

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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<b>Submitted by:</b>	Adventure HQ Inc
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Chairperson  
Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland  
Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

By: Online Submission

Dear Sir/Madam

As a volunteer, not-for-profit incorporated entity Adventure HQ Inc, trading as Adventure Sport NQ appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee.

Since our beginnings in late 1990's our focus has been on providing quality, affordable volunteer run sport and recreation events in the Cairns region. Our founding volunteers established a very strong nationally recognised base for adventure racing and cross country navigation sports in the Cairns region after the famous 1997 EcoChallenge event.

More recently our efforts have shifted to hosting trail running, urban orienteering, bush rogaining and off-road multisport events. We work closely with other local volunteer-run groups including Cairns Road Runners, Red Earth Running, Cairns MTB Club and Cassowary Coast Multisport Club. We also have connections with Outdoors Queensland, Trail Running Association of Queensland (TRAQ), Queensland Rogaining Association and Orienteering Queensland and are aware of the challenges those organisation face in respect of retaining and enhancing volunteer capacity.

In terms of impact, our 10 main events for 2025 are anticipated to be attended by around 100-200 participants per event, and around 40 per week for our short format evening orienteering events. This will see our team of 6 core volunteers facilitating outdoor recreation opportunities for around 2,000 participants this year. For these volunteers its all altruistic, as we hold full time jobs and have family, caring and other volunteer interests.

### **Experiences and Observations**

- Through our regular role in arranging outdoor sport and recreation events, we rely heavily on our regular event directors, and a number of on the day volunteers who make our events great. The rewards for these individuals are minimal and may include a random a draw prize or a box of bananas left-over from the post-event recovery table! Nothing extravagant, but they all go home knowing they have helped make a great day out for plenty of people.
- We are aware of a number of other groups in North Queensland that face the emerging issue noted in the Briefing Document, and their struggle to maintain volunteers.
- The physical and mental capacity of our older generation of volunteers is reducing as they seek to enjoy their retirement and travel and undertake other sports and hobbies. There will come a time when the older generation are no longer available, i.e. the next 10-15yrs and there will be a big gap, and threaten the succession planning and longer term viability of organisations such as ours should the present issues facing volunteers remain unaddressed.

## Barriers

- Availability of insurance, and the administrative efforts to obtain and maintain such cover is a significant task and cost each year for our treasurer/secretary, especially given we offer “non-standard” sports.
- Administrative burden of approvals for hosting events. We occasionally have a scenario where one agency won’t approved a permit until another has, but the other agency won’t issue theirs’ until all others have. This requires more volunteer time and energy to navigate this inefficient process.
- Adding to this is also the disconnect between State agencies, or sections within the very same department. We have experiences where Department of Environment Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) permit staff will make applications and conditions very onerous while the Sport and Recreation section of the very same Department are allocating resources (grants) to promote sports and use of state reserve areas that will never come to fruition due to the administrative impediments being placed on volunteers trying to organise those events.
- Workplace agreements, we are aware of examples where other forms of volunteering are not supported, and only those of “state emergency services” are within definitions of acceptable volunteer arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, and we support such legislative change provide a greater array of organisations through which employees’ volunteering can be recognised.
- The emerging threat of changes in land tenure of former State Forest and Timber Reserve to National Park. This is leading to permissions becoming problematic for the formerly permissible low impact use for non-commercial sports like cross country navigation (Orienteering, Rogaining, Trail Running) that require access to large land areas (100 sq kms needed for a 24 hour navigation event). Whilst the environmental benefit of tenure change is clear and is supported, the Department’s consultation processes, and subsequent permissions system are not conducive to volunteers putting their hand up to run an event.
- Future threats - cyber security and breach of confidential participants information- and the excessive IT requirements to enable a group to obtain cyber insurance.

## Opportunity

- **Mental health** – for both our volunteers and also the participants, our low cost fun, and inclusive events are a significant source of regular relief and the have a significant community benefit as well. Our experience indicates the altruistic efforts to run our organisation have positive mental health outcomes for our volunteers.
- **Core outdoor skills** - with reduced participation in groups like Scouts and Guides the core outdoor skills of children and the options to practice those have been reduced. There needs to be significant support for early age outdoor skills development through the school curriculum or if not through major support for volunteer run organisations that focus on these areas.
- **Sustainability** - alignment of Government and business policy and funding is needed to exploit the emerging areas of Economy-Sustainability and Governance (ESG), where volunteer opportunities and greater community giving are a key, and present an opportunity, with some minor workplace changes to work hours, split shifts or workload balancing to give staff hours for volunteering participation.
- **Enhancing volunteer numbers** – some detailed evaluation and subsequent Government support for targeted programs for the teenage to <30 yrs age group is strongly needed if organisations such as ours are to have a future. There are some key demographics where a focus at school/high school and early adulthood would improve.

A number of the matters identified in the consultation summary outlined on page 8 and 9 of the Briefing provided by the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee are very active influences on our organisation.

Whilst we have attempted to articulate our experiences, notes on barriers and opportunities to volunteering from our perspective of a small but impactful North Queensland alternate sports organisation, we appreciate the opportunity to elaborate further on these issues with the committee.

Regards

Secretary/Treasurer  
Adventure HQ Inc