

## Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

**Submission No:** 185  
**Submitted by:** The Boys' Brigade Queensland  
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### Submitter Comments:

The Boys' Brigade Queensland is a youth organisation dedicated to developing boys and young men into responsible, resilient, and community-minded individuals through structured programs, mentorship, and community service, in partnership with local Churches spread around Queensland. Our mission is achieved through the dedication of volunteers who invest their time and energy into the next generation. The success of The Boys' Brigade, as a youth development organisation, since its entry to Queensland in 1897 has been driven by the passion and dedication of volunteers, spread around Queensland and working in various roles - whether at a: local level, where all leaders and support roles in local groups are filled by volunteers regional level, where volunteers step up and coordinate the work of the Boys' Brigade across their geographic area, organising and running various events aimed at supporting local volunteers and providing a suite of activities for Boys' Brigade members that are not feasible at a local level state level, where other than two paid part-time employees (who focus on administration and development), all functions performed by our state organisation (whether by serving on the Board, various administration and compliance activities, running programs and events in support of local groups, training leaders, etc) are all carried out by volunteers. This reliance even goes so far as to rely on volunteers to develop, maintain and operate our campsite at Atkinson's Dam. Regardless of the level of the organisation that our volunteers work in (and many offer their time at various levels of the organisation), our volunteers express their desire to volunteer in terms of being motivated by a sense of duty, a desire to engage in faith-based service, and being inspired by the opportunity to positively influence young people's lives - often in a similar way to what they, themselves, experienced in Boys' Brigade (or in similar organisation). Our volunteers also regularly indicate that by serving their local communities through volunteering in the Boys' Brigade, they enjoy the camaraderie and personal development associated with leadership roles within the organisation. Without the support of countless and varied volunteers, the work of the Boys' Brigade, much like many other children and youth organisations, would not be possible. While this reliance on volunteers does present a range of challenges, there are many benefits of being an organisation reliant on Volunteers: ...Volunteers find personal fulfilment by contributing to their local community and knowing that they are investing in future generations through skill development, providing leadership opportunities, and creating stronger social connections...Our organisation experiences an increased capacity to deliver programs, strengthened community ties, and sustained operation that would not be possible if we simply relied on what we can pay for...The communities we work in experience enhanced social cohesion, reduced social isolation, and opportunities for youth development...Queensland, ultimately, experiences a stronger civil society, reduced burden on government resources, and economic contributions through skill-building and workforce preparedness. Having said all of that, countless barriers exist, making sourcing and keeping volunteers difficult: - Excessive Legislative and Regulatory Burdens: Compliance requirements (such as Blue Card processes, WH&S/Risk Management compliance, and training requirements associated with various outdoor/sporting activities), can be time-consuming and deter potential volunteers Work-Life Balance Pressures: Volunteers often juggle full-time jobs and family responsibilities, limiting their availability Financial Constraints: Volunteers face personal costs related to transport, uniforms, and training Limited Awareness and Engagement: Many potential volunteers are unaware of opportunities or feel uncertain about their ability to contribute effectively While it is important to maintain an environment where the children and young people who participate in our programs, as well as the volunteer adults themselves, are safe and protected

from potential harm, it is important to ensure that the regulatory and compliance environment that is imposed on volunteer organisation accounts for the fact that this is not paid work, with paid hours to complete these tasks. A balance must be struck that creates and maintains a safe environment for participants and volunteer leaders while not being unnecessarily burdensome and imposing undue requirements on volunteers to comply for no real benefit. In addition to the above barriers that volunteers face, as an Organisation, there are various challenges that The Boys' Brigade Queensland faces:

- Retention and Succession Planning: Many long-term volunteers experience burnout, and recruiting younger volunteers remains a challenge
- Training and Support: Adequate induction and ongoing training are essential for confidence and competency
- Digital Literacy and Access: The increasing reliance on digital platforms for volunteer coordination poses a challenge for older volunteers
- Young Volunteers often struggle to balance study, work, and volunteering and would benefit from structured, short-term volunteering opportunities
- Rural and Regional Volunteers face challenges in travel and resource accessibility and experience an inherent need for better digital infrastructure and support to promote remote engagement
- Volunteers with Disabilities require accessible venues, adaptive technologies, and inclusive training approaches that allow them to volunteer in meaningful and constructive ways that are in alignment with their reasons for wanting to volunteer

our organisation, at a state level, often requires volunteers with specialised knowledge/skills (such as bookkeeping, social media marketing, etc), and it is difficult to identify people with these particular skills who are available to support community organisations through volunteering. Finally, regardless of the level of our organisation, or whether we are talking about the volunteers or the organisation itself, a massive ongoing challenge is having available the financial resources necessary to support, resource and develop volunteers to make meaningful impacts in their local communities. Any funding that The Boys' Brigade Queensland uses to operate comes from member contributions or volunteers self-funding to cover costs associated with their volunteering. Available grants are either specific purpose and/or often tied to such a narrow focus/agenda that they preclude most mainstream volunteer organisations from accessing them. Further, to apply for many grants, hoops such as only organisations with DGR/Charity status can apply. This is a massive impediment to organisations such as The Boys' Brigade Queensland from being able to manage, support, equip and resource its volunteers as it is difficult to access "general purpose funds" that simply allow an organisation to manage their volunteers. The Boys' Brigade Queensland appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion. Volunteers are vital to our mission, and it is essential to address barriers and enhance support mechanisms to sustain and grow the volunteering sector. We urge the committee to consider our feedback and recommendations to ensure a thriving and resilient volunteer community in Queensland.