

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

Submitted by QMusic

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Introduction

QMusic appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland. As the state's peak body for the music industry, we support musicians, industry professionals, and live music events across Queensland. Volunteers are integral to our operations, ensuring the success of major events such as BIGSOUND, the Queensland Music Awards, and Valley Fiesta.

This submission addresses the current state of volunteering in the live music sector, the value volunteers bring to Queensland, the challenges they face, and opportunities for government support to enhance and grow volunteer engagement.

The Value of Volunteering in the Music Industry

Volunteers significantly bolster Queensland's live music sector by supporting music festivals, events, and community initiatives. Their contributions extend beyond logistics and event execution, fostering community connection, skill development, and career pathways for emerging industry professionals.

Economic and Social Impact

- **Operational Support:** Volunteers provide thousands of hours of unpaid labour at Queensland music festivals and events annually, substantially reducing operational costs.
 - **Event Success:** Events like BIGSOUND, attracting over 26,000 attendees and 1,600 industry delegates, rely on over 100 volunteers each year for logistics, artist services, and event operations.
 - **Career Development:** Volunteer engagement fosters workforce development, with many former QMusic volunteers transitioning into paid roles within the music and events industries.
 - **Community Engagement:** Volunteering offers social benefits, fostering community engagement, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging for participants.
 - **BIGSOUND Impact:** In 2022, BIGSOUND volunteers contributed more than **4,500 hours** of support, reinforcing the essential role of volunteering in sustaining Queensland's vibrant music sector.
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Case Study: BIGSOUND Volunteers

BIGSOUND, the largest music industry event in the Southern Hemisphere, heavily depends on volunteers for its success. In 2023:

- Over 100 volunteers contributed more than 3,500 hours of support.
- 87% of volunteers surveyed reported gaining valuable industry experience that improved their career prospects.
- 92% stated that volunteering at BIGSOUND increased their sense of community and belonging in the music industry.

In comparison, **2022 saw an even larger volunteer effort**, with volunteers dedicating **over 4,500 hours** to ensure the event's success.

Challenges and Barriers to Volunteering

While volunteering in the music sector is rewarding, several barriers limit participation:

1. Regulatory and Administrative Burdens

- Volunteers often undergo multiple compliance checks, including Blue Cards and safety training, which can be costly and time-consuming for both volunteers and organisers.
- Insurance and liability concerns can deter event organisers from expanding volunteer programmes.

2. Workload and Burnout

- Volunteers often face high-pressure environments, particularly during large-scale events like BIGSOUND and the Queensland Music Awards.
- Many volunteers are students or emerging professionals balancing commitments with study and work, leading to volunteer fatigue.

3. Accessibility and Inclusion

- Individuals from diverse backgrounds, abilities, and regional areas face barriers to volunteering due to transport costs, scheduling conflicts, and lack of financial support.
- Volunteers with disabilities or accessibility needs often require better accommodations at event venues.

Recommendations to Enhance Volunteering in Queensland

To strengthen and grow volunteer engagement in the music sector, we recommend:

1. Improved Government Support

- Provide grant funding for volunteer training programmes to equip participants with industry-specific skills and ensure safe event delivery.

- Streamline compliance processes for volunteers, including reduced fees for background checks and simplified insurance coverage for event organisers.

2. Investment in Regional Volunteering Opportunities

- Support regional music festivals to offer volunteering opportunities outside major cities, reducing geographic barriers to participation.
- Subsidise travel and accommodation for volunteers at key events to encourage diverse participation.

3. Incentives for Volunteers

- Implement recognition programmes (e.g., awards, certificates, professional development opportunities) or other benefits (e.g. merchandise, discounts) to acknowledge and celebrate volunteer contributions.
- Establish pathways from volunteering to paid employment in Queensland's creative industries.

4. Leveraging the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games

- The lead-up to Brisbane 2032 presents an opportunity to integrate festival and event sector volunteering into the Games' broader volunteer strategy.
- QMusic recommends that volunteers supporting major cultural events, such as live music performances during the Olympics, be included in government-sponsored training programmes.

Conclusion

Volunteering is a cornerstone of Queensland's live music industry – particularly in arts festivals and events - driving economic, cultural, and social value. QMusic urges the Queensland Government to invest in streamlined processes, financial support, and recognition initiatives to sustain and expand volunteer engagement.

By addressing regulatory barriers, accessibility challenges, and workload concerns, Queensland can foster a thriving volunteer culture that benefits individuals, organisations, and communities alike.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this submission and welcome further discussion on enhancing volunteering in Queensland's music sector.