

## Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

**Submission No:** 325  
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**Publication:** Making the submission and your name public  
**Attachments:** No attachment  
**Submitter Comments:**

Over the past 8 years, I have been actively involved in volunteering for many local events and groups in my small rural community. I love it! It's a great way to meet people and help out. Now in my early 30's and having started a family, there is barely a minute of time for volunteering in the way I used to enjoy. And my connection to like-minded people in my community has also been harder to find. Part of the reason for this is because the cost of my time is so front of mind that when opportunities to assist (long term, not just for at a once-off event) come up, I have to think very seriously about whether I can afford to not be working for the hours "needed" to be a volunteer. Those hours include meetings, messages, group chats, emails, committees, applying for grants, following regulations and safety requirements, advertising our activities, fundraising for annual costs like power and rates...and that's all before I even start to actively help my community. When both my partner and I are working to pay for basic living expenses and bring up children, who has the time for all the formalities of committees! We have also experienced a big shift away from community connections at local venues like pubs, cafes and restaurants in our rural town, probably since 2017 and certainly through COVID. These were places that I met other locals and was invited to "get involved" as a volunteer for fundraisers or events. It's where I met people older and younger than me, full of ideas for our town, and where we made plans to make it a better place to live. But those spaces don't exist anymore and it's easy to see why. As the cost of running these venues has increased with more taxes, insurance, licensing and regulations it makes it impossible to maintain modern, inclusive and fun spaces for people to enjoy. Now, the only local venue that all generations used to connect at is full of Pokies and gambling on TVs. And don't get me started on the costs to run a local races or sporting event! Organisers spend so much time trying to cover their annual overheads there is little remaining to foster the next generation of volunteers. Outside of the cost of living taking away time from Queenslanders, I still believe that volunteers are out there, but there is a human connection element that should not be ignored. Volunteering cannot be legislated, but the barriers to community action can be removed. It cannot be grown by a government department or inquiry alone, but paths to social cohesion can be rebuilt. Let's get back to local connection, time spent together, and getting back the energy we need to volunteer for our community. Otherwise, what's the point?