

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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**Submission to the Queensland Government Parliamentary  
Inquiry on Volunteering in Queensland, February 2025**

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This submission provides insights that draw on extensive research expertise in volunteering and the work of colleagues at Griffith University. The focus of this submission is the delivery of an enduring volunteer sector and legacy through the hosting of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This submission focuses on three main areas that a purposefully designed digital platform for volunteering in Queensland could provide: 1) increased accessibility and inclusion, 2) improvements in safeguarding, child safety and protection and 3) increasing access for Oceania stakeholders to participate in the Brisbane 2032 volunteer experience.

As the recent State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024 Report highlights, volunteering is a critical contributor to community life and enables individuals to build new skills, develop a sense of satisfaction in contributing to others, and enables organisations to fulfil leadership and operational tasks. Volunteers also contribute significantly to the economic viability of all sectors and industries across Queensland. To reach the level of volunteer preparedness required for Brisbane 2032 and provide the best possible opportunity for organisations to capture the heightened interest and commitment of ‘Games’ volunteers in roles post-Games, investment in the volunteer sector (pathways for participation) is urgently required. This is in consideration of combating the long-term declining formal rate of volunteering in Queensland. The number of people volunteering in Queensland fell 10% in 2022-2023 (Volunteering Queensland, 2024), and is in long-term decline nationally (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023). Declining volunteer numbers pose a threat to the social fabric of communities and opportunities to deliver strong economic and wellbeing benefits to Queenslanders. It also limits the potential to secure a skilled volunteer workforce at Games time.

Evidence suggests that while people are interested in volunteering, they are often time poor or find access to volunteering opportunities cumbersome or not easy to navigate. Additionally, opportunities to be ‘retained’ in the volunteer sector are not easy to come by, particularly in relation to mega and major event volunteering. For example, young people expressed increased interest in volunteering for major events during the FIFA Women’s World Cup in Brisbane and large numbers of volunteers at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games readily showed interest in volunteer participation, but on both occasions, there was no mechanism to readily capture this active interest and transfer this to other parts of the voluntary sector. Securing the next generation of volunteers is of paramount importance as recent research commissioned by the national peak Volunteering Australia highlighted that 83% of Australian volunteer-involving organisations need more volunteers now and into the future (Holmes et al., 2022).

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The 'capture and transition' of volunteers from one event to the next, or one organisation to another, would be aided by purposefully designed digital platforms that draw on the considerable expertise of volunteer researchers at Griffith University in partnership with key industry leaders, technology and data stakeholders, and organisations willing to pilot test innovative approaches to volunteering in readiness for the Brisbane 2032 Games.

### *Accessibility and Inclusion*

The added benefit of a purposefully built digital platform for volunteering in Queensland, is the deliberate consideration of accessibility and inclusion measures that would be built into the recruitment, training, development and retention of volunteers, to not only enhance the experience for all but also open up volunteering opportunities to a wider group of Queenslanders whose full participation in volunteering is often forgotten or deemed challenging (e.g., persons with disability, persons from remote and regional communities). For example, leading researchers from Griffith Inclusive Futures contributed to the Game Changer's Report [Developing Inclusive Employment Legacy From the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games](#) which highlights significant opportunities for inclusive and accessible volunteering. A mechanism to safely and securely support online volunteer participation would also help to boost the sector - filling gaps where volunteers can volunteer virtually.

### *Safeguarding Child Safety and Protection*

Digital volunteering platforms would also serve to protect young people in sport, by drawing on relevant data sources and security mechanisms to ensure that volunteers meet the standards required to work with young people. Child safety in sport, including how adults can have conversations with sporting clubs and organisations about keeping children and young people safe from child abuse (National Action Plan Activity 6) would be a strong feature of a digital recruitment, training and retention platform to innovate volunteering in Queensland. Through [Griffith's Disrupting Domestic Violence Beacon](#) and [School of Criminology and Criminal Justice](#), evidence based research could drive the development of this tool to set a new standard for international best practice.

### *Oceania*

As a legacy of the Games, the Elevate 2042 Legacy Strategy refers to the full participation and active engagement of the Oceania region - partnering and connecting socially, culturally and economically. Developing a sustainable sport system through sharing knowledge of volunteer expertise across the region would be a critical asset to Oceania sport and communities. This work would build on the

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internationally leading work of [Griffith Institute for Tourism](#) researchers. For example, Professor Leonie Lockstone Binney has twice received funding from the International Olympic Committee to examine best practice in generating volunteering legacies from mega and major events. To conclude, Queensland now has the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to invest in volunteering ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Games. That means investing in the state peak Volunteering Queensland to ensure they can adequately support and grow volunteering in the Queensland ahead of and beyond the Games. Griffith University is well placed to play its part in delivering a state-of-the-art digital platform to advance the volunteer recruitment and retention practices of Queensland's voluntary sector.

The university offers wide scale capability in professional development (e.g, microcredentials in volunteer management), data analytics (e.g., [Relational Data Insights Lab](#)), and world-leading research expertise and knowledge in volunteering across Australia that would work to amplify volunteering in Queensland and the efforts of multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral, and multi-lateral partnerships.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2023). *Volunteers*.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers>

Holmes, K., Dunlop, P. D., Lockstone-Binney, L., Davies, A., Farid, H. M., & Lavery, C. (2022). Volunteering in Australia: The Organisation Perspective. Volunteering Australia, <https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia2022-The-Organisation-Perspective.pdf>

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