



LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Members present:

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

Staff present:

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

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 24 March 2025

DALBY

MONDAY, 24 MARCH 2025

The committee met at 10.30 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this first public hearing for the committee's inquiry into volunteering in Queensland. My name is James Lister, the member for Southern Downs. I chair this committee. With me today are: Margie Nightingale, the member for Inala and deputy chair; Adam Baillie, member for Townsville; Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore; and Joan Pease, the member for Lytton.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to parliament's rules and standing orders. Only committee members and invited witnesses may participate in the 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. In line with general rules relating to parliamentary proceedings, I remind witnesses to please refrain from using unparliamentary language such as swearing or offensive terms, even if you are directly quoting from material or someone else.

These proceedings are being transcribed by Hansard and I thank our Hansard reporters for coming from Brisbane to do that. Media may be present. I note the ABC is with us. The media is subject to the committee's media rules at my direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. Please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode.

BOURNE, Ms Kylie, Deputy Mayor, Western Downs Regional Council

CHAIR: Good morning, Councillor Bourne. I invite to make an opening statement and afterwards we will have some questions for you.

Ms Bourne: Certainly. It is wonderful to be here this morning and have this opportunity to speak in regards to our discussion paper that we presented as part of the review into volunteering—certainly a topic that is pertinent in every community and probably never more so in small regional communities as well. In fact, it is a topic that comes up quite regularly with me, as a councillor moving through our region, to understand the challenges that are faced by our community organisations and the impacts of volunteering that we are seeing right across the board. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here this morning.

CHAIR: That is fine. We have been looking forward to hearing from you. You are the first cab off the rank as a submitter, so lucky you.

Ms Bourne: Lucky me. I get to be the guinea pig this morning.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Thank you for your submission and thank you for being here today. It was great to read that your council is beating the numbers across the country with a higher than average rate of volunteering, so well done to you. What do you put that down to?

Ms Bourne: As I was saying in my opening comments, we see challenges in smaller regional communities. I also believe that small regional communities are quite connected. They are very passionate, dedicated and committed to making a difference in their communities. We have a saying here on the Western Downs: it is the people that make it. That is certainly very true. At a grassroots level, it is volunteers right across our nation who are the very fabric of keeping community connected. Without knowing at a granular level what that is—the reason we have perhaps a higher uptake of volunteers—I would suggest it is probably that connected community piece that is pretty critical in small communities particularly.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: I think it is probably a bit similar in a lot of smaller communities where it is easier for people to get to know one another and to know what is going on. That does make some sense.

Ms Bourne: Taking a step away from that community piece, as a council we have also developed a volunteer program ourselves and have a number of volunteers who are very valuable to the organisation and community through our visitor information centres, libraries, assisting at events

and with our parks and gardens. There is some diversity even at a local government level and we draw on community to keep connected with community and deliver some of those services as well. We have a lovely little community, Wandoan, to the very north of our region. A project driven by community was to develop a garden in honour and remembrance of the soldier settlers. As part of that soldier settler project, there are roses right the way through the pathway. The community actually come forward and assist our parks and gardens team to care for those roses. That is one example of a small community taking on ownership, as well as connectedness around something that keeps their community active, vibrant and attractive for visitors.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Following on from the question that the member for Inala was asking, obviously you have smaller communities, and in certain parts of Queensland we have larger communities, like Townsville, with the member over here, and in my area down the Gold Coast where it is just a large city these days. You are talking about interconnected communities and how they are working together. How do we get young people involved? What is your suggestion when it comes to young people? Obviously, we have retirees involved, but how do we get young people involved?

Ms Bourne: It is interesting. I have young people myself. I have a 21-year-old and a 23-year-old of my own and they have come from a family where volunteering is very much engrained. Before I became a candidate on council or a member of council, at my peak I was on nine committees. In fact, my children told me that I should just take my swag and camp at the local museum and, 'That will do, Mum. You love that more than us.' With regard to young people these days, it is a bit of a conundrum. We have never been more connected yet more disconnected. I think that sense of belonging is an interesting one for young people. The way they interact is very different these days.

Admittedly, the team have helped to pull our submission together, and I note they have mentioned specifically incentives around young people. The Duke of Edinburgh Program, for instance, is an absolutely amazing program, but I think some of those cost barriers in some of those programs become prohibitive to actually seeing their full potential. I note also, as a former schoolteacher, there is an understanding around the drawdown on curriculum and the actual task at hand of schools having to actually get through what they need to from a curriculum perspective, and that adding another layer or another program or initiative can sometimes be overwhelming. That is perhaps a thought I have with regard to that. Cognisant of those challenges around school curriculum, but there needs to be incentives for young people. We would have to think differently about how we incentivise those opportunities as well and what that actually looks like. Who knows? Were they engaged during school in volunteering in some capacity in their community and is that a credit point towards university or further studies? How do we think differently about incentivising young people to consider volunteering as a high priority in community? It builds that connectivity in your own community and sense of belonging.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I suppose the issue then is when you look at social media and how the internet has changed a lot of people's lives, they feel they get their connectivity from the internet and not these things. How do we deal with that?

Ms Bourne: Yes, it is interesting. I also reflected recently a little on when I was a young girl growing up in regional communities. Our opportunities were different, too, particularly around sport. On weekends, a lot of families are extremely busy now with sport activities. I think back to my time and really you were only going to sporting events that were organised on school days and maybe there was a cricket match on Saturday. Now there is a plethora of activities and events. A number of families are doing multiple things. Not only have we taken away potentially some of those volunteering opportunities for the young people—although a lot of them are trying to contribute to their sporting codes in various ways—but the families, or mum and dad, are also taken away from those other volunteering opportunities that might happen on weekends in communities. I do not have the silver bullet; I wish I did. Yes, social media is certainly an interesting one.

Ms PEASE: Thank you for coming in, Kylie, and thank you so much to the council for your very informative submission.

CHAIR: Yes, it was a good one.

Ms PEASE: Yes, it was great. I also appreciate your recommendations; they are very meaningful and will contribute to the committee report. I was really interested to hear, like the member for Inala, that you have a high participation rate. Has the council consciously worked towards building volunteering, or has it just evolved?

Ms Bourne: We actually do have a very small team that are doing some work. I was only just talking to the coordinator of that volunteering space. We had some staff who attended the conference last week in Brisbane. We are trying to keep abreast of what is going on within that volunteering

space. Yes, we do have a small but dedicated team who do this amidst their other tasks. We have done a little bit of research into it. We are also trying, through our own volunteering programs, to streamline some of the processes in the hope that we may be able to help other community organisations with the streamlining of some of those platforms or avenues, processes or systems. Whilst that is in its infancy, our long game is a hope that we may be able to share some of those learnings and tools to be able to help our smaller community organisations as well.

Ms PEASE: That is fantastic to hear. It is in a way incentivising organisations to continue to grow?

Ms Bourne: Yes.

Ms PEASE: And providing some governance and support around that. I notice in your submission you talk about the governance and the regulatory burden. Could you expand on that? I guess what you are talking about is excessive legislation and regulatory burden. How does that impact on organisations?

Ms Bourne: I can link back particularly to my time as president, a few years ago, of our local Miles Historical Village, which is one of the lead tourism organisations within this region. During that time, I did an extensive amount of work in that governance space. Unfortunately, we live in a time of litigation, and we understand the importance of having governance and strong measures in place that protect not only our organisations but also our volunteers and the people we care about. It seems that at times a great deal of that governance is now skewed way on the other side, and volunteers are daunted by that.

Larger community organisations are in a little better position. They may have paid staff who can help to deal with all of the red tape, for want of a better word. In smaller organisations that is very daunting for people. For some people that is not their bread and butter or where they came from or what they are used to. They just want to put their hand up to help that group because they are passionate about it or they love that organisation. They know it is important for community. They do not want to come along and deal with all of the other things—blue cards and doing all the checks and balances to keep an organisation safe these days. It is definitely a deterrent.

I think of my own mother-in-law. I know you have a deputation next from Dalby Meals on Wheels. My mother-in-law, who turns 80 this year, has been involved with the Miles Meals on Wheels for a very long time and has experienced frustration at the level of red tape for Meals on Wheels in a little community. In fact, I worry at times that that social service in our community is at risk. We are at risk of losing it. We are at risk of losing that service to community members purely because of the red tape. It is overwhelming.

I would question whether the one-size-fits-all approach is right across the board in every format. Let's talk about Meals on Wheels as one example. When it comes to all of those tasks—that onerous commitment—I assume Toowoomba Meals on Wheel would have paid staff; Miles Meals on Wheel does not. How do we find our way and make sure we have volunteers and organisations protected but at the end of the day we are delivering for community, because we cannot lose services, especially services like that, in our community. That is just one example.

Mr BAILLIE: I do appreciate the comprehensive submission. One portion of it in particular piqued my interest. The submission mentions that council uses a 'simple, user-friendly app and online platform to streamline volunteer recruitment, training, and deployment'. Can you describe that app?

Ms Bourne: No. I have not used the app.

Ms PEASE: Has your mother?

Ms Bourne: My mother could; my mother-in-law may not. From what I know, the app is really more about—we can schedule on it so volunteers can understand when their rosters might be. It has the ability to do training. There are small training portions as well. I am not overly familiar with the app myself, so I am not sure I would be best placed to make too much comment in regard to that.

Mr BAILLIE: Do you know whether that is something that council has developed or is it something that is otherwise available to everyone?

Ms Bourne: I could not answer that either, I am sorry. I assume it is something we have adopted, but I would not want to lead the committee astray in that regard.

CHAIR: I was going to ask about that myself.

Ms Bourne: I could find out further to let you know.

CHAIR: Can you take it on notice, if you would not mind providing us with a description and emailing it to the secretary? That would be much appreciated.

Ms Bourne: I will grab some details after this, absolutely.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: You have a large number of volunteers for a small community. Do you know whether they volunteer in a lot of the other local community organisations? I know you yourself peaked at nine committees. I know from my experience you tend to rarely volunteer for just one organisation. Do you have any data or information about crossover volunteering?

Ms Bourne: I know we have done a survey. Whether there was a granular question around that in particular, I do not know. I am just thinking off the top of my head. Of the few people I do know who volunteer for council, yes, the majority are also volunteering. I know of one lady in Chinchilla who, when trying to catch up with her, when it comes to her calendar, I think she is busier in retirement than she ever was. She volunteers at just about everything. I think predominantly I would be safe in saying the answer is yes. What do they say? Ask a busy person—

Ms PEASE: Give a busy person a job to do and you know it will get done.

Ms Bourne: Definitely, and they will do it.

CHAIR: I think we will be hearing that one a bit, won't we?

Ms Bourne: Yes, absolutely.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: About the app, I thought if it had some fantastic feature where young people could grow in the app when they volunteer. Is there some incentive in the app that connects with them? I wondered whether it had any of those features to it.

Ms Bourne: I will find out a bit more about the app and get the team to pass that on.

CHAIR: The time for your appearance has concluded. Thank you very much, Councillor Bourne, for your time. Again, I commend the council on the thoroughness of their submission. It was very good.

Ms Bourne: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I would like to invite to the table representatives of Dalby Meals on Wheel. There being no representatives present, we might defer Dalby Meals on Wheel. Our next group is the Dalby & District Show Society. I invite representatives to come forward.

BYRNE, Mr Darryl, President, Dalby & District Show Society

CHAIR: Welcome, Mr Byrne. Would you like to make an opening statement and then we will have some questions for you? I also thank you for your submission.

Mr Byrne: The Dalby show is in its 150th year this year. In the last probably 30 years we have seen a decline in the number of volunteers coming forward to help set the show up, not only to help with the set-up and pull-down but also to be committee members. They will come to a couple of meetings and say, 'This is old hat,' and that is the end of it.

In short, I think modern technology and the reduction in social engagement of people over the generations have impacted on this. I can remember back when we had no TV or the only TV was the ABC, which closed at 10 o'clock at night. When that came out a lot of people stopped going out on Saturday nights to the movies or to dances. In every country area there were a number of dances, and they all fell by the wayside. In those times when I left school there were a number of organisations and young people were encouraged to join one or more. They were the Rural Youth, Junior Farmers, JCs, the CWA Younger Set and all the church groups had their own youth group. The members of those youth groups tended to move on to the more senior organisations. I think that is where a lot of people became involved with volunteering and they continued on.

My mother was a great one in the CWA. Female cousins all joined the CWA Younger Set and they have all moved on. They are still volunteers today and they are my age. Also, in more recent times, it has become more evident with the advent of Facebook and social media that young people tend to talk to each other more online than going out to a cafe or a dance and having a good time.

As an aside, when we were growing up my cousin came home from work one day—she worked at the National Australia Bank. We were all at our grandfather's place for some reason. She said, 'Pop, we have this wonderful new machine that has come to the bank. I don't have to sit there all day on that old thing clanking and banging doing the ledger cards. The teller puts it all in when they are up at the counter and that is the end of it.' Pop said, 'That will be the end of your job,' and it was. He further added that technology was going to be the ruination of or help with the ruination of communities.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. How long have you been with the show society?

Mr Byrne: I have been involved with the Dalby show since 1967 as an exhibitor. When the kids were growing up we were working away from Dalby. In the last 15 years I have been a full-time active member of the committee.

CHAIR: In that time there has been a lot of innovation. You just gave an example in the banking sector. How much is the decline in volunteers for committee positions that you talked about associated with the evolution of those onerous roles in terms of managing risk and being responsible in ways that they were not in years gone by?

Mr Byrne: It is a bit hard to answer that. In general, there is probably too much easy money around. People are taking the attitude that they will not do anything without payment. From a volunteer's point of view, I get satisfaction, as do all our volunteers at the show society, on the Saturday night when the show is in full swing going out and seeing a couple of thousand people enjoying themselves.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Thank you for coming in and for giving us a submission. Thank you for all of your work in volunteering for the show society over such a long period of time. I am interested to know whether you have seen a change in the way people engage with the show when it is on and whether you think that somehow connects with the change or reduction in interest in volunteering for the show.

Mr Byrne: When people come to the show they expect to be entertained. We have a group of suppliers for that type of thing. From the people who come to the show we do not really reap very many volunteers. We will have the odd one who will come up and say, 'That was a good show,' or 'Maybe next year you should do this or you should do that.' You say to them, 'Come along to a meeting.' They will come to maybe one meeting. They expect that things can happen like that and it does not. It takes time.

I know with changes we have brought in you might have two or three people in the committee who are for it but you have others who are not, and you have a fair bit of politicking to do to bring them around. We had a good example here with the Dalby show. Saturday night was rather dead. The show used to finish at five o'clock. Some would hang around for the fireworks at 7.30 pm and that was it. For about three years we badgered on about getting a really good entertainer—a country

and western entertainer or something like that—and having a rodeo. The first year that happened you could not put a pin between people in the arena, and that has continued to grow. Out of those people we do not get any volunteers. We get lots of criticism at times.

Mr BOOTHMAN: You bring up a very interesting point about how disconnected society is becoming with people living in this world of social media and information constantly updating. They do not understand that, when it comes to organisations such as yourselves, you have to put in an enormous amount of effort to keep the show going. I used to have a fair bit to do with the Ormeau show on the Gold Coast. It was a massive team effort to do that. Over the years the numbers of volunteers got smaller and smaller to the point that the Ormeau show does not exist anymore. Does your organisation have any plans or ideas to get new volunteers onboard and are you finding any success? What methods are you putting in place to alleviate this problem?

Mr Byrne: Recently we upgraded our Facebook page and social media. We have an outside person to do that now, whereas before it was done by a committee member who has elderly parents and a full-time job and probably did not have the time to devote to it that was needed. Apart from that, it is through social media and talking to people at the show or at other functions that we have at the showgrounds to try to get people in.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I share your frustration. As I say, I was part of the Ormeau Fair for many years. It was a nightmare to try to get volunteers. The Lions Club actually ran it. I share your frustration. It is very difficult.

Mr Byrne: The other thing is the compliance with workplace health and safety requirements where people have to be virtually qualified to come and do something, rather than just come and some of us older guys will show them how to do it and do it.

CHAIR: I remember the days when someone used to bring a first aid kit and they were in charge of that—tick, that was done.

Mr Byrne: Yes. We have tried getting people from Corrective Services' community service. We had a couple of guys who were really good. We have had other ones where all the arrangements were made for them to turn up—and guess what? The same with Work for the Dole when that was going. They would turn up and sign on and as soon as you turned your back they were gone. I think that gets back to education. A lot of the younger people are not responsible for their actions. Let me put it that way.

Ms PEASE: Thank you to you, Darryl, and your board for the amount of work that goes into putting on a show. I can only imagine what it would be like. I want to ask about the types of activities that go on at shows these days. Do you have cake decorating and dog shows? Is it that sort of thing?

Mr Byrne: Yes. Basically we have what we can call the main pavilion. In there we have competitions for handicraft, sewing, cookery, quilting, fine art, children's pottery and adult pottery.

Ms PEASE: Have you noticed over the years there has been a decline in exhibitor participation?

Mr Byrne: In some of those areas there has been, but it is up and down.

Ms PEASE: No doubt there would be separate associations such as cake decorating that would have their own association. I have one in my electorate. I have a Wynnum Manly cake decorating association and Scattered Arts that do all of the arts programs. Does that operate there or do you have to have your own judges for that?

Mr Byrne: No. We have some of our own people involved in that. Generally, people who are involved—particularly with the quilting, the cooking and the cake decorating, there is a person who is right into that and she has a dedicated group of followers who help out with that. Outside we have stud cattle. We also have a young judges' competition for prime beef and led steers which involves the kids from the various schools. We have horse events most years, although this year we are not having them for some reason—a particular reason. We have a big gathering of entertainers from the Showman's Guild of Australasia.

Ms PEASE: When you say 'entertainers', is that entertainment as in musical entertainment?

Mr Byrne: No. That is games, rides and all of that type of thing.

Ms PEASE: Right, so you have the rides. The carnies would bring their rides in. They are not run by volunteers though. That is a paid for service.

Mr Byrne: They pay us to come to the show.

Ms PEASE: In terms of the volunteering activities that go on at the shows—

Mr Byrne: We have the stud cattle. There are volunteers involved in running the sheep dog events.

Ms PEASE: The setting up and pulling down and all of that—the organisation of getting those exhibitions happening. For an organisation such as a show society, like you are, it is a very complex range of volunteers who work within your organisation. You have the overarching umbrella organisation and then you would have other organisations—and you would not be alone; it would be every show society across Queensland—not necessarily conflicting but organisations that are trying to provide an opportunity for their members to exhibit, present et cetera. They have to either find a judge or you have to find a judge. You believe it fluctuates?

Mr Byrne: No. We never have any trouble finding judges.

Ms PEASE: No, in terms of exhibitors.

Mr Byrne: Exhibitors, yes. Particularly in the rural industry, it depends on a number of things—the seasons and all the rest of it. Also, every third year our cattle section is always down because our show clashes with Beef Week.

Ms PEASE: Up in Rocky, yes.

Mr Byrne: The week before Beef Week.

Ms PEASE: What about cost of living? Does that impact you in terms of getting volunteers and exhibitors who are also volunteers?

Mr Byrne: I do not think so. For a number of years we kept our gate entry fee rather low. Then because of increasing costs with insurance and everything, we had to put our gate entrance fee up by \$5. It did not make any difference to the number of people coming to the show.

Ms PEASE: How many people attend your show?

Mr Byrne: Between 3,000 and 5,000.

Ms PEASE: How long does it go for?

Mr Byrne: It is over two days.

Ms PEASE: It is a lot of work for two days, isn't it? Do you raise enough money at the gate and through the show to cover your costs?

Mr Byrne: No. We get support from various business houses around town.

Ms PEASE: Right, so you have sponsors.

Mr Byrne: We get sponsorship for the bigger items like the fireworks and the rodeo. We put some money into the rodeo but there are several businesses in town that support us that way.

Ms PEASE: So your volunteers have to go out and find those sponsors as well.

Mr Byrne: That is right, yes.

Ms PEASE: It is a lot of work.

Mr Byrne: It sure is.

Ms PEASE: It is all for a couple of days entertainment for your community and bringing your community together. It is lovely.

Mr Byrne: Yes. I work full-time managing properties. I take a lot of time off because I start work early or finish work late to fit it in. Like I said before, it gives me and the other members the satisfaction of seeing people enjoying themselves. That is something we have to try to engender in the younger generation. It is not all about dollars; it is about self-satisfaction as well.

Ms PEASE: You would have heard the deputy mayor speak about families and how busy they are with sporting activities over the weekend and how that has an impact.

Mr Byrne: This is right.

Ms PEASE: Have you spoken to other show societies across Queensland? Are they experiencing similar problems?

Mr Byrne: The lack of volunteers to show societies across Queensland seems to be endemic. There are a couple of show societies that, I believe, are in the throes of maybe closing because they have not been able to get volunteers.

Ms PEASE: You mentioned about the cost of insurance. Is that impactful for you?

Mr Byrne: Yes.

Ms PEASE: How much does it cost you, if you do not mind me asking?

Mr Byrne: About \$12,000 a year. That is our normal insurance for public liability and that sort of thing. Then we have our rain insurance or wet weather insurance as well which is over \$3,000.

Ms PEASE: Contingency—so \$15,000. That is all money that you have to raise somehow.

Mr Byrne: That is right.

Ms PEASE: Thank you for all your work and to all of your committee members, thank you.

Mr BAILLIE: I am conscious of time, Darryl.

Ms PEASE: Sorry, Adam.

Mr BAILLIE: No. That is all right. You asked a lot of good questions and a lot of them were along the same path as I was thinking. Darryl, at the start of our discussion today, you mentioned the community dances and how society has changed over time. You mentioned 3,000 to 5,000 people attending the show. Are you noticing an increase in attendance of the show over time or is it declining or remaining steady?

Mr Byrne: It seems to be fairly steady around that figure. It was noticeable when we changed our admission fee that the difference was the difference in dollars at the gate, not in ticket sales.

Mr BAILLIE: When did you make that change?

Mr Byrne: Last year.

Mr BAILLIE: Over a five-year period though, have you been monitoring the number of people through the gate?

Mr Byrne: For the previous 10 years the admission fee was \$10 per adult and last year it was \$15. Until we have another couple of shows we will not really know.

Mr BAILLIE: There is still very much an interest in the show and people come along to the show.

Mr Byrne: Yes.

Mr BAILLIE: It is just that they expect it all to be there ready for them to use, and they walk away rather than helping to set up or contribute.

Mr Byrne: That is right.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Do you think that there should be better recognition of these volunteers for what they do? Going back to my experience, a lot of people thought individuals were getting paid to look after these organisations and to put on these shows. Do you think that we as a society could do a lot more to recognise these people and to put them up on a pedestal to say, 'Look, this is what such and such has been doing.' What is your opinion about that?

Mr Byrne: I think we should, not just from the show society or Meals on Wheels or the Rotary Club or whatever. There should also be a community award, such as on Australia Day or something like that, for somebody who has given a lot of time and service. A lot of us do not go out and wave the banner and say, 'Hi, I'm a volunteer. I do this and I do that.' We do it and that is the end of it. A lot of the people in the community would not necessarily know that those people are involved and have been responsible for doing that. In our organisation we are looking at having an award at the opening part of the show for the volunteer of the year or something like that, but that will just be within our own organisation.

Mr BOOTHMAN: It is about advertising it out there in the greater community to say, 'Look, this is our local champion. This is what he or she has been doing.'

Mr Byrne: But it is up to somebody from outside of our group to nominate Billy Smith or whoever as the nominee for that. One of our volunteers is coming up to 86 years old, and you just cannot keep him away from the place.

CHAIR: He is one of the younger ones, is he? I have eight shows in my electorate of Southern Downs. I am sure that you would see eye to eye with all of their presidents on these sorts of things. Thank you, Mr Byrne. Thank you very much for your submission and for coming forward. Please feel free to stay to listen to all the other groups who are presenting to us today. I acknowledge your colleague there who I have a suspicion is also from the Dalby & District Show Society.

Mr Byrne: That is right.

CHAIR: Thank you for coming.

Mr Byrne: Thank you.

STIMSON, Mrs Glenda, President, Dalby Meals on Wheels

ZIESEMER, Mrs Jennifer, Dalby Meals on Wheels

CHAIR: Do we have representatives from Dalby Meals on Wheels here? We do.

Ms Stimson: Sorry for our tardiness. We actually had to volunteer this morning because we were short a volunteer.

CHAIR: That sounds like a pretty good excuse to me. We accept your apology. I now welcome representatives from Dalby Meals on Wheels. Thank you very much for coming in and thank you for the submission you have just tendered to us. Would you like to make an opening statement to the committee before we ask you some questions?

Ms Stimson: I would like to read my statement.

CHAIR: Be my guest.

Ms Stimson: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Dalby Meals on Wheels. The service has been in this local community for well over 45 years. The wives of some local influential businessmen saw the need for this service, especially for the aged and the vulnerable. While volunteers for the kitchen and delivery were often challenging, they forged ahead with a strong committee presence and developed a worthwhile and valued service which continues today.

Our greatest challenge in recent times has been to gain, retain and manage volunteers, not only in the kitchen and delivery but also committee members. While we have a stable financial base to work from, that in itself does not alleviate the problems faced when the largest part of the workforce required to continue the service comes from volunteering. We have found our volunteer base shrinking over the years, especially since COVID. Many who were with us simply did not choose to return after this event. There will always be our faithful who are loyal to the cause and desire to contribute to their community in a meaningful and rewarding way, but often we find gaps being filled by those volunteers who have already given many hours.

Our paid staff are often going the extra mile. While this is greatly appreciated, it is not ideal from a management perspective. We have found this leads to burnout of volunteers and staff, which then compounds our volunteer shortfall and leaves staff feeling they carry the burden of responsibility.

Other areas of concern for volunteers seem to be privacy, or the lack of, volunteer info paperwork to be filled out, the process of getting a yellow card, and the gathering of information regarding time spent with clients. They often do not consider this a priority for themselves.

In regards to the committee pressures, many volunteers consider the responsibility too great to take on executive roles, especially in the finance area—time consuming within the roles of secretary and treasurer. The aged-care sector is always evolving and can often seem daunting to a newcomer. While training and information is readily available, time constraints prove a restriction to this happening. It takes years to get a good grasp on what is happening on regulation updates and processes for reporting et cetera.

With respect to the demographics of our volunteer base at this time, the age group of those volunteering is predominantly pensioners and retirees, with the oldest volunteer being in her nineties. We do have a group of young parents who home school and see volunteering as part of the education they wish their children to experience at a young age. Clients are also delighted when children arrive with parents or grandparents to deliver their meal. Deliveries are made predominantly by females, with a small band of faithful males. The kitchen is predominantly female with the occasional male brave to enter, and the brawn is always appreciated.

Over the years we have offered small monetary reimbursements to help with fuel costs, held morning teas, and presented flowers and certificates to show our appreciation, but what we are finding is our volunteers are busy people who do not have time for a morning tea, and they do not want any reimbursement for fuel costs. What we would like to see is an incentive program through government that encourages people to volunteer. We live in a world of reward points where whatever you buy comes with points and eventually you are able to collect those points and gain something else in return for your loyalty. As far as solutions go, could volunteer hours be recorded as reward points and collated with the possibility of then being used to help reduce basic living costs? Is there a way they can be applied to household rates, water or through a government agency? Alternatively, volunteering would cease to exist. All volunteers would be paid by government subsidy to be paid to organisations, depending on hours recorded. The not-for-profit organisations would, in turn, pay for services rendered.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. Before we proceed, I would like to ask the committee to grant leave to table the Dalby Meals on Wheels submission or contribution? Leave is granted.

Mrs Ziesemer: We have two, if that is alright. Could we table both of them?

CHAIR: I have not looked at this yet. There is a difference?

Mrs Ziesemer: They are slightly different. No, I will not read mine; it is quite similar to the other, but I have a few stats.

CHAIR: Sure. We will get to that one once you have spoken. Did you want to speak as well?

Mrs Ziesemer: No, I am good. I can answer questions.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. Member for Inala and deputy chair, would you like to ask a question?

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Thank you for appearing today and for the great work you do. I know that Meals on Wheels is such a valuable service and enables our elderly and those with disability to remain in their homes for much longer than they would otherwise. Thank you for that. Your work is noted and valued. I would like to ask particularly about the administrative burden. Having been secretary and treasurer on numerous committees, I do have some empathy for those who are taking on those roles and do know how challenging it is. Can you describe the type of support you get for the people undertaking those roles, whether it be from within the peak body of Meals on Wheels or from outside of the organisation?

Mrs Stimson: There is no real support in terms of getting the job done, even to the extent of any training. Treasurer is a fairly full-on position with an incredible workload. The role of secretary does not have such a workload, but we seem to be struggling to find people who are willing to step into those roles with the burden that comes with it, that sits in the background in the shadows in case something goes wrong. It is difficult to ease people into a position of treasurer or secretary, especially if they are coming in green, and especially in the aged-care sector. It is not a straightforward association where you have your meeting and things run well. Aged care, as you would know, is changing, evolving constantly, so there are constant updates; there are constant things that we need to be changing and rearranging.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: In terms of the governance support, do you have assistance with the guidelines with information, or do you need to find that yourselves and then find a way of trying to upskill your volunteers?

Mrs Stimson: We do have membership with Queensland Meals on Wheels. They would certainly be willing to assist us if we put that call out to them. There are guidelines that we have that we can access online that anybody can read, but if you have a look at those guidelines, as you would know, they are pretty—

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Not easily accessible for a new person coming on; it is quite onerous.

Mrs Stimson: Yes.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Do you have any suggestions as to practical ways that the knowledge that a new volunteer or an existing volunteer would need could be managed and transferred from one to another? Do you have any practical tips on that?

Mrs Stimson: What I would like to see is every position have an assistant for the 12-month term, in the hope that that assistant then would slide into that position and then just keep rolling those positions. I believe there ought to be an assistant. To me, that is the easiest way to gain the knowledge; to be sitting with someone who has that knowledge. It is very difficult to impart all of the knowledge in that length of time for them to take over.

Mrs Ziesemer: I came in. I do a little bit of admin and a little bit of volunteer work. It goes hand in hand with volunteering; if you are in a paid position, believe me a lot of it is as a volunteer. But I am lucky enough to be able to learn quickly and I have had to just learn on my feet. You go into the Meals on Wheels Queensland website to find out how to do things. Really, it is the volunteer training the volunteer. I am not an HR person, but I have to do HR. It really basically volunteers training volunteers.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Do you engage with Volunteering Queensland for support in any of that governance space?

Mrs Ziesemer: I do not even know about Volunteering Queensland.

CHAIR: We might introduce you to the Volunteering Queensland people who are here today.

Mrs Ziesemer: Maybe! Thank you.

Mr BAILLIE: Thank you both for coming. A quick one off the bat: did you have some deliveries this morning?

Mrs Ziesemer: We have deliveries on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In a month, we will deliver at least 1,700 meals. We have 84 clients, with a very small delivery base. It only takes them an hour or maybe two, but it is pretty intense. The kitchen was where Glenda was this morning. She was called in at six o'clock this morning to work in the kitchen as a prep person and to help with packaging.

Mr BAILLIE: I was fortunate enough to spend some time with the St Andrew's Meals on Wheels organisation in Townsville recently and did a ride-along. I understand that it is so much more than delivering meals. Sometimes you are the only person that that resident or client might see that day. Thank you to you and all your volunteers for what you do.

Mrs Ziesemer: Thank you. That in itself is actually a little bit interesting in that I always have this fear when I do a delivery that there might be something going on in the house if they do not answer the call. So, we have to be a bit brave. We do not have any training for that either, but we cope.

Mr BAILLIE: Yes. You do not know what has happened if there is no answer. Glenda, you mentioned that since COVID you have noticed a big difference or a big drop-off in volunteering.

Mrs Stimson: We lost probably a quarter of our volunteers. Some have filtered back in, once they have passed the fear, but the bulk of that quarter is still out there somewhere.

Mr BAILLIE: What do you put that decline down to?

Mrs Stimson: I think possibly having COVID themselves and not having a good outcome. Because we are aged, we are on the far end of volunteering, I think they saw it also as going out into community again, with the fear of catching something again. I think also, they have been volunteering with us for a long time, so I think they probably thought, 'This might be my opportunity now to step away completely and do something different.'

Mr BAILLIE: Do you think people still have quite a bit of fear about health in general now?

Mrs Stimson: I think so, yes. It is still there, yes.

Ms PEASE: Thank you so much for your work. Meals on Wheels is an incredibly important organisation.

CHAIR: Hear, hear!

Ms PEASE: I volunteer for mine and have done for over 10 years. I have had to cut back a little bit recently because I find it difficult with time, so I do apologise. It is interesting that you say that often the person delivering the meal is the only person the client might see. Interestingly enough, I often get calls from Meals on Wheels visitors who are seeing people who have problems with their phones—phones particularly are the biggest thing; they report it to me so I can actually get something done and get their phones picked up. The other issue during COVID was how to reach those people in their homes that were house-bound and getting out there to give them the vaccination. There are very important roles that you all play, and I acknowledge that. I hope after today that you do reach out to Volunteering Queensland because they have volunteers. You can register to get volunteers from them. That is their remit; that is what they are meant to be doing. It would be great if you register and meet them today—they are here. I am really interested to know why you both volunteered and why Meals on Wheels?

Mrs Stimson: I came into the association 35 years ago. I was playing midweek tennis. The two ladies who originally started Meals on Wheels played tennis and they seconded probably 40-odd players from a group of 120 who came along, and we started a delivery that was done through the ladies' midweek tennis. I think I am probably the last girl standing. I have been in the association and on the committee, in and out. It is close to my heart; it is dear to my heart.

CHAIR: Thank you. I am sure we are all most grateful.

Ms PEASE: Thank you. Jennifer?

Mrs Ziesemer: I was full-time working and I was semi-retired. The girls approached me because they needed help with admin. The admin was very much struggling and they knew I had admin skills. I went in. Of course, once you are in, you are a volunteer, I can tell you, well and truly! I do many deliveries. The oldies are absolutely gorgeous. It is a very rewarding position to be in, to be able to volunteer to those oldies because they all love us.

Ms PEASE: Thank you both very much, and to all of your volunteers. It is a really important job you do, so thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you. That concludes the time for the Dalby Meals on Wheels' presentation. Again, thank you for coming before us. I am sure I speak for everyone on the committee in wishing you well in the years ahead in managing these challenges. Thank you.

WOOD, Mrs Beth, Treasurer, Dalby Welcoming Community Inc.

SMITH, Ms Sharlene, Vice-President, Dalby Welcoming Community Inc.

CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement to us and then we will have some questions for you?

Mrs Wood: Not really. I was probably set to answer questions, but I can.

CHAIR: Just tell us a bit about your organisation, how it came about and what you do.

Mrs Wood: Dalby Welcoming Community is a small organisation that does a number of things in Dalby. One of those is we organise and run Dalby's Delicious and DeLIGHTful Festival. We also look after Dalby's RU OK? Day and have a community art project each year that fits in with that. Until very recently—there is much more employment available here now—we also ran a really successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. Something we are very proud of is that we always got 100 per cent employment, which is super, but it makes it very hard when you only have people for a very short time and then they are employed. Maybe we are really good at writing resumes and cover letters and get them out there, but that is the way it has been.

At the minute we have pulled back from that a little, but we also help people who are both new to the country and new to our community. They are usually wives of skilled workers and they are totally and utterly isolated both here and in Australia. The men go to work. They probably have access to a vehicle and they have that wonderful opportunity to meet people and mix with their workmates. Their wife, in the meantime, is at home often totally isolated and afraid to go out, and for her it is very difficult, very challenging. They are often very homesick and lonely so we try and organise a fun program for them. That is probably what we do most.

I can talk just a little about volunteers, particularly in terms of the festival. It is always hard to get people to come on board as long-term volunteers, in terms of your meetings, planning and whatever, so it falls to a core group of people who then do that organising. Dalby is a wonderful community and I find that on the festival days we actually have lots of people who volunteer for us because it is short-term and we try to provide an incentive for them. For example, we might have gate people. They will be volunteers who probably belong to another group, so it might be a Rotary club or a Lions club or a Cancer Council. They are always seeking funds so rather than us keep any profits, we try to give back financially to those groups because we know that every community group is really struggling to be able to survive, as you would have heard from Meals on Wheels. That works for us in some ways.

It would be amazing if you people were able to come up with amazing and wonderful suggestions that we could implement. We always try, of course, to make sure that our volunteers are well respected and the day or days are enjoyable for them and meet their talents and skills. You are not going to try to put somebody in the children's area when they are focused on logistics and counting numbers and whatever. I think those are some of the things that we have considered.

CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Smith, would you like to say anything?

Ms Smith: No. My question is, and I see it across the board because I volunteer with quite a few other organisations: once you do get the volunteers how do you keep them there? How do you keep their interest and keep them coming back? If they come, they just drop off like flies—not because they have work or anything. That is my problem across the board with everyone. It does not matter what nationality; it is very common. My question is once you get them there, how do you keep them there; how do you get them engaged?

CHAIR: You are not the last person who will say that to us in the course of our inquiry.

Ms Smith: Really? That is it.

CHAIR: We might go to questions.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Thank you for coming in today. It sounds like your organisation does amazing things for your community so thank you for that. It sounds very heartwarming. I represent a very multiculturally diverse community and really understand that piece of work around social isolation and trying to help people to feel welcome in a community and then to take the next step to actually be actively engaged within that community. It sounds like you are doing a good job. I do have some questions around how you go about engaging. I am assuming that the skilled workers are from multicultural groups?

Mrs Wood: Yes.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: I am interested in how you go about engaging with those cultural groups and with those new people in the first instance? Do you have a strategy around that?

Mrs Wood: Do you mean how do we get them to come along?

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Yes.

Mrs Wood: It is word of mouth. It is a little bit of advertising. We do know the major culture groups within our area and we know the employers who are bringing skilled workers into the community so we connect through them often too. That is a really good strategy which has worked well for us over time. I can say too that it is really exciting when some of those women from other cultures want to volunteer and be seen as part of the community and give back to the community that they are in. We do pick up a few volunteers from those as well.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: That was the second part to my question. Often people from multicultural communities do not see giving back to community as volunteering, they see it as a normal obligation of being part of a group or being part of a community. Have you found sometimes the different cultural perspectives around the issue of volunteering; have you noticed that within your organisation?

Mrs Wood: I guess what I have seen is that they really want to engage, that they want to be seen as part of the community and 'If that's what this old lady does then that's what we might do too.' I think it is about us being a role model for them within the community so that they understand the Australian way of life, even if they do not understand much about our Australian slang. It is really interesting to work with them.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Thank you both for coming here today. It is interesting hearing about what you are doing in your local community. My question is to do with those fun programs where you have these new people moving into the area. What are they about? What do you do in those programs? What do they entail? After these people participate, do you actually get many of them who want to stay on and bring other people along with them?

Mrs Wood: Yes, they do. They do all of those things. For them, that is the highlight of their week. We basically do that program one day a week. It is really exciting for me to cook a cob loaf or something and they go, 'What's this?'

Mr BOOTHMAN: Nothing beats a cob loaf.

Mrs Wood: It is all the things that they do not understand. We do a lot around language, and it is very much the Australian language because we have actually found that the workers are sometimes—not criticised, that is not the right word—thought of as not as skilled as the employer thought they might be, and my question to them often is: is it the skill or is it the language? Very often it is the language and I find it really interesting that the women who come will often ask questions on behalf of their husbands. For example, 'Bill's boss invited us over for a barbie and a cold one. We didn't go. We didn't understand what that was.' It is those simple things. It would be simple things like, 'How are you going, mate?' 'Well, I did come on my bike, Sir.' It is all that that makes it very difficult for them. In terms of the women, yes, for them what we are able to do is we are able to make them understand that. For some of the African women, Australia is a safe place by comparison. Those are things that are fears for them and you have to build a connection with them to make them understand that what you are going to be saying to them is right.

Mr BOOTHMAN: You are building a community within a community.

Mrs Wood: I suppose, but ultimately in my view we are one community. We have a large Filipino group here. They have been here for quite some time and they are very much now almost that second generation and they would see themselves as part of the community, not part of the Filipino community.

CHAIR: Are their kids all getting dux at the high school? That is what I found in my schools.

Mrs Wood: Yes.

Mr BAILLIE: Thank you both for coming today. Trying to focus a group of people on a common outcome is difficult, even when we are all from the same place, the same culture and the same background. You mentioned several different cultures and origins. What strategies have you found successful with all these different cross-sections of the community—the Africans, the Filipinos, everyone—working together?

Mrs Wood: I think our festival does that in many ways. It is a multicultural festival. We encourage them to be involved. For example, we have a flag parade with all of our nationalities—a bit like the Olympics parade—and we find that they are very happy to be in that flag parade representing their country. I think it is incredibly important for the Aussies who are there to see the

number of cultures we have within our community and to welcome them. On the festival day, the council also does a citizenship ceremony. We advertise our festival as a celebration of our diversity, and I think that also encourages lots of those different cultures to become involved in the festival and therefore involved in the community.

Mr BAILLIE: Have you learnt any lessons about how to engage with all the different cultures? Say you are going to have a flag ceremony, they might not know what that is or have never participated in that before. Are there any lessons you have learnt yourself or can share with us about how you can engage with those different community groups?

Mrs Wood: We do an enormous amount on social media obviously. Then we try to connect with them personally so we can have that chat about what it means if you are going to have a food stall at the festival or what it will look like if you are in the flag parade or go in the cooking competition or whatever. I think it is always about that communication and the connection.

Can I say one other thing, taking off my Dalby Welcoming Community hat for a moment? It is a bit of a puzzle for me. I organise a group called Dalby Circles of Care. On a Thursday night as a group we provide a meal for people in need. We are doing it a little bit differently. We are asking each of our community organisations, schools, businesses or whatever to provide a meal once a year. We have 50-odd groups that are involved. When I suggested that, someone told me that I was barking mad and it could never happen. That was probably enough of an incentive for me to decide to have a go.

We do have that number of groups, but we also have a number of volunteers who bat up on that Thursday night. Those are people who may not be connected to an organisation at all but who come along and help set up, help clean up, do the bits and pieces that someone else has not been able to do or whatever. That volunteer base continues to grow. For me, that is a bit of a contrast to what you would expect. I can only put it down to the fact that people feel good when they help people in need. They meet the people who are in need and they go home feeling thankful for what they have but also feeling good about what they have done for someone else. I do not know if there is a little secret in there at all in terms of your volunteers or not.

CHAIR: Thank you for your insights. It is very good of you to come before us. We thank the Dalby Welcoming Community Inc. for your appearance today. Now we will go to the next witness.

HEATHWOOD, Ms Sarah, Private capacity

CHAIR: I would like to remind witnesses of the terms of reference for this inquiry. You would be aware from our website that we are looking specifically at volunteering issues. We are not investigating individual complaints or concerns about organisations. In this regard, I ask witnesses to be cautious about providing evidence that may adversely reflect upon a person or organisation because what we say here goes into *Hansard* and is visible to everyone. Thank you for coming before us. I invite you to address the committee for up to five minutes and then we may have some questions for you.

Ms Heathwood: Thank you very much for doing this. I am on a couple of different committees. I am treasurer of our Bell Show. We are in Dalby here and then 30 minutes out we have Bell. I wear a few different hats but I am coming here today as a board member of the Dalby Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The business chamber is a little different to some of the other organisations. Our board is mostly full of people who are fully employed or business owners. We have only 11 people who can be on it at any one time and then we are full. When you are on there you have to show up; you have to do the work. It is almost like having a treasurer or a secretary role. When I signed up for it, I was not ready for what I thought it was going to be.

It is very heavily funded by our local businesses and our stakeholders. We have partnered with the Dalby regional council. We always have to answer to our stakeholders and local businesses. We sign up for a year, so we know it is going to be long term. Finding volunteers for individual events who turn up on the day seems to be quite easy, but if you want people to sign up and have a role and be there for the long term it is much harder.

As all of you would know, when you sign up for any sort of committee you have to take time away from your family, your job and your social commitments, and that can get really hard. Lately I have been finding a lot of executive committee members in different roles throughout the district get very burnt out because there are a lot of pressures. Whether it is social or financial, it seems to be a lot.

I really love being a volunteer, but I have to say a lot of my friends think I am crazy. They do not understand in any manner why I do it, including my husband, but he has slowly gotten the hint that I just really enjoy it and I think it is rewarding. I do not know whether it is just my generation, but I do find lots of my friends have a really different opinion of volunteering. I cannot understand completely why. I know some of the younger ones do not think it is worth it. Thinking about some previous committees I have been on, you go in and there is the older generation. What they have done has worked really well and they have had a successful committee for a long time, but nowadays it needs changing. I have come up against some hard opinions as they think we are changing it but not for the better. I do find it scares a lot of younger volunteers away, especially from taking positions. If you are a farmer or something and you are taking on a treasurer role, that is not particularly your training. Learning on the run is quite hard for some people, but you have a committee or a community all looking at you to hold that position. It is quite hard sometimes if you do not truly enjoy it. I went on a bit of a wayward tangent there but thank you.

CHAIR: Thanks very much for that.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: I am interested in that age gap space because I have seen that and heard that. In all of the committees that I am on it is a regular issue. If you are fortunate to have someone from a younger generation, those who tend to preside over these committees find the way of talking and engaging different—I have found it can be quite a put off for younger people. Is that what you are finding?

Ms Heathwood: Yes, definitely.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: They come along with this intent to want to help but then they are met with a situation they do not find comfortable to be engaging in. So when efforts are made to try to make things a little bit more modern or have a slightly different approach, that idea of change is met with some resistance. Is that what you are finding?

Ms Heathwood: Yes. When a younger person comes in, like we do with anything we are coming into, they are very excited and, as younger people, we are more likely to be outspoken. I would not say we have done our homework, but we are very able to just go and make it happen. That might be very scary for the committee that has been there and seen it working one way, but it may not have been working as well over the years. A younger generation might then want to come in and be like, 'Okay, we're just going to do it this way.' It is all big and different and it might be expensive at the start. We are probably not as worried to take that risk.

I find it is a very social pressure type of thing for the younger generation; if it does not look cool and it does not look like it is doing a good job, they do not want to be on it. That is the problem with some of the things like Meals on Wheels; it is not flashy. When you get to know the older generation and go into their homes, they are amazing—their stories and what they have lived through. They look old on the outside but on the inside they feel like we do. Unless you have had that experience it is just, 'That's not cool. Who would do that on there?'

CHAIR: The deputy mayor, Councillor Bourne, and the council submission talked about schools and whether it would be good to include as part of the curriculum some obligation to do community service. Do you see that as being a way of exposing younger people to the joys and the satisfaction of dealing with others such as working with older people?

Ms Heathwood: Possibly. As the Dalby business chamber, we have just started a junior chamber. A couple of our board members are helping kids get jobs when they do not want to go to school but they do not know what they want to do. They are lost in their story; they do not know what they want to do. Then on the same junior board we have kids who are the leaders of the school who are really out there and they are ready to go. These two minor groups mixing within our junior committee is quite fascinating because they are bringing out different things in each other. It could possibly be about interacting with people in a social way.

I also do some work with aged care and the older generation did not have as much of an appeal for me until I actually knew their stories. You do not know what you do not see, I guess. Someone could have put it on a board as you walk past and you might think, 'That's great,' but just keep walking. That face-to-face interaction is something that I think would be great for schools.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Do you feel that when you have these job descriptions for the secretary and treasurer roles et cetera, which always seem to be the hardest to fill, it is a daunting task for people when they first see that and they may not want to go down that pathway? Do you feel they are being recognised for doing all this work? Do you feel that the community does not seem to understand the effort you put in?

Ms Heathwood: Definitely.

Mr BOOTHMAN: In what ways do you feel society could try to correct that? I was reading some stats from the United States on the way here this morning and their volunteer rates over there are pretty good—very good, especially in the small towns—and they seem to make a big thing of it. What is your suggestion for us when it comes to promoting it? As someone who is linked to the business community but also the community as a whole, how do you think we could do that? It is a tough one, I know.

Ms Heathwood: That is interesting. I think definitely talking to people. It is hard because if it is not 11 seconds on a swipe pass and it does not catch people on social media or an advertisement, you do not catch any of the younger ones. Getting people face to face to acknowledge that is sometimes hard, too. That is a really hard one. I do not think people fully understand what people do in secretary or treasurer roles; I sure didn't before I joined. I know with the show, it pretty much consumed my life for a month and a half. I told my husband that I was MIA, that I would turn up and sleep, but he has to do everything else. It was like that. I have really good children who will come and volunteer with me.

I always say you have hard days with anything. There were days where I was like, 'Why am I doing this?' But I always tell my children that that is everything in life: there are always things you do not want to do, but it does not mean it is not rewarding at the end. I even think that with our families, we go home and complain about everything, but we are not talking about what is good at the end. I do not know if it is a generational thing. I think acknowledging—

Mr BOOTHMAN: Do you feel we dwell too much on the negatives? What you do for the community is wonderful. If you did not do it and another group of people never did it, the community would be by far worse off.

Ms Heathwood: Yes. I feel like the news is a really good example. They focus too much on the negative. I do not know if people would watch, but they could have 20 minutes of people being interviewed or just show what people are doing—the good stories. I know that with my oldies, that is all they watch. They are stuck in their houses, they watch TV and listen to the radio or read the newspaper. A lot of it is not good. There needs to be more good things advertised. We know that is out there, and we need to see that too, to change. That is a really hard one.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I just wish my father would stop watching TV and the news. I always get a barracking from him.

Mr BAILLIE: Thank you for your time today, Sarah. You have mentioned that you have a family and you are on the show society and you are in the business chamber. How do you carve the time out of your busy schedule to volunteer? When your friends ask, 'Why do you do it?' what is your message to them?

Ms Heathwood: The first part of your question in regards to how do I carve out the time, that is a really interesting one and I am still not sure. My husband and I own two businesses as well and I work a bit in aged care. I dabble in everything, but I am very social and I like to do that. That is one thing—when I am not at work, I am not making money. I am obviously a business owner, so I need to work. I do not just go to a job and get paid or take it out of my holiday pay, or whatever that looks like. I actually have to take the days off. For me, it is rewarding to have that exchange. My children come with me and my husband comes with me and they help at those events. We do it as a team. I know it is not like that for everyone. Some families do not like to be involved with that sort of thing. That is how I personally do it; I look at it as a community thing, and the more people who are involved, the less work it is. What was the second part of the question?

Mr BAILLIE: Your message to your friends?

Ms Heathwood: That one is very hard. They are very opinionated about it. I did make one of them come and help me at the show this year. I said, 'I need your help. I can't do this.' It was an eye-opener for her as well. At the meeting she agreed with lots of what they said and she said, 'Wow, there is a lack.' Especially at a show, there is so much to do—anywhere from the canteens, the bars, all the sections, and there are usually 12 sections. That is a lot of people. You have between two and 30 in each section. For the town of Bell, which is tiny, it is super hard. The only way we do it is because it is generational. You get the parents and the grandparents and the children come in, and then everyone just brings a friend. We still have a lot of people who don't and they are not interested in it, but I just try to get my friends in there to see what it is like, and to see that it is rewarding.

We just had our Bell show on 1 and 2 March. We were up in sales on our gate—because I am the treasurer, I do the figures—\$6,000. We are a brand new executive committee, all under 40, which was shocking for the whole committee because we had great ideas and it was scary for them. However, we actually made a \$20,000 profit this year; last year we lost \$500. We had to spend \$30,000 more—a big risk—to then push this. How did we do it? Our focus was families. We had to make it cost effective for families. If you go to a show these days and you have to pay \$10 for each child to go on one ride, they are not going on many rides. So, we made sure we had armbands. If the children bought an armband, they could go on as many rides as they liked. We had duck races and a petting zoo, and they were all free for the kids. Then you get the families in, and they are not paying for all those things so then they will buy a bit of food. They are not nagging their parents, 'Oh, this is boring, Mum. I want to go home.' They are out doing things. We were heavily focused on bringing families and community in.

It is not that we forget about the older generations that no longer have kids at home or anything—that was not the case—but they will come because they want an outing, and they want to see their friends. It is a once-a-year event to see all the people from around the district. But families will stay at home if they cannot afford it. You cannot take the kids out and tell them they cannot have anything. It does not work like that these days.

That is how we did it. We were met with our older committee being very worried because we were doing big things. That is where I went to my friends and I said, 'I need your help. We cannot do this by ourselves. If we have an influx of \$6,000 more, which is \$15 a person through the gate, we will not be able to do it.' As it was, we were running around everywhere, and we were literally pulling in volunteers as they were walking past. Some people are really happy to do that. They will do one day and they will say, 'Yep, I will do a couple of hours,' and then they are happy. But those same people would never join a committee. It is that longer commitment that is very hard.

CHAIR: It mirrors the business chamber: volunteers are okay, but if it requires a year-long commitment with onerous responsibilities, it is a different story.

Ms Heathwood: Yes.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: I am interested in the example that our volunteers give. I wonder how much people know that we need more volunteers and that we need to share the load. From what I have seen and heard anecdotally in comments is people might say, 'Oh, you are amazing. You do so much.' Sometimes I think it is a dual-edged sword in that you are a strong, capable person who is very busy, doing so much, so (a) that frightens people because they do not have the time and capacity to do what you do or (b) that is not the type of person they are, so they do not see themselves suited to that. How much of an impact do you think your success as a volunteer has on sometimes making people think that they are not needed or that what you do they could never replicate?

Ms Heathwood: That is massive. I am very outgoing and forward. I just get it done. That scares a lot of people, yes. That is hard. There are different personalities. We have our big, strong personalities who want to lead and then there are our quieter ones where it is not their cup of tea at all. However, with some of those quiet achievers, I found that if you ring them or talk to them face to face and say, 'Could you just help me with a small job?' they are more than happy to. I think tailored positions for volunteering is something that we have to be very mindful of.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: So making the general community aware that not all volunteering needs to look like that?

Ms Heathwood: Exactly.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: That we do need more, but we need it in lots of different ways, and how do we get that message across to people.

Ms Heathwood: I think that is probably the key to it. There are lots of people who would love to help, but just not in the same capacity. I do get that a lot. People will say, 'There is no way I could do what you do,' or I will get people who say, 'You know Sarah, she will just do it.' I think tailoring is key. If you have a job that you know someone else could do, then advertising. There are lots of different things that people can do. We sometimes split the position in special rural areas. We might have someone in a secretary role who does not like to write minutes, so we might have—not a sub position, but a helper who does minutes, and then the other person doing all the rest. I think dividing the roles is something that would make a lot of positions a lot easier. I think that is where organisations need a bit of help; to split the roles and make them aware that you can have different types. I think they think that they just have to do it, and it is probably not necessarily the case.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Heathwood, for your appearance today and for your insights. That concludes our hearing today. I would like to thank everybody for their attendance. To those who came before us, thank you very much on behalf of the committee for your contribution. I would like to thank our Hansard reporters and also the staff of the committee secretariat who do so much work to make these hearings possible—Kylie Guthrie, the committee secretary, and Zac Dadic, the assistant secretary. Thank you for your help there. We had one question on notice which was to the council. Would it be suitable to provide a response to us by 5 pm on 4 April, please?

Ms BOURNE: I am assuming so.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. One of the staff will give you the correct email address. I declare this public hearing closed. Thank you, everyone.

The committee adjourned at 12.14 pm.