


Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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INQUIRY INTO AND REPORT ON VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND.

25 February 2025.

Submitted by

[REDACTED]

Email address is

Mobile number –

[REDACTED]

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on volunteering in Queensland. I am involved with volunteers through my role as;

- Chair of the Maleny Street Gardeners Alliance Inc.
- Newsletter Editor and management committee of the Queensland Council of Garden Clubs {QCGC Inc}.
- Previously, National President of the Australian Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management, State President of the Institute of Purchasing and Supply, State Chair of SCLAA NSW, various body corporate as Chair or committee member.

MY GENERAL POSITION.

I agree that an enquiry should be undertaken as the majority of “Not for Profit” entities are all struggling to attract and keep volunteers since the end of COVID19 in Queensland. Prior to COVID19 the majority of NFP entities that I volunteered on had no problems getting people to join and be active in committees.

During COVID19 people were not able to freely move around, forced to be being isolated and meeting in groups was discouraged. Faced this these government restrictions, many people found other ways to cope with isolation and personal interaction with others. Many NFP entities ‘shut down’ for the entire period of time when COVID restrictions were imposed. This is most like the outcome of low volunteer numbers in Queensland.

When COVID19 restrictions were removed by government, many people felt free to do all the things they were prohibited from doing. This included going to garden club meetings, travel locally, interstate and overseas, attend family meetings and joining various groups, The benefit of the internet allowed people to have regular conversations, play games and participate in competitions while at home and found that they could cope in isolation. Today, it’s a struggle to get volunteers as those who were once available are now otherwise occupied. They are now mostly travelling instead of volunteering.

Red tape, rules and regulations is a further barrier to volunteering for some persons.

ITEM 1 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Values and benefits of volunteering

With a garden club, an orchid club, a herb club, horticultural society or those aligned to gardening, the benefits to the community are significant. Members join a club to learn about soil, fertilisers, pests, environment conditions, watering and making friendships by interaction with others. It also improves the mental state of a person to see the results of their gardening endeavours. The home grown vegetables often seem to be fresher and often cheaper.

On the environmental aspects of gardening and horticulture, plants use photosynthesis to absorb carbon and convert it to oxygen. A barren public park can be made more attractive with green grass, bushes and flowers. Garden clubs provide a place for like minded persons to learn about gardening and share friendships.

ITEM 2 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Current barriers for volunteering

I think that there is confusion between various groups of NFP entities in the public arena. Some are classed as charities that help to generate funds that assist a particular class of persons such as life savers. Others are churches that provide a source of faith based religions. Garden clubs provide friendship through gardening. [One size does not fit all]

I believe that there is too much compliance that a volunteer in a 'not for profit' must address when being an office bearer or a committee member.

These may include the following;

- Compliance with Qld Workplace Health and Safety legislation / regulations
- Duty of Care to provide a safe workplace or area. [Example Smoking, site inductions]
- Compliance with the new Office of Fair Trading Model Rules
- The cost of various insurances for a NFP entity. [A burden on small groups.]
- Office bearers are considered Directors with due diligence requirement [ASIC]
- Now a formal processes [OFT] for managing a grievance between persons in a NFP
- Workplace Health and Safety legislation can impose financial penalties on office bearers for non-compliance to include volunteers.
- Taxation on NFP profit generated over \$416.00 and 57% tax thereafter
- ATO self-assessment forms that must be completed and submitted annually
- Compliance with the Department of Health on food preparation, serving, compliance
- Compliance with Council on parking when holding Spring Fairs or 'open gardens'
- Need a Certificate on Food handling to serve food at club function and events.
- Need a Blue Card to volunteer at a school or kindergarten

Since the various changes in the Model Rules exemplar in Queensland issued by the Office of Fair Trading, many people do not want the various responsibilities of being a office bearer or committee member. Office bearers are considered Directors and have the same responsibility of a director or a commercial business or similar structure.

Adding to this, the Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Legislation and Regulations place both financial penalties and criminal penalties for office bearers of a NFP entity. The 'duty of care' responsibilities and the need to provide a 'safe workplace' at meeting or at an event is a further impediment.

ITEM 3 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Addressing challenges and improving a volunteer's experience

One challenge of clubs is the financial cost and availability of finding a monthly suitable venue to hold meetings and monthly functions. Church halls is a common venue.

Most garden club meetings have a structured and formal process to keep members informed and to comply with the rules of an entity. Treasurer's reports are often generate enquiries from members.

Sadly, with cyber fraud, many clubs have lost some or all of their savings.

Many garden clubs have a simple uniform that gives a volunteer a warm feeling and one of belonging to either a group or a family of like-minded persons.

ITEM 4 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Challenges of people with diverse backgrounds or disabilities.

This is not often a challenge providing a suitable venue or providing a welcoming environment for holding monthly meetings or functions for anyone interested in horticultural activities. The availability of a suitable venue usually the facilities for persons with disabilities to hold meeting. One challenge would be that the meetings are all delivered in the English language.

Any catering provided at meetings usually covers dietary requirements. Bigger garden clubs often have a defibrillator and a few persons trained in its use. Alternatively, a call to 000 can be used for medical emergencies.

Where a bus trip to a nursery is planned, part of the decision making process considers the requirements of members including mobility, dietary needs, toilet amenities and members medical conditions. Disabled parking spaces may be an issue with some groups.

ITEM 5 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Extent of current government support

Federal, State and Local governments are all able to be more effective and efficient in providing support for both small, medium and large NFP entities.

The management and skill sets on many NFP's committees vary greatly. Those who have previously been in management positions and are now in volunteering on a committee often have little or no problems. Those who have not been in management or have never worked for many years are often resistance to the rules and requirement of a management committee.

Government could consider the following;

- State government can assist by providing education for committee management.
- State government can provide simple booklets free on how to work in a committee
- Governments can provide simple checklists for free on how to manage RISKS.
- State government can offer low premiums insurance to NFP's
- Local government can assist NFP by providing community halls at minimum cost
- Federal government can ensure that unemployed persons can be directed to volunteering as part of receiving government benefits.

ITEM 6 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Growth in volunteering to support the Brisbane Olympics

There were two different international events that were very successful in Australia. The Queensland government should implement the various models that ensured their success.

- New South Wales government hosted the Olympic games at Homebush in 2000, a Sydney suburb. This Olympics games was very successful and provided legacy venues for future use. Those who volunteered were issued very attractive uniforms and wore them with dignity. Perhaps the Brisbane Olympic planning group should follow this model.
- The Queensland government hosted EXPO 88 in Brisbane in 1988. This event was very successful and was a model that could be followed for the Brisbane Olympic games in 2032.

ITEM 7 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Volunteers for emergency response.

The federal government once had a unemployment training scheme where persons that were on government benefits were required to actively participate in a structured training program. At the end of formal training the training provider did not receive the final payment unless the student became employed full time for a period of 3 months.

Perhaps this is one strategy for government to consider. The structured training must be aligned to what emergency services need. I do not have any other knowledge of how emergency services could recruit volunteers.

ITEM 8 OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

First Nations people for volunteering

The role of volunteers from First Nations people would have many moving parts. It would vary between each State or Territory in Australia and by various geographic location in Queensland. Those in the city have different need to those in remote areas.

The level of education for a volunteer and the culture within the family unit must be considered. In some environments there may be thinking that the government will provide everything that is needed for a community. There are always exceptions to that thought.

The federal government must be part of the process to achieve the various aims and objectives of the Queensland government volunteer initiative.

Suggestions could be;

- To have Elders of various mobs be trained and to volunteer to assist in watchhouses or detention centres to assist in resolving issues and provide guidance to youths.
- To have Elders of various mobs be trained to assist Teachers in primary and secondary schools to be a resource person to assist in the education of First Nation peoples and other students.
- To have Elders of various mobs assist and monitor children to attend schools. This could assist in reducing truancy and the “non-attendance” of children going to school.

ITEM 9 OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

Other relevant matters

Finally a charity, church or a garden club could have very different State legislation, Rules and Regulation for their operation as they would have very different aims, objectives and roles within a community. Maybe, make exemptions to the existing legislation for nominated group classes.

End.