

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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I am writing to submit my perspective on how Amateur Radio volunteer groups, particularly through the Wireless Institute Citizens Emergency Network (WICEN) and similar groups, can contribute to enhancing Queensland's emergency response infrastructure. As a dedicated member of my local WICEN group and a local Amateur Radio operator, I would like to highlight how volunteer groups like ours can provide critical support to Queensland's emergency services, particularly as a last-resort communication resource and through integration with existing communication methods.

1. Voluntary Support to Emergency Response Agencies Amateur Radio operators, through volunteer groups such as WICEN, offer an invaluable resource to emergency response agencies, especially when traditional communication systems are disrupted. Natural disasters, such as floods, bushfires, or severe storms, often overwhelm or destroy infrastructure, leaving communities without phone lines, internet, or other communication channels. Volunteer Amateur Radio operators are trained to establish and maintain reliable communication networks in these situations. By offering our expertise, equipment, and personnel, we can ensure that emergency responders and local communities stay connected during critical moments. Our role can be as a backup communication system or as an auxiliary resource to fill gaps when conventional methods fail.

2. Integration with Existing Communication Methods Volunteer Amateur Radio operators can seamlessly integrate into existing emergency management frameworks in Queensland. Our skills and equipment are complementary to the communication methods already employed by emergency services. With minimal training, emergency personnel can quickly learn to operate Amateur Radio systems and utilize them alongside their existing tools. Specifically, our contributions can include: Relay and backup communication when primary systems, such as mobile networks, fail. Data transmission of vital information, such as situational reports, health updates, or urgent messages, when digital networks are down. Supporting coordination of emergency responders by ensuring messages are reliably passed between affected areas and response teams. By having trained Amateur Radio operators volunteer in emergency management roles, we can further strengthen the resilience and responsiveness of Queensland's emergency infrastructure.

3. Local Integration in Queensland and International Success Stories There are already examples of Amateur Radio volunteer groups integrating with Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) across Queensland. In several regions, WICEN operators are actively involved in supporting emergency communication during major events. These existing partnerships have proven to be effective, especially in rural and remote areas, where communication networks are often the first to fail during large-scale disasters. Globally, volunteer Amateur Radio networks have shown tremendous success in supporting emergency response efforts. Countries such as the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom have successfully integrated Amateur Radio into their national emergency management systems. In these nations, volunteer Amateur Radio groups have provided critical backup communication during natural disasters, enhancing coordination, delivering emergency supplies, and even saving lives.

4. Recommendations for Expanding the Role of Amateur Radio Volunteers in Queensland To further enhance Queensland's emergency preparedness and response capabilities, I propose the following steps could provide for beneficial integration of Amateur Radio volunteer groups: Formalize collaboration between WICEN (and similar groups) and Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) to create a more robust and accessible communication network for emergencies. Implement basic training programs for emergency responders to operate Amateur Radio systems, ensuring that they are equipped to handle emergency communications in all situations. Additionally, training could include the use of Amateur Radio operators as backup

operators to assist with emergency responders' communication equipment. This will ensure there are additional trained personnel available to support communication operations if primary operators become unavailable or if equipment fails. Establish clear protocols for the use of Amateur Radio networks within emergency response plans, creating a seamless integration with existing communication systems. Encourage public participation by raising awareness about the role of Amateur Radio in disaster management and encouraging individuals to become licensed operators, expanding the volunteer base. By leveraging the skills and resources of volunteer Amateur Radio groups, and with small investments into these volunteer networks, Queensland can significantly increase its resilience during crises. This will ensure that emergency services are better equipped to respond when traditional communication systems fail, while also providing a cost-effective, sustainable, and flexible backup communication resource. Thank you for considering this submission.