

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Mr James Lister MP
Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee
Parliament of Queensland
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Dear Members of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee,

Re: Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

We thank the Queensland Government for undertaking this important inquiry and are pleased to make the following contribution:

BACKGROUND - GIRL GUIDES QUEENSLAND

Girl Guides Queensland (GGQ) was established in 1919 and is the largest and oldest youth organisation for girls and young women in Queensland with almost 3,000 youth members and 700 volunteer leaders and adult members. We provide a non-formal educational program designed to create leaders of tomorrow by building on strengths and personal skills development.

The Guide Program is flexible and can be designed to suit each individual youth and adult members' goals. We are an organisation that welcomes and actively seeks members from all racial, ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups.

GGQ is a member of Girl Guides Australia and of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

Girl Guiding is facilitated by trained volunteers across all states in Australia with a program that is girl-led and designed to empower girls and young women to be the change in their world.

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION



The current state of volunteering in Queensland and the value it contributes, including benefits to volunteers, organisations, communities and the state:

99% of the GGQ workforce is volunteer with 378 leadership roles delivered by volunteer members in 2024 across 268 communities in Queensland. GGQ has seen a decline in adult members and volunteers over the 15 years, however due to massive organisation review and financial investment in staff and systems, we experienced 6% growth in 2024. We have every confidence this will continue if we are able to realign the cost burden to ensure sustainability. We request a review of government funding options to address this systemic issue affecting all charities and entities dependant on volunteers.

Girl Guides Queensland maintains strict adult volunteer-to-youth member ratios, ensuring a safe and enriching experience for all participants. As a result, we rely on a significant number of adult volunteers to effectively deliver the unit experience.

Our 2024 analysis conservatively indicates that 144,488,787 hours were contributed by our members across Queensland. This time was spent delivering outdoors programs including camps and adventurous activities, running events, providing community service, preparing and delivering programs in local communities and developing and participating in training and administration.

Based on Volunteering Queensland's definition, averaging a \$58.33 hourly rate, this accounts to over \$845M in replacement hours.

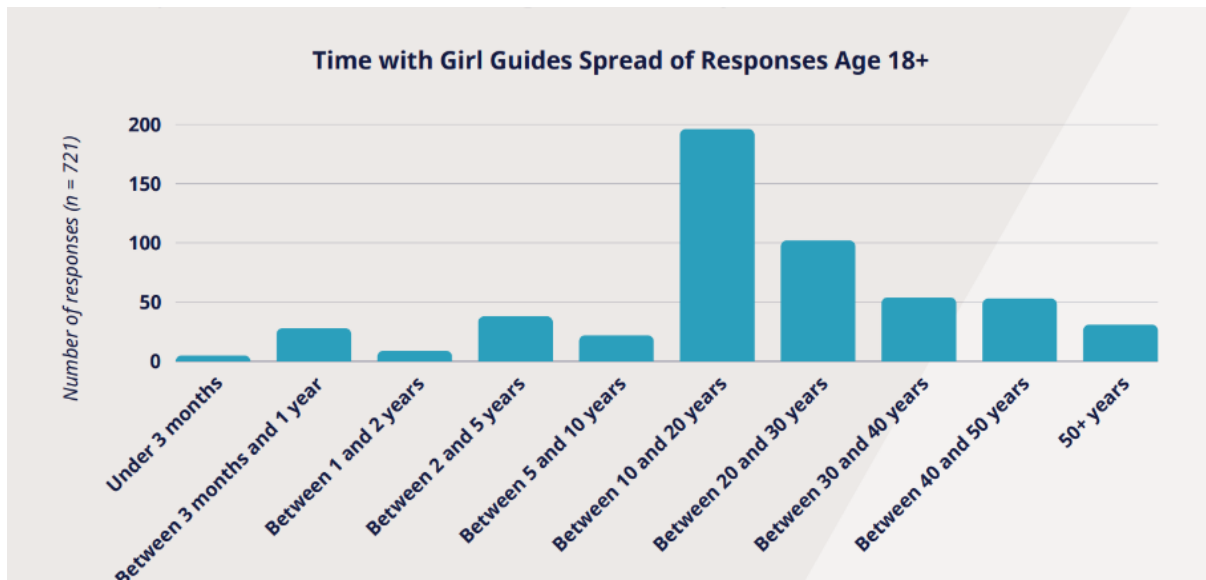
Girl Guides Queensland has been tracking the social impact of the organisation over the past three years. Our recent social impact report (2024) highlighted that around 60% of respondents had been volunteering with Girl Guides for more than 10 years.



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The 2024 Social Impact Report also highlights:

- Wellbeing higher in members aged 30+ Wellbeing analysis revealed that members aged 30+ have higher wellbeing than those 18-30, with scores of 5.31 and 4.88 respectively (scale of 1-7). This difference reflects national trends across the lifespan, which typically show a decline in life satisfaction from age 15 to the mid-30s, stabilization from mid-30s to the early 50s, and a steady increase from the 50s.
- Confidence, purpose and fun are just as important at all ages. Analysis revealed many predictors of wellbeing were shared across generations. 'Purpose', 'Pride', 'Self-love', 'Fun' and 'Self-belief' emerged as key drivers of wellbeing for all members. These shared predictors demonstrate that there is a consistency in what matters most to Guides across generations.
- Outcomes experienced by Adult Members 30+ create a virtuous cycle of impact. Qualitative analysis of feedback from Adult Members aged 30+ revealed a dual impact – the positive impact they experienced themselves, and the positive impact they have in the lives of the Guides they lead. As Adult Members grow in their skills and confidence, they experience greater joy from their role. This growth leads to better outcomes for Youth Members, which in turn, positively impacts the Adult Members who see the difference they're making in the lives of the Guides they lead. At its best, there is a virtuous cycle of positive impact.



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:

When asked what things you wished were removed from Girl Guides, our volunteers responded with Administrative Burden as the most pressing.

Whilst making significant efforts to reduce the burden on its volunteers, the number one complaint that Girl Guides Queensland receives is the level of regulatory burden and administrative expectations placed on volunteers. Our volunteers are required to adhere to stringent child safety practices to comply with a Child Safe Child Friendly policy, comply with organisational expectations (including cyber security and workplace health and safety) and must train in delivery of the Guiding program.

Workplace requirements have evolved significantly since the foundational structures and systems of Guiding were first established over a century ago. Finding practical ways to adapt to the changing legislative and regulatory expectations is burdensome and costly, especially among our older volunteers that have been delivering to older standards.

A recent example of the stress and challenges faced by the volunteering community includes the recent roll-out of O365 to ensure that data collection and storage meets the current government requirements. A combination of paid staff and volunteers were used to roll-out the program, starting with our leadership team (State Commissioner team of five and 12 regional managers), then to the 71 District Managers. A combination of online training, face-to-face support and pre-recorded support materials were provided. Whilst uptake among many was effective, there remains significant challenge in bringing some members online, these challenges were amplified in regional and remote areas.

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

Our recent report highlights that for the younger adults, two factors emerged as priority needs. Determination, relating to the outcome of 'Resilience', was the lowest-scoring factor at baseline and remained a priority need from last year's measurement, indicating the persistent nature of this challenge over time. Additionally, conflict resolution was identified as a new priority need for this group.



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For individuals aged 30 and above, the primary needs identified were centred around the development of **life skills**, with **goal setting** and **time management** emerging as key priorities for this age group.

In addition, time available continues to be a challenge for our volunteers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics highlights that women's participation in paid work has increased over the past 50 years. Women made up almost half the paid workforce in Australia in 2020, compared to around 30% in 1966.

This shift in employment pattern has made it challenging for women to volunteer, especially when many are also in unpaid positions as parents, carers and housekeepers. We have seen positive impact of certain organisations providing "volunteer leave" opportunities – recognising the value that volunteering has on the community without volunteers needing to give up their leave to provide their time.

With a reduction in numbers of volunteers we are also seeing the increase in volunteers taking on multiple roles, which may result in burnout, which is a significant concern for individuals, for obligations with workforce legislation and directly affects the ability to offer the opportunity for youth and adult engagement.

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;

GGQ is committed to connecting with all girls and women across Queensland. We are experiencing a higher level of individual support is required and it is very difficult to effectively training and support our volunteers to have the confidence to deliver programs with wide support needs. Support to access relevant skills and resources would make a positive impact particularly as we have been unsuccessful in all our attempts to secure grant funds for development in this area.

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

Girl Guides Queensland has a history of successfully securing competitive grants and receiving government support e.g. Fair Play and Active Clubs provide critical support which enables participation and Department of Sport grants support essential property maintenance.



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We welcome the opportunity to strengthen our collaboration with the government to ensure our members and volunteers receive the recognition they deserve and further support for organisational costs which enable the safe delivery of our service.

We welcome the opportunity to explore further grant or support options that would help alleviate the regulatory and administrative burden on our volunteers. Where feasible, delegating these responsibilities to paid staff would enable volunteers to reclaim up to 15% of their time—allowing them to focus on their personal development, design outstanding programs for our youth members, or spend valuable time with their own families.

Examples where this could be applied include:

- Staff costs added as an eligible area within grants
- Accounting support for annual audit requirements
- Improved systems of grant criteria to recognize the value of centralised delivery that delivers on the intent of the grant and reduces administrative burden and supports any strategic direction of the organisation
- Property management support – generating revenue to reinvest in property upkeep
- Funding to assist with the cost of learning and uplifting skills through non accredited education and formal training
- Systems updates to support streamlining of reporting requirements and reduce risk of cyber breaches with an organisation that holds sensitive member data
- Climate action support to deliver net zero requirements aligned to global commitments
- Greater connection of government links /agencies/ resources and employees to organisations who are often too time poor to know where/how to access so greater leverage can be gained

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;

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are a significant opportunity for Queensland. Understanding the limited pool of volunteers across the state, we would advocate for Government support during that time for our volunteers to actively support the games. For Guides, this would mean a pause in Guiding as usual processes, weekly meetings and youth engagement and a redeployment to Games related activities. All our volunteers are blue-carded and police-checked, thereby reducing volunteer onboarding costs for Games hosts. We believe this to be incredibly valuable for our volunteers and



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for the Government. These cost savings could be redistributed back into the Guiding community providing some alleviation of barriers to engagement or toward a dedicated recruitment campaign to attract more volunteers.

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;

GGQ has a long history of supporting local emergency response efforts using its properties and social activation networks. Additionally, we have an established, yet unfunded, structured partnership program with the State Emergency Service (SES).

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

GGQ has First Nation engagement in our membership (5% youth) and (1% adult) and throughout our program. We have identified areas for greater opportunities however this is constrained by resourcing.

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.

Guides Queensland is an active contributor to Volunteering Australia and Volunteering Queensland frameworks and consultations.

We support Volunteering Queensland's Advocacy Plan in addition to direct support to individual entities as outlined in this submission.

Conclusion

GGQ is challenged by a decline in adult volunteers and an increase in regulatory requirements. In efforts to reduce the burden on volunteers, we have shifted volunteer functions and responsibilities to staff which places an increased cost with those costs unsupported by membership fees and typically excluded from funding opportunities such as grants. In an economy where the cost of doing business is ever increasing, this is putting greater strain on the organisation.



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100
YEARS STRONG
1919 - 2019



Our volunteers find value in empowering girls and young women to be leaders of their world, the benefits established not only for the youth they work with but develops their personal development and contributes to broader workplace and community cohesiveness, inclusion and economic outcomes.

I welcome the opportunity for an ongoing opportunity to contribute to this important review and to build stronger connections with the Queensland Government on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Kim Harrington MACID
Chief Executive Officer



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