

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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As the President of the Lions Club of Burleigh Heads, I wish to raise two critical issues impacting the effectiveness and sustainability of volunteer organizations:

1. The lack of accessible storage solutions and the possible to increase the use community assets
2. The financial barriers to volunteer recruitment and retention

Both issues present challenges that limit the capacity of volunteer organizations to support their communities effectively. Addressing these concerns would enhance the efficiency and sustainability of the sector while delivering significant social and economic benefits.

Issue 1: Lack of Storage for Shared Community Assets

Many volunteer organizations, including Lions Clubs, own a significant number of assets, such as BBQ trailers and event equipment. However, these assets are often underutilized due to a lack of secure, centralized storage facilities. Instead, they remain on private property, restricting access for broader community use. In our Zone alone we have 14 fully kitted out BBQ trailers.

Proposed Solution: The establishment of community storage hubs to allow shared access to volunteer organization assets. These hubs could be council-supported or funded by grants and located in easily accessible areas, such as community centers or sporting facilities. Enabling resource-sharing among volunteer organizations, surf clubs, and sporting groups would maximize asset usage and reduce duplication of equipment purchases.

Issue 2: Financial Barriers to Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

The volunteer sector faces increasing challenges in attracting and retaining members. Many organizations require volunteers to pay membership fees and insurance premiums, adding a financial burden on individuals who are already donating their time to community service. Additionally, changes to aged care services, the rising cost of living, and later retirement ages are reducing the number of retirees who can afford to participate in volunteer work.

Proposed Solution: Government subsidies or financial incentives to support volunteer organizations in covering membership fees and insurance costs. A review of funding models to explore ways to make volunteering more accessible, particularly for retirees and lower-income individuals. Recognition programs or incentives for businesses that support employee volunteering efforts.

Conclusion

The volunteer sector provides immense value to the community and delivers substantial cost savings to the government. Addressing these two key issues—improving storage solutions and reducing financial barriers—would strengthen the sector and ensure its continued ability to provide critical services. I urge the government to consider these recommendations and explore collaborative solutions that enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of volunteer organizations.