


Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitted by:	
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To whom it may concern:

Please find attached a brief overview of my involvement in 2 local community based organisations that rely on volunteers to operate and prosper. Our volunteers, in turn, do benefit, but so too, do our local communities. The revegetation efforts of the volunteers on the rail trail at Lowood, and the partnerships formed with all 3 levels of Government, with local businesses, community organisations and local residents over many years, has helped to transform a section of town that was looking pretty grim. The rail trail at Lowood is now a source of great community pride and has created new tourism and business opportunities for the town.

Equally, the ever changing nature of our “not for profit” Folk Art Cooperative and its successful longevity owes much to the commitment and social benefits gained by those members who are proud to have their skills on public display, but more importantly, proud their talents are admired and purchased by the buying public.

For your information I had submitted the comments below to our Lockyer member Jim McDonald for his consideration, and he in turn, suggested I submit the comments directly to those coordinating the enquiry.

Thank you for accepting them.

As a Foundation Director and Treasurer for Folk Art, and volunteer, since our formal registration as a Cooperative since 1981, the shop has evolved from our early days, when most of our registered Shareholder members (approx 40) worked regularly as volunteers, on a roster basis at the shop, to serve customers, to now having a much smaller group of members and volunteers who work regularly at the shop.

We now rely on the support of several older ladies who are not eligible to get the pension, working 15hrs a week under Centrelink arrangements. The great thing about their first approaching us as a means to complying with their Centrelink arrangements, is that they then became active members and Shareholders in the Cooperative, and receive some welcome remuneration, when times are tough, from the sale of their home crafted/made/grown goods to our customers.

Each of our current 87 Shareholder members will have different reasons for providing goods for sale through Folk Art's outlet. Many no longer work at the shop, owing to aging, family commitments or health issues, or because they have other paid work commitments. For

those that work at the shop, some do for the companionship and social interaction with customers, some join to achieve a return on the costs associated with making or preparing goods for sale and some newer to the district, are just looking for a way to become part of the community.

No one makes a fortune at Folk Art, but while it has evolved and changed over the years, according to the membership and goods on display, most if not all our past and present members will tell you they get immense pride in having their work on public display. They get an even greater sense of satisfaction when someone buys what they have made/crafted or grown.

This is probably a long way to say it is my belief volunteers today, need to receive something back for taking the time to get involved in community organisations. Most won't stay if there is conflict in the organisation, they need to be nurtured and recognised for the time and effort they contribute towards the effective success of the organisation. Equally, successful organisations need reliable administrative support and stability, to continue to serve communities in an effective and meaningful way. This can come at a cost to an organisation, and some groups do not always have the means to address this!

Also...it is important to remember, managing volunteers can be very different to managing employees.

The other organisation that relies heavily on volunteers is West Moreton Landcare.

We operate across a wide region and have fewer volunteers after the covid years. Prior to that time, I used to think the majority of our registered members, associate members and volunteers welcomed the chance to learn about the many aspects of environmental issues, through their attendance at workshops and having guest speakers come to the monthly meetings. Fewer members were interested, had the time, or were able to get down on hands and knees to plant trees or treat weeds. It was again, a dedicated small group of people who committed to the administration of the organisation, the chasing of project funds, and the implementation and maintenance of on-ground projects by volunteers that ensured the longevity of the organisation eg. *Peter Bevan's revegetation with his team of volunteers, revegetating the rail trail at Lowood, and Des Rinehart's monthly management of revegetation and maintenance of Masons Gully at Rosewood.*

The problem for WML is that both of these projects require maintenance funding, of which there is little available. It has to be sourced through WML's involvement in Federally funded work programs, past project savings, Local Government and local business support or the generosity of volunteers themselves. State Government "gaming grants" are a valued source for equipment funding, but there are little (if any) funding opportunities to cover maintenance costs.

The Lowood and Rosewood communities are rightly proud of these ongoing projects, but few volunteers step in to lend a hand. The hot summer months also don't help with field work.

WML is well aware of the need for accountability, for funds received and projects successfully acquitted and completed on ground. We always endeavour to recognise and pay credit to project partners and those volunteers who take pride in helping to "give back" to their communities.

However, for the long term sustainability of community organisations like WML, consideration needs to be given by all 3 levels of Government, to funding a part or full time Coordinator to help with the implementation of community based projects to help improve the local environment, bring noticeable social and financial benefits to local communities, including local businesses, and have the time to encourage, motivate and coordinate greater volunteer support on an event type, or regular basis.

My views.....and kindest regards [REDACTED]

Mob [REDACTED]

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25th February 2025.