

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitter Comments:

I represent a 100% volunteer non profit organization (which is also a registered charity). The number one issue impacting us and volunteering is we really struggle to obtain and retain volunteers because of the huge and ever increasing levels of red tape. Volunteers are a very important part of the community and our lifestyle undertaking tasks which would cost the government a massive amount of money to do. We fully understand that some levels of control and risk management are necessary but these need to be appropriate for the level of risk and scalability of the operation rather than what is becoming the trend of a one size fits all approach. We are accredited under the federal Rail safety Act which has a built in ability to adapt to scalability, our level of risk etc. However it is a constant battle to get things associated with it. For example the recent medical standards to recognize this - while it is under the Federal NTC, the standards are signed off by state ministers. The recently released one has set all medicals the same as a high risk mainline commercial railway which has not only increased the cost but is resulting in volunteers being failed unnecessarily due to excessive requirements with no data to back up the need for the increase. Volunteer organizations like ours rely heavily on the more senior members of our community and this is discriminating against them. It also fails to address the resulting mental health issue. Being a railway we also suffer increased levels of red tape etc which makes it very hard to attract volunteers when they can go to other volunteer groups with a minute fraction of the red tape. Another issue which impacts us and other volunteer groups is a lack of consideration when preparing/amending acts. For example a few years ago parliament decided all railways need to be a 1 in 1000 year flood level - Tourist and Heritage railways are not a food supply chain or need to move people in an emergency but there was nothing exempting Tourist and Heritage Railways. Another example is move to set minimum environmental levels for vehicles etc. While fully support the bulk there needs to be provision for our heritage. Another issue severely impacting us is lack of funding. There are a huge variety of grants etc out there for sporting clubs, arts etc but next to nothing for heritage. The only state funding opportunity is the Gambling Fund and that does not cover the level of funding we need (for example a storage shed for us is well over \$100k. Perhaps take couple million dollars a year out of the existing Arts funding and dedicate it to heritage, particularly heritage railways. At one stage the Gambling fund had a condition you could not get another grant for two years after you received one which resulted in a much fairer arrangement with smaller volunteer groups receiving funding each round rather than being dominated by the big organizations with professional paid grant writers etc - take it back to that arrangement of have to wait two years before apply again after receive a grant. Also, it is great the gambling fund has introduced a once a year 100k grant but need to put a caveat on it that it must be for single items over \$50k - I know of groups putting in for things like \$100k of computers - something which could be obtained via a series of the smaller grants. Another hole in funding is for security including security fencing - something badly needed in today's world and which would align with the government's policy on getting tough on crime. Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information (if by phone and I don't answer please also email/text as like a lot of others having trouble with time taken voice messages to appear) as it is hard to articulate issues just by email.