

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission to Committee Inquiry Into Volunteering In Queensland

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Submission is made on behalf of:

Myself in having many discussions with fellow individuals and volunteers.

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I begin with our submission by stating one size does not fit all.

For too long now, we have government (local, state, and federal) praising and saying the nice feel-good things such as volunteers are the backbone of our communities Etc. but whether we are emergency services, aged care community groups, youth mentoring and so on - we are thrown into a basket and no real recognition as to what are our needs are and or what difficulties exist for the most part of each day and years. There is a very poor understanding from those who we need to rely upon for resources, guidance. etc. to simply exist as a group or to provide the work within community. I would go as far to say, the care factor and real support is a non-existence.

There is some common belief from government levels that if we as volunteers require some financial assistance, we simply write a grant application, and all of our dreams come true. This maybe for the large organisations who operate to the detriment of the smaller organisations who actually do the crucial work required within the communities. Quite often at the expense of the volunteers themselves, otherwise it does not happen.

Today the cost of volunteering is something that we find pulling us down as individuals as we find it harder and harder to find the money that is needed, once this was easily found either from business houses or our own pockets, however, it is so much more costly and impossible to do nowadays.

The reporting and operational requirements are far more demanding on the small band of individuals who have always supported in the values of giving back. Every government agency believes that the volunteers have an electronic resource equal to theirs and the numbers to waste time for hours trying to fulfill the obligations put upon the organisation. Being so called "deem eligible" – How hard can you make it for the groups and individuals.

Too many Roadblocks - Inefficiencies Inefficient Communication and Poor Processes when dealing with government bodies, truly does exist.

We do not believe that this enquiry like in the past will ensure the government understands the needs to deliver real improvements.

Those in Government need to get on the road, see the various groups, the value, the skills, the energy spent with the commitment and love these really special people do day in day out. Recognise the difference between the many organisations and the groups who swing the pick and shovel doing, rather than creating another organisation among the growing trend of being

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show ponies amongst the not for profit groups – There are groups who continually spend money time in, “have we got a deal for you”, “we can generate volunteers for your organisation”.

Nowadays we have so many groups / Governments etc. who have a package to sell as the answer to the crisis.

The shame of it. Some are even set up as not for profit groups on government funding and the wheelbarrow of goodies pushed might be;

Things like – “The best time to put in place good volunteer management systems was 10 years ago. The second-best time is right now.

How good are your records? If you can’t answer all or most of the questions above, you need better volunteer records systems.

Who’s in charge of your volunteers? Are they provided with enough resourcing (time, training, facilities, equipment, software, management support) to do the job properly?

How good are your volunteer management systems? Do volunteers get a good induction? Do you have good policies in place? Are rosters orderly and predictable? Do you make it as painless as possible to volunteer? Where are the friction points?

Do you have a recruitment strategy? Is it equitable? Does it consider the needs of volunteers alongside the needs of your organisation?”

Reputable volunteer organizations will prioritize volunteer safety by providing safe accommodation, health insurance, and emergency support. (The greater percentage of groups need support to resources not being feed as though they are a major corporation in the business)

All sounds good – like a coloured brochure nice to see but produces nothing.

This is all false and misleading. But again, money is provided to these groups, and they continue to operate at the expense of real volunteers. This should be investigated.

Our biggest challenge is the changes within community.

Our older residents who were raised with the understanding as to giving to your community are either passing or having to leave our communities. This change occurs and we often loose numbers in the community, or the younger families have different values and priority.

We understand that volunteer recruitment and retention is and always remain a significant challenge for many organisations - time constraints etc play a role but now the country regional areas are also showing that for the best part no one volunteers, we are still fortunate as when tough times happen, local disasters, we do see the community spirit of old come out.

Over the many years I have never experienced the feeling of being disengaged as a Volunteer as you are made feel today. Is this simply because we are in 2025, I believe this is not with the organisation but with the levels of government and the bureaucracy of frustrations we are being buried in.

Why would people want to do what we do when for most nowadays we feel undervalued and or unsupported.

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Also, it is a generational thing to the lack of recognition and cooperation from community members, as I do not believe the majority of the younger generations understand this side to life and what it's all about and what it does mean to the community. (Too much today is only recognised as a value when it is lost)

Peoples' values and priorities and what we understand to the values of our goals in life truly are a real issue to so many failings within our communities today, some circles of government say that the decline has been since 2010 and Covid (yes let's play the old - another thing covid destroyed) all played a hand. However, the truth is, we have been deteriorating since the early nineties, Lifestyles changed dramatically leaving everyone with less time for voluntary activities or so they thought, it was seen as not being necessary. Everything in life become disposable, the plastic credit become available to everyone whether you had the money or not, volunteers become paid positions and then when we can no longer sustain this lifestyle the change required for the community in general to understand what volunteering, this, has made the time factor and the understanding to volunteering, so much more difficult.

Real change is needed, right from the family unit at home into our schooling and our work lives.

Otherwise, you will still be asking the questions in another 20 years' time.

It has to be a culture!

There is a whole new volunteer workforce out there if you work out who they are, how to reach them, and how to attract them to your cause, it is not going to occur if the life values are not taught, understood and respected.

In finishing.

As, The Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee, Let me ask you this.

-Do you believe that volunteers are important even crucial to many services within community like government services, charities and not-for-profits, informal community groups, Etc.?

-Do you as a committee member actually volunteer time to your community?

-When are the little people, who do the real volunteering ever going to be heard and receive the respect due that will provide to ensure they feel valued and supported.

While we are not as such providing a submission, we are providing our past and current experiences, motivations and challenges for us as volunteers being involved in local organisations.

To make recommendations for addressing these challenges and improving the volunteering experience would be like appealing to Caesar.

As volunteers we invite you to visit the many communities to learn and develop real change that is required today and into the future.

When will it happen?

Ross McClure

19/02/2025.