

## Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

**Submission No:** 192  
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Personal Submission for

## **State Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland**

### **Personal Details**

- Volunteer Marine Rescue Southport (VMR Southport) - Active Member – 28 years.
- Volunteer Marine Rescue Qld State Vice President – 2 years.
- Volunteer Marine Rescue Qld State Councillor – 18 plus years.
- Life Member - VMR Southport.
- National Medal.

### **Roles in these Organisations**

- Vessel Master.
- Squadron Operations Controller – 20 plus years.
- Squadron President – 4 years.
- Midweek Controller.

### **Reason for Volunteering**

- To contribute to the community in a worthwhile field of interest.
- To acquire new knowledge and gain skills from others.
- To source new friendships with like-minded people.
- Social aspects

### **Present changes to this specific area of volunteering (Marine Rescue)**

- Following a Blue Water Review of Marine Rescue Services in Qld, the previous Qld Labor Government implemented the formation of a Government run (hosted by the Qld Police Service) entity, called Marine Rescue Qld.
- This inefficient process has been underway for 6 years, with Marine Rescue Qld only being formed officially in 2024.
- The goal was to amalgamate 46 volunteer-based statewide Marine Rescue units across Volunteer Marine Rescue and the Australian Volunteer Coastguard into one unified rescue service with more secure funding and resourcing into the future.

### **What have I personally gained from volunteering?**

- Industry accepted Commercial vessel qualifications.
- A sense of achievement, contribution and purpose.
- Peer social support, personal development skills, and social interaction outside of a normal working life.

### **What volunteering in Marine Rescue has looked like over the last 20 years**

- The allowance of a group of individuals to pool their collective knowledge and skills to achieve goals in Marine Search and Rescue, fundraising, vessel repair and maintenance, building projects etc
- This self-determination has built a sense of ownership, belonging, and respect for the assets we have gained and built.
- A level of respect from other agencies - QPS, the Qld Ambulance Service, Maritime Safety Qld etc, and in the community, for the level of service we provide, and the expertise we have in achieving our goals.
- Pride in our shared experiences and standing in our local communities.

### **How Volunteering in Marine Rescue has changed over the last 20 years**

- Increased regulatory oversight from a myriad of Government Organisations.
- Increased difficulty with OH&S compliance, and Insurance protection for the volunteers and the volunteer gained assets.
- Increased pressure to remain current in a similar manner to full time paid employees, but in a part time availability.
- Increased compliance documentation, mandatory imposed personal regulation, and costs in time and money to maintain these.
- Increased imposed authority and direction.
- Restrictions imposed upon decision making and overt risk assessment, dictating all aspects of operations, in what can be a dangerous environment, is stifling the expertise of the volunteers and diluting the service delivery to the community.

### **The impact on volunteer delivery services by Government and its effect on volunteers**

- Loss of independence and autonomy.
- Loss of respect for the collective knowledge gained over decades.
- Imposition of a top-down authoritarian control by paid employees with little or no knowledge of the specific area of operation, or experience of volunteering.
- Appointment of Managers wearing uniforms with badges of rank that are not earned through experience and length of service, imposing direction to volunteers that do not respect their authority.
- Whilst the security in funding and the promise of less compliance and administrative burden (yet to be realised) is a laudable goal, many volunteers have lost their sense of ownership of the assets they have worked so hard to earn.
- Imposition of more complex and bureaucratic processes to satisfy reporting and oversighting compliance that is viewed as largely unnecessary.
- Less effective use of Government funding. Marine Rescue Qld appear to have no control over their budgets.

### **In closure**

- If the Qld government wants to attract and retain volunteers, they must stop recruiting highly paid bureaucrats, and Consultants, who don't listen to volunteers, who have little or no volunteer, or industry experience, and are only in the job for the lucrative pay cheque.
- Our volunteers are worth way more than that and deserve better.
- Volunteers give their time because they wish to make a difference with their free/spare time, therefore, it must be enjoyable.
- Compliance costs, imposition of bureaucracy, and a lack of respect of volunteers' knowledge, skills and opinions are not acceptable.
- If this continues, these self-starting, self-motivated people will leave to find other fulfilling opportunities that are enjoyable.
- This will be a huge cost to the community in loss of service and huge cost to Government as then these roles will have to be performed by paid employees of various agencies.