

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitter Comments:

I have volunteered for many different causes, with Conservation Volunteers Australia, The Australian Greens and a large social support NGO in Brisbane, As a volunteer, my preference for scheduling is to book in online and to be able to cancel if other priorities emerge. I volunteer at free meal service twice a month. Last week, we were notified that the meal service is being cancelled due to concerns about "volunteer safety" as a couple responses to a survey said the location of the service was a safety issue, and occasional verbal aggression from clients who use the service. Volunteers have now been notified the service is being cancelled and the volunteers are no longer needed, displacing 150+ volunteers who have been involved for 1-7 years. Risks are always involved when working with people, especially marginalised, traumatized people, but cancelling the service due to risk is excessive, as there have been no critical incidents and QPS have never been required. Volunteers are well supported with debriefs, 10+ volunteers and 2 staff in attendance and access to an Employee Assistance Program. Volunteers are very hurt by these actions, concerned for the community and are searching for other after-hours volunteer options, but they are limited as many are not taking new volunteers. I have found that whenever I am volunteering for an organisation, I feel a strong sense of connection to the coordinator or whoever is working there. When there is a staff change, my sense of connection is impacted. I volunteer as it gives me a purpose and I meet new people. I like when volunteer organisations hold social events to build a sense of belonging.