

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitted by:	The Scout Association of Australia, Queensland Branch Inc.
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Submitter Comments:	



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We would be happy to discuss this submission at the appropriate opportunity.

rely,

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COMMISSIONER OF QUEENSLAND

GJD.LMP

<https://scoutsqld.sharepoint.com/sites/ccoffice/Shared Documents/General/Correspondence/Letters/2025/20250228 Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland.docx>

**PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING IN
QUEENSLAND**
Submission by Scouts Queensland

This submission seeks to address each of the terms of reference of the Parliamentary Committee, through of a significant Queensland Volunteer Organisation being Scouts Queensland.

About Scouts Queensland

- Scouting in Queensland has over 3500 volunteers across the State, in 175 communities.
- Scouts Queensland has 24 paid staff representing an FTE of 19.9
- Scouts Queensland delivers the purpose of the Scout Movement, being to contribute to the education of young people in achieving their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national, and international communities. In Queensland, Scouting delivers to our communities, resilient young people, who have gained leadership experience are physically active and care for others. Volunteers are primarily responsible in supporting program delivery.
- Volunteers are critical to our purpose and are valued in and through their contribution. There is service award certificates provided at 2 years then 5, 10, 15, 20 through to the most recent certificate being 60 years of service to Scouting. The introduction of service certificates at 2 years is recent to seek to recognise contributions earlier in the volunteer life cycle.
- The Chief Commissioner regularly thanks our volunteers personally, in writing or via social media to ensure we recognise and thank people promptly. Our Strategic Plan seeks to recognise and acknowledge our volunteers at all levels across the organisation.
- There has been a decrease in the number of volunteer leaders particularly in recent years, which as noted earlier reflects “personal time” commitment, and the pandemic. There continues to be an increasing need for volunteers to:
 - o Provide Scouting to more young people.
 - o To support our existing volunteer workforce.
- A reduction in volunteers would mean in some instance the closing of Scout Groups and cessation of the delivery of the Scout Program. This would see an impact on local communities.
- Scouting has been around for 117 years and through all that time has been supported by thousands of volunteers.



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- The experiences our volunteers have is the joy when a young person achieves a peak award or does THEIR BEST! That is what it is all about.
- The barriers to volunteering for individuals are:
 - o Cost
 - o Time
 - o Training required
 - o Nobody asked them
 - o Legislation/Regulation - fear of personal prosecution
- From an Organisational perspective the barriers are:
 - o Legislation
 - o Insurance
 - o Funding
 - o Time
 - o Supporting Increased Neurodiversity across membership
 - o Redress and Civil Litigation claims
 - o Government Support

Each of these organisational barriers are outlined on the following pages.



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LEGISLATION

There are many pieces of legislation that impact on the organisation that present challenges. e.g. Child Safe, Workplace Health and Safety.

Blue Cards: whilst acknowledging recent improvements in process times one example here is Scouts Queensland recently hosted the 26th Australian Scout Jamboree in Maryborough Queensland, with over 10000 participants. This event ran for 10 days. Every adult over the age of 18 was required under Queensland law to obtain a Blue Card (Working with Children Card). We reached out to the Department to see how we could support the need of over 1000 Adults from outside of Queensland and overseas to obtain a Blue Card. The initial response from the Department was simply "Make the event run for 7 days, then a card is not required." Scout Jamborees in Australia have been running since 1934 and have always run for 10 days. It was a very disappointing response from the Department, given the Queensland Government had provided financial support to host the event. We subsequently worked with the Department to ensure all adults attending obtained a Blue Card to meet Queensland Legislation.

Recommendation:

- **State Governments and or the Federal Government work across Australia to have one (1) Working with Children Card that is acceptable throughout Australia.**

There are productivity and costs savings within this approach.

Scouts Australia will continue to run Jamborees across different States for 10 days and this recommendation would reduce the administration burden on both Government and Scouting.



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INSURANCE

This remains an extremely high financial burden for Scouting (and volunteer organisations).

Under Legislation we are required to hold to Public Liability Insurance and through our Property Portfolio ISR Insurance.

This represents our largest cost outlay within our operating expenses and falls directly on volunteers to fundraise. It also impacts on our cost of membership.

We acknowledge the importance of Insurance, but Government support to meet or mitigate some of this cost would be welcomed.

Most Scout Dens/Facilities have been provided by volunteers through fundraising to provide the financial support to construct. Some of these are located on leased property through Local Councils or Department of Natural Resources. The cost of insuring these properties is a responsibility of Scouts Queensland. Our recommendation would be that local Councils could insure these properties with an insignificant increase to Council costs, but a significant savings to Scouts Queensland and other volunteer organisations.

Similar approach for Department of Natural Resources should be taken.

Recommendation:

- **Amendment to the legislation requiring Public Liability Insurance.**
- **Government funding of the insurance cost.**
- **Government to work with Local Councils/Department of Natural Resources to fund Building Insurance for leased Scout properties.**
- **Establishment by the State Government of a Volunteer Insurance Program for volunteers who are trained and compliant with legislation. This program could also provide legal coverage to qualified volunteers against emotional and physical abuse by members and parents, this enforcing protection.**

These would provide significant value to Scouts Queensland in reducing costs and improving volunteer engagement and retention.



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FUNDING

It is worth noting that the economic contribution of Scout Volunteers is in the order of \$43M per annum to Queensland economy. This contribution comes with no recurrent funding from the State Government. An opportunity here is the provision of meeting places for Scouts and other volunteer organisations.

As noted earlier much of volunteer time is focussed on fundraising to maintain facilities. The provision of a managed shared community space, with suitable storage would allow volunteers to focus on program delivery as opposed to fundraising. That is a much better outcome for our community given the value of the Scout Program.

There are existing meeting spaces available - state schools, high schools – but accessing that space is at the discretion of the principal. We would seek that arrangement sit with Department of Education which would see a consistent approach to the use of existing facilities.

The training cost to volunteers is another barrier that impacts.

Recommendation:

- **The Government make existing School facilities available to Scouting for delivery of the Scout Program and that this be managed by the relevant Department as opposed to local principals.**
- **Consideration of a funding arrangement with government to support the training of volunteers which would reduce the volunteering effort/burden of raising funds.**



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REDRESS/CIVIL LITIGATION

Redress continues to be a significant burden to many volunteer youth organisations and has the ability to bankrupt some youth organisations. Most youth organisations have accepted their past responsibilities and continue to provide funding through the redress scheme for the victims of child molestation. The concern for volunteer organisations including Scouting, which has systems in place to train and maintain competence of volunteers for many years, is the need to sell off assets to fund the redress payments and civil claims.

The Government could potentially assist by providing finance up to the existing value of youth organisation assets, secured by those assets to allow payments to be made.

This would reduce the emotional burden on volunteers.

The intent of the Redress Scheme was to provide closure and a compensatory payment to survivors. We know that some survivors choose the civil litigation path, which in some cases can take years to reach conclusion, with a higher burden of evidence required.

We hold data to demonstrate the time taken for closure through National Redress Scheme compared to the Civil Litigation is significantly less. We feel this is driven by advice provided by Legal Firms, which may not include reference to the Redress Scheme, thus potentially delaying earlier closure for the Survivor, in the hope of a larger compensatory payment. This may not always be the case once Lawyer fees are considered. Again, the intent of the National Redress Scheme was early closure for survivors.

Recommendation:

- **Government to provide finance to the existing value of the assets of the organisation, with those assets securing that facility to allow ongoing payments to be made, thus not bankrupting the organisation.**
- **The State Attorney General engage with the Queensland Law Society to seek a commitment that legal firms representing survivors ensure their clients are aware of the National Redress Scheme, and have the client sign a document to that effect.**



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GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

We believe there are numerous ways for Government support to Volunteers in Scouting. Some have been outlined in the recommendations above.

Some form of taxation relief for individuals who volunteer would be strong recognition of the contribution made by volunteers to our community. Advocacy by the State Government to the Federal Government would be welcomed.

We would highlight that Resilient Youth Australia Survey (2019) Attachment “A” demonstrated that a young person involved in Scouting has a better overall life satisfaction than their non scouting peers and that the longer they stay in Scouts the more resilient they are likely to become.

Volunteers are critical to the delivery of our program and thus have a direct impact on the outcomes identified in this survey,

Scouting is very much linked to our communities and another way of Government support would be the inclusion of the Scouting program into the School Program in parallel with other curricular activities.

Scouting is delivered through Schools in many Southeast Asian countries.

Recommendation:

- **The State Government advocate to the Federal Government for a form of tax deductibility to support volunteers personally from a cost perspective.**
- **The State Government continue and seek to increase the Fair Play Voucher Scheme to support young people’s participation in Scouting (and other organisations) as this financial support also assists volunteer’s children to participate.**
- **The State Government seek to implement the Scouting Program into the School curriculum.**



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ADDRESSING THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE



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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.

Scouts Queensland has been providing youth-based programs delivered by volunteer leaders for over 117 years across Queensland Communities. The state of volunteering in Scouts Queensland can be quantified on two levels:

- Leaders who are directly involved in program delivery and support
- Adult Members who are in supporting roles - i.e. Committee appointments.

We have seen a decline in the number of volunteer Leaders. This decline can be attributed to several factors:

- COVID 19 Pandemic
- Leaders who follow their children through Scouting and leave when their child leaves.
- Regulation/Legislation making it challenging for volunteers.
- Personal time commitment.

The value provided by our volunteers based on (NSW peak volunteering body, Centre for Volunteering's volunteers are now worth \$43.27 per hour) \$43 per hour, based on estimated 1M hours per annum – would see an economic contribution of \$43M per annum.

The benefits to the volunteers are in some cases intangible, but the intrinsic value of seeing the growth and development in young people to contribute their communities is immense and one that generates immense pride in our volunteers. Further our volunteers receive training, in areas such as, outdoors, leadership, personal growth to name a few. This training allows them to contribute to their local communities outside of Scouting and bring added value to their community.

Recommendation

- **State Government fund training for volunteers up to \$1000 per annum.**



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.

We have outlined some barriers earlier with recommendations.

Scouts Queensland is a child safe organisation and has child safety at the core of everything we do. Thus, we are totally supportive of legislation that focuses on child safety and regulations that ensure a safe environment for young people.

The views of current volunteers and prospective volunteers are different.

Current volunteers in the organisation have a knowledge of the policies, procedures, and processes – some of which are seen as burdensome – but align with legislation/regulation.

Prospective volunteers did not have that perspective and therefore perceive a lack of knowledge of the organisation or its policies as a barrier to entry.

The current legal climate around risk mitigation and thus seeking accountability around accidents also places pressure on potential volunteers, to understand their legal obligations when it comes to mitigating or managing risk.

Recommendation

- **State Government introduce legislation/regulation to protect the volunteer (and organisation) where they have followed process/procedures of the organisation.**
- **State Government introduce a volunteer indemnity scheme.**



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

Scouts' Queensland endeavours to ensure that our volunteers are suitably trained for the role they are undertaking, in working with or supporting young people. This training can be extensive and takes time both online and in person to complete. Our volunteers would argue that it in some cases it over emphasises components required. That is something Scouts Queensland is currently considering.

The other component is one of cost to train. For Scouts Queensland, those costs are met by volunteers through fundraising, grants applications or donations. Consideration of a funding arrangement with government to support the training of volunteer would reduce the volunteering effort/burden of raising funds.

Scouts Queensland also seeks to ensure we provide both a fun and rewarding experience for volunteers. Be that through skill development, social networking and interactions, community involvement or simply the ability to interact with young people and enjoy their company.

Recommendation

- **State Government fund training for volunteers up to \$1000 per annum.**



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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.

Whilst Scouting is all inclusive and welcomes members from all races, creeds and religions, there are challenges in this diverse space.

Language and cultural challenges can present perceived issues from prospective volunteers.

Our view is that in this regard diversity should be promoted to all.

Scouting in Queensland has cultural and faith- based groups currently operating across, Muslim, Chinese, Taiwanese, Buddhist multicultural communities. Further our broad membership base also sees multicultural engagement within Scout Groups across Queensland.

The Government could promote the opportunity of volunteering in Scouting to communities from diverse and cultural backgrounds. The Scouting experience is global across 175 countries with a membership of 57M.

Recommendation

- **State Government introduce a promotional campaign encouraging diversity in volunteering across Queensland, working with organisations to identify specific needs.**



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

Currently Scouts Queensland does not receive any ongoing funding from Government. We do take advantage of Grant programs on offer, where we are successful in some circumstances. We are not aware of the depth of Government support for volunteering apart from a funding line to Volunteer Queensland, who subsequently then charge their members a fee!

As noted earlier our volunteers contribute significantly towards the Queensland Economy, across the state (\$43M pa). Consideration by Government of a funding line to Scouts Queensland to cover training costs, or insurance costs (property/public liability) would have a significant impact on our capacity to improve the volunteer experience and deliver more programs to more young people.

Our volunteers are regularly recognised for their contribution to their communities through various award programs – Australia Day Honours, Local Hero Awards, Local Council Awards, Citizens of the Year Awards to name a few.

It is well known that we are seeing a decline in volunteering across all sectors, so government support via promotion, financial support, and any other means to recognise the value of volunteering would be strongly recommended.

Recommendation

- **State Government fund a small mileage payment/ parking costs/petrol allowance for volunteers to ease the cost burden.**
- **State Government introduce a gift card voucher system to reward volunteers. (\$50 per annum gift card) to recognise the contribution of volunteers**



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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.

Scouts Queensland is in a prime position to provide volunteers to support both the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. We have a cohort of 3500 volunteers who may be interested in a role to support the games. We also have nine thousand youth members who would passionately love to be a part of the games. Scouting is known around the world – so Scouts to be the Medal Bearers for medal ceremonies would be one suggestion.

Further the use of our Campsites and Facilities across Queensland could be invaluable to visiting international teams as they prepare for the Games. With supporting capital investment from Government, we could revitalise facilities to be available not only for the Games but make them available to the Queensland community both before and after the Games in 2032.



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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.

Scouts Queensland has at its disposal 13000 members across Queensland, and we could seek to mobilise some of them to support emergency and disaster management in a time of need. These members are across that state in 175 communities.

Further Scouts Queensland has at its disposal over three hundred bell tents and equipment and gear that could be made available to support major disaster recovery. An example of that deployment was the recent 26th Australian Scout Jamboree held in Maryborough Queensland- where we constructed a small city for 10,000 participants for 10 days.

We see opportunities to work with Government to support emergency response initiatives.



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

Scouts Queensland has in the past run Scouting programs that were funded by Government in remote and regional Indigenous communities. Regrettably when the government funding ceased, so did the programs.

Funding the Scout Program in remote and discrete communities achieves several outcomes. It provides a purpose and value to a young person, whilst also providing a volunteering opportunity to adults in those communities.

We would further seek consideration of establishing a Scouting in Schools program funded by government, which would achieve similar outcomes but would use existing infrastructure and knowledge to support delivery.

The commencement of such programs would be a strong tool so support Closing the Gap initiatives. This is independent data research from Resilience Australia 2019 (Attachment A) that highlights being a Scout has a positive impact on a young person life, compared to others who have not experienced the Scout Program.

Recommendation

- **State Government review funding to run Scout programs in Indigenous Communities**



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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.

We would refer the committee to the Resilience Australia Data from 2019 (Attachment A) wherein being a member of Scouting confirmed the positive impact the Scout Program had on the life of a young person across a range of attributes.

- Scouts are 6.2% more likely to enjoy school.
- Scouts report to have better social skills than non-scouts by 5.6%
- Scouts are 12.1% more likely to help with tasks at school
- Scouts are 14.1% more likely to read than non-Scouts for fun
- Scouts are 8.1% more likely to know they can solve a problem, rather than quit
- Scouts are 15.4% more likely than non-Scouts to feel they make a positive contribution to their community
- Scouts report they have a healthy body 11.6% more than non-Scouts
- Scouts are 8.1% more likely than non-Scouts to give time to help others
- Scouts are 11.8% more likely to feel good about themselves
- Scouts are 6.5% more likely than non-Scouts to feel they can talk about things that are upsetting them
- Scouts are 5.2% more likely than non-Scouts to get along with people who are different to them
- Scouts are 11% more likely to feel good about themselves
- Scouts report to have a healthier mental state than non-Scouts by 13%
- Scouts are 13% more likely than non-Scouts to trust others
- Scouts report they have an overall better life satisfaction than their peers by 5.2%
- Scouts are 6.3% more likely than non-Scouts to forgive others who are mean to them
- Scouts are 6.8% more likely than non-Scouts to report they have adults who set good examples for them
- Scouts are 9.4% more likely than non-Scouts to hold more hope for the future.

We would also ask you note that **Volunteers** deliver the Scout program. Scouts Queensland is aligned with Scouts Australia and the Worldwide Organisation of the Scouts Movement. Scouting is represented in 175 countries with a membership of fifty-seven million.



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Resilience Survey Key Findings

Scouts Australia partnered with Resilient Youth Australia to conduct the Scouts Australia Resilience Survey to investigate the impact of Scouting on the resilience of its youth members.

A sample of current youth members aged 8-18 years old across all States and Territories took part in the survey. Their results were benchmarked against the Australian norm dataset of 48,671 young people aged 8-18 years.

Through this survey, we have found that Scouts have an overall better life satisfaction than their non-Scouting peers, and that the longer they stay in Scouts, the more resilient they are likely to become.



Scouts are 9.4% more likely than non-Scouts to hold more hope for a positive future.



Scouts are 6.8% more likely than non-Scouts to report they have adults who set good examples for them.

Scouts are 6.3% more likely than non-Scouts to forgive others who are mean to them.



Scouts are 13% more likely than non-Scouts to trust others.



Scouts report have an overall better life satisfaction than their peers by 5.2%.

Scouts report to have a healthier mental state than non-Scouts by 13%.



Scouts are 11% more likely to hold to feel good about themselves



Scouts are 5.2% more likely than non-Scouts to get along with people who are different to them.



Scouts are 6.5% more likely than non-Scouts to feel they can talk about things that are upsetting them.

Scouts are 11.8% more likely to feel good about themselves



Scouts are 8.1% more likely than non-Scouts to give time to help others.

Scouts are 6.2% more likely to enjoy school



Scouts are 14.1% more likely than non-Scouts to read for fun.



Scouts report they have a healthy body 11.6% more than non-Scouts.



Scouts report to have better social skills than non-Scouts by 5.6%.



Scouts are 12.1% more likely to be selected to help with tasks at school



Scouts are 8.1% more likely to know they can solve a problem, rather than quit



Scouts are 15.4% more likely than non-Scouts to feel they make a positive contribution to their community.