

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission – Queensland Government Inquiry into Volunteering

Let's begin by reframing the conversation around an organisations value, sustainability and impact and change the narrative from “not for profit” or “charity” to “For Purpose” organisations.

- “Not-for-profit” describes what an organisation doesn't do i.e. making profit. instead of focussing on their mission, impact and values, this is restrictive and limiting language.
- “For-purpose” highlights a commitment to the mission and commitment to making a difference by creating social, environmental or community impact, not just to avoid making a profit.
- Shifting from ‘not-for-profit’ to “for-purpose’ highlights an organisation’s mission and impact rather than what it lacks. This positive framing attracts funding, volunteers and corporate partnerships, encourages sustainable growth, modernises the sector’s image and strengthen advocacy efforts, reinforcing that these organisations exist to create meaningful social change.
- Encourage organisations to be more “business-like” – This is best summarised by Dan Pallotta’s TED talk - https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pallotta_the_way_we_think_about_charity_is_dead_wroing
 - Public education is essential – “for-purpose’ organisations must be judged by ‘impact’ and **not** by ‘overheads’.
- **Incentivising** or rewarding volunteers to provide their time through government incentives -
 - reduced rego, free public transport or active travel (bike hire) for those travelling to undertake volunteer shifts.
 - allowances for power used for home offices,
- **Removing** TAFE and higher education fees for recognised courses which will increase volunteer's capacity and impact - ie Cert IV in Training and Assessment, Cert 3 in Aged Care, First Aid etc.
 - For younger volunteers this provides additional pathways to employment, whilst injecting youthful energy and enthusiasm into ‘For Purpose’ organisations. This will provide a positive impact on the existing volunteer workforce, as well as enhancing intergenerational relationships.
 - Additional skills will equip older volunteers with increased capacity to train new recruits and enhance the quality of care and support provided by an organisation.
 - Volunteers will experience greater confidence in their ability, enhancing retention leading to higher engagement. This adds to feelings of value and empowerment, fostering a greater sense of purpose.

- These qualifications will assist with meeting regulatory and funding requirements, enhancing standards of service delivery.
- Overall, higher qualifications create better community outcomes, higher quality support, leading to better physical, emotional and social well-being for volunteers and beneficiaries.
- **Providing** further incentives for people who wish to undertake leadership positions in 'For Purpose' organisations.
 - By opening pathways for people to step into leadership roles, the effectiveness and efficiency of organisations will increase, deepening their community impact.
 - To assist transferring the skills of retired professionals in the areas of administration, accounting, governance and operational management, enabling them to mentor emerging 'For Purpose' leaders.
- **Overarching recognition** by all government departments of charity status regardless of policy.
 - Gold Coast Waterways Authority's policy deems a NFP which provides benefits to anyone outside their organisation is "commercial", and is subject to the payment of commercial fees when applying for permits –
 - eg, Cycling Without Age which provides free trishaw rides to the elderly and people with disability is deemed to be commercial because it provides rides to those who aren't volunteers in their organisation. It's passengers are classified as 'third party' and any organisation which provides benefits to a third party is a "Commercial" organisation.
- **Reduction** of governmental red tape to cut through bureaucracy (all levels of government).
 - Many volunteer hours are employed battling bureaucracy (eg – Cycling Without Age Gold Coast (CWAGC) V Gold Coast Waterways Authority). Although knowing GCWA's policy was flawed and incorrectly interpreted by professional bureaucrats, many volunteers wanted to give in for the sake of their own time and sanity. This would have had lasting detrimental effects on service delivery to the marginal groups who receive the benefit of CWAGC's services.
 - Situations such as these cause stress for volunteers and unnecessarily impede service delivery. A more common-sense approach when applying 'policy' is warranted and departmental staff must be provided with the authority to exercise discretion.
- **Extending Work Cover** to protect volunteers whilst serving the community in lieu of Volunteer Insurance resulting in:
 - Consistent and reliable coverage will reduce the gaps which exist in volunteer insurance.
 - Volunteers receiving the same rights and protections as paid workers, including coverage for medical expenses, lost income (where applicable), and rehabilitation in case of injury.

- Eased burden of the cost of ineffective private volunteer insurance.
 - A centralised government-supported safety net, easing financial pressure on 'For-Purpose' organisations.
 - Greater incentive for potential volunteers, knowing they have strong legal and financial protection. This is vitally important for older volunteers and those with roles involving physical risks – Cycling, community transport, aged care support etc.
 - Equity and recognition of volunteer's contribution treats them with the same respect as paid employees, reinforcing the idea that their work is valued and supported at a systemic level.
 - Clearer definitions and protection under WH&S legislation, reducing legal uncertainty.
 - Streamlined claims process and reduced liability concerns for 'For Purpose' organisations because WorkCover could handle claims instead of relying on organisational resources.
- **Better access** to relevant government departments - Dept of Seniors, Disability and ATSI, Dept Health, Transport & Main Roads, Communities, Housing & Digital Economy (for the IT), Tourism Innovation and Sport, Environment & Science (Eco friendly transport), Emergency Services resulting in:
 - Stronger advocacy and policy influence, ensuring government decisions align with community needs.
 - Improved funding and grant opportunities to provide additional and essential resources for sustaining and expanding impact. Grants which enable organisations (especially fledgling organisations) to pay for labour (admin, marketing etc) must be included.
 - Efficient collaboration and service delivery to streamline processes, reduce bureaucracy and improve service coordination.
 - Recognition and sector support – fostering government recognition of the sector's value, leading to greater support, partnerships, and policy consideration.
- **Access** to government fleet discounts for vehicle lease or purchases intended for organisational use in conducting its operations.
 - Cost reduction for organisations, allowing more resources to essential components of service delivery.
- **Regular spotlight** on the work of 'For Profit' organisations.
 - Area specific, dependent upon community needs being addressed and organisational activity. eg Palm Beach Rotary Club may be focusing upon different needs to that of Palm Island Rotary Club.

- Advertise the community benefits provided and regularly highlight a specific organisation’s work driving greater awareness, engagement and support to assist organisations create a meaningful impact in their communities. – eg Billboards focussing on a local ‘for-purpose’ organisation (eg a billboard on the M1 – “Pimpama Landcare Group planted 1,000 trees to beautify your journey along the M1”)
- Volunteers reaching a certain number of hours being eligible for
 - Discounted memberships to gyms/sporting clubs/RSL etc.
 - Free public transport at all times, not just off peak.
 - Discounted prices for proactive health services – massage, yoga, pilates etc.

Conclusion: Volunteers are the backbone of Queensland’s communities, providing essential services and strengthening social cohesion. Volunteer organisations play a critical role in delivering community programs, supporting vulnerable populations and enhancing the overall wellbeing of Queenslanders.

However, our organisations and our volunteers face increasing challenges, including funding constraints, volunteer recruitment and retention issues, and growing service demands.

Cost of living pressures have multiple effects upon the volunteer workforce, both directly and indirectly whereby they are providing child-minding for their extended families because parents cannot afford the costs of childcare. This reduces a volunteer’s energy levels and availability to serve their community.

To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of volunteering, strategic support through funding, policy development and capacity-building initiatives must be provided, ensured and ongoing.

Volunteers are an investment which strengthens community resilience and delivers significant economic and social benefits.

By prioritising the support of volunteer organisations and their workforce, the Government reinforces its commitment to a stronger, more connected and more inclusive Queensland.

On behalf of Cycling Without Age Gold Coast, we thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission for this Inquiry.

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