

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitted by:	<div></div>
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Submitter Comments:	

Phone [REDACTED]

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VOLUNTEER SUBMISSION

My volunteering has been over 50 years, the majority whilst working full time with Community Service Clubs and Self Development Clubs. These Clubs/Groups folded through a lack of members. Over the past 20+ years I have been in an unpaid caring role for family members.

My submission is as a Community Volunteer. Currently my main Volunteer hours are with SeniorNet on their Management Committee as Secretary. A brief outline is below.

- 1. ORGANIZATION** – SeniorNet Association Inc., Ipswich. ((Seniors helping Seniors use Computers and the Internet).

TYPE OF BUSINESS – Computer Training for Seniors 50 and Over.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE of 8 has 5 Committee Members 80+ years of age.

TUTORS- Our three Computer Tutors are all 80+ years of age.
The two Family History Tutors are 75+ years of age.

ATTRACTING YOUNGER TUTORS – Despite our very best efforts we have not been able to recruit younger Tutor Volunteers to deliver this vital service. Always on the lookout with word of mouth and at Senior Expos in our Community.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES – Two Social Events are held Monthly to offer companionship & prevent isolation.

Coffee and Chat Morning Tea with an informative Guest Speaker from the Community ie Ipswich Library, My Gov, Aged Care Changes, Gardening etc.

Lunch where members interact at a Local Venue ordering meals within their budget.

2. MAJOR COSTS -

VENUE: - We rent a Venue for our Activities.

INSURANCE COST; – Public Liability and Voluntary Workers PA & I.

RENEWAL OF COMPUTER PROGRAMES SUBSCRIPTIONS. To run our Workshops we have several Laptops, (Participants bring their own laptops or use SeniorNet's), a Printer, Projector and Screen.

MEMBERSHIP FEE kept to a minimum to enable Seniors to become confident Computer Users. Single \$20.00 Family \$25.00 Annually.

We are now in our 28th year of helping Seniors with Technology, with Workshops in Android Phones, iPads, Computers, Email, Word, Powerpoint etc. It was originally anticipated there would be a 3-5 year need as the General Public became Computer Literate through their employment etc.

OPEN MORNING –Held February promoting Computer Workshops, 15 new Members paid their fees. These beginners are now in their third week of "Introduction to Computers" Workshops.

- 3. VOLUNTEERS – LEAVING THE WORKFORCE** – Males and Females workers may receive the age pension at 67 with some electing to continue working. Previously earlier retirement was available. Females at 60 and Males took transition or early retirement at 55, or 60 with the Age Pension beginning at 65.

Future_Volunteers are leaving the Work-Force at an older age.

4. CURRENT PRACTICES – LIMIT VOLUNTEERS.

Carer Duties – With Aged Care being so limited we are in caring roles for Family Members.

Cost of Living – It is a costly exercise to be a volunteer. Travelling Costs -bus, car, parking - petrol and service costs of the running a car. Cost of purchasing drinks/food if facilities not available to store. With the general household budget stretched to the limit some retirees cannot afford these costs.

Grandchildren Duties – Many would be Volunteers are caught up with caring for grandchildren. With the current Childcare using up the family budget, many grandparents are looking after grandchildren from the time they are born. Two friends travel interstate regularly to Care.

A Police Clearance required for a Driver taking patients to and from Kidney Dialysis Treatment. The Clearance took far too long and the Volunteer went elsewhere to Volunteer.

A Blue Card is required by Volunteers where Children are Involved which takes time to acquire.

Research Study (this week) where the Pension Age Raise Impacted Fertility Rates. That is because Grandparents are in the Workforce longer and unable to look after their grandchildren. Their **Suggested solution** is to lower the Age for Pensions and the whole country would benefit.

5. A SOCIETY TOO DEPENDANT ON VOLUNTEERS.

Have we become a Society too dependent on the valuable resource of Volunteers? Organizations and Businesses have relied on this Vital Volunteer Workforce to support all types of activities. Involved in Community Fund Raising, Directing Visitors at Hospitals, Tourist Information Centres, Museums run by Volunteers, Activities for Senior Groups, Companions for Seniors, Nursing Homes Activities. Op shops in every town raising Community Funds. JP's and C'Decl's assist the public with Passport Photos, Forms, and Oaths at Shopping Centres & Court Houses. SES, Rural Fire Brigade, St Johns etc. Fundraising for Cancer and other diseases, etc. and many more use Volunteers for their Services.

SUMMARY.

Dedicated Volunteers in an older age bracket give many Vital Community Hours. Newer workforce leavers are not filling the gaps left by committed Volunteers who are standing down.

Some Volunteers, who stood aside with COVID have not returned. Serious Viruses are still in the Community and this group, now 4 years older are watching their health more carefully.

REWARD – Are Volunteers really acknowledged for their efforts. Given a little extra “thank you”, a small gift, a Certificate, a free lunch. A friend has petrol costs reimbursed with an irregular gift card. A small acknowledgement she really appreciates for the hours she gives.

My personal belief is that an incentive maybe needed to attract younger workforce leavers into Volunteering. Perhaps our dependency on a Volunteer Workforce is no longer practicable as they are committed elsewhere with grandchildren, ill, and older family members who are living longer. Or have organizations become “Takers” of what has always been a Valuable resource that the older generation has been prepared to give. A generation who came through and weathered tough times which were more prepared to share what they had with others.

Sincerely,

