Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering
Submitted by: Freddy Bear Foundation (FreddyMatch)
Prepared by: Roxane Foulser-Piggott, CEO, Freddy Bear Foundation
Email address: ██████████████████
Telephone number: ████████████
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1. Introduction

FreddyMatch is an Australian-based, locally developed volunteer-matching platform and a registered charity deeply embedded in and committed to the volunteering sector. We specialise in supporting small to medium-sized organisations, for whom robust and reliable volunteer recruitment and management technology is generally out of reach.

Our mission is to make volunteering more accessible by reducing barriers to participation through community-focused, locally developed technology. We work closely with charities, volunteer resource centres, and other sector partners to build genuine, lasting partnerships that strengthen the volunteering ecosystem.

Despite our strong presence and excellent reputation in Queensland, we are increasingly seeing government entities procure large-scale, unwieldy volunteer or staff management platforms, rather than leveraging trusted, local solutions that communities already use and value. This approach can inadvertently exclude smaller organisations that lack the capacity to adapt to complex systems.

FreddyMatch provides a streamlined, community-driven alternative, ensuring that volunteer management remains accessible, user-friendly, and tailored to the needs of Queensland's diverse volunteering landscape.

Peak volunteering bodies are increasingly relying on FreddyMatch technology, including the peak body in South Australia to enhance youth engagement and the peak body in the Northern Territory to support First Nations engagement. This demonstrates the adaptability and effectiveness of locally developed solutions in addressing key challenges across different communities.

Through our work with over 400 organisations and 30,000 volunteers, we have gained significant insights into the challenges facing both volunteers and organisations. This submission provides our perspective on the current state of volunteering in Queensland, the barriers to participation, and recommendations for improving volunteer engagement across diverse communities.

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2. The Current State and Value of Volunteering in Queensland

Volunteering provides substantial economic, social, and community benefits. It strengthens communities, enhances well-being, and serves as a critical workforce in sectors such as aged care, disability services, and emergency response.

However, volunteer participation rates have been declining, particularly among young people and time-poor professionals. Through our data, we have identified trends showing that volunteers are increasingly seeking:

- Flexible and short-term opportunities that fit around their schedules.
- Pathways to employment and education, particularly among youth.
- Corporate-supported volunteering where employees can engage through workplace initiatives.

The future of volunteering in Queensland depends on addressing these needs through technology-driven solutions that are locally designed and trusted by the sector.

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3. Barriers to Volunteer Participation

FreddyMatch has identified several key challenges faced by volunteers and organisations, including:

- Administrative and regulatory burdens: Many organisations lack the resources to manage volunteers effectively, leading to inefficiencies in recruitment and engagement.
- Lack of accessible opportunities: Volunteers struggle to find roles that align with their skills and interests.
- Youth disengagement: Young people often perceive volunteering as bureaucratic or irrelevant to their career aspirations.
- Corporate participation hurdles: Many businesses face difficulties in finding suitable volunteering opportunities for employees.
- Inconsistent digital infrastructure: Organisations rely on outdated methods, making it difficult to track and engage volunteers effectively.
- Over-reliance on large-scale technology systems: Many government-funded volunteer management platforms are costly, overly complex, and difficult for small and medium-sized organisations to implement effectively.

FreddyMatch addresses these challenges by simplifying volunteer discovery, enhancing engagement through automated matching algorithms, and reducing administrative burdens for organisations. Importantly, we offer a locally developed and trusted alternative to large-scale systems that may not serve the unique needs of Queensland's community-based volunteering sector.

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4. Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteering

Certain demographics face unique challenges in volunteering, including youth, First Nations communities, people with disabilities, and individuals in regional areas. Our initiatives in youth volunteering have demonstrated that tailored approaches can significantly increase engagement.

For example, our work with alternative education programs and justice-involved youth has shown that volunteering can serve as a stepping stone to employment. Integrating

volunteering with structured career pathways will further increase engagement from these groups.

We recommend:

- Expanding volunteering-as-employment pathways for youth.
- Increasing First Nations-led volunteer programs that are culturally appropriate.
- Enhancing digital accessibility for regional and remote volunteers.

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5. Government Support and Opportunities for Growth

While existing government programs support volunteering, further improvements could significantly enhance participation.

Key recommendations include:

- Prioritising locally developed, community-driven technology solutions rather than outsourcing to large-scale platforms that are not tailored to Queensland's volunteering landscape.
- Improving funding and resources for digital volunteer management solutions, particularly those which, like FreddyMatch, focus on linking and coordinating established volunteer-based organisations and coordinators through technology designed to operate from the grassroots level.
- Reducing red tape for organisations to recruit and onboard volunteers.
- Creating a statewide volunteer database that integrates existing platforms, including FreddyMatch, for streamlined recruitment and reporting.
- Providing additional incentives for businesses to support corporate volunteering programs.

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6. Leveraging Brisbane 2032 for Long-Term Volunteering Growth

The Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games present a unique opportunity to drive long-term volunteering engagement. Past host cities have shown that successful volunteer programs lead to sustained community participation beyond the event itself.

FreddyMatch recommends:

- Establishing a centralised, technology-driven volunteer recruitment platform for Brisbane 2032, integrating existing digital solutions to ensure scalability.
- Creating post-Games transition programs to retain event volunteers in community organisations.
- Engaging youth early through schools and universities to foster long-term volunteering habits.

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7. Emergency Volunteering and Disaster Response

FreddyMatch has worked closely with Volunteering Gold Coast to support disaster response volunteering in Southeast Queensland. Our experience highlights the need for a more structured, real-time digital system to coordinate volunteers effectively during emergencies.

Key recommendations:

- Establishing a statewide digital emergency volunteer registry that automatically matches volunteers to available roles based on location, training, and experience.
- Providing a consistent, scalable solution across the many charities that work in disaster-affected areas.
- Increasing preparedness training for volunteers before disasters occur.
- Enhancing integration of spontaneous volunteers into formal response efforts.

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8. Recommendations and Conclusion

To strengthen volunteering in Queensland, we recommend the following key actions:

1. Prioritise local, community-driven technology solutions that are trusted across the sector.
2. Expand pathways for youth volunteering by integrating volunteering into education and employment initiatives.
3. Reduce administrative burdens for organisations through streamlined onboarding and compliance processes.
4. Develop corporate volunteering incentives to increase participation from the business sector.
5. Leverage Brisbane 2032 to create a long-term volunteer engagement strategy.
6. Improve disaster response volunteering through real-time digital coordination and training programs.

FreddyMatch welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the Queensland Government to implement these recommendations and enhance the impact of volunteering across the state.