

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Written submissions close on 28th February 2025.

Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group (QHVSG) is a not-for-profit charity that supports people throughout Queensland in the aftermath of homicide. It includes but is not limited to providing support to family members, friends and witnesses. QHVSG prides itself on providing high quality, individualised support to homicide victims, 24/7. We understand the critical need for support with the grief and trauma caused by murder or manslaughter. Through our team of counsellors, case managers, court coordinator, volunteer coordinator, peer and community volunteers, we provide support, which is trauma informed, empathic and compassionate.

Volunteers are the backbone of our organisation and QHVSG would not be able to achieve what it does without their selfless dedication to supporting victims of homicide. Peer volunteers are volunteers with lived experience of homicide who support other people after the unimaginable has happened. Peer volunteers provide support to our members statewide which means greater reach to those people who are more remote. Support is provided through telephone, online, group meetings, at court, at events and admin support. QHVSG's community volunteers are volunteers with no lived experience who can also provide support over the telephone, in court, at events and admin support. Again, this can be Statewide

At present we have approximately 50 volunteers. Our numbers may not seem high in comparison to other organisations however, the number of volunteer roles each volunteer holds could see that number triple as most volunteers perform multiple roles. There are two streams of volunteers at QHVSG, those with lived experience and those without. The impact the volunteers have is immeasurable, without their selfless support we would not be able to provide the amount of connection and support that we do today. Their support to the healing of our members that have suffered the most horrific and unimaginable loss goes beyond words.

I see many barriers to why volunteering may be a challenge currently. Firstly, I feel the Covid 19 pandemic changed the way people live and are more comfortable with not connecting with others and the community in the same way they did before the pandemic. Although the pandemic happened a few years ago there are changes from this that are still having repercussion now.

Secondly, out of pocket expenses for volunteers. Compliance with the regulatory requirements has a cost implication that can impact a person's ability to volunteer. Police checks are an organisational requirement at QHVSG and to see funding that covers this for non-paid volunteers would be a great initiative. There are also compliance expenditures for organisations, such as the cost of Volunteer insurance policies. Additionally, the current cost of living crisis has an impact. It was commonplace for students to volunteer their time whilst studying to complement their studies with real life experience. As a recent graduate I know all too well that students prioritised working to support their studies over volunteering their time.

Lastly, many of our volunteers are retirees and often technology poses a barrier for them. I recently had a potential volunteer decide against volunteering as they struggled with completing their police check. Many of our volunteers struggle with the technological side of the role such as completing their volunteer reports online. I have also had a potential volunteer chose to retire rather than comply with the mandatory obligations for state payments.

Additionally, I am also mindful that this is a difficult and challenging space emotionally for people to offer their time.

There are approximately 2.8 million people in Queensland who volunteer their time to support people. By volunteering their time, they contribute an enormous amount economically to the State.

QHVSG has a dedicated peer support and community volunteer coordinator to engage with and oversee all the activities and emotional wellbeing of the volunteers. This is a paid position and

providing vital support to the volunteers. It is so important that volunteers feel they are valued and are much appreciated members of the team.

Moving forward, it would be good to see more corporate/ Government organisation volunteering schemes. This would attract volunteers with a whole different set of skills to be able to offer their time.

An increase in Government grants or funding to cover volunteer insurances and police check and other regulatory requirements.

Keep the 50-cent travel for public transport and have a government funding/grant for reimbursement of travel.

Volunteers are truly an essential part of the workforce and provide a substantial economic contribution. Organisations that rely heavily on volunteers to provide the level and depth of care and support, and the volunteers themselves should be supported to make this achievable.