

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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From a surf life saving perspective, we have continued to see a decline in volunteerism in this area, particularly in the last 10 years. The Wide Bay area suffers from the draw of young people down to larger cities, e.g. Sunshine Coast and Brisbane, for university, so once our youth turn a certain age we lose them and we often do not see them return or if they do, they come back as parents of young children with limited capacity to volunteer. The area also suffers from the lack of employment, so there a more fly in fly out and drive in drive out workers who then have limited capacity to volunteer as well. When you add that to the social demographic changes which has seen changes to business trading hours on weekends which limits the available pool of people to volunteer, competition with other sports which are increasing their seasons for longer and longer, cutting in to the surf life saving summer season, and an increasing sense of entitlement and an expectation from a younger general of people that believe they should not have to give up their own time, we continue to see a heavy reliance on the older generation of members, some of which have been in our club volunteering for more than 20 or 30 years. The generation of volunteers left are also becoming more and more bombarded with regulations and administrative requirements which are becoming more and more burdensome which for some of our members means they work full time paid jobs and need to spend the equivalent of other full time job unpaid working to meet the requirements demanded of them by branch, state and national requirements, leading to further loss of members when they've just had enough. Add to that the costs borne by members out of their own pockets to provide volunteer services which is rapidly becoming unaffordable in the current cost of living issues. Unless something changes drastically to support clubs or provide incentives for people to volunteer, it will continue to decline and clubs will be forced to close.