

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Submission No:	336
Submitted by:	Charis Mullen MP, Member for Jordan
Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Charis Mullen MP

State Member for Jordan

27 February 2025

Secretariat - Local Government, Small Business and
Customer Service Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Email: lgsbcsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

SUBMISSION: Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland on behalf of individual volunteers who reside in the Jordan Electorate.

Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024 – 2032

It is somewhat surprising that the Queensland Government initiated an inquiry into volunteering, given the previous Queensland Government only released a comprehensive *Queensland Volunteering Strategy* in 2024.

Volunteering Queensland, community organisations and the volunteer sector played a pivotal role in the development of the Strategy which acknowledges the important role that volunteers play in Queensland and set an ambitious but actionable roadmap to respond to the significant challenges and opportunities that the sector had already described to Government.

Whilst appreciating that the new LNP Government wishes to set its own course, it would be disappointing if the significant amount of work that has already been undertaken by dedicated organisations and volunteers through the existing strategy is not recognised and implemented.

State of Volunteering in Queensland Report

Indeed, in 2024 Volunteering Queensland released the second *State of Volunteering in Queensland Report*. Data for this report was collected from the biggest survey of volunteers and volunteer managers in Queensland.

The data has already identified the key barriers to volunteering which unsurprisingly re also reflected in the views received from volunteers within my local community.



Phone: 3447 9300 **Email:** jordan@parliament.qld.gov.au
Office: Ground Floor, 6 Yoga Way, Springfield Central
Post: P.O. Box 4178, Springfield QLD 4300 **f** [CharisMullenQLD](#)



Again, it would seem that establishing another review through this Parliamentary Inquiry is likely to elicit the same information received in the *State of Volunteering in Queensland Report* and is potentially duplicating information and data already readily available to Government.

Current Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering

The current Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering is seeking to again understand the barriers and challenges to volunteering and what opportunities there are to improve the participation, accessibility and experience of volunteers.

The State seat of Jordan is one of the fastest growing outer-metropolitan seats in Queensland straddling both the Ipswich and Logan LGAs and representing a cohort of mainly younger families, multicultural communities and a growing number of older residents.

Given the seat captures many newer established communities such as Greater Springfield and Greater Flagstone, most community organisations are therefore “newer”, have only been in place for less than 20 years and are therefore less established than in other parts of Ipswich and Logan.

At the same time, we have a significant number of community organisations, sporting clubs, charities, faith-based organisations, P&Cs and not for profit groups all relying on volunteers to support their organisations and our community.

As the State Member for Jordan, I developed a qualitative and quick (5 minute) survey to reach our local organisations and individuals in order to garner their views and experiences of volunteering. I did this as I was cognisant that these volunteers are very busy and were unlikely to have the time to contribute to the Inquiry through a formal submission.

I am pleased to say that I received significant feedback in relation to why people volunteer, some of the barriers or challenges as well as the opportunities to improve the participation, accessibility and experience of volunteers.

Where possible, the responses and comments used in the submission have been de-identified.

Barriers to Volunteering and Opportunities

Lack of time & flexibility to volunteering

Lack of time was raised consistently by many respondents as a barrier to volunteering with family and work commitments make volunteering less attractive or not achievable.

There is also a general perception that volunteering will also mean taking on a lot more work, which is making people reluctant to volunteer in the first place.

As one respondent commented – “*the many hands make light work has been lost*”.

A lack of structured leave in many paid jobs means most people are unable to contribute during a work week and are only available in the evenings or weekends. “*To volunteer during the day, you would need to take annual leave*”.

To grow volunteer numbers, a suggestion was made that State / Federal Governments could offer “volunteering leave” or businesses could be offered benefits for releasing their workers to volunteer.

A number of private companies and organisations have already implemented “Pay it Forward” days where staff volunteer on community projects, encouraged as a form of corporate social responsibility within the communities they serve.

Offering flexible scheduling for volunteering opportunities was also suggested as something organisations needing help could consider – not everyone is available during the week, so how can these organisations make weekend / alternate times (early morning / later evening) available to volunteer.

Creating more family-friendly initiatives was another suggestion to *“create opportunities where families can volunteer together making it easier for parents to participate whilst instilling the value of community service in younger generations.”*

Cost of Living impacts

A number of respondents raised cost of living impacts indicating it can be expensive to “give back”, when you are struggling financially or times are tough.

Cost of transport / fuel was highlighted by a number of volunteers as an additional burden for volunteering opportunities at this time.

A number of respondents recommended an option of introducing a subsidy for long-term volunteers or potential volunteer tax incentives for those who volunteer for executive positions.

As one respondent indicated – *“There are 1000 deductions for investors and people who donate money, but few, if none for people who volunteer time”*.

Volunteer Workload & Responsibility

A number of respondents indicated that the workload now required in some volunteering roles—for example in “executive” positions is very high or holds too much responsibility.

As one respondent indicated – *“I give up so much time for volunteering and love it, but when you have the weight of a huge organisation on your shoulders, it can be a bit much”*

An increase in the requirements with rules and regulations is *“making it feel like a full-time job”*.

One respondent involved in a local sporting club advised that the amount of administration, process and procedures inflicted on local community clubs by state and national associations, and local, state and Federal governments is very onerous.

As they wrote *“As a football club, our players are required to register 3 times (once with the Club, once with Football Queensland and finally with Football Australia). This is not a blocker to players signing up but the admin overhead for a completely volunteer club can be 20-30 hours per week in the months Nov-Mar”*.

Communicating Volunteer Opportunities

A number of respondents raised concerns that there is not enough information or advertising of volunteering opportunities, especially in local areas.

This is particularly difficult for older Queenslanders who may not have access to online websites or social media platforms. As one respondent indicated – *“the opportunity to volunteer is not reaching the people who are interested”*.

Whilst the *Volunteering Queensland* portal is available, there are still many who are not aware of its existence with a number of respondents recommending localised volunteer databases.

Targeted outreach was also suggested to actively engage under-represented groups in volunteering opportunities through outreach programs in schools, community centres and culturally diverse organisations.

As one respondent recommended *“offering bilingual materials or culturally relevant opportunities can also help”*.

Many Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities will actively volunteer their time for cultural events and community festivals yet are not supported or encouraged to use those honed skills for further volunteering opportunities and especially in natural disaster situations, where language and cultural understanding could be better utilised and considered an asset.

Volunteer Training and Skills Development

Volunteer training was raised consistently by the respondents with the recognition that more structured support, including better training and clearer role definitions could help to encourage volunteers and retain them.

Getting the right people with the right skill set for specific roles is challenging. As one respondent wrote – *“sometimes the complexity or requirements of a role can make it difficult to find a perfect fit. Training and clear role expectations are key to overcoming this challenge.”*

Having qualified and suitable training can be expensive and more funding to be able to train volunteers was a suggested need for many organisations.

One respondent also raised the potential conflict between those who hold paid positions in organisations and those who volunteer. As they said – *“I think sometimes people are frightened you will take their job, or your work ethic is too high and thereby make them look bad”*.

Natural Disaster and Community Recovery

A number of respondents were concerned about the engagement, support and integration of volunteers assisting with natural disasters and community recovery.

Similar concerns to general volunteering were raised including potential pre-disaster volunteer training programs, clear role assignments based on skill and availability and cultural and language inclusivity to ensure all communities can be connected.

Coordination with agencies was referenced as a major issue for volunteers with the need to strengthen collaboration between government agencies, non-government organisations, and volunteer groups. This would ensure streamlined logistics and *“avoid duplication of efforts and ensure consistent messaging during disaster response and recovery”*.

Issues such as optimising technology such as apps and platforms to manage volunteers, providing transport and accommodation support for volunteers as well as offering psychological first aid and access to mental health resources to volunteers were also raised.

An important factor mentioned was also having robust recognition programs, such as certificates, public acknowledgements or thank you events to show appreciation for the contribution of volunteers in natural disaster recovery but also to encourage continued involvement.

Conclusion

As a State Member, I am deeply grateful to the many local volunteers in the Jordan Electorate who provided their views and ideas for this submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland.

I recognise that my electorate is enhanced deeply by the incredible volunteers who each and every day give of their time freely to make our communities better and wish to thank each and every individual for their contribution.

As one respondent so eloquently and simply observed – *“everybody that sticks their hand up to volunteer does so because they want to give back to the community, offering professional skills and life experience that couldn't be bought”*.

Thank you for your consideration of the issues raised.

Kind regards,



Charis Mullen MP

State Member for Jordan

Shadow Minister for Public Works

Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs