

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

**Submission No:** 147  
**Submitted by:** Toowong and District Historical Society Inc.  
**Publication:**

**Attachments:** No attachment

### **Submitter Comments:**

As the secretary of the Toowong and District Historical Society Inc (TDHS), I am providing this submission on its behalf. TDHS is an incorporated not-for-profit local community history organisation which was established in 2003. While we have many followers on our Facebook account, we struggle to find financial members. The number of locals who take up membership is impacted due to the demographics of the local area. Toowong is an area where the demographic is a mixture of Commercial and Residential B, with numerous high-rise units, while parts of West Toowong is Residential A. Those residents who have young families are usually families where both parents work in order to afford to pay the mortgage on their property or to pay the rent (if leased). Many of the property prices are over the \$1 million mark, and sometimes as high as \$2million and over. House weekly rents are \$650 to \$850.00 per week. Consequently, due to this financial pressure and the usual inflation-driven cost of living, people aged 50 to 55 and younger are less likely to become active members and attend our monthly meetings which are held on a Friday. Older members of retirement age (60 years and over) do not necessarily want to join a local community organisation. Many become grey nomads, buy a caravan or campervan and set off travelling Australia and the world. Other older residents relocate out of the local area to where their grown-up children live so they can assist with taking their grandchildren to school and collecting them afterwards, and minding them while their parents work, thus saving money that otherwise would be spent on OSC (Out of School Care). Some actually move interstate to do this. Others downsize their house and move into either a unit/townhouse or into a retirement village. Apart from AVEO at Taringa, there are no such retirement villages in the Toowong area. Therefore, people who choose this option move out of the local area. Downsizing has the advantage of not having to walk up and down stairs (avoiding the risk of falls when one is elderly) and of the expense of upkeep, maintenance and gardening, especially if widowed. Retirement villages have buses to shopping centres, so one can sell the family car as it is no longer required. The retirement village arranges trips and outings and there are also leisure activities on site. So, one does not have to leave the premises to create new friends and seek entertainment and things to do. Downsizing also has the advantage that a person can move \$300.00 into their superannuation account. So people choose to take advantage of downsizing to build up their superannuation nest-egg to last them longer in their old age. Currently, an analysis of unit and townhouse property values show that a unit or townhouse often costs more than the value of that person's property. Consequently, choosing to move from a house in Toowong to a unit/townhouse is not actually downsizing, but upsizing and does not fulfil the downsizing provisions of superannuation. Many people when they do downsize, move out of Toowong to elsewhere. They even move out of Brisbane, often to coastal areas at the Gold Coast, Bribie Island, the North Coast, or even to other locations which are attractive to retirees. A friend of mine has just moved to Sydney so her family can assist her in her old age. These issues have impacted upon community organisations in Toowong and I have noted that groups such as Probus, Rotary and National Seniors (which no longer exists in both Toowong and Indooroopilly) have been impacted by these demographics over the years. Unless an organisation recruits members, they won't have a group of people to source volunteers from. This is the issue which TDHS is now faced with. In the past year our group has lost several members due to various reasons: --one died; another moved into a nursing home aged 100 years and one month; one moved to Sandstone Point, near Bribie; another person had a clash of commitments and resigned; another obtained employment and also resigned; a committee member, aged 86, developed severe health problems and now uses a walker; another committee member's husband

became very ill and now she can only attend if she can book a carer. Unfortunately, we have no-one in the current membership putting their hand up to replace these two people on the committee. Succession is not happening: we have very few younger people interested in local history joining up because those who are interested also work. One young member who has joined--he is in his early twenties--is training as a secondary teacher so he can only come to meetings during the semester break; and when he completes his course, he could be appointed to anywhere in Queensland. We had tried evening meetings many years ago. This did not work because younger people could not leave their young families. Quite a few of our older members did not like driving home at night, particularly in winter and they stopped attending. Ditto with meetings held on a weekend--people with families might have been interested in becoming members, but could not attend on Saturday because children played sport or learnt ballet or music. Older people wanted quality time with their families and grandchildren, and so were not available. Sundays were a problem due to people wanting to attend church in the mornings, or to go somewhere for an outing for the day. In the afternoon, it was usually the chance to work in the garden; take the dog for a walk; spend some quality time with the family; organise dinner/bbq with friends; or pop out somewhere for an outing. The above analysis of aspects of the demographics of the local area of Toowong assists with explaining why TDHS is struggling to attract members and why it is under threat of closing. And why we cannot get enough volunteers to effectively operate as we once did. I have noted that those local community societies in Brisbane who have their own premises (which allow them to house their archives) are not under as much threat as those societies that do not have their own premises. Obtaining premises is a big issue for local community history centres due to the inability of small groups to have the income stream to afford lease fees for premises. Therefore, if groups can obtain premises for meetings and to house their archives, they are more likely to attract members, and consequently volunteers.