

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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I am a retiree living in Roma, Queensland and my current volunteer service includes the following: President of Roma Historical Motor Club Inc. Coordinator of Crescendo Community Choir Worship Leader and Communion Facilitator at Roma Church of Christ Tutor for Facebook for Roma U3A Member of Roma Historical Precincts Inc which is restoring and making a museum out of the old Butter Factory. I undertake projects to assist this group and help with fundraising efforts when I am able. Member of Roma and District Family History Society Inc. where I index photos. Volunteer admin of Roma for Families Website which assists Roma residents by compiling information about Roma in one place. Volunteer admin of Facebook Pages and Groups association with the above organisations. Also, my husband, also a retiree, volunteers in the following ways: Secretary and Grants Coordinator - Roma and District Aeromodelling Club Inc. Security Officer - Roma Historical Precincts Inc. (He has just completed a year as Secretary of this group.) Dating Officer and Rally Coordinator - (completing forms for Special Interest Vehicle Scheme) - Roma Historical Motor Club We have both volunteered for many years in our community (we moved there in 1982 from Brisbane). Therefore we do have an understanding of volunteering in Roma and I would like to submit the following based on our experiences.

Pros: I compare the number of people I know in Roma and surrounding towns who are volunteering in some capacity to those I know in Brisbane and other towns and it seems that people in country areas are more likely to volunteer. Perhaps because venues etc. are easier to travel to than in Brisbane, particularly. I find there is a great community spirit in Roma particularly amongst those who volunteer and experiences are shared between groups, to the benefit of all. I have not found anyone turned away from becoming a member or volunteering in any group that I have been a part of. Everyone is welcome with open arms. The Government's scheme under which you can volunteer at a registered organisation to contribute to mandatory hours for Centrelink has worked well for one of the above organisations with a person who did this now becoming a very active and involved member. Another way we have seen work well, in our travels, for tourist sites, is for "grey nomads" to volunteer at tourist sites and museums in return for a place to park their caravan. I see also that there is a scheme for these same people regarding their threshold to earn more money if they are working in the tourist area before it affects their pension.

Cons/Barriers: Available time to volunteer or even become a consistent member of a group is of course, an important factor. I find these days, most families have both husband and wife working and if they have children, there is precious little time left in their week to volunteer. Even retirees, like us can find ourselves pulled in many different directions and these days grandparents seem to be actively assisting their children and grandchildren, with day to day family life, particularly in the school holidays. The transient nature of the Roma population is another thing which is detrimental to consistent members and volunteers and also the shared knowledge and experiences of the group is not retained, unless this is deliberately shared. (Not many people are like us, we came to Roma on my husband's transfer, intending to stay for the usual 2 to 3 years but ended up really loving the country life-style and community life!) As a member of the Management Committee of the Roma Historical Motor Club for many years, I have found that it has been up to me to keep abreast of and knowledgeable about law changes which affect this group. Office of Fair Trading, ATO, CO-VID, Insurance, Food Handling, Risk Management etc. There is no one place to access information and most groups are run on what people think should be done. Even to running a meeting. I have had to spend a lot of time in sourcing and accessing information to ensure our club is properly governed. I have shared this with management committee members

of other groups I am a member of. There is a guide for incorporated associations on how to best start one up and dealing with the Office of Fair Trading but these does not cover all the legal obligations on clubs and groups. I also have found a lot of people want to join a group, but do not necessarily want to volunteer within that group, to do a task or role. That is just human nature I guess. Finally: We have found that as volunteers you are constantly giving your time, energy, and even finances. It is demanding but also very worthwhile. We have made many lifelong friends in our volunteering journey and there is a sense of connection to the community that we would not have otherwise.