

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Volunteering has been a lifelong pastime for many in our small community. Generally a core group of individuals learn committee and team skills from their parents, in sports administration or when their children start school. They are then invited to join other committees as time goes by, subject to availability. Not all people have the skills and not all people make themselves available for the benefit of the whole community. However a core group of people in small towns have ensured committee needs are met in local, regional and state non-profit organisations. Over the last 15 years, volunteer roles have become more complex due to various administrative, insurance, reporting and whs policy demands. This has reduced the volunteers' desire to be involved. The cost, complexity and responsibility of the management role has increased with no apparent benefit. The younger generations are not so committed to their local community groups due to changes in travel and lifestyle. People actually go away for work or the weekend so are not always available to help community group activities. For this reason, they don't join as a regular volunteer but make themselves available to assist at one-off activities that interest them. Locally, we are approaching a crisis point as the older generation is forced by health issues to reduce or stop volunteering. Although there remain some younger volunteers, it appears that there are not sufficient to meet the needs. Various encouraging activities have been tried to attract more volunteers but not all are successful. We are fortunate that our local Agricultural Show Society is thriving with a younger and committed team plus about 100 volunteers to ensure the event is successful. Local sports groups sometimes struggle for management committees but all are still operational. The Art Gallery has sufficient volunteers but would like more. The museum is experiencing difficulty due to age and illness with a general disinterest from younger generations. The Men's Shed group is a successful social activity for older retired men. The community service group is a blessing, being funded sufficiently to employ staff but still relying on a volunteer committee for administration and volunteers for various activities. It is sometimes difficult to attract volunteer drivers for the patient transport program as that is a frequent full-day and emotional commitment, thus limiting volunteer options and "rewards". Volunteers persist in serving our community because "Somebody has to do it" but they sometimes feel pressurised to continue what they have been doing for many years. If some way can be discovered to reward and encourage volunteers, I would be very grateful.