

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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# MAYOR *Jon Raven*



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Local Government, Small Business  
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## SUBMISSION FOR INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND

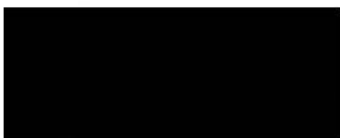
Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of Logan City Council, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to submit to the *Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland*. I am a passionate advocate for the 34,000 volunteers who live in the City of Logan. Our volunteers are a living example of our strong sense of community.

Every day I see people willing to go out of their way to help and support each other and one of the things that makes Logan and the warm and welcoming city that it is. They are the heart and soul of our community and its critical that we do everything we can to support them to continue their vital work.

I am looking forward to the progression of this inquiry, if you have any questions, I invite you to reach out to me at [mayor@logan.qld.gov.au](mailto:mayor@logan.qld.gov.au) or 07 3412 5218.

Kind regards,



Mayor Jon Raven  
**LOGAN CITY COUNCIL**

# Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Submission 28 February 2025

# Executive Summary

The contribution of volunteers is essential to enhancing community wellbeing and supporting the core operations of local government. There are many barriers in place that disincentivise volunteering, both for prospective new volunteers and the retention of existing volunteers. The volunteering experience needs to be sustainable and greater long-term financial, mental health and training support is needed. Focused recruitment efforts are also crucial to ensure a consistent pool of appropriately skilled volunteers can be drawn on in times of need to ensure systems are in place to prevent the burnout of current volunteers. State-led policy, planning and funding support has the potential to improve the state of volunteering in Queensland and as such Logan City Council proposes the following recommendations.

## Key recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Provide dedicated mental health support, including trauma informed responses and vicarious trauma, for volunteers dealing with traumatic events including disaster, homelessness, and domestic violence.**

**RECOMMENDATION 2: A localised approach to disaster and emergency volunteer deployment is needed.**

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Establish dedicated training and certification programs for volunteers to help build a more prepared workforce and better clarify the skills and abilities of volunteers to ensure they are set up to succeed.**

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Develop a volunteering action plan inclusive of funding, programs, and volunteer training with a matter of urgency.**

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Establish a blanket insurance policy that covers all spontaneous volunteers activated during disaster/emergencies.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Centralise information and training for volunteers across local and state government to ensure coordination is not ad-hoc.**



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# Introduction

The City of Logan has more than 34 000 active volunteers. Our volunteers make an incredible difference in the community every day and many organisations are kept afloat through their charity and goodwill. Their influence is far reaching and extends to community groups, environmental advocacy groups, animal welfare groups, sporting clubs and disaster recovery.

Our volunteers take on complex roles and responsibilities in the community. They deal with a range of challenges that need to be navigated with empathy and specialised knowledge and skills. It is vital that there are appropriate systems and support in place that enables and encourages them to participate fully in volunteering activities. The current system needs reform if we are to provide the right environment for volunteers to continue the work they do in strengthening and supporting the wider community.

## Terms of Reference

### **The current state of volunteering in Queensland and the value it contributes, including benefits to volunteers, organisations, communities, and the State;**

Volunteers play a crucial role in supporting the community, and the functions of local government. Some of the City of Logan's volunteer programs include:

- **Sport and community clubs** are run in partnership with local government with volunteers responsible for the day-to-day operations of these many facilities across the city.
- **Libraries** offer a range of programs including adult literacy tutors providing one-on-one assistance with English language skills, pager turns aimed at assisting primary aged children with reading skills, homework help assisting both primary and high schools students, be connected programs for older Australian's to improve their technology skills, home library delivery services for those who are housebound or have difficulty accessing public facilities and family history research support.
- **Park and wildlife volunteers** supports the city's rich ecosystem by controlling weeds, planting and propagating new habitats and native plants, and recording native flora and fauna. They also support ecotourism through trail management, erosion control and education.

Not only do volunteers give so much back to the community, but as local governments continue to operate under increasingly challenging financial environments, the contribution of volunteers is becoming even more crucial to the city's operations.

### **The views of volunteers, prospective volunteers, and the volunteering sector on the current barriers to volunteering, including excessive legislative and regulatory burdens and other restrictions adversely limiting active volunteers;**

Recent anecdotal feedback from volunteers is that the social challenges they are encountering are becoming increasingly complex. Within community centres they are encountering increased homelessness, an increased volume of emergency relief requests, mental health challenges and an increase in domestic violence cases. Fatigue and turnover of volunteers is rising and there is limited support and training available to them.

AusSport have identified that volunteer roles are of a limited type and are often time intensive. This is a significant barrier for people who may not see opportunities that suit their interests, motivations or life circumstances. Many clubs have inadequate tools or systems in place to manage volunteers and the flexibility of volunteering casually is not an option in many cases.

Council also conducted its own research to understand the barriers that prevent or limit volunteering efforts in the context of our environmental programs in 2024. It was found that:

- volunteers often bare the financial costs of rescuing and caring for wildlife including equipment, fuel and other resources. The scale of this can be significant and unsustainable.



- volunteers travel long distances to seek further support such as that offered by RSPCA Wacol and Currumbin Wildlife Hospital
- they are often required to prioritise paid work and this is disproportionately impacting the ability of younger generations to contribute time to volunteering activities
- time constraints are a barrier to participation at all ages
- burn out is occurring frequently due to low recruitment of new volunteer carers; and
- an increased number of injured, sick and displaced wildlife due to more frequency natural disasters is increasing workloads.

### **The current experiences, motivations and challenges for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and their recommendations for addressing challenges and improving the volunteering experience;**

Due to the complex nature of some volunteer positions, the significant emotional toll that it takes on some people, particularly when dealing with disasters or community members with complex needs, cannot be underestimated. Without adequate support programs, this is leading to an increase in reporting of trauma and fatigue. Often there is high interest initially from new volunteers however once activities ramp up there is a sharp drop off in participation due to the stressful nature of the work. Dedicated and fully funded support programs would go some way to addressing the health and well being of volunteers.

In response to concerns around the financial cost of volunteering, Logan City Council volunteering the City of Logan offers mileage reimbursement to help Home Library Service volunteers cover their transportation costs and we are seeing that this is encouraging more volunteers to participate and stay engaged in this valuable service.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Provide dedicated mental health support, including trauma informed responses and vicarious trauma, for volunteers dealing with traumatic events including disaster, homelessness, and domestic violence.**

### **The unique challenges experienced by people from diverse backgrounds, genders, age groups, abilities and locations, and opportunities to improve volunteering participation, accessibility, and experience for these groups;**

Feedback from the 2022 flood event, revealed that many volunteers based in Logan who registered through Volunteering Queensland were deployed to other parts of South East Queensland to provide assistance. Many volunteers offered their support, with the intention of helping their own local community and were unable to do this through the existing state centralised process. This also provided logistical challenges for volunteers, who had to commute during a time where infrastructure was inundated or severely damaged.

This also led to volunteers by passing onboarding processes and directly offering their time and support at disaster-affected sites. These unaffiliated volunteers often lacked adequate occupational health and safety (OH&S) equipment, were not covered by insurance, and had not received essential information about the disaster site. Consequently, this resulted in an influx of vulnerable individuals in high-risk situations. To address this issue, localised approaches are necessary to ensure that people can give back to their local community.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: A localised approach to disaster and emergency volunteer deployment is needed.**

### **The extent, effectiveness, and efficiency of current government support at all levels for the volunteering sector in Queensland and sustainable opportunities for improvement;**

Funding and support are needed to manage volunteer skills development, manage mental health and combat fatigue to ensure that volunteers can be retained over the long term. Greater state and federal government support is needed to ensure volunteers are well trained, prepared and supported.



**RECOMMENDATION 3: Establish dedicated training and certification programs for volunteers to help build a more prepared workforce and better clarify the skills and abilities of volunteers to ensure they are set up to succeed.**

**Opportunities for the Queensland Government to leverage all portfolios to support growth in volunteering across Queensland, including through hosting the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games;**

Development of centralised programs, training and a shared action plan with adequate funding and resources would improve the state of volunteering in Queensland and this is also applicable in the context of hosting the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The City of Logan has passionate and large grassroots sporting community and the support of sports clubs could be leveraged to enhance the experience of games in South East Queensland.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Develop a volunteering action plan inclusive of funding, programs, and volunteer training with a matter of urgency.**

**Opportunities to increase emergency response volunteering in Queensland, including how to optimise the engagement, support and integration of volunteers assisting with natural disasters and community recovery;**

One of the biggest issues when utilising volunteers of a spontaneous nature is that they are often an unskilled/untrained workforce. Obtaining insurance cover for a workforce of this nature is extremely difficult. It often leads to delays during the activation phase as Council is unable to engage spontaneous volunteers until work cover/insurance is guaranteed. Logan City Council does not have insurance to cover this and is reliant on the State Government to provide adequate work cover.

During times of disaster, an increased volume of people can become interested in volunteering. This occurs at a time when local government resources are under increased pressure to manage a range of disaster response activities. Being able to call of a pool of volunteers who are already trained is critical in ensuring disaster response and recovery activities can commence as soon as practical following an event.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Establish a blanket insurance policy that covers all spontaneous volunteers activated during disaster/emergencies.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Centralise information and training for volunteers across local and state government to ensure coordination is not ad-hoc.**

**First Nations peoples volunteering, including in remote and discrete communities, and the role of First Nations volunteering in Closing the Gap; and**

Volunteers from the Logan District Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Elders run the successful *Yarning with Our Mob* reconciliation and Dreamtime story time program at Logan City Council Libraries, in conjunction with library staff. These monthly sessions celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and cater for the diverse needs of young people and families in the community. Council welcomes for support for these initiatives through grants and other programs.