

## Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

**Submission No:** 474  
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### Submitter Comments:

Good Day,I have been a volunteer for over 20 years. I am currently the managing director of a cooperative.Prior to taking on my current roleI was the director of an arts organisation for 12 years.I have taken on my work roles as a director in a volunteer capacity.I am 79, and still keen to do my part.I treat my pension as my wage for the work I do.I am a veteran The name I use for volunteers is GIFTERS for the time and personal resources they put in.In 2007 I put my hand to see if I could save an organisation that had lost all its State funding.I put a team of volunteers together, and the organisation was saved, and flourished. Recently the organisation has been reformed as a cooperative.Although I could have taken payments from funded projects I initiated, my approach has been to look after your team first to ensure their efforts are properly rewarded. To ensure the organisation could meet all its financial and legal obligations I would gift money i could have taken back to the organisation. I strongly believe that the top looks after the rungs below before taking a payment. This approach results in team where members are willing to gift time into supporting the organisation, their team, and the communities we help.Another outcome that by opening up opportunities to volunteer freely and without cohesion results in a team that is stable, energetic, committed, keen to put forward their ideas to grow the team and organisation. This often leads the team to spontaneously celebrate a volunteer or volunteers for their achievements, outcomes, or service given to others.One example of being celebrated was when the team surprised me with a banjo they bought for me, and on another occasion when an Italian, who went on to become a pastry chef back in Italy. baked the biggest Tiramisu I had ever seen. These are the rewards of gifting ones time, passions, and approach to working with people. Gifting has give as much back to me as I have given. Volunteering has kept me young.Those who volunteer here have their ranged in ages from 17 into the 60's. As well, anyone who started out as a volunteer. if they took on a roll of someone who would have been paid, the volunteer was paid for the work that would have been undertaken by a person who would have been paid.I let volunteers (gifters) to initiate and trial their ideas for community projects and give then a small budget to begin it, and all the administration help they required. One of initiated project began by a Gifter in 2016 is still running today. The woman who began the program was in her late twenties. It has continued to evolve and grow ever since. The program even ran during Covid. We provide two high schoolers free studio residency to put on a solo exhibition in our gallery. The positive impact on their lives has been substantial. Being a teacher she had approached the education department for support for idea was knocked back. As soon as she told me of her idea, I saw the merit in her idea and should be given the opportunity to give it a go. Another one of our volunteers had an idea for helping students at risk of fall out of high school, She got funding for it and if we could have kept receiving the small amount we had been funded for it, I dare say it would still be running today.There are other programs we have run that have had significant impact on communities all down to volunteers.Through our approach to volunteering to help people who hadn't been in the country long, I supported and mentored people Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, Croatia, Columbia and Kenya. to find paid work they were qualified for.Because of the opportunities we have provided in the past, to embrace people with varied culture backgrounds it grows into a vibrant, mixed culture environment that creates a unique exchange and flow of ideas, cohesion and a buoyant workplace where everyone, shares, learns new skills, and has the opportunities for personal growth, and to stay connected long after one has move on.In 2011 a young woman with autism and with other cognitive complexities came with a support worker to volunteer a day to work with us. After being here for three months I took over from the support

worker in a volunteering capacity. She loved being here so much she started coming in everyday, She stayed with us for 8 years. In that time she grew into taking on a range of responsibilities. She was being financially supported through whatever allowance she was getting, but we would show our appreciation for her contribution to the organisation by giving her a small financial bonus at Christmas Time. May my contribution be of some benefit to your committee. Thank you for the opportunity and may your work bear wonderful fruits.