

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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## Submission to Parliamentary enquiry into volunteering in iQueensland

As an active volunteer in the Coolum Beach community since 1997 as a member of Coolum District Coast Care in 2006 I started my own environmental project and our team was designated The Watercourse Warriors. Last year our project featured in a book published "Earth and Us" by a Steiner School student in Noosa. (google Watercourse Warriors for photos and story)...

...However late 2024 as I was the sole remaining Warrior owing to ill health and translocation of members; the Sunshine Coast Regional Council ordered me to cease work on my project and it would be maintained by SCRC employees. (this has not happened and I continue to spend 2 hours a week removing invasive weeds).

This submission relates to my decision to try for another volunteer position in the Coolum community and I contacted our [REDACTED] office and expressed interest in being a delivery driver with Mondays my preferred day. When interviewed by the Roster Organiser [REDACTED] and a short talk from the Manager [REDACTED] my licence was photocopied and details of past given for a Police check. At no point was I told that it was necessary for a new volunteer to work with a driver for sometime and I assumed therefore I was to be a driver. When asked if we would be available the following week I offered to work on Monday January 27 which was the Australia Day public holiday.

Reporting for duty on the 27<sup>th</sup> I was told I would be assisting a male driver [REDACTED] when I expressed disappointment I was told "that is the way it is". I was upset but did not shout, abuse, or misbehave in any fashion. I did say that [REDACTED] must be one of those men who do not like being driven by a woman: that was my only objection. I was going to come home, but when told the manager would try to find a replacement I decided to do the right thing and go with [REDACTED]

On pretty much our first delivery I quickly realised the necessity for learning the route before taking it on: naively I had thought we would be delivering to homes; but they were the exception (two only) and the gated communities were outside my known world (to put it mildly!). [REDACTED] is an experienced delivery driver and knew the codes and location of the "clients". At one gated complex he was unable to open the gate when he entered the code....he stood beside his car and when I saw a man inside the gate I asked for help...he found a man with a card who opened the gate for us. When we entered the client's unit I said we had a problem with the gate: the attitude from this male was something like "your time is not important: I had been asked to ask for their menu and I did: the woman said "I haven't done it"...so I asked her to phone the office otherwise their meals would not be delivered. (I later learned that apparently a volunteer is not to offer any opinion or instruction).

Two hours of delivering meals and we returned to the office where I attempted to give my "feedback" to [REDACTED] when I told of the gate problem his reply was that in such a

case one should phone the office: who would phone the client and ask them to open the gate. I didn't say that I believe this to be a waste of time and that the manager of that complex should be asked to fix the gate access problem.

End of conversation and I had been prepared to say that I understood the reason for learning the route and gated codes before taking on the role of driver: and should have been told this was the system, at my interview. Nor was I given the opportunity to say that I was quite okay to work as an assistant (as no way did I ever want to drive into those huge gated communities!).

I came home thinking I would be contacted about my next "assignment" at some stage. However, next day a text from the Roster Organiser put an end to that: **Lineze, from the feedback from [REDACTED], clients and volunteers I'm reluctant to assign anymore shifts to you".**

On receipt of that offensive text, I emailed [REDACTED] asking exactly what complaints from clients had been received; and as I had not been introduced to the other volunteers, how were they able to form such an opinion of me?

He never replied and I assume that is because there were no complaints (no reason for them). With such an experience with this not-for-profit partly government funded organisation, I am relieved to not be one of their volunteers. And I have to suppress a cynical laugh when I read their column in our local newspaper and I quote for your amusement: **We are always on the lookout for new volunteers to join our team. Can you spare a few hours a month to help keep the wheels running smoothly? Why not give us a call to find out more? It could make your day! Please call 5446 1000 to find out how to be a part of our community"**

Perhaps my expectation to be treated as an adult is too high for this particular organisation but it would be interesting to know if others have been subjected to a similar experience.

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[REDACTED]

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