

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

<b>Submission No:</b>	55
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<b>Publication:</b>	Making the submission and your name public
<b>Attachments:</b>	See attachment
<b>Submitter Comments:</b>	

## Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

Most people at sometime in their lives will volunteer. One has only got to attend Junior Sport, the Beach or the local shopping centre to see volunteers hard at work, coaching children in sport, lifesaving on our beaches and local swimming pools, or performing the necessary tasks as a Justice of the Peace in the Community. Let's also not forget those volunteers who go out and help in either an official or non-official role when natural disasters occur. They all do this because they want to help their community, make a difference give a hand.

Over the years there has become an increasing need for volunteers to support/replace previous paid staff in hospitals, schools' museums and galleries to name but a few. The need to have these volunteers enables better use of resources but what about the volunteers.

During COVID volunteers were dismissed especially those over a certain age. A lot did not return, for various reasons, leaving organisations (public and private) short staffed. Also, the knowledge of those volunteers who did not return has disappeared with them.

If an organisation values, it's volunteers they vest time training them and the volunteers themselves constantly improve their value by attending workshops and learning improve their skills. Some volunteers have specialised skills from their previous occupations which is invaluable to organisations. Sadly, there are organisations who place absolutely no value on their volunteers considering them a waste of time. This latter attitude is extremely disappointing, but it exists.

Organisations who value their volunteers make sure the volunteers know that they are not "worthless but priceless". By having a volunteer coordinator, volunteers have someone they can liaise with, and this person makes sure any grievances are dealt with, also ensuring a person is not placed in a position which does not suit their skills and personality. It is essential to match the individuals' skills with the organisation's needs.

Sadly, whilst the need for volunteers is higher than it has ever been, the numbers of volunteers are decreasing. Younger people are not encouraged to volunteer unless it is to benefit their careers or their children. Most families both parents work therefore do not have time to volunteer. Newly retirees are interested in volunteering but only between holidays, which is fine as long as the organisation can cover their absences. The current average age of volunteers is 70+ and if things keep going this way, there will be very few available to give their time.

Awards and honours generally go to the Management of the organisations I believe we should be acknowledging the ordinary volunteer, make them feel what they do is worthwhile and valued.