

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

<b>Submission No:</b>	272
<b>Submitted by:</b>	Victoria Nancarrow
<b>Publication:</b>	Making the submission and your name public
<b>Attachments:</b>	See attachment
<b>Submitter Comments:</b>	

# **Submission to the Queensland Parliament Regarding the Challenges and Rewards of Volunteering in Small Communities**

## **Introduction:**

I am writing to share my experiences as a volunteer in South West Queensland, hoping to raise awareness of the unique challenges and immense rewards of volunteering in small, remote communities. My story highlights the vital role volunteers play in sustaining these communities and underscores the need for greater support and recognition of their contributions.

## **My Volunteer Journey:**

In 2011, I moved from Western Australia to a small community in South West Queensland with a population of under 200. Seeking to connect with my new surroundings, I discovered the world of volunteering. I was initially drawn to the local QCWA branch and quickly became involved in various community groups. Over the past 14 years, I have served in numerous roles, including secretary, treasurer, and president of the QCWA branch, treasurer of the Aboriginal Corporation, secretary of the Tennis Club, divisional president, and secretary/treasurer of Sports Shear Queensland. I even purchased and operated the local post office for a time, all while experiencing a nine-year drought. Currently, I serve as Treasurer of the Aboriginal Corporation, President of the Bollon and District Community Group, and Treasurer for both the divisional and local branches of the QCWA. I am also employed as a Community Engagement Contractor for the PODD's (Place of Diversity and Development), a trial program funded by FRRR, working with the towns of Bollon and Thallon.

## **Challenges and Rewards:**

Volunteering in a small community demands versatility and dedication. With limited resources and a small pool of volunteers, individuals often wear multiple hats. As my experience demonstrates, I have taken on a wide range of responsibilities, often juggling several roles simultaneously. This can be challenging, requiring significant time commitment and adaptability. However, the rewards are equally significant. Volunteering provides a deep sense of connection to the community and the satisfaction of making a tangible difference in the lives of others. It fosters personal growth, develops valuable skills, and strengthens the social fabric of our small towns.

## **The Need for Recognition:**

While reflecting on my extensive volunteer experience, I recently applied for jobs in Western Australia. I was surprised to find that the skills I had gained through years of community service were not readily recognized by potential employers. This highlights a significant gap in the formal recognition of volunteer experience. The skills I honed – leadership, financial management, event planning, community engagement – are highly transferable and valuable in the workforce. Yet, they are often overlooked simply because they were acquired through volunteering rather than paid employment.

## **Call to Action:**

I urge the Queensland Parliament to consider ways to better recognize and value the contributions of volunteers, particularly in small communities. This could include:

- **Developing programs to formally recognize skills and experience gained through volunteering.**
- **Providing training opportunities for volunteers to enhance their skills and knowledge.**
- **Highlighting the importance of volunteering and promoting its benefits to individuals and communities.**
- **Supporting organizations that rely on volunteers through funding and resources.**

By acknowledging the vital role of volunteers and addressing the challenges they face, the Queensland Parliament can help ensure the sustainability and vibrancy of small communities across the state. Thank you for your time and consideration.