

## Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

**Submission No:** 159  
**Submitted by:** [REDACTED]  
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**Attachments:** No attachment

### Submitter Comments:

I am a member of a small rural fire brigade and would like to offer my views regarding volunteering for this brigade. There are a variety of reasons why I volunteer, but the primary one is to protect my community from fire. Fortunately, the brigade that I am in has members that are like minded, are committed to being good team members and being well trained to respond to incidents. Note that this training is "hands on" and very practical, as distinct from the training offered by the RFS training organisation. Over the past year I have observed, and participated in, the "uplift" of the organisation – a term used by what I will term as "Headquarters (HQ)" - to describe a rearranging of roles and positions, removing and replacing staff with the statement that there will be no impact to those "at the coal face" ie the volunteers. What a disaster this has turned out to be! The re-organisation has created "silos" of expertise that have distanced experienced paid staff away from interfacing with day to day operations and contact with brigades, and increased the number of "specialist" areas that all report up different chains of command. This uplift also meant changes to the legislation and a logical step would be to start from scratch and create a framework according to defined needs, but instead we had to change existing legislation ending up with a hotch potch of bad legislation. This may have been of benefit to some areas within but certainly not the volunteers.

For some reason, HQ or its' master wanted to take control of brigade finances, and with the uplift told us that we would have a "sub-account" under the main RFSQ primary bank account whereby we would retain complete control and autonomy over our finances. This was a total lie as we assumed that our account would be a normal bank account with no change to how we operate. The sub-account is not a bank account but a "file" within the accounting software - this subterfuge shows the lack of respect that HQ has for volunteers.. Brigades can not transfer funds (unless via HQ managed process) which is one of the core needs not recognised by HQ. The financial aspect of this "uplift" has been a total failure from a brigade and volunteer perspective. HQ may say that we have a better "voice" in decision making as they have created both a financial and advisory committees with volunteer membership. The truth is that these committees are, in my opinion, restricted in what they can report on and what level of interaction that they can have with the broader volunteer community. There has been no attempt by HQ to provide improved communication platforms that would enable these committee members to gather feedback from 26,000+ volunteers. It should be noted that the advisory committee members are also under a Non Disclosure agreement regarding the releasing of any reports and minutes of meetings. These hard working volunteers are being "used" by HQ. HQ needs to change their attitude regarding the volunteers, we are their customers/clients. Without us they do not have a job. Treat us with respect, understand what we need and want, and let us do what we know how to do with minimal interference from HQ. We are not here to improve your CV.