

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Submission No:	244
Submitted by:	Andy Parkinson
Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Managing, leading and developing volunteers has always been a part of my career. I am now the Volunteer Services Manager for PCYC Queensland, overseeing the framework and support for over 1900 volunteers each year. Prior to this I have held roles as Sector Engagement Manager at Volunteering Queensland, as well as supporting volunteers within universities and local government, both in Australia and England. I have also volunteered as a cricket coach, team manager and various committee roles for over 20 years.

Through my experiences of volunteering and volunteer management I have observed a need for the structures and supporting around volunteering needing to be updated and modernised. There are too many barriers for people to access volunteering, and it is no wonder that volunteer levels have decreased when there is an increased competition for people's time, of which many other activities can be accessed on demand and at the click of a few buttons. Volunteering lags in this respect with frequent lengthy applications and onboarding processes that aren't device friendly as well as often rigid schedules that don't put the volunteer experience front of mind.

I also often hear that young people aren't or don't want to volunteer, but my experiences are that young people are community minded, it's the systems and structures put in place that make it difficult for them to see volunteering with an organisation as a viable option for their time.

There are also stereotypical views of what a volunteer is. Marketing and advertising campaigns can help to show, and develop understanding of, the breadth and depth of what volunteers can and do contribute to across the state, as well as showing that volunteering offers something for everyone – it's not just an activity for retired people (as valuable as this is).

We can also better show the value that volunteering brings to communities, and recognition that volunteering is a worthy activity that makes a real difference to people's lives, communities and the environment. Often the economic value, such as hours and \$ value of contribution, is more readily available, however the human and social impact needs to be celebrated more, and is significantly more relevant to the reasons why volunteers engage with organisations.

Better support for organisations and individuals who lead volunteers would greatly assist in developing volunteer experiences and supporting recruitment and retention of volunteers. There are limited career and training pathways to becoming a 'Volunteer Manager' with minimal training or units to support knowledge transfer. Often people

can find themselves leading volunteers as part of a larger role, then struggle to dedicate the time to the relationship building aspects of volunteer engagement. Even in dedicated roles, volunteer managers are regularly a team of one, managing multiple functions covering HR issues, marketing, recruitment, reward and recognition, training and more. Software to support volunteer management also requires considerable improvement in functionality and useability, both for volunteers and volunteer leaders.

I feel optimistic, that with the right support and systems in place, volunteering rates can increase and thrive, although change is needed for this to happen – doing more of the same isn't working.