

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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| <b>Submitted by:</b>       | Meals on Wheels Cairns                     |
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| <b>Submitter Comments:</b> |  |



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**Cairns**

**\*\*Submission to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland**

**On Behalf of Cairns Meals on Wheels\*\***

**\*\*1. Enhancing Volunteer Processes\*\***

Cairns Meals on Wheels has made significant strides in streamlining volunteer engagement and reducing administrative burdens. To build on these achievements, we suggest the following constructive improvements:

- **\*\*Expand Universal Registration Systems\*\***: Introducing a centralised volunteer ID system could greatly reduce repetitive paperwork across various organisation's, enhancing the overall volunteer experience.
- **\*\*Implement AI-Assisted Volunteer Matching\*\***: Developing a digital tool to align volunteers with suitable roles based on their skills, availability, and interests could optimise role assignments and satisfaction.
- **\*\*Streamline Digital Onboarding\*\***: Utilising QR codes for quick access to online registration and instructional resources would facilitate a smoother onboarding process for new volunteers.
- **\*\*Establish Mentorship Programs\*\***: Creating a structured buddy system that pairs new volunteers with experienced team members could provide invaluable hands-on training and support.

**\*\*2. Increasing Volunteer Engagement and Recognition\*\***

Recognising that volunteers are essential to community service; we propose strategies to enhance engagement:

- **\*\*Create Recognition Programs\*\***: Community awards, appreciation events, and partnerships with local businesses to offer discounts and incentives can foster a culture of appreciation and recognition.

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Cnr Scott & Severin Sts Parramatta Park Q 4870





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- **\*\*Offer Flexible Volunteering Options\*\***: Providing one-time or micro-volunteering opportunities tailored for busy professionals and students would expand participation and inclusivity.
- **\*\*Enhance Social and Professional Development\*\***: Organising networking events, skill-building workshops, and cross-training opportunities would contribute to personal and professional growth for volunteers.
- **\*\*Introduce Skill Exchange Initiatives\*\***: Allowing volunteers to share their expertise in exchange for valuable training and experience would promote mutual benefit and knowledge sharing.

### **\*\*3. Encouraging Youth Involvement\*\***

Engaging senior school students in volunteering is vital for cultivating future community leaders. We recommend the following initiatives:

- **\*\*Initiate School-Based Volunteer Challenges\*\***: Friendly competitions among schools can spark enthusiasm and encourage greater participation in volunteering.
- **\*\*Provide Career-Aligned Volunteering Opportunities\*\***: Offering structured volunteering options related to students' future career aspirations, such as logistics, marketing, or social work, would foster interest and professional growth.
- **\*\*Facilitate Family Volunteering Programs\*\***: Encouraging parents and teens to volunteer together can strengthen community bonds and promote familial engagement.
- **\*\*Empower Youth-Led Initiatives\*\***: Utilising student-led social media campaigns to attract younger volunteers can increase visibility and participation in volunteering activities.

### **\*\*4. Strengthening Pathways to Employment\*\***

Recognising the pivotal role of volunteering in workforce development, we suggest several initiatives:

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- **\*\*Develop Employment Transition Programs\*\***: Creating structured pathways from volunteer work to paid employment can help volunteers successfully transition into the workforce.
- **\*\*Expand Government-Supported Training\*\***: Collaborating with businesses to fund training initiatives that lead to employment credentials can enhance job readiness for volunteers.
- **\*\*Facilitate Job Network Collaborations\*\***: Aligning volunteering programs with workforce re-entry initiatives can support long-term unemployed individuals and assist in their transition back to work.
- **\*\*Provide Targeted Volunteer Opportunities\*\***: Offering practical roles for retirees and unemployed individuals, such as food preparation, delivery, and facility maintenance, can engage diverse community members meaningfully.
- **\*\*Encourage Engagement of Semi-Retired Volunteers\*\***: Inviting older individuals to participate in meaningful volunteer work can enrich their lives while leveraging their skills and experience.
- **\*\*Introduce Government Incentives for Older Volunteers\*\***: Implementing financial incentives, such as small stipends or tax benefits, would encourage semi-retired and retired individuals to engage in volunteering activities.

Cairns Meals on Wheels appreciates the existing government support for volunteer data management. We advocate for ongoing collaboration to enhance volunteering opportunities and create lasting, positive impacts within our community.

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