

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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# INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND

This response is on behalf of the Royal Queensland Art Society Inc.

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**1. The current state of volunteering in Queensland and the value it contributes, including benefits to volunteers, organisations, communities and the State;**

*There has been a marked drop in volunteering over the last 20 years, and in the activities of volunteer groups. Some examples:*

- a. St John's cathedral had 60 volunteer guides 20 years ago. Now they have 16*
- b. Elections for committee members and responsible positions are rarely contested, and usually the existing committee needs to actively persuade volunteer members to take on committee responsibilities.*
- c. RQAS has more volunteers than they have had in the past (176 registered volunteers) who will volunteer for one off volunteering events. However, as pointed out in (b) it is difficult to get suitable volunteers to commit to taking on committee roles, or more time-consuming duties. The number of volunteers is also probably due to membership increasing, with approximately 50% of our members volunteering.*

**2. The views of volunteers, prospective volunteers and the volunteering sector on the current barriers to volunteering, including excessive legislative and regulatory burdens and other restrictions adversely limiting active volunteers;**

*Legislative and regulatory burdens do not appear to be a problem for volunteer organisations in the cultural field.*

*Insurance can often be difficult for art galleries and organisations.*

**3. The current experiences, motivations and challenges for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and their recommendations for addressing challenges and improving the volunteering experience;**

*With notable exceptions most of the management committee members are retired, and many of them have been retired for some time. Recruiting active members in the cultural field has been challenging. Persuading working people to give time to volunteer organisations has been difficult. More needs to be done to persuade employers to value the efforts of employees in volunteer organisations. This is largely due to the fact that most families now have both adults working, meaning they have less time to allocate to volunteering activities.*

**4. The unique challenges experienced by people from diverse backgrounds, genders, age groups, abilities and locations, and opportunities to improve volunteering participation, accessibility and experience for these groups;**

*More needs to be done to open up to a more diverse, and younger group and encourage them to become leaders.*

**5. The extent, effectiveness and efficiency of current government support at all levels for the volunteering sector in Queensland and sustainable opportunities for improvement;**

*There does not appear to be any real support for volunteer organisations in the cultural field. The Queensland Office of Fair Trading requires annual reports, but does little to support and encourage volunteer organisations. The moves by the ACNC to lift the financial levels for which audited reports are required has reduced some of the administrative burden, but again little in the way of active support is forthcoming from the ACNC.*

*Of course there is Volunteering Queensland, – we did engage with them to give the unemployed work experience, but it did not work very well for us. They have us on their mailing list and they run conferences and events but their products do not seem relevant for us.*

**6. Opportunities for the Queensland Government to leverage all portfolios to support growth in volunteering across Queensland, including through hosting the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games;**

*Many organisations are keen to get involved in the Brisbane Olympics. However, it is not clear who to approach – especially given the change in priorities with the new Queensland government.*

**7. Opportunities to increase emergency response volunteering in Queensland, including how to optimise the engagement, support and integration of volunteers assisting with natural disasters and community recovery;**

**8. First Nations peoples volunteering, including in remote and discrete communities, and the role of First Nations volunteering in Closing the Gap; and**

*First Nations People are poorly represented in the organisations in which I am involved. The closure of the Birrunga Art Gallery in Brisbane is a definite setback in the art field. It would be helpful if a list of First Nations organisations (such as Winnam ATSIC) could be compiled by the OFT, together with contact details.*

**9. Any other relevant matters, including academic and other diverse sources, and any relevant reports and reviews at the national level and across other states and territories.**

A recent accident has raised the issue of liability insurance and ensuring that it is relevant and sufficient to cover all eventualities. It would be helpful if there were more groups like History Queensland which negotiates a group policy to covers it affiliated societies.

A related issue is ensuring that employees and volunteers have suitable training about safety at facilities and what to do in the event of emergencies. Some guidelines and standards for induction training for volunteers and employees would be worthwhile.

Possibly both these issues could be addressed by Volunteering Queensland.