

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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# Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission made on behalf of Far North Queensland Diverse Communities Council (FNQDCC) and PNG & Wantoks Association Cairns.

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Number of volunteers in your activity, organisation and/or sector across the state or your region or community.

1. FNQ-DCC, is in its embryonic stage, however, it is being recognised by the greater Cairns multicultural communities and service providers. The volunteers in FNQDCC include the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and three ordinary committee members.
2. Another not-for-profit organisation, PNG & Wantoks Association Cairns Inc., that I also volunteer in as secretary has 14 members: four executives – president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and 10 committee members; all volunteers.

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- Number of paid staff compared to unpaid volunteer workers in your organisation. The organisations are run fully by volunteers, who are professionals in fulltime paid professions. There are no paid roles in this organisation; this is the same in most not-for-profit associations in Cairns and Far North Queensland.

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Brief outline of what your organisation does and the role of volunteers within it. Far North Queensland (FNQ) Diverse Communities Council is a newly established not-for-profit

association that aims to unite the diverse communities in Far North Queensland. Based in Cairns, this Council aims to create a united platform to address educational, social and cultural issues faced by people in the region. The executives and committee members all have fulltime jobs, in addition to volunteering.

FNQDCC executives consist of the: President who is a manager with Wujal Wujal Local Government Council | Vice President: Self employed | Secretary who is a secondary school teacher in Cairns | Treasurer who is a secondary school teacher in Cairns | Ordinary members who are also professionals

PNGWAC consists of the President who is a human resource officer with Lockhart Local Government Council | Vice President who is a Hotel worker | Treasurer who is a Disability Support Officer | Secretary who is a secondary school teacher | Publicity officer who is Disability Support Workers/NDIS agent | Ordinary members who are also employed by various employers in Cairns.

- How well volunteers are valued and treated in your organisation & ideas for what could be done better. [Volunteers in the Cairns and Far North Queensland](#) play a very important role in the lives of people, because it is not always that paid workers are able to reach people in the community, seven days a week. Volunteers commit their time to various causes, without expecting monetary returns for their services.

Volunteers in the organisations that I am part of are valued within the group but not by those in governments or independent institutions running programs to fulfil their key priorities.

For example: Cairns being a multicultural city, has a 'multicultural week' set by the LLG. This means that not-for-profit multicultural associations, run by volunteers, are invited to participate in the multicultural week. Events organized require huge paperwork, which all falls back to the volunteers in these associations or groups; the

demand for documents these take a lot of time and therefore contribute to the feeling of not being valued as volunteers.

Has there been an increase or decrease in volunteers for the organisation or work that you do? Is there an increasing or decreasing need for volunteers? With the increasing number of refugees and people migrating north/far north, I think there has been an increase in the need for volunteers for not-for-profit organisations such as FNQ DCC, but there is a decrease in volunteers for a not-for-profit organisation; people are getting tired of volunteering because it is time consuming, and it requires many hours of work and a lot of effort without any monetary incentives.

One of the main reasons for the decrease in volunteers is this: Most volunteers must take time off their full-time jobs to attend to their volunteer role's meetings, workshops and training which are run mostly by paid professionals employed by government departments and/or independent service providers.

Volunteers who are paid workers in their 'real' jobs often lose their full salary or wages due to taking time off to perform their voluntary roles.

Not for profit associations and organisations such as FNQDCC is run by volunteers.

- What might the consequences be if your organisation had fewer volunteers One of the consequences of not having enough volunteers in our association/organisation is that volunteers become exhausted, and their mental and overall health and well-being is greatly affected.
- How long you've been volunteering, and the types of volunteering work you have done. Personally, I have been volunteering since moving to Cairns in 2006. I volunteered as an ordinary member and president in Papua New Guinea & Wantoks Association Cairn Inc (PNGWAC). I am currently volunteering as secretary for PNGWAC and now in FNQDCC Inc.

- What are some good experiences or lessons you've had with volunteering? Some good experiences and/or lesson gained with volunteering are: organisational skills, grant writing skills, negotiation skills, event planning and project managing skills. When volunteering one gets to meet other people from various walk of life. What are some bad ones? Some not so good experiences are: family life becomes a secondary priority and one loses family/home-volunteering-work balance. Volunteering requires one to use their own money for fuel, stationery, to supplement their association's need to function.
- What things do you think are stopping you or others from volunteering more (or from volunteering at all)

The bad experiences as stated above and the fact that volunteering is not paid but very time consuming. Volunteering when one is a full-time employee of another organisation (government or independent) adds on to their stress levels. When people realise that volunteering will not give them money for personal use and their insurance is not guaranteed, why should they?

The work demanded from volunteers is huge, and the same example given in an earlier response is used here: Cairns being a multicultural city, has an annual 'multicultural week' scheduled by the local government. This means that not-for-profit multicultural associations, run by volunteers, are invited to participate in the multicultural week. The activities organized, such as festivals require huge paperwork, which all falls back to the volunteers in these associations or groups; the demand for documents these take a lot of time and therefore contribute to the feeling of not being valued as volunteers.

Those who do are either passionate or are paid well in their full-time real jobs, enough to sustain their roles and responsibilities in their volunteering roles.