

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submission to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

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The Current State of Volunteering in Queensland and Its Value

Executive Summary

This submission to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland highlights the critical role of volunteering in the community, particularly in the lead-up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It outlines the current state of volunteering, identifies barriers, and provides recommendations to enhance volunteer engagement and support. Key focus areas include:

- i. **Current State of Volunteering:** Volunteering is essential to Queensland's social, economic, and cultural fabric, with significant contributions from community-driven organizations like Sunshine Coast 2032.
- ii. **Barriers to Volunteering:** Legislative and regulatory burdens, lack of awareness, time constraints, and financial costs are major obstacles that need addressing.
- iii. **Volunteer Experiences and Challenges:** Positive volunteer experiences are crucial, but challenges such as time management, lack of recognition, and insufficient support must be mitigated.
- iv. **Diverse Groups:** Inclusive programs and targeted outreach are necessary to engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds, genders, age groups, and abilities.
- v. **Government Support:** Increased funding, cross-portfolio collaboration, and reduced administrative burdens are recommended to bolster volunteer programs.

- vi. Leveraging the Brisbane 2032 Games: The Games present an opportunity to promote large-scale volunteering, engage communities, and create a lasting legacy of volunteerism.
- vii. Emergency Response Volunteering: Enhanced training, support, and coordination are needed for emergency response volunteers.
- viii. First Nations Peoples Volunteering: Culturally appropriate programs and targeted funding are essential to support First Nations volunteers.
- ix. By addressing these focus areas, the submission aims to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable volunteer culture in Queensland.

Overview:

Volunteering in Queensland is a vital component of the community, contributing significantly to the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the state

In 2024, approximately 64.3% of Queenslanders aged 15 and over engaged in volunteering, contributing an estimated 719 million hours

Sunshine Coast 2032 is a community-driven organisation led by Chair Roz White and Deputy Duncan Armstrong. Our purpose is to connect stakeholders at all levels to maximise opportunities before, during, and after the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. We aim to amplify the Sunshine Coast and Noosa region's unique strengths and create long-term community benefits.

Sunshine Coast 2032 is supported by a series of committees which these Terms of Reference define purpose, objectives and scope in further detail including the Volunteering and Community Sub-Committee, of which I am Deputy Chair.

The Volunteering and Community Sub-Committee of 2032 exists to give a voice to the local community, maximising engagement opportunities, being inclusive and encouraging wider participation in volunteering.

If Sunshine Coast 2032 was a body – The Volunteering and Community Committee are the beating heart! We strive to be truly valued and impactful, as evidenced at the Sydney 2000 Games, it was the people, volunteers and atmosphere of the city that attracted the title “best Games ever”. In 2032, the Sunshine Coast and each region has the opportunity to create a competitive advantage by creating a different feel to our neighbouring regions, leaving a long-term impression on our visitors and locals alike. To ensure the Olympics and Paralympics benefit the Sunshine Coast Community by encouraging projects that leaves our region feeling vastly different for all groups and that has created new cultural ‘norms’. Through volunteer engagement initiatives towards inclusion and accessibility can be accelerated both for locals and tourists post Paralympic Games; consider reducing the mental load of an individual by creating ease

of access and acceptance through dining in a restaurant that offers different languages on the menu and welcomes all cultures. Imagine having your special needs met and new services offered through awareness. It is our position that engagement with volunteer groups such as Sunshine Coast 2032 in the lead up to and beyond the games are a valuable and impactful tool for Brisbane OCOG and State Government. They provide the opportunity to develop a direct community voice that is able to provide insight, input and activation to meet their inclusivity and logistical objectives. Volunteers in groups such as these can be invited to activate community lead projects, events and activations that fall outside of Government constraints. However current structures are not adequate to engage greater volumes of population in philanthropic activities and reduction in hours of volunteering is well evidenced in research.

Government will need to identify groups that need a stronger voice and activate communication channels to provide that voice for the betterment of the regions in the leadup, during and post Games

The objectives created by the volunteers of our sub-committee to Sunshine Coast 2032 provides insight into what we see a functional and effective volunteer group can be:

Be a valued input channel and conduit for other Sunshine Coast 2032 Board & Committees, all tiers of Government and OCOG, measured by the frequency that these groups seek our input and opinions from our aligned community sectors before undertaking activities and resulting in reducing wasted resources and spending.

Be the cultural champions - attracting and engage the 'people army' that are prepared to get involved prior to OCOG's official engagement so that we are prepared and able to stamp the Sunshine Coast difference into the volunteer community.

Embed the value of volunteering into the way of life by capturing as much culture and excitement in the leadup to the games through preliminary and training events that inspire involvement and show a keen desire for participation, connection and contribution.

Enable a valuable experience for our volunteers, setting them up for success and creating a vision that is aspirational "blueprint

Post event, keep the experience and cultural changes alive and continue to promote volunteering and community participation as a way of life.

Our Approach

- i. Being the beating heart of a high-performance region
- ii. Taking a human centred design approach to stakeholder engagement
- iii. Being open, inclusive, collaborative and communicative

- iv. Always looking to break down the barriers – as a group we succeed in spite of the hurdles placed in front of us
- v. Being unapologetic for our passion in identifying the impact that other Committees, Governments and OCOG are having on the Sunshine Coast
- vi. Tempering this passion with diplomacy and understanding that better outcomes are achieved through inclusion, communication, collaboration and coordination
- vii. Understanding that there are groups that do not wish for the Games to be located here and supporting Games related committees and organisations to communicate with and support these perspectives'
- viii. Looking for the 'WOW' factor in creating moments that matter to people.
- ix. Developing a broader social conscious across the whole community.

We have no official role in building and engaging the volunteer community for the 2032 Games and cannot make commitments to individuals or groups that we are an official pathway towards such involvement. That role will be fulfilled by OCOG with our intent to build value in the lead-up to these decisions for our possible inclusion / input. We do however see our collective community and immediate responsibility is to create excitement, curiosity and provide a pathway for inclusion in lead up activities that create a sense of community and engender a volunteering mindset.

Benefits

- i. **Volunteers:** Personal growth, skill development, social connections, and improved mental health
- ii. **Organisations:** Enhanced service delivery, community engagement, and resource augmentation
- iii. **Communities:** Strengthened social cohesion, increased civic participation, and improved community resilience
- iv. **State:** Economic contributions through unpaid labour, reduced social service costs, and enhanced public welfare, community cohesion and health benefits.

Barriers to Volunteering

Current Barriers

- i. **Legislative and Regulatory Burdens:** Complex compliance requirements and administrative overheads
- ii. **Other Restrictions:** Lack of awareness, time constraints, and financial costs associated with volunteering, access and lack of purpose/ community connection and engagement to motivate benefits, past volunteering experiences created burnout or negative social impact from participation.

Experiences, Motivations, and Challenges

Volunteer Experiences

It is essential to create positive experiences include a sense of purpose, community connection, and personal satisfaction:

- i. Challenges include time management, lack of recognition, and insufficient support from organisations, excessive expectations of contribution by organisations, training burden, social barriers to entry and lack of inclusiveness
- ii. Focus on the Next Generation ensure every child feels they contribute and have purpose, seek activations across interest zones for next generation to be involved and embrace volunteering
- iii. It is important that volunteers are not seen as the implementation vehicle for entities or committees to rely on for event management and volunteers without consultation and prior agreement then expected to deliver objectives regardless of the value to the community.

Recommendations

- i. Simplify regulatory requirements.
- ii. Increase public awareness campaigns.
- iii. Provide better support and recognition for volunteers
- iv. Provide flexible opportunities for volunteers
- v. Consider impact of exploitation of volunteers
- vi. Explore ways to engage a volunteer culture fit for next generation

Unique Challenges for Diverse Groups

Challenges

- i. **Diverse Backgrounds:** Cultural barriers, language differences, and lack of targeted opportunities, financial cost of volunteering,
- ii. **Genders and Age Groups:** Gender-specific roles, age-related physical limitations, and generational differences in volunteering preferences and expectations
- iii. **Abilities and Locations:** Accessibility issues, transportation challenges, and limited opportunities in remote areas.
- iv. **Economic and Financial impact** cost to volunteering in resources, time and opportunity to undertake other activities
- v. **Negative Social impact** wellbeing and health impacts of emergency services and social services volunteering

Opportunities for Improvement

- i. Develop inclusive volunteering programs.
- ii. Enhance accessibility and provide transportation support.
- iii. Create targeted outreach initiatives for underrepresented groups
- iv. Fund or remove burden of administration
- v. Provide health and wellbeing support to volunteers responding to critical incidents

Government Support and Opportunities for Improvement

Current Support

- i. Various grants and funding programs are available to support volunteer-involving organisations
- ii. Government initiatives to promote volunteering through public campaigns and partnerships

Opportunities for Improvement

- i. Increase funding and resources for volunteer programs.
- ii. Foster cross-portfolio collaboration to integrate volunteering into broader government initiatives
- iii. Decrease burden of administration
- iv. Recognise and respond to negative financial and health impact

Leveraging the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Opportunities

- i. Use the event to promote volunteering on a large scale.
- ii. Engage communities to activate pre and post games
- iii. Engage volunteers in event planning and execution.
- iv. Highlight the legacy of volunteering post-Games.

Sport matters. It is a vitally important aspect of our social fabric as a nation. Sport promotes inclusiveness, inspires us, enables health and wellbeing and practically educates us on the importance of teamwork. Our passion for sport creates an incredibly powerful emotional connector that binds communities creating positive social impacts.

Volunteering supports collaboration and communication Beyond the social benefits, grass roots sporting clubs have become an incredibly valuable contributor to the national economy through the power of volunteering:

- i. 14m Australians participate in sport annually
- ii. 1.8 million volunteers provide 158 million hours each year
- iii. 220,000 are employed across the sector (QLD -15,900)
- iv. 3 per cent of our national GDP
- v. \$83 billion in combined economic, health and educational benefits each year
- vi. Return on investment of \$7 for every dollar spent

Without intervention, declining volunteer rates will increase the burden on government-funded services, leading to higher social service costs and reduced community engagement. Strategic investment in volunteer programs now will result in long-term cost savings and improved community wellbeing.

Emergency Response Volunteering

Opportunities

- i. Enhance training and support for emergency response volunteers.
- ii. Improve coordination between volunteer organisations and emergency services.
- iii. Develop strategies to retain and engage volunteers during non-emergency periods.
- iv. Support volunteers who deliver the same service as employees with support services.
- v. Remove financial and administrative burden of volunteering.

Creating a Lasting Volunteer Legacy from the 2032 Olympics with 3 clear focus areas:

- i. **Pre-Games Volunteer Culture Building** – Engaging early to ensure a pipeline of experienced volunteers.
- ii. **Games-Time Volunteering** – Highlighting volunteer roles that enhance the Olympic experience.
- iii. **Post-Games Volunteer Engagement** – Ensuring volunteer retention and continued community participation.

First Nations Peoples Volunteering

Current State

- i. First Nations volunteers play a crucial role in community development and cultural preservation.
- ii. Volunteering contributes to Closing the Gap initiatives by fostering community leadership and empowerment.
- iii. Regional areas and cultural volunteering are underrepresented.

Recommendations

- i. Support culturally appropriate volunteering programs.
- ii. Recognize and celebrate the contributions of First Nations volunteers.
- iii. Provide targeted funding and resources for First Nations volunteering initiatives.

Other Relevant Matters

Additional Considerations:

- i. Review and incorporate findings from national and interstate reports on volunteering.
- ii. Engage academic institutions to conduct further research on volunteering trends and impacts
- iii. Review and engage peak bodies with research and reports on volunteering

References:

- i. State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024 Report
- ii. Volunteering Queensland – Barriers to Volunteering
- iii. Volunteer Experiences in Queensland
- iv. Challenges for Diverse Groups in Volunteering
- v. Government Support for Volunteering in Queensland
- vi. Opportunities for Volunteering in Queensland
- vii. Emergency Response Volunteering in Queensland
- viii. First Nations Peoples Volunteering in Queensland
- ix. Other Relevant Reports and Reviews
- x. Clearinghouse for Sport – volunteers in sport
- xi. Sunshine Coast 2032 Community and Volunteering Subcommittee papers