volunteers when this was submitted—we are now over 7,000 volunteers in the last 12 months—offering a flexible, impactful and enriching experience. We encourage the Queensland government to grow participation by supporting pathways for diverse groups; enhancing youth engagement and fund flexible skills-based opportunities, including micro volunteering; enhancing retention by funding volunteer recognition initiatives, mental health support and stress management programs; increasing engagement by investing in structured training leading to accredited training qualifications, recognising volunteer experience for employment; reducing barriers to volunteering by supporting partnerships, digital tools and funding for volunteer management systems to alleviate administrative burdens; and strengthening disaster responses by improving coordination and logistical support for more efficient volunteer mobilisation in such circumstances. These actions will help strengthen Queensland's volunteer sector, ensuring its sustainability and amplifying its impact. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the committee and the Queensland government to build a stronger and more effective volunteer sector.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your submission. Member for Inala, do you have a question?

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Thank you, Mr Matbouly, it is good to see you again. You obviously have a very successful organisation and a growing number of volunteers, which is something that many organisations are quite envious of. If you had to identify the top three reasons you are able to attract and engage so many volunteers, what would they be?

**Mr Matbouly:** I think the first would be the fact that we are a new-age charity. We have been around for the last five years. We started because of the pandemic and we currently have around 21 humanitarian programs. There is a saying we use in Serving Our People all the time about volunteers—if you don't use them you lose them. We are usually able to give them a really good platform of different activations and different activities. We are very active as a charity. Continuously throughout the year we have different activations, we have different humanitarian programs they can get involved in and we can use their skill set in any way, whatever that may be. We also make it quite easy to volunteer with Serving Our People. It is not a 12-page form or 50 million applications that you need to put through to become and volunteer with us. We follow the process and we make it easy. Also, we use social media a lot. Our apps, for example, help us to make sure that the volunteers get access to different locations and different jobs very quickly.

The other thing is we have a very large young volunteer base. We have schools and we have universities that come and volunteer with us as well on a regular basis, but the majority of our volunteer base is young and that is because I think they can associate with the brand and they also have the opportunity to come and do different things with us. If somebody wants to come and volunteer at our galas then they can do that, if somebody wants to come and volunteer at our cafes they can do that, if somebody wants to come and volunteer at a homeless activation or supermarkets, then they can do that, and so on and so forth. Because of the 21 humanitarian programs we have different things for different people. I would say that that is probably one of our main things.

Then we have developed volunteer programs like VAP, which Genevieve can probably speak to more than I can. We are currently refitting out our headquarters—and a big section of it—to literally look after volunteers, where they can come in as a community together, from table tennis to ice baths, and we give them access to the gym. We have made partnerships with gyms in our community where they can get free gym memberships. There are many different activations and many different programs that we have to offer them to make sure that they are always looked after. We think about it a bit like Google; how would Google treat their employees? We treat our volunteers exactly the same as our employees. We have only five full-time employees at the moment, but we treat them with that same mentality.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Would you suggest that social media is a big driver of the young volunteers? Is social media a way that you are able to recruit volunteers?

**Mr Matbouly:** For sure, 100 per cent. We post everything. We actually wanted to ask permission to take a video or a picture here and post that as well. We really post everything. We have different groups. We have a cafe serve group, which serves the academy as well. We have volunteers who are coming in there, about 10 volunteers a day, to volunteer. At the moment our rate is increasing by about 200 volunteers a month. They are everything to us, our volunteers, and they are part of our team. It is much harder to deal with 7,000-plus volunteers when they are not paid because they do what they want when they want to, but also there is a beauty in that. The beauty in it is that we do not actually judge and we just keep going and that is fine. If they want to come and volunteer at gift wrapping at the end of the year that is okay. If they want to come and volunteer at the supermarket every single day or the furniture store every single day, whatever that may be, then that is okay too.

**Mr HEALY:** It is hard to tell someone what to do when you are not paying them, I agree. It gets a bit awkward. Sorry, Chair.

**CHAIR:** That is all right, member for Cairns.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Youth engagement is every interesting. If you are able to table some methodology that you use to get those young people involved, that would be awesome. My question goes to retaining young people and retaining volunteers per se. What types of strategies do you put in place to get them to keep on coming back?

**Mr Matbouly:** Do you want to touch on the VAP program and then I can answer the question with a few other points?

**Ms Colling:** Absolutely. I think culture is a very big part of it. It is very much that family and community environment. As Yas was talking about, our volunteers are like our employees. We treat both exactly the same. Last year, on the back of the work health and safety legislation being updated around psychosocial hazards—a little bit of an interest area of mine for my PhD—we created an EAP for the small number of employees we have and we actually mirrored it and created probably what is a world first, I think—I do not think there is one out there—volunteer assistance program, which is essentially the same. The primary focus is on prevention and early intervention, so looking after our volunteers in terms of their own mental health, in terms of what they might be coming in with in terms of their personal environment, but also in terms of what they might be dealing with in terms of volunteering with us and what they might be confronted with. Our managers are currently going through training in terms of looking after the volunteers whom they manage and then we also do spot training, depending on the location, depending on what might be coming in, which is something we cannot control, but how do we mitigate that, how do we work with volunteers to equip them with the right psychological skills to support their mental wellbeing whilst they are here.

Also, as Yas mentioned, we have a lot of other activities and things that go on during the year and also in terms of our headquarters which is being fitted out with other extracurricular or fun activities that allow them to engage with each other. Occasionally, there are things like barbecues or catch-ups to allow people to really connect and get to know each other as well. There are a number of different things like that, which I am not sure other organisations are doing, and it does make it unique. It allows them to feel like they belong somewhere and encourages them to come back. That is probably the prime area for me.

**CHAIR:** Ms Colling, you are a successful organisation bucking the trend in increasing your volunteer numbers. Can you attribute some of that to the volunteer aid program and surrounding the volunteer that you are talking about there?

**Ms Colling:** Probably. We probably already had it since SOP started and we have grown it, but what I have tried to do is put a little more structure around it, something a little more formal so as we grow, ideally grow well beyond Gold Coast and Queensland. We have that blueprint. Effectively, when another entity, when another humanitarian aid organisation within SOP, in another location is set up, that becomes part of that blueprint and ethos of what SOP is. Regardless of whether Yas or I or any of the original team are physically present, that becomes part of the ethos of SOP. It is more of a structure now to formalise what we already had anyway.

**Mr Matbouly:** I think the other point, if you do not mind me saying, is that our VP of volunteer engagement is a 24-year-old. I think young people are able to attract young people. That is one big aspect of it too. For example—we have never had this before—at our last fundraiser we had about 120 volunteers from Bond University. That is increasing every single month in different activities and different things that we are doing. That is one aspect of it.

The other thing is we post a lot. We like to post everything that we do. People post about some great things in the world. We like to post about service. We like to post about how we can help other humans. We like to post about how you could be a better human in many different ways. We think that should also be promoted. At the same time, we are nondenominational. We welcome all religions and all faiths. We have people from every single religion and faith working with us continuously. I think a couple of these points help volunteers when they come in and they volunteer with us. Plus, obviously, they get free gym memberships, free ice baths. It is a lifestyle. We are offering them a little bit of belonging and a lifestyle. We have seen a very large number of volunteers who are on work and travel visas. We have a very large number of those who are coming in in different areas. Brisbane is different from the Gold Coast and the Gold Coast is different from what we see in the Northern Rivers or Sydney and Logan. On the Gold Coast, for example, we have a very large number of work and travel visa volunteers and they want to learn a skill and we offer that skill for free. They come in and volunteer in very large numbers every single week.

**Ms PEASE:** Thank you very much for coming in and, congratulations, you have been very successful. It is an interesting trend that your volunteer numbers are increasing. You mentioned in your opening statement about micro volunteering. Can you tell me what that is, please?

**Mr Matbouly:** Sure. I would like to come back to you on notice and send you some more information on that, if that is okay?

**Ms PEASE:** Sure. The other question that I am interested in is the type of volunteers you are getting. You mentioned those on the work and holiday visas. Do you find that you are getting professionals who are coming through—younger professionals? Is that the type of volunteer you are getting? Do you have data on the types of volunteer you are getting? You said you had people from Bond University. Are they more that younger cohort who are wanting to get something out of volunteering? You talk about the lovely ice baths and all of that, but young people want to see a response immediately. That is my understanding of volunteering. Do you have any demographic information particularly around your volunteers?

**Mr Matbouly:** Of course. We can share that as well. Yes, we do. We work a lot with what we call our CSR programs with corporates. It is something that we really like to work a lot with. Our target is to have one corporate come to SOP a day, which we do not have yet.

**Ms PEASE:** You have a lot of corporates who give their staff to volunteer?

**Mr Matbouly:** One hundred per cent, yes; correct. At the moment, we are getting about one corporate every two weeks. Our aim is to have a corporate a day come to Serving Our People in whichever location that may be. We are very active in that sense. When corporates come and volunteer with us we are seeing a couple of great things come out of that. Apart from the fact that the young professionals or the professionals within those organisations get fulfilled on many different levels, we are seeing the organisation itself come to support the charity a lot more, both from a financial perspective and support in whatever we need. At the moment, we are working with a property developer on a housing application that we are putting through. They came in as volunteers in exactly that same way.

**Ms PEASE:** Do you find that people who are coming to you have tried volunteering elsewhere and they have been unhappy with that experience?

**Mr Matbouly:** I would say the older volunteers, yes. Some of the younger volunteers are trying it for the first time, but the older volunteers have definitely been in other places and they like where we are. We are also working on making sure that we do not lose volunteers, but it does happen. If somebody has a bad experience at the supermarket with a recipient and they do not want to come back again then obviously we have measures in place for that, but it does happen with us as well. We are trying to make sure the number coming in and the retention is so much larger than the people leaving us. That is obviously with all the different programs and everything we have put in place. Since our inception, our volunteers have been the heart of serving our people.

**Ms PEASE:** It is tremendous and great work, in a time when there is so much competition in the areas you are operating in for volunteers, that you are being so successful. Congratulations.

**Mr BAILLIE:** Congratulations. It is really good to hear that you are experiencing so much growth. Did you say you have five FTEs as an organisation? When you are onboarding 200-odd volunteers a month, how are you getting through that? What does that process look like?

**Mr Matbouly:** We have 130 volunteers working for us every month. They are full-time and part-time volunteers but they are almost like employees. We only have five paid.



**Mr BAILLIE:** So not all of your volunteers are out on the 21 humanitarian programs; a lot of your volunteers are also helping you run the organisation?

**Mr Matbouly:** Correct. For example, our head of volunteer engagement—his name is Ryan Osborne—has a team of six people working for him. He is paid, but then the other people are not. They are all working with him on rostering: some of them are rostering at the supermarkets, some of them are rostering at the cafes, some of them are rostering at the warehouse and some are working at the depot—Logan, Brisbane and so on. They are working on rostering continuously at different locations. Then Ryan, Genevieve and I, for example, will work together, and with our head of people and culture, Cleo, on these different volunteer incentives and volunteer wellbeing programs that we have to make sure they are continuously benefiting from some of the best.

We went and visited a couple of really great corporations. One of them is here on the Gold Coast called Hismile. They are a couple of guys, about 22 years old, who ended up building pretty much a multibillion dollar toothpaste company. They are across the world. One of the things we learned when we went to visit their office was how well they look after their staff. They have been able to grow that organisation from the Gold Coast to now a global entity, and they have had many different offers from some of the larger corporates in the world to actually buy them for billions of dollars. They have done a really good job. We went there and we learned a lot from some of the things they were doing there, and we wanted to implement all of that back into our volunteers and our team. I know they spent a lot of money to get to that and to learn from that and to learn how to do these things. We are copying a lot of that from them for free. We are learning with our team as well how we can make it better to suit our volunteers specifically.

**Mr BAILLIE:** On the volunteer engagement, you have mentioned posting everything you do. Do you have your own app that your volunteers as an organisation use that you post to, or are you talking generic social media platforms?

**Mr Matbouly:** We are continuously recruiting through different avenues—everything from Seek to FreddyMatch to Volunteering Gold Coast. We are continuously looking for volunteers. We also have, on a regular basis, public activations like at malls. For example, we have a partnership with Pacific Fair, Indooroopilly Shopping Centre and many others across Queensland. We are continuously in front of people trying to recruit them to become our volunteers and we are also telling them more about what serving our people does.

We started with a simple WhatsApp group. Now we have multiple WhatsApp groups. In the multiple WhatsApp groups there are close to 3,000 people, and these are people who are on all the time. I can probably show you in one of our WhatsApp groups, if you want to see, what happens right now and the different posts that everybody is making. It will just give you an idea. I do not know how you could properly record that into the proceedings, but at least I can show you and then it gives you an idea.

**Mr BAILLIE:** You post on an internal platform as such to share what everyone is doing?

**Mr Matbouly:** Correct, and it is continuous; it is all the time. For example, as I was saying, if we could take a picture and now I posted it, they would know exactly what we are doing. I think the other thing is that we are a high-profile charity. We are in the media a lot, and a lot of the things we do are continuously in the media in different areas. That also gives encouragement to a lot of volunteers to come in and volunteer with us. Obviously they see us in the news and they see the great work we are doing. We are very hands-on; we are a grassroots charity. Everything we do they see straightaway, so they tell their friends or they tell other people.

**CHAIR:** Would you mind taking some screenshots and forwarding them to the committee for us to look at?

**Mr Matbouly:** Of course, with pleasure.

**CHAIR:** That would be great. Thank you very much. That concludes the time for your appearance before us today. Thank you very much for serving our people, for coming before us and for your submission. I gather there are two questions that you have taken on notice. Would you be prepared to get the answers to us by 14 August, please?

**Mr Matbouly:** Of course.

**CHAIR:** The secretary can send you some details of what was agreed. Thank you very much.

**GILLESPIE, Mr Alan, Private capacity**

**GREENFIELD, Ms Joanne, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** I now welcome Mr Alan Gillespie and Ms Joanne Greenfield. I understand you are both retired officers of the rural fire brigade in Queensland; is that right?

**Mr Gillespie:** That is correct, Mr Chair. I am certainly retired. Ms Greenfield is now employed at the federal level with federal Health.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your appearance today. I invite you to make an opening statement and we will have some questions for you.

**Mr Gillespie:** Good morning, Chair—it is good to see you back in the seat—and committee members. I thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today along with my colleague Joanne Greenfield. My interest is in volunteering with the Rural Fire Service. You already have a copy of my submission to the inquiry, so I will not re-prosecute its contents. What I would like to do is make three broad statements, if I may, and then I will hand over to Joanne for her presentation.

Firstly, the history and culture of the Rural Fire Service has always been steeped in community. By and large, each rural fire brigade reflects the disparate needs and expectations of their local community since it is from that community their membership is drawn. How RFSQ operates in the north, south, east and west of our state is often very different because community needs and expectations are different. Over the last 30-odd years, community has been eroded from the RFS ethos until, with the creation of QFD, the centralised control of volunteers became complete. It used to be a big family; it has not been for very many years. Volunteers have become unsalaried public servants and subjected to Public Service style doctrine and have become a nameless serial number in a bureaucratic computer.

Secondly, RFSQ needs to be a standalone statutory authority, run by a board drawn from rural and regional areas of the state whose members bring together experiences and talents suited to providing relevant and practical governance of a community-based and community focused volunteer Rural Fire Service—a board that understands what it means to volunteer and understands the need for maximum support with a minimum amount of red tape.

Lastly, RFSQ desperately needs inspirational leadership with a CEO, commissioner, chief officer—whatever it ends up being—of its own who has walked a mile in the shoes of volunteer firefighters, who understands and respects RFS culture and history, and who has a high level of experience and credibility in the science and practical application of bushfire prevention and suppression.

They are the statements I would like to make, Mr Chair. I will now introduce my colleague Joanne Greenfield and will explain her background, because Joanne did not make a submission prior, just to give you a bit of an understanding of who she is and the credibility she brings to what she is about to talk about. She has over 25 years senior executive leadership experience. She started her career in the UK in their National Health Service as a nurse. She went on to become a senior healthcare leader in London, working across emergency departments, intensive care units and the helicopter emergency services. She was an incident controller for a range of mass trauma events, from terrorist bombings to road and rail crashes. She then headed overseas for 15 years, working in countries such as Afghanistan and Zimbabwe for the World Health Organization and UNICEF, with a focus on community resilience. Joanne led the disaster preparedness, response and recovery operations for famines, wars, Ebola and other disease outbreaks, volcano eruptions, earthquakes, cyclones—the list goes on. These were major events. She led food and health services for the biggest refugee camps in the world.

In coming to Australia, Joanne worked for AusAID within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, leading international programs and Australia's response to major disasters across the world. Joanne joined what was then Queensland Fire and Emergency Services in 2019 where she was the first female assistant commissioner and responsible for leading disaster responses at state level.

The role that I know her most in is that of chief officer of the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service—that is at deputy commissioner level—where she was leading 30,000 volunteers. She was the state commander of operations during major events such as the 2019 Black Summer bushfires, which we can all remember, floods, cyclones and COVID.

Joanne has now returned to the health sector, joining the Australian Digital Health Agency as the chief operating officer of this national agency. She has a very unique and unusual level of experience right across some of the world's biggest disaster areas, and that is what she will bring into her presentation to the committee. Mr Chair, may I now introduce Joanne.

**CHAIR:** Ms Greenfield, thank you for your appearance. Would you like to address the committee?

**Ms Greenfield:** Thank you, Mr Chair, and thank you for allowing me to come today. I would like to read from a prepared statement and, if it is okay with you, I would like to submit that statement to the committee.

**CHAIR:** Please go ahead.

**Ms Greenfield:** Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to acknowledge our incredible volunteers across Queensland. They are the best of us. Mr Gillespie mentioned the 2019 fires. You may remember at the time there was a call from the Commonwealth to make payments to volunteers. We had a handful of volunteers in Queensland who took up those payments. Around the country thousands did, so I believe our volunteers in Queensland are even more special than those around the country. They were not interested in payments; they were interested in delivering for their community.

I am sure you have heard from many about the contribution of volunteers to our community cohesion, our economy and productivity. The Productivity Commission produced a big report a few years ago and they estimated the overall contribution from volunteers in Queensland over a 10-year period was valued at about \$50 billion to our economy.

As you have heard, we do have some challenges in the volunteer sector in Queensland. Volunteers are often disadvantaged through the structural and cultural issues that they face every day, making it harder for them to volunteer and to be retained as a volunteer. That stems from policy, legislation and governance arrangements that are often put in place that disadvantage those volunteers. As an example, if we look at the emergency management levy at the moment, the Rural Fire Service will receive, on my estimate, about 12 per cent of that. Despite being double the number of brigades, double the number of stations and overall six times the number of units to their paid colleagues, they are receiving less than 12 per cent of the overall budget.

There are cultural challenges in terms of putting in place contemporary models. As Alan said, it morphs into a Public Service model which restrains volunteers—and often they are financially disadvantaged, having to pay for their own training, their own tea and coffee—in actually trying to get to do their volunteering. We know that their worth is incalculable.

What does 'good' look like? This comes from my experience over many years but also from working with colleagues like Alan over the last few years. We need a flexible and spontaneous volunteering model that is supported by the appropriate legislation and the appropriate policy that enables the appropriate structural set-ups. As Alan described, the best structures that we see that succeed around the world are volunteer-led and community-driven. They are really focused on the fact that volunteers are part of our community and are volunteer-led in terms of the structural set-up.

We need to respond to the changing demographic. We just had a wonderful example of how we can attract young volunteers through technological innovations as well as the environment that volunteers work in. As Alan said, it is very different in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Burketown brigade is very different to the Coomera volunteer brigade that we see on the South-East Queensland coast. We need to make our models appropriate for the community they are in.

We need to be proportionate with our policy and our risk, not tie people up with red tape. Over training demands, over compliance demands—all of these things push volunteers away. We need to look at the risk we hold versus the risk we put on to individuals. We are tying people up in models that again make it impossible for them to continue volunteering.

We need to recognise the prior skill sets. I am sure Alan has many anecdotes, but I have sat in a room with a commercial pilot next to me, a trauma doctor, a canefarmer—all of these people with wonderful skill sets that they are bringing to the table. The pilot will ask them, 'Why do you volunteer with drones? What skill set do you have?' The canefarmer will ask, 'What do you know about the landscape?' We are not recognising the skill set and maximising the use of that skill set. We need to look at the recognition and incentives. What motivates volunteers? It is not the same as paid staff. It is really about the community support and the community recognition, and that intergenerational and cross-cultural model works very well.

We have to be inclusive. We have to celebrate our volunteers but we have to look at models as well that attract our non-English-speaking people or those who predominantly speak another language at home, as well as our First Nations people. The Burketown brigade I just spoke about is

a great example of that. When Burketown flooded three years ago it was our First Nations brigade that was on the ground. They never left. They were the ones who did the wash outs. They were the ones who kept people safe. They did not need helicopters flying in. They were already there as part of the community and resilient.

Being technology enabled is really important—having digital platforms. At the moment we are making people use very old-fashioned platforms that are not enabling. There is not a one-stop shop, a digital volunteering hub, to help people into the volunteer world. Our legislation is clunky. I am not sure it is as good as it can be to protect and support our volunteers, so we do need to look at our legislation models. Our legislation models should not undermine a community-led approach as we have seen in recent years.

One of the things that we also talk about is funding. Alan has called for a separate RFS. Having worked in the department for a number of years, I believe that is affordable within EML. I believe that it is feasible within EML but the structures RFS already has would stand alone. With the right support from the corporate body to support them, it could be volunteer led and volunteer driven and be a much healthier organisation. I will stop there, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Thank you for presenting today. If you had to choose one strategy or intervention that government could make that would improve not only the number of volunteers that you are able to recruit but also the retention of volunteers, what would that one strategy be?

**Mr Gillespie:** I want to quote Tom Dawson, the former assistant commissioner for the RFS. Tom had a volunteer background initially but when he came into RFS he really embraced it. Tom's attitude was that we just need to get out of the road and let them get on with the job. Your specific question was around government. We need to give them a framework that is volunteer driven, volunteer friendly. We need to have them tell us what it is that they need to deliver locally. Then we need to get out of the road. We need to give them the support that they need but stop hitting them with Public Service doctrine and bureaucracy and reports. We need to just let them get on with it.

Most people join a rural fire brigade—it is a little bit different here on the coast. Rural fire volunteers started 75-odd years ago with neighbour helping neighbour. It was about: 'I'll come and help you when you have a fire because you'll come and help me when I have a fire.' It was really a necessity that they did it. All they want to do is get in, fight the fire, save each other's properties and then go back and do their job. In my case, it is looking after cattle or looking after your crops or whatever. They are the things that really drive the majority of brigades. The one thing that the government can get the department to do is to get out of the road of volunteers and let them get on with the job.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Joanne, you were talking about legislation being 'clunky'. Could you elaborate and give some details?

**Ms Greenfield:** I think the current legislation for emergency services volunteers, particularly the RFS, has taken away the community ownership. Even if you look at the funding, it has drawn the funding into a central pot. It has made the powers on the ground delegated from the top very difficult to implement. If you are actually at a fire ground, the number of things you have to check before you can start putting the fire out—to make sure the first officer is there, to make sure this is there, to make sure that is there—I believe is slowing down their ability to do what they are there to do which is why they volunteered in the first place.

As Alan said, we need the legislative framework there to offer the protections. That is absolutely important, but it needs to enable the volunteer-led model, whereas at the moment it has flipped it on its head. It has enabled a bureaucratic-led model that is holding volunteers back.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** You are saying that it would be far more prudent to have a grassroots up model.

**Ms Greenfield:** Absolutely, yes.

**Mr HEALY:** Thanks very much. I like the very direct opening statement clarifying things. Alan, you have 45 years of experience in the Rural Fire Service. Was there a particular time when you thought it was managed a lot better? I will use an often prosecuted term, which is not a bad thing. When did bureaucracy creep in or perhaps some unsound practices may have crept in which you have noticed. Was there a time when it was running more efficiently? I remember joining the local bushfire brigade where I grew up on the northern beaches in Sydney. In the late seventies there was a fire up there and I stayed on. It was a good gig. It was different. We had lots of beers after the fire. I am sure things have changed a little bit. Can you name a time when it was better and what made it better?

**Mr Gillespie:** I can relate to what you are talking about.

**Mr HEALY:** That is why I thought I would throw that in.

**Mr Gillespie:** I joined my local rural fire brigade—the Jimboomba bushfire brigade does not exist anymore—along similar lines. I do not think there was a specific time. I think it relates to people and how an organisation is led. I can think of three outstanding leaders of RFS. I go back to the board days prior to 1990. We had a head of the rural fires board come in and he was absolutely inspirational. He had a vision. He knew how to communicate. He knew how to talk to people. He understood how volunteers operate. He understood the culture of the organisation. He understood why they existed. He understood it was about neighbour helping neighbour. He understood how each community was different and that the community set the standard because they were all members of the brigade.

I have seen that relatively recently in two other outstanding leaders. One is sitting beside me who understood that and who faced enormous difficulties and challenges because 35 years ago someone decided we should put red and yellow trucks together. As one of your ministerial colleagues said to me recently, it just does not work that way. It just does not work. We always look back at the past. I can remember as a kid when you talked to all the older fellas and they said 'Back in my day.' You would go, 'Yeah, righto.' Now I find myself doing that a little bit now. I put myself up.

**Mr HEALY:** You are too young. Alan.

**Mr Gillespie:** Thank you for that. It is not about moving forward. We all move forward. Everything progresses, but you have to progress in the right way. They are trying to make us a department and are enforcing Public Service regulations. Under these new corporate rules of funding, I have volunteers saying to me, 'We can't go and buy tea and coffee to have in the station so that when we come in on a Saturday morning to clean the trucks and clean the station we can have a cuppa,' or 'We can't go out and buy some pizzas.' That is just appalling. It demonstrates very clearly that the leadership have it wrong. They do not understand what the RFS is all about.

We have had 35 years of this experiment and they have not got it right yet. It has to go back to having a board of local people running it. There are a whole range of things we have to do. OH&S back then was not as critical as it is now. We need to keep our people safe, absolutely, but there are ways of doing that that work within the volunteer structure. Currently what is being pushed on our volunteers is not working which is why they are leaving in droves.

**Mr HEALY:** That is a good point. The purpose of this is that when governments are spending hundreds of millions of dollars it is about putting that infrastructure in place. In my eight years as an elected member of parliament, I can guarantee you that it is about having the right people in the right places. I could not agree more. Thanks for your input.

**CHAIR:** That rounds up the time for your presentation here today. Thank you very much for coming before us.

**Ms PEASE:** Are we going to table their submission?

**CHAIR:** Yes. Ms Greenfield, rather than table it, could I suggest with the committee's agreement that it might be best to provide it to the committee for the purpose of helping the Hansard reporters with their transcript? I know whenever we speak they always appreciate getting a copy of the speech to make sure that any mispronunciations can be understood. Thank you. We now have a period of 20 minutes for private individuals to come before us as witnesses. I believe we have a list of witnesses who have registered.

**BABA, Dr Hussain, Founder, Multicultural Social Network Inc.**

**CANNING, Ms Sinead, Senior Policy Officer, Community Services, Queensland Council of Social Service**

**EVANS, Ms Leanne, Volunteer, Gold Coast Mid-Week Ladies Tennis Association**

**FITZGERALD, Mr Shawn, Volunteer Impact and Engagement Manager, parkrun Australia**

**CHAIR:** Welcome and thank you for appearing before us. I will ask each of you to make a very brief opening statement and then the committee will have questions for you either individually or collectively. Mr Fitzgerald, would you like to lead off?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** Thank you for the invitation to speak today. My name is Shawn Fitzgerald. I am the Volunteer Impact and Engagement Manager for parkrun Australia. Parkrun, for those who are not aware, is a five-kilometre free timed run, walk or jog in a park or in a particular location on a Saturday morning. We also offer junior parkrun for participants between four and 14 in locations on a Sunday morning, and that is two kilometres.

Without volunteers, parkrun would not function. There are over 100 events in Queensland alone. There are over 2,000 worldwide. Within parkrun Australia, there are about 600 events, but that includes New Zealand, Japan, Singapore and Malaysia. We try to break down as many barriers as possible with respect to volunteering because we try to make volunteering as easy as possible to get into because we understand the positive nature of volunteering and the benefits that it can provide people. We try to make the case for people to promote volunteering as positively as possible. We have positions available as rosters are not full with regard to people wanting to perform roles, but we are also not turning away volunteers because we have seen evidence in the past where people have been turned away and it has quite a negative impact on them, so we try to work from those positions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Fitzgerald. Ms Canning, would you like to introduce yourself and give us a brief opening statement?

**Ms Canning:** Thank you for the opportunity to appear in front of you today to speak about the importance of volunteering in Queensland's community sector.

The Queensland Council of Social Service is Queensland's peak body for the social service sector. Our vision is to achieve equality, opportunity and wellbeing for all Queenslanders. QCROSS represents organisations from the largest employer group in Queensland, with almost 220,000 people employed in more than 7,000 charities across the state. The sector's essential work is supported by more than 413,000 volunteers.

Each year QCROSS issues a State of the Sector report, which seeks to identify and understand emerging issues that impact on service delivery. The report's findings are underpinned by both qualitative and quantitative data from our face-to-face consultations at QCROSS town halls, which last year took place in Brisbane, Logan, Toowoomba, Gympie, Moreton Bay, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Mount Isa, Townsville and Cairns, with a total of 262 community sector representatives. The majority of these attendees came from regional areas. Secondly, we use the findings from our annual community service sector survey, to which we received 1,307 responses last year. There are some quite relevant findings regarding volunteering in the community sector.

Firstly, community organisations rely heavily on volunteers to ensure service delivery can meet community needs. In 2024, community organisations reported that: just seven per cent of them were able to meet demand, with more than half reporting their service could never, rarely or only sometimes meet demand; a third of organisations indicated they rely heavily on volunteers to deliver services; 20 per cent of organisations reported they use less qualified staff for volunteers in order to meet demand; and 49 per cent of organisations reported that the costs associated with managing volunteers are unfunded, with 28 per cent reporting being underfunded to complete this work and just eight per cent reporting they are adequately funded to take on this work. As per our submission to the committee, in many cases community organisations rely on volunteers to respond to issues they may not have appropriate training for. This raises additional risks for community organisations such as the safety and wellbeing of their volunteer workforce.

We made four recommendations in our submission: establish a cost-of-volunteering reimbursement fund to assist volunteers cover out-of-pocket expenses that arise from volunteer activities; establish and provide ongoing operational funding for an integrated network of regional

volunteering hubs; conduct an internal feasibility study within government to examine the possibility of a statewide volunteer insurance framework; and QCOSS urges the Queensland government to continue implementation of the social service procurement principles.

In 2024 QCOSS outlined a series of procurement related reform priorities identified by the community sector that would strengthen its sustainability and improve efficiency and effectiveness as well as an organisation's ability to promote volunteering and provide appropriate volunteering supports. These included: providing longer contract agreement terms; appropriate lead-in time for contract renewals; and providing grants that reflect the real cost of delivering quality services. These principles will be a key enabler of productivity across the social service sector. QCOSS posits that the implementation of the principles will result in better continuity of staff and services and, therefore, more stability and support for volunteers who support the crucial work the community sector undertakes.

**CHAIR:** Dr Baba, would you like to make a very brief statement, please.

**Dr Baba:** Yes. I am the president of Multicultural Social Network. It has been operating for the last six years. It is not a volunteering organisation, per se. Why I say that is that my volunteers are the donors themselves. It is a kind of a CSO thing. We are not restricted to the Gold Coast. We were there for the New South Wales bushfire, the Brisbane floods and the Lismore flood.

We provide meals and personal hygiene products. Our volunteers support themselves because we do not depend on government grants or fundraising. It is all self-funded. Almost all of them are from the CALD community, the culturally and linguistically diverse community. We have been doing this on the Gold Coast on a weekly basis. We provide 200 to 300 meals per week. We work together with other charity organisations like the St John Crisis Centre and Centacare. We are a middleman. We get stuff from our donors and then distribute to these organisations. It is all transparent. It is all in our Facebook page. Whatever we do, we want to be transparent.

My submission relates to the under-representation of CALD members in community volunteering. To be more specific, almost 30 per cent of Queenslanders are from a CALD background. That works out to about 1.5 million people. They are really under-represented in community volunteering such as SES and QPS or even volunteering in volunteer organisations, so they have been under-represented. This is an area we have to look into. Yes, post COVID there has been a drop in volunteers, but there is an increase in members from the CALD community. Between 2022 and 2024 we had a 3,000-member increase in the CALD community. This is an area the committee has to look into: how can we encourage members of the CALD community to get engaged in wider community activities? Queensland being a multicultural state, it will also help with social cohesion. We have to look into the barriers and how to get more people involved in community service.

**CHAIR:** Ms Evans, would you like to make a brief opening statement? Then we will have some questions for everyone.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you this morning. No doubt you will have read my submission containing multiple recommendations. I am the vice-president of a local tennis club and the chair of the Gold Coast Regional (Tennis) Assembly. We have about 28 tennis clubs on the Gold Coast. I just wanted to highlight where I started with this process.

For many of our higher level sanctioned tennis events we have to pay to bring in tennis officials from outside the region. One of our highest credentialed tennis officials retired earlier this year after 15 years of service. Unfortunately, we do not have an immediate successor. One of the key points I would like to bring up this morning is that, as a key delivery partner of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, I would love to see the Queensland government leverage that role to ensure that regional Queensland benefits from a comprehensive social legacy, especially relating to sports officiating and volunteering. That legacy will bring both economic and high-performance benefits, because many regional events have to pay to bring in officials. That is why I think the government's role as a key delivery partner can be leveraged.

You have heard about the decline in volunteering across the state. In the case of sport, the federal government's data reveals that proportionately—no surprise—there are fewer sports volunteers and officials in Queensland than Australia. I believe the 2032 games offer a real incentive to attract a new generation of volunteers and officials, though many of you would be aware there is a long runway needed, often between six and eight years, to ensure high-level officials can be trained and gain the experience necessary to volunteer at the games.

Many sporting organisations are already recruiting officials with 2032 in mind. I have made some suggestions in my submission as to what can be done in the short term, including a needs analysis and developing implementation plans. With that in mind, I have been working closely with the council and Volunteering Gold Coast to advocate for this issue. I would love to see regional quotas established for technical officials and sport-specific volunteers.

My other key point is that I co-founded a community foundation on the Sunshine Coast: the Buderim Foundation. It provides funding to local community organisations, including sporting organisations, especially those that totally rely on volunteers. I think your colleague the member for Buderim would be able to confirm the impact of the Buderim Foundation, which has now distributed \$940,000 in grants to 105 community organisations from 2008.

A small investment in feasibility studies into establishing community foundations across Queensland would pay enormous dividends. I believe a key hook for that potentially is the Olympic torch relay. There is much energy and resources put into planning for the relay but there is actually no legacy afterwards. That was a concept I floated at a recent sports strategy meeting which the Minister for Sport attended. I am happy to take questions.

**Mrs NIGHTINGALE:** Thank you to everyone for appearing and for your submissions. My first question goes to Dr Baba. I represent a very culturally diverse electorate and I understand the challenges there are sometimes in engaging CALD communities in volunteering. Do you have one strategy that you would consider to be the strongest in terms of helping government to encourage and recruit from within the CALD community?

**Dr Baba:** Yes. The people I work with are very much involved in their own communities. They are quite active. It could be a religious organisation or their own national organisation. They do very well. They are not reluctant to do any volunteering work. They are prepared to do it.

I think it should be from the other side, from the government. They need to go and approach these communities and promote engaging in volunteering. I am presently doing another PhD specifically on engaging CALD members in intercommunity volunteering. For example, this is a concept some of the members said. Let's take the SES. If you google 'SES' you see the images, but you hardly see anybody from a CALD background. It relates to: 'We think it is not for us; it is for them.' That is the perception. This is where the government has to really look into it.

I am also the secretary of an Islamic organisation on the Gold Coast. We are 15,000 members from 80 different countries. For example, they could come to the mosque. It is very close to here. Organise a day and we will explain to them what needs to be done. English is not a problem with them because, when we mention CALD communities, we are first generation and not everyone may speak English, but the second generation was born here. Their parents must be speaking some language other than English, so they speak fluent English. It is not a handicap. There are other reasons as well. This is where the government needs to come and meet the people and talk to them about what puts them off from engaging in community volunteering.

**CHAIR:** Mr Fitzgerald, what sort of insurance landscape does your organisation parkrun face in public places, where participants freely join in to go for a run? Have you any experience that would be of interest to the committee?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** I will respectfully take that on notice. I know the broad outlay of insurance that parkrun Australia has, but I want to take that on notice and provide a fuller response for you, if that is all right.

**CHAIR:** Yes, that is fine. Does parkrun Australia maintain insurance?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Are you happy to provide that to the secretariat by 14 August?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** Yes, I am very happy to do that.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Member for Lytton?

**Ms PEASE:** I do not really have a question. I am sorry that we do not have a great deal of time to hear from you all, but thank you very much for everything you do. I volunteer with parkrun. We have two parkruns in my electorate and it was very easy to onboard as a volunteer. It was a very easy process. QCOS, thank you for everything you do. It would be great to hear some more from you, I think. Dr Baba, it is great to see you. Ms Evans, I would love to talk to you about the Buderim Foundation. We have a foundation in my electorate that I started, so it is lovely to talk to you. Thank you for coming today.



**Mr BOOTHMAN:** Ms Evans, I think your submission wins for word count, so you have done a very good job with that. You mentioned real incentives for young people. Could you elaborate on that?

**Ms Evans:** I have a couple of ideas. In terms of incentives, I think many organisations in their submissions, including mine, recommended that the state government consider working with the council on federal financial relations with respect to tax deductibility for volunteer expenses. I understand that my colleague Brad from Volunteering Gold Coast has offered another range of incentives which could be, for example, reduced car registration, where the state government is responsible for costs which potentially could be discounted for volunteers.

In terms of working with young people, I can only echo what has previously been said. We have a program for young court supervisors so we are building a transition pathway, if you like. I think it is really important to engage young people at their level to provide some basic incentives like merchandise or tickets to the Brisbane International, for example. I think it is a wraparound service and just providing that education and support. One of our marketing hooks potentially is: 'If you enrol in this program, you could be an official at 2032.' I think it is a matter of capitalising on tangible benefits as well as a longer pathway.

**CHAIR:** We have reached the end of the time for your appearance here today. Thank you, Mr Fitzgerald, Ms Canning, Dr Baba and Ms Evans, for your appearance. I extend thanks to everybody who has participated and come to see today's proceedings. It is great to have you here. We were coming to the Gold Coast quite some time ago but a certain cyclone intervened. It is great to finally make it here.

I would like to thank our Hansard reporters, Tina and Melissa, and our committee staff, Kylie—who actually is the secretary for this inquiry—and Zac. It is great to have your help. You do so much work to make this happen behind the scenes, so thank you very much. A transcript of the proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I remind anybody who has taken a question on notice that we would appreciate your response to us by 14 August, please. I declare these proceedings closed.

**The committee adjourned at 12.01 pm.**