

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Submission No:	264
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Publication:	
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	



Submission to the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee on Volunteering in Queensland

Maroochy River Rowing Club Submission

Maroochy River Rowing Club is pleased to offer our submission to the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland. As a community-based sporting organisation, we rely on volunteers who are the backbone of our club—supporting coaching, event organisation, maintenance, administration, and community engagement. However, a combination of economic pressures, over-regulation, and outdated support mechanisms are placing increasing strain on our volunteer base.

1. The Value of Volunteering

Our volunteers make invaluable contributions by:

- Enhancing the quality and safety of sporting events.
- Providing skill development, mentorship, and community cohesion.
- Building local networks that inspire and support future generations.

2. Barriers and Legislative Challenges

In 2025, a significant barrier to volunteering is time poverty. Many potential volunteers are forced to work multiple jobs, or in dual-income households, both parents must work to cover the high cost of living, leaving little time for volunteer commitments. Additionally, our volunteer-run organisations are burdened by:

- **Excessive Certification Requirements:** The need to maintain first aid certification, appropriate licenses (tinnie licenses), and coaching accreditation to satisfy insurance requirements adds complexity and cost—requirements that rarely translate into tangible improvements in the sport.
- **Administrative and Insurance Demands:** Small organisations are often overwhelmed by regulatory and insurance obligations, detracting from our core community-building activities.

3. Experiences, Motivations, and Recommendations

While our volunteers are passionate and dedicated, they face mounting challenges that impact both recruitment and retention:

- **Time Constraints and Volunteer Retention:** With the increasing pressure of multiple jobs and a dual-income household model, retaining volunteers beyond a 12-month cycle is challenging. Extending volunteer engagement is essential to ensure that investments in training and development are sustainable and to reduce the risk of burnout among overcommitted individuals.
- **Access to Business Tools:** One practical improvement would be better access to business tools, such as functional CRMs and technology solutions that streamline administrative tasks. These tools can reduce inefficiencies and simplify operations, yet they are often priced for large businesses and remain out of reach for volunteer-run clubs. Although a recent grant aimed to address this issue, its strict eligibility criteria would have excluded most sporting clubs if applied honestly.
- **Training and Recognition:** Accessible and tailored training programs are vital to equip volunteers with the necessary skills to manage regulatory and operational demands. Enhanced recognition programs—both

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financial and non-financial—can also help retain volunteers by acknowledging their contributions and mitigating burnout.

4. Enhancing Inclusivity and Diversity

For volunteering to be truly accessible:

- **Flexible Opportunities:** We need flexible volunteering roles that accommodate time-poor households and those juggling multiple jobs.
- **Removing Administrative Barriers:** Simplifying certification and licensing requirements will help ensure that the administrative burden does not disproportionately deter volunteers, especially those from diverse or underrepresented backgrounds.

5. Government Support and Opportunities for Growth

Robust, sustained government support is critical:

- **Targeted Funding:** Increased financial support would assist small organisations in managing administrative costs and investing in volunteer training and technology.
- **Leveraging Major Events:** The upcoming Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games present a prime opportunity to promote and expand volunteer engagement across the community. There is much opportunity to be gained here if Council doesn't limit our opportunities.
- **Emergency Response Volunteering:** Streamlined coordination and enhanced support for emergency response volunteers are essential to strengthen community resilience during natural disasters.

6. First Nations Volunteering

We recognise the unique challenges and strengths within First Nations communities:

- **Cultural Protocols and Simplified Processes:** Policies should respect cultural protocols while simplifying burdensome certification and licensing requirements. First Nations people make up less than 2% of the population of the Sunshine Coast. We simply do not encounter them in our day to day running of our club. Tailored support is essential to empower First Nations volunteers and bolster initiatives like Closing the Gap, but we have to have actual requests from First Nations people in order to facilitate this.

Conclusion

Maroochy River Rowing Club urges the committee to address the critical challenges facing Queensland's volunteer sector. Addressing time poverty and over-regulation, extending volunteer engagement beyond a 12-month cycle, and providing better access to affordable business tools are key to ensuring that the valuable contributions of volunteers are sustained and not short-lived. By reducing unnecessary barriers and supporting our volunteer community, we can build a more resilient, inclusive, and effective volunteer sector that benefits all Queenslanders.

Thank you for considering our submission. We look forward to ongoing collaboration to foster a thriving and sustainable volunteering environment.

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