

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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| Submission No: | 101 |
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| Publication: | Making the submission and your name public |
| Attachments: | See attachment |
| Submitter Comments: | |

Personal Submission for

State Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

Peter D Stock



Personal Details:

- Long term Volunteer – Volunteer Marine Rescue Qld (21 years) and previously Australian Volunteer Coast Guard (6 Years)
- Life Member
- National Medal

Roles in these organisations:

- Vessel Master
- Secretary
- Management Committee member
- Duty officer
- Operations Manager (VMRAQ) (Paid and Voluntary role)

Initial Motivation for Volunteering:

- To contribute to the community in an area of interest that I held (Boating, Vessel ownership and safety).
- To acquire new knowledge and gain skills from others.
- To build a social network with like minded people in an area outside of my paid profession.

Present changes to this specific area of Volunteering (Marine Rescue)

- Following a Blue Water review of Marine Rescue Services in Qld, the previous Qld Govt has implemented the formation of a Govt Run (hosted by the QPS) Marine Rescue Qld.
- This, in my view, flawed and inefficient process has been underway for 6 years.
- The goal is to amalgamate some 46 Volunteer units from VMR and AVCG into one unified rescue service with a more secure funding and resourcing into the future.

What I have personally gained from Volunteering

- Detailed Industry accepted commercial Vessel Qualifications through industry accepting training RTO.
- A sense of achievement, contribution and purpose.
- Peer social support for personal development and social interaction removed from my normal working life.

What Volunteering in Marine Rescue has looked like over the last 20 years

- Self-determination, a level of independence allowing a group of individuals to pool their collective knowledge and skills to achieve goals, be they Search and Rescue, building Projects, maintenance and fundraising.
- This self-determination has built a sense of ownership, belonging and respect for the assets we have gained and built.
- A level of respect from other agencies (QPS, Ambulance, Govt local and state), and the community, for the level of service we provide and the expertise we have in achieving the goals.
- Pride in our shared heritage and standing in our local communities.

How Volunteering in Marine Rescue has changed over the last 20 years

- Increased regulatory oversight from a myriad of Government organisations.
- Increased difficulty with OH&S compliance and Insurance protection for the Volunteer and the Volunteer gained assets.
- Increased pressure to remain current in a similar manner to full time paid employees, but in a part time availability.
- Increased compliance documentation, mandatory imposed personal regulation and costs in time and money to maintain these.
- Increased imposed authority and direction.
- Restrictions imposed upon decision making and overt risk assessment dictating all aspects of operations, in what can be a dangerous environment, is stifling the expertise of the volunteers and diluting the service delivery to the community.

The bureaucratisation of Volunteer delivery services by Government and its effect on Volunteers:

- Loss of independence and autonomy.
- Loss of respect for the collective knowledge gained over decades.

- Imposition of a top-down authoritarian control by paid employees with little or no knowledge of the specific area of operation or experience of volunteering.
- Appointment of Managers wearing uniforms with badges of rank that are not earned through experience and length of service, imposing direction to Volunteers that do not respect their authority.
- Whilst the security in funding and the promise of less compliance and administrative burden (yet to realised) is a laudable goal, many Volunteers have lost their sense of ownership of the assets and have developed, in some cases, a sense of entitlement that the new Govt administered Rescue organisation should provide for all aspects of the Volunteer journey.
- Imposition of more complex and bureaucratic processes to satisfy reporting and oversighting compliance that is viewed as largely unnecessary
- Less effective use of funding. Volunteers by necessity are used to producing \$1.50 value out of every dollar.

Final Word!

- Having had the opportunity to interact with Volunteers up and down the Qld Coast, I recall at a recent management meeting in the Whitsunday when a long-term Volunteer (Over 40 years in Marine Rescue) sighed and stated:

“This just isn’t fun anymore!”

- And therein lies the Crux in my view, we VOLUNTEER because we wish to make a difference with our free/spare time, but at some point, it must be enjoyable, if the compliance cost, imposition of bureaucracy and a lack of respect for our knowledge, skills and opinions gets to a level where it:

“This just isn’t fun anymore!”

These self-starting, self-motivated people will leave to find other fulfilling opportunities that are enjoyable.

This will be a huge cost to the community in loss of service and huge cost to Government as then these roles will have to be performed by paid employees of various agencies.