

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering

Who we are

Ceramic Arts Queensland (CAQ)(formerly Queensland Potters Association/ Fusions) is a not-for profit volunteer run organisation formed in Brisbane in 1968. The organisation is a public company limited by guarantee and run by a Board of (volunteer) Directors elected by our membership at our AGM in March. The Board meets monthly to ensure we continue to meet the aims and philosophy of the founding members of the organisation.

The Objects of the Company are:

1. To be Queensland's leading advocate for the ceramic arts.
2. To promote fellowship amongst those involved in the ceramic arts.
3. To elevate, promote and develop all aspects of the ceramic arts.
4. To promote the ceramic arts through the provision of exhibition, training and educational facilities to all sectors of the community.
5. To promote, develop and encourage strong regional, national and international partnerships and exchanges.

We foster an inclusive and unified ceramic art community in Queensland and Northern NSW. Through our website, social media, a fortnightly Flash email newsletter and quarterly Bulletin magazine, our members can share information, advertise events and access markets and development opportunities. Last year we held our annual Members' Exhibition, eight fully subscribed workshops, some social events, members sold work at markets, and we held a few public outreach demonstrations. We are about to open our biennial Siliceous Award exhibition which attracts entrants from around Australia.

We have no employees, and one contractor who provides some project support and administration services, for a set monthly amount.

We currently have seven volunteer Directors (up to nine at times), two regular volunteers who cater our workshops, and four regular volunteers on our raku team. Each year we run one or two exhibitions, and the number of volunteers increases to around twenty additional people who help with bump in and out, opening night, and as gallery attendants. We do not collect data on who volunteers, why, or how many hours they give, or if this is generally reflective of our membership base or not. Anecdotally, our volunteers are at least 75% women.

Volunteer Recruitment

In the three years I have been involved on the Board, there has been a slow but steady increase in membership, and we have not noticed an increase or decrease in volunteers. When volunteers are required, we put a call-out in our newsletter and social

media posts. Usually, Board members will have to call around and specifically ask for assistance, from members who have volunteered before.

CAQ have not changed what they provide for their members and the public for several years, so the demand for volunteers has not changed either. If CAQ had fewer volunteers, we would need to adapt what we provide. In an extreme case, if there were insufficient volunteers to form a Board as per our Constitution, then CAQ would have to close.

The Board has identified the need to develop a succession plan, and a skills matrix to identify gaps that should be filled. It would greatly assist us if there was free training and development available for our Board members.

Volunteer Management

As a micro arts organisation, in a rebuilding phase, we do not have a broad suite of policies and procedures written down and formally adopted. We do not have a paid volunteer manager, or a training budget. We do take out Voluntary Workers insurance each year, and have recently taken out Directors' insurance.

Volunteers *are* valued in our organisation, but there is no culture of giving monetary thank-yous. Verbal and written appreciation is a regular thing, actual gifts are an exception for example someone retires after many years of service on the board. We do reimburse volunteers for specific pre-approved expenses such as food they bought to cater a workshop.

We recognise that volunteers come with the best intentions to do a good job, so the work they are expected to do will be discussed, a safety briefing will be given, and training will be provided as required. Sometimes though, volunteers do cause more work for the administration coordinator and the Treasurer, for example if they make errors recording sales and handling payments.

An example : volunteer gallery attendants at our biennial exhibition in 2023

- those who drove out from Brisbane to do a shift at the gallery in Ipswich were offered a \$10 fuel card
- morning tea/afternoon tea was supplied
- an induction checklist was developed and sent out to every volunteer beforehand (to read , sign and return) this covered things like how to open the gallery, work health and safety, number to call if they needed assistance, their duties and responsibilities.
- a kit was developed, that was kept at the gallery. It included the roster, how to handle sales, a comms log book for handover and recording visitor numbers, the risk assessment plan (including the gallery's emergency plan), theft, vandalism and accidental damage procedures, visitor survey forms, who the gallery tour

leaders would be and times they'd be happening, and a hazard identification reporting form.

- every volunteer was asked for feedback at the end of the event, and personally thanked by the volunteer coordinator (herself a volunteer).

Challenges for, and Motivations of, Volunteers

Legislative and regulatory burdens impacting on volunteers: we have not found these to be excessive. We do not work with children however, and our volunteers do not have to go through any vetting process. Of course, we would support a general insurance scheme paid for by the government, for Directors and general Voluntary Workers.

Spare time volunteering: We know that some of our members work full-time (and are artists in their spare time) which means they can only consider volunteering on a weekend. Others are self-employed and/or have a studio practice that allows them to volunteer during the week, which is what we need to keep an exhibition open for example. Retired, or part-timers like to be able to contribute and be actively involved in our community.

Skill set : One of our fundraising events, that we run once or twice a year, requires volunteers to have specific knowledge of raku firing, so we have developed a small team of experienced volunteers that can be called upon. However, we find new volunteers do come forward wanting to know how to raku fire or get more experienced at it, so we train them up. We struggle to find volunteers with financial expertise and other governance skills for our Board, so there is an ongoing need to train and inform ourselves. We rely heavily on a couple of experienced Directors, and free resources we find online to do this. Not having certain knowledge and skill sets in investment, business, and real estate have held us back from acquiring a property and managing it for the benefit of our members, and to advance certain strategic goals.

Out of pocket expenses: we do not have data on our members' financial status, but we assume that most of our members are not facing pressing cost of living issues, as ceramics is not a cheap hobby. Like most artists in Australia some members are not financially well off but they still choose to give their time and expertise to build and support their community. Apart from our Directors, this wouldn't be a significant burden financially because we only ask for assistance a few times a year. It would be different if we were relying on them for many hours a week, as some not-for-profits must.

Personal rewards: members are expected to volunteer if they have work in an exhibition, so you could say it is in their interests to volunteer, and ensure the gallery is kept open and staffed so they can sell their work. Sometimes people volunteer hoping to network with others, meet people who might assist them, and find opportunities. Generally though, the reward is a sense of satisfaction and increased sense of well-being, through

being helpful, achieving something worthwhile and spending time working alongside friends.

Giving back and paying it forward: we find those who volunteer the most hours, our Board members, have a strong volunteering ethos. They find themselves at a stage in life where they can contribute, and want to give back, supporting and shaping their creative community.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry into volunteering. We look forward to seeing the outcome.