

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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# Submission to the Queensland Government: Inquiry into Volunteerism

This submission is made as an individual who has had extensive experience in the Volunteer sections including:

- CEO of St Vincent De Paul Qld (14 Years),
- CEO of St Vincent de Paul Northern Territory (3 Years)
- Currently CEO of ST John Ambulance Qld.
- Board Member of various Not for Profit organisations with Volunteers

## Introduction

Volunteerism is the lifeblood of many community organisations and essential to the delivery of key services across Queensland. However, there are significant challenges that must be addressed to strengthen and sustain the volunteer workforce. This submission highlights some key barriers and opportunities for improvement to ensure a more inclusive and effective volunteer sector.

## 1. Barriers to Volunteer Registration

Current government requirements for volunteering, such as mandatory police checks, blue cards, and yellow cards, while important for safety and compliance, present significant challenges for potential volunteers, particularly older Australians.

- **Photo ID Challenges:** Many elderly individuals no longer hold valid photo identification due to not driving or holding a passport, which creates barriers to completing these checks. Simplifying or providing alternative identification methods could significantly increase accessibility for older volunteers. This can often result in having to undertake federal police check which costs organisations \$85 per report. There is no discount for organisations.

- **Complex Processes:** The registration process can be overwhelming and discouraging for volunteers, especially those unfamiliar with digital systems. Streamlining these processes and offering support services could improve participation rates.

## 2. Effectiveness of Volunteer Recruitment

Research by organisations such as St John Ambulance and St Vincent de Paul (Vinnies) demonstrates that traditional advertising is not the most effective means of attracting volunteers.

- **Personal Invitations:** Personal invitations remain a highly successful strategy for recruiting volunteers. Organisations should be encouraged to adopt tailored outreach approaches, leveraging existing networks and relationships to bring in new volunteers.
- **Community Engagement:** Government initiatives could support more community events and engagement opportunities where personal connections and invitations can be made. I.e Volunteer Expo. Or street market to display types of volunteering
- **Spending money on advertising etc to secure volunteer is usually not cost effective and organisations need to avoid this trap.**

## 3. Youth Volunteerism

Youth engagement in volunteering is critical to building a sustainable volunteer base for the future. However, opportunities for young people to volunteer outside of sport are limited.

- **Educational Integration:** Programs at institutions like the Australian Catholic University and some TAFE's, which mandate volunteering as part of their curriculum, are excellent initiatives. Expanding such programs across more educational institutions would encourage youth participation in a broader range of activities.
- **School-Based Volunteering:** In past decades, schools were hubs for introducing students to volunteering opportunities with various organisations. Reviving these school-based initiatives, such as volunteer fairs and partnerships with local charities, could engage students with diverse interests, not just those inclined toward sports.

- Non-Sport Activities: Encouraging non-sport-related volunteer opportunities in First Aid, arts, community service, and environmental projects would attract a broader demographic of young people.
- Organisations need to be trained on how to attract younger members and to make them part of the organisation now, not the organisation of the future.

#### 4. Insurance

Many Not for profits struggle with not only the costs of insurances for Volunteers, but also the difficulty in securing policies particularly regarding Molestation, often policies must be sourced from overseas. Government could secure bulk policies to cover Volunteer organisations, like how the current Household Workers insurance operates.

Government could set standards regarding the specific training and policies that organisations must have in this regard and then undertake random evaluation like the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC) otherwise the organisation is excluded from operating in the state.

#### 5. Induction, recognition and ongoing Training for Volunteers

Many volunteers need to be regularly trained and retrained in areas of child protection.

Employers need to be encouraged to provide paid days for their staff to undertake volunteering training and run sessions where staff share what they do as a volunteer.

#### 6. Olympics Opportunities

Organisations like St John Ambulance would benefit from agreements developed now with the government to be identified as the official supplier of Volunteer First Aid at Olympic venues, this identification could then be used to attract volunteers now, so that they can be fully trained for the Olympics, this would also assist in the lead up to the Olympics and post the Olympics in securing volunteers to assist at sporting and community events and relieve the current pressure on Qld Ambulance and Qld Hospitals.

## 7. Volunteering skills transfer to the workforce

Many of the skills that volunteers learn, are extremely transferable to the workplace and this needs to be recognised more. Particularly skills in leadership, managing others, chairing meetings, First Aid, Merchandising, marketing, financing management, Negotiation, handling difficult people. Companies need to be made ware more of the value of engaging staff who regularly volunteer in the community.

## Conclusion

To enhance volunteerism in Queensland, the government must address the barriers to volunteer registration, adopt more effective recruitment strategies, and focus on youth engagement. Simplifying registration processes, encouraging personal outreach, and expanding educational and school-based volunteering initiatives will ensure that volunteering remains vibrant and accessible for all generations.

Thank you for considering this submission. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these points further or provide additional insights based on experiences from organisations such as St John Ambulance, and St Vincent de Paul.

Yours sincerely,



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