

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission: Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

The current experiences, motivations and challenges for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and their recommendations for addressing challenges and improving the volunteering experience.

One significant challenge in volunteering today is that many parents, balancing demanding work schedules and caregiving responsibilities, find it increasingly difficult to dedicate time to volunteer opportunities. As work-life balance becomes harder to achieve, especially in a fast-paced world where both parents are often working full-time, the availability of parents for volunteer work becomes limited.

Additionally, with people choosing to work later in life and delaying retirement, there's a decrease in the number of older adults who typically fill volunteer roles. This means fewer experienced individuals are available to offer their time and knowledge, further straining the volunteer sector and making it more challenging to fill crucial positions. Together, these factors create a growing gap in volunteerism, making it harder to meet the needs of communities.

To encourage greater volunteer engagement and support communities, it would be beneficial for government agencies to implement paid volunteer leave for their staff. By offering employees designated paid time off specifically for volunteering, agencies would not only foster a culture of civic responsibility but also empower their workforce to give back without financial burden. This initiative could help bridge the gap created by work-life pressures, especially for parents or those with demanding schedules, allowing them to participate in meaningful volunteer opportunities. Moreover, providing paid volunteer leave would also allow employees to develop new skills, enhance job satisfaction, and strengthen community ties, all of which can translate into a more engaged and motivated workforce. Such a policy could make a significant difference in meeting community needs and inspire other organisations to adopt similar practices.

This has been implemented at CQUniversity and is called Engaged Service Leave, staff can apply for up to 7.25 hours annually – however I do believe to engage more actively in the community it should be increase to 36.25 hours annually.

- As at March 2024 258,012 FTE was engaged within Queensland Government

- Offering 7.25 hours Engaged Service Leave would increase volunteering hours by 1,870,587 hours per year.
- Offering 36.25 hours Engaged Service Leave would increase volunteering hours by 9,352,935 hours per year.

A policy would need to be implemented to provide structure around what type of volunteering work is supported and the required evidence to be provide under the Engaged Service Leave Entitlement to ensure that staff are truly engaging in a meaningful way that contributes to Queensland's Volunteers agenda.