

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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We deeply appreciate your interest in volunteering. Research on the not-for-profit (NFP) sector is often conducted by universities or government agencies, which may lack firsthand experience with the grassroots NFP landscape, often only focusing on Charities which only make up 10% of NFPs. As a result, previous studies and reform efforts have often failed to create meaningful change for volunteer reliant NFPs.

Key Solutions to the Volunteer Crisis

1. **A Central Support Hub for NFPs and Volunteers**
A dedicated space where NFPs and volunteers can access resources, support, and assistance on an ongoing basis.
2. **Evidence-Based Funding Allocation**
Funding processes should be adjusted to prioritise evidence-based merit, such as through NFP House standards, rather than organisations simply applying for what they think they need.
o Organisations would first assess their actual needs, receive funding accordingly, and later be reassessed to measure the funding's impact.
3. **Stronger Foundations for NFPs**
Volunteer-reliant NFPs need governance and systems support to establish solid foundations. Investing in policies, processes, governance, and planning makes organisations more sustainable.
o This approach reduces the workload on volunteers, ensuring smoother operations and enabling a shift toward task-based volunteering.
4. **Task-Based & Workplace Volunteering**
Breaking down volunteer roles into smaller, defined tasks makes it easier for people to contribute without overwhelming long-term commitments.
o Workplace-supported volunteering programs can introduce employees to volunteering opportunities, as a one off trial but which may lead to long-term engagement beyond. It acts as the conduit and makes that initial engagement safe and supported.

The Role of NFP House
Established in Gladstone in 2019, NFP House was founded by a sector veteran with over 30 years of experience, recognising a critical gap in support for volunteer-driven NFPs. Over five years, the pilot program has demonstrated the success of regional facilitators, with NFP House supporting over 200 community organisations and 1,000 community members.

How NFP House is Addressing the Volunteer Crisis:

- **Face-to-Face, Ongoing Support**
While online resources help, volunteers thrive in environments where they can connect with real people for guidance, whether by phone or in-person.
- **Specialist Training & Conflict Resolution**
Volunteers often seek help with internal conflicts, while high-achievers need support to maximise their potential.
o NFP House provides tailored education and mentoring to ensure volunteers and organisations succeed.
- **Minimizing Duplication in the NFP Sector**
Instead of launching new NFPs that replicate existing ones, we help integrate and merge similar organisations for efficiency.
- **A Culture of Warmth, Structure & Data-Driven Solutions**
o NFP House combines a welcoming, supportive environment with structured, measurable processes to drive real change.
o We've developed benchmarks specifically for small and medium-sized NFPs to assess their operational health holistically—not just their volunteer management. The organisation working with volunteers must be ready for them across the board, otherwise they don't sustain themselves or their volunteers.
- **Task-Based Volunteering & Workplace Partnerships**
o After assessment to these benchmarks, organisations receive an improvement plan, connect with volunteers, and gain access to funding and ongoing mentorship.
o Volunteer tasks are broken down into manageable, one-off commitments and listed on our volunteer portal.
o Workplace volunteering programs link employees to these tasks, increasing engagement and leveraging corporate support.
o Many people don't realize that volunteering doesn't require a massive commitment—one-time skilled tasks can make a significant impact!
o They also don't realise some of the skills they have which may be needed – skill based volunteering is highly underutilised currently.
- **Regional Data & Reporting for Smarter Funding Decisions**
o With 70+ assessments completed in Gladstone, NFP House compiles sector-wide data

into a regional report card, helping funders identify key areas of need. This creates a self-regulation mechanism, where NFPs are assessed against best-practice benchmarks and funding effectiveness is measured over time.

- Volunteer & NFP Matching Program

We assess organisations' readiness for volunteers, profile volunteers based on skills and interests, and oversee relationships to ensure successful placements. This approach has been particularly impactful for marginalised groups, ensuring inclusive opportunities for all.

Conclusion NFP House's proven model offers a scalable, evidence-driven solution to Australia's volunteer crisis. By strengthening NFP infrastructure, supporting volunteers, and fostering workplace engagement, we can create a sustainable, thriving volunteer sector.