

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Submission No:	501
Submitted by:	Discovery Coast Tourism & Commerce Inc
Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Submission Regarding the Current State of Volunteering in Queensland

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Introduction:

This submission addresses the Queensland Legislative Assembly committee's inquiry into the current state of volunteering in Queensland. As a long-term volunteer with extensive experience in festival coordination, committee work, and pro bono services, I offer insights and recommendations based on my observations and experiences.

General Position:

I believe that volunteering is a critical component of Queensland's social fabric and that its current decline presents a significant challenge. I support initiatives that aim to revitalise and strengthen the volunteering sector.

Observations and Challenges:

- **Decline in Volunteer Participation:**
 - A noticeable reduction in volunteer numbers, particularly among younger demographics, is evident at festivals and community events.
 - This decline has necessitated operational downsizing for many organisations.
 - This is being observed across many organisations.
- **Contributing Factors:**
 - **Financial and Lifestyle Pressures:** Increased living costs and the need for dual-income households have reduced available leisure time.
 - **Cultural and Societal Shifts:** A perceived decline in community spirit and camaraderie, potentially exacerbated by recent lockdowns, has diminished the intrinsic rewards of volunteering.
 - **Insurance and Liability Costs:** High insurance premiums and liability concerns have become a significant barrier for volunteer-involving organisations.
 - **Training and Mentorship Deficiencies:** A shortage of experienced volunteers limits the capacity for effective training and mentorship.
 - **Age Demographic Shift:** An increased reliance on older volunteers, with a corresponding decrease in younger participation, presents sustainability challenges.
- **Impact on Organisations:**
 - Organisations are struggling to find and keep volunteers.
 - Organisations are having to reduce services.
 - Organisations are facing increased costs due to insurance.

Proposed Solutions:

In response to the committee's terms of reference, I propose the following solutions:

1. Funding for Volunteer Coordinator Roles and Training:

- Invest in dedicated volunteer coordinator positions and comprehensive training programs.
- This will ensure professional management, enhance the volunteer experience, and foster a strong volunteering culture.
- Relates to terms of reference point 3.

2. Integration of Volunteering into School Curriculum:

- Incorporate structured volunteering opportunities into the school curriculum, similar to work experience.
- This will cultivate community awareness, teamwork, and practical skills among young people, promoting lifelong volunteering and transferable skills to the workforce.
- Relates to terms of reference point 4.

3. Grants and Financial Support for Volunteers:

- Provide grants to organisations to support volunteer expenses, such as fuel and travel.
- Consider incorporating volunteer support into existing grant programs to incentivise participation.
- Relates to terms of reference point 5.

4. Government Leveraging and Strategic Support:

- Utilise the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a catalyst for increased volunteering and the training of volunteering coordinators to assist after the games.
- Implement strategies across all government portfolios to support and promote volunteering and showcase the intrinsic benefits.
- Relates to terms of reference point 6.

5. Emergency Response Volunteering:

- Develop comprehensive strategies to optimize the engagement, support, and integration of volunteers in emergency response and community recovery efforts.
- Develop people skills and soft skills in the sector to support and encourage volunteers and build a good inclusive and supportive culture in the organisations to keep recruited volunteers.
- Relates to terms of reference point 7.

6. First Nations Volunteering:

- Support and promote First Nations volunteering, particularly in remote and discrete communities, to contribute to Closing the Gap initiatives.
- Showcase volunteers and volunteer initiatives in communities that are working well to inspire other communities and community members to create initiatives.
- Relates to terms of reference point 8.

7. Addressing Regulatory Burdens:

- Review and streamline legislative and regulatory requirements to reduce barriers for volunteer-involving organisations.
- Relates to terms of reference point 2.

8. Data Collection and Research:

- Conduct further research to better understand the motivations, challenges, and experiences of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.

- Conduct case studies of successful volunteering organisations and share the learning to implement in other organisations..
- Relates to terms of reference point 1, 3, 4, and 9.

Conclusion:

Revitalising volunteering in Queensland requires a multifaceted approach that addresses financial, cultural, and logistical barriers.

By implementing the proposed solutions, the Queensland Government can foster a thriving volunteering sector that benefits individuals, organisations, and the broader community.