

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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| <b>Submission No:</b>      | 467  |
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## Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering

### **Context:**

I have been involved in the not-for-profit sector for over 40 years, holding volunteer positions that have included: management committee roles, chair and leadership roles and administration. I currently hold a Director's position on the Ron Tough Yachting Foundation board - an organisation that is based in WA. I also volunteer with Volunteering North Queensland in Townsville after relocating here several months ago.

### **My concerns:**

Over the many years of volunteering the main issue for so many NFP's that I have witnessed has been the lack of recurrent funding. Consecutive Federal and State governments have failed to acknowledge that NFP's cannot rely on 'donations' from the community to assist them with the regular 'running costs' of NFP and volunteer organisations. Further, anecdotal evidence also shows that many Australians are unable or unwilling to donate to community groups and are only being 'inspired' to do so in the times of tragedy or community outrage. Yet governments and the community 'expect' these groups to continue to provide the services they do.

The lack of recurrent funding and access to recurrent grants has seen the demise of many community groups and NFP's, with those being 'left' struggling and becoming overwhelmed when trying to meet the needs and expectations of the community.

These groups are part of the third sector of the economy and provide vital services that governments and commercial operators do not – yet they are the least funded and the most ignored.

Sadly, too, when the Federal government recently identified a number of 'peak' bodies within the volunteering sector - many of these organisations seemed to have no inclination or motivation to support organisations in the regions that they are 'supposed' to be responsible for. One must ask then where is the accountability or transparency, and 'where are the federal and state funds going?

### **Examples:**

VNQ – Volunteering North Queensland: is a referral hub - where councils, and other community groups can contact the agency to list their volunteer positions or 'find' volunteers. The agency has over 100 registered organisations who regularly seek volunteers from its database. A recent request for funding was submitted to the identified 'Peak Body' Volunteering Queensland, (VQ) to enable it to keep the doors open. The request of \$20,000 was refused with no feedback or comment as to why or on what grounds. The result - the current management committee will be publicly announcing the closure of the agency by the end of March 2025.

<https://www.vnq.org.au/>

A further example of how volunteer organisations struggle is from outside of Queensland and my experience. It is evident that the problem of supporting volunteer organisations financially long term is an issue that exists in all states and territories of Australia.

For example: The Duyfken 1606 Replica Foundation. This organisation was responsible for managing a national asset -the replica sailing ship Duyfken. Built in Fremantle (WA) immediately after the Endeavour replica was built, the Duyfken replica was an acknowledgement of the first

European ship recorded to visit Australian shores. Under Captain Willem Janszoon the original Duyfken sailed into the Pennefather River after reaching the Cape York Peninsula.  
<https://gutenberg.net.au/pages/jansz.html>

The Duyfken 1606 Foundation, established in 1993, had been receiving recurrent funding from the WA government until the state election (2017). After a complete turnabout by the then McGowan government who, some would consider, went of a 'rampage' , cut government spending to what was deemed 'non-essential' community groups and services. In this move - organisations such as School of the Air (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-13/wa-government-sweeping-education-cuts-deliver-170-job-losses/9256622>), The wild life education centre, the Perth Festival, School Sports programs to name a few, lost all of their funding. The Duyfken Foundation included.

The Duyfken Foundation at that time had been running a successful education program that had been integrated into the Year four social history curriculum. The ship was also playing an integral part in the Western Australian tourism sector.

With over 150 volunteers, and no recurrent funding the challenge to replace the \$150,000 per annum began in earnest. Several attempts at corporate sponsorship were made and a crowd funding campaign proved successful when the ship needed to replace it engines - but no recurrent funding was secured from any source. The Foundation board and its volunteers had to watch as the ship was loaded onto a cargo carrier bound for NSW and is now at the National Maritime Museum on exhibit after being gifted by the foundation to the museum so that its conservation could be preserved. (<https://www.sea.museum/en/whats-on/our-fleet/duyfken-replica>).

### **In conclusion.**

My experience working in the NFP and volunteer sector has proved to me that unless the sector is recognised for the 'work' and services that it provides and is properly funded to do 'that' work, the sector will continue to falter. Community members are ready to volunteer and don't 'mind' giving up their time and skills if they feel the 'cause' is worthwhile.

Further, we also need to acknowledge that current and previous generations i.e. Gen's X Y, and Z have not been educated in the benefits gained by individuals who volunteer. New skills are learned, new connections are made, people find 'paying' jobs, social isolation becomes a non-issue. An individual's mental health and wellbeing improves – dramatically.

All these factors have a knock-on effect – we end up with healthier and happier community's which put less stress on our already over stretched health services.

Some good promotion of what volunteering can do for the individual is needed – but it surely must start by having NFP's and community groups properly funded – as I feel, as many others do, that it is a joint responsibility where state and federal work together.

Vikki Baldwin