

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitted by: Community Support Centre Innisfail Inc
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Submitter Comments:

Community Support Centre Innisfail (CSCI) has a long history (50 years) of involving volunteers to provide services to the local community. Over this time, CSCI has experienced a professionalization of human Services which has evolved the volunteer role and consequently the volunteer rates within the sector. CSCI involves volunteers currently via two programmes (1)Management Committee Volunteers: Management Committee volunteers are responsible for the governance of the organization. The Management Committee members have varied professional experiences including community development, justice, finance, child protection, education and Quality Assurance. Management Committee volunteers are identified within the community to represent 'whole of community' and together should be able to bring a range of organisational knowledge, experience and skills to make informed and accountable decisions on the governance and strategic planning of our organisation.

- Benefits of MC Volunteers:
 - oRepresent the diversity within the community
 - oBroad range of experiences
 - oTarget skills or knowledge for holistic decision making
 - oRelationship based
 - oLocal accountability: service delivery accountability – do what we say we do.
 - oProvide a mandate to respond to community need
 - oInherent opportunities for partnerships and collaboration with local community groups, other organisations and businesses.
- Challenges for MC volunteers:
 - oAvailability of professionals or skilled volunteers. Often on more than one Committee/Board and/or working
 - oCultural Diversity, age and gender often not reflected in Committee make up due to inherent barriers to participation (skills, knowledge not recognised)
 - oLimited knowledge of governance responsibilities – no local face-to-face training opportunities
 - oConflict of Interest situations

(2)Service Delivery Volunteers: CSCI volunteers are involved in service delivery roles within the organisation. Volunteers identify multiple reasons for volunteering:

- Reciprocity – giving back
- Gain skills
- Mutual Obligation (Service Australia)
- Community/Social connection
- Feeling valued within their community
- Employment

Service Delivery Volunteers roles are differentiated from paid staff in the level of responsibility and delegation of authority within the organisations. All Volunteers are provided a position description and inducted into the organisation using the CSCI policy and procedures.

- Benefits of Service Delivery Volunteers:
 - oConnection to community. Create pathways for diverse or marginalised community cohorts via volunteer social networks to learn about CSCI services
 - oCreate career pathways
 - oLocal accountability: service delivery accountability – do what we say we do.
 - oProvide a pathway for community to feedback into services via the volunteer relationships
 - oRelationship based – our clients feel valued and seen. Volunteers demonstrate that community thinks they are deserving of support/help.
 - oVolunteers bring an enthusiasm to 'help'. They start from 'yes' as they are not restricted by Programme contracts. Can provide flexibility within service delivery – their hours are not contributed to most contracts.
- Challenges for Service Delivery Volunteers:
 - oThe new Volunteer wants to be spontaneous – the bureaucracy of 'safeguarding' doesn't allow for this to happen. CSCI struggles to find systems to keep prospective volunteers engaged through the Volunteer Management recruitment process.
 - oHistorical abuse of unpaid workers. Eg Unpaid wages, historical slavery work models. People are mistrustful of volunteering.
 - oVolunteer Management – CSCI combines this role with Neighbourhood Centre funded roles. Hours and outcomes are not recorded for the Neighbourhood Centre contract.
 - oAvailability – volunteers' life's are complex (see reasons for volunteering). Be available for a consistent roster is difficult. Organizations need to be able to respond to the volunteer availability.
 - oVolunteer Support – mental health, social isolation, social skills, organisation skills and other individual challenges in meeting expectations of a volunteer

require formal individualised support plans. The hours contributed to this support is not recognised within current funding models. oOffice resourcing – paying for office resources (IT, desk, stationery, amenities, equipment, uniforms) not included in funding contracts. oTraining – employment, organisational and professional helping skills. Hours contributed to training not recognised within current funding models. CSCI requests the following strategies to support volunteering within our community: •Resource volunteer management in community-based organisations •Recognising the diverse outcomes for the community, organisation and volunteers in programme reporting •Resource the organisation contribution to managing volunteer programmes –governance, recruitment, screening, inducting, equipment, management/support, training, community education. •Provide governance training to Management Committee/Board across the State (need for face-to-face training). •Resource Management Committee functions – reimbursements, allowances, honoraria, strategic planning facilitation, training and meeting costs.