

Executive Summary

The Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland was established on 11 December 2024, when the Legislative Assembly agreed to a motion to refer the matter to the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee.

During its inquiry, the committee heard from a broad range of stakeholders. These included volunteers, volunteer involving organisations, volunteering peak bodies, volunteer research centres, members of the SES and RFSQ, and members of the public. These groups shared their experience and viewpoints with the committee through written submissions and at public hearings, which were held in Brisbane, Dalby, Toowoomba, Gympie, Sunshine Coast, Roma, Cairns, Cooktown, Townsville, Emerald and Rockhampton.

The inquiry found that while volunteering contributes immense civic, social, and economic value—estimated at over \$117 billion annually—participation rates have declined significantly, falling from 75.7% in 2020 to 64.3% in 2023, equating to a loss of around 200,000 volunteers. Those who remain are increasingly burdened by rising expectations, financial costs, and regulatory hurdles.

The committee has made 8 recommendations. These recommendations relate to the following key areas:

- adopting a whole-of-government approach to recognising, investing in, and supporting volunteers
- reducing barriers to volunteering
- changes to the Rural Fire Service Queensland to address cultural and organisational issues
- improving the volunteer experience for State Emergency Service volunteers
- improving operating conditions for existing Queensland Volunteer Resource Centres
- furthering engagement with government organisations and stakeholders
- reviewing volunteer onboarding requirements
- investigating policy approaches for First Nations and multicultural communities.

Volunteering is vital to Queensland's economy, society, and disaster resilience, yet it is under threat from declining participation and systemic barriers. The inquiry calls for reforms and a reset of the volunteering experience—removing impediments, addressing entrenched challenges, and recognising the immense contributions of volunteers. By adopting the committee's recommendations, Queensland can reinvigorate its volunteer sector, ensuring it remains a cornerstone of community life and a foundation for the State's future prosperity.

The recommendations can be found from pages viii - x of this report.