

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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IntroductionTen Fm is a community radio station located in Stanthorpe & Tenterfield committed to providing a platform for local voices, music, and information to the people of Queensland. We operate as a not-for-profit, volunteer-run organisation, with over 30 volunteers who contribute their time, skills, and expertise across a variety of roles, including on-air presenters, technical support, administration, and community outreach. This submission highlights the importance of volunteering to our operations and the broader community, while identifying challenges that volunteer-based organisations face, and providing recommendations on how the Queensland Government can enhance volunteer participation and support.

Role of Volunteers in Our OrganisationVolunteers are the backbone of our radio station. They allow us to deliver a diverse range of programming, from news and current affairs to music and cultural shows, all tailored to the interests and needs of our local community. In addition to broadcasting, our volunteers are key to station administration, event management, and liaising with local organisations and stakeholders. For many of our volunteers, their involvement in the station provides meaningful opportunities for personal growth, skill development, and connection to the community. Our station also acts as a springboard for aspiring media professionals, many of whom gain valuable industry experience before pursuing careers in broadcasting and related fields.

Challenges Faced by Volunteers and Volunteer OrganisationsWhile the contribution of volunteers is invaluable, there are several challenges that hinder the sustainable operation of volunteer-run organisations, including:

- 1. Volunteer Retention:** Volunteers often face competing commitments, particularly with work, study, and family obligations. Many volunteers also experience "burnout" as a result of the pressure of balancing volunteer work with other aspects of their lives. We have found it increasingly difficult to retain volunteers for the long term, which disrupts the continuity and quality of our programming.
- 2. Lack of Financial Support:** As a not-for-profit community station, our ability to pay volunteers or offer remuneration is extremely limited. While many of our volunteers are driven by a passion for the work, there is an ongoing challenge to keep them motivated and engaged without adequate financial support for their contributions. Financial assistance to support volunteer programs and operational costs would go a long way in ensuring a stable environment for volunteers.
- 3. Access to Training and Professional Development:** Volunteers often take on roles with limited formal training in broadcasting, media production, or technical support. Access to affordable, quality training and professional development opportunities would not only benefit our volunteers but also enhance the quality of the content we offer to our audience. However, the costs of training programs are often prohibitive.
- 4. Legal and Insurance Barriers:** Volunteers often face a lack of clarity around insurance coverage and legal protections, particularly in high-risk areas like technical operations or public outreach. The absence of uniform policies and government-supported guidelines can create uncertainty and hinder volunteer participation.

RecommendationsWe recommend the following actions to strengthen volunteering in Queensland and support volunteer-run organisations like ours:

- 1. Provide Financial Support for Volunteer Organisations:** We call for greater financial investment in community-based organisations to help cover operational costs and provide stipends or reimbursement for volunteers' expenses. This will help prevent burnout and encourage longer-term involvement.
- 2. Facilitate Training and Skill Development:** The Queensland Government should partner with volunteer organisations to provide accessible and affordable training programs. This could include media-specific workshops, leadership training, and technical skills development. Creating pathways for volunteers to develop professionally within the organisation would enhance

volunteer retention and satisfaction.3. Simplify Insurance and Legal Frameworks: The introduction of a clear and consistent framework for volunteer insurance and legal protections is essential. This could include a state-wide insurance scheme that covers volunteers across different sectors, ensuring they feel protected while contributing their time.4. Support Volunteer Recognition and Engagement: Establishing programs that formally recognise the contributions of volunteers, such as awards or grants for volunteer initiatives, will not only increase morale but also attract new volunteers to the sector.5. Promote Volunteerism and Community Engagement: Greater government efforts to promote the value of volunteering—especially in the media and broadcasting sectors—will help raise awareness and attract new volunteers. Public campaigns and resources should highlight the tangible benefits volunteering brings to both individuals and communities.

ConclusionVolunteers are at the heart of our community radio station, and their contributions are integral to our ability to serve the people of Queensland. However, the challenges of volunteer retention, lack of funding, training opportunities, and legal barriers limit the impact of organisations like ours. With the right support from the Queensland Government, we believe we can build a stronger, more sustainable volunteer sector, benefiting not only our station but the broader Queensland community. We thank the Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering for the opportunity to submit our views and look forward to working together to ensure the future of volunteering remains bright in Queensland.