

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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# Submission on Volunteering in Queensland

## Abstract

This submission by Wade Hart @ [REDACTED], currently working with the Queensland **Croquet** Association on **organisational restructuring and digital transformation**, presents the **Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework** as a practical approach to addressing declining volunteer participation across Queensland. Built on three pillars—**Strategic Task Design, Volunteer-Centric Organisational Structures, and Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation**—this framework recognises that volunteers are primarily **motivated by enjoyment** and satisfaction, not external rewards. By restructuring volunteer tasks, governance models, and experiences to **prioritise enjoyment** and **minimise administrative burden**, organisations can significantly increase volunteer recruitment, retention, and contribution. Drawing on real implementation at the Queensland Croquet Association, this framework offers actionable strategies aligned with the Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024-2032, providing a roadmap for cultivating a more vibrant, sustainable volunteer sector throughout Queensland.

## Section 1: Introduction - Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering

This submission to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland introduces a framework centred on **Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering**. This concept is crucial for understanding and enhancing volunteer participation across the state.

The central premise is simple: **volunteers are primarily motivated by enjoyment**. While they are unpaid, their sustained engagement is directly linked to the **satisfaction and fulfilment** they derive from volunteering. Therefore, to boost volunteer numbers and effectiveness, we must strategically focus on **cultivating Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering**.

This framework builds upon the **Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024-2032**, which identified key challenges including volunteer attraction and retention, changing volunteer preferences, and increasing regulatory complexity. The Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework directly addresses these challenges by providing practical approaches to:

- Enhance volunteer attraction and retention through strategic task design that maximises enjoyment and minimises burden
- Accommodate evolving volunteer preferences by creating flexible, enjoyable experiences
- Navigate regulatory complexity through volunteer-centric organisational structures
- Support the Strategy's focus areas of 'supported and sustainable volunteering' and 'building an inclusive volunteering ecosystem'

Rather than replacing existing work, this framework offers practical implementation pathways to achieve the Strategy's vision of a thriving volunteer sector.

This framework is not purely theoretical. It is grounded in practical analysis of **volunteer dynamics within organisations**, including volunteer-led groups like the Queensland Croquet Association, which is currently implementing organisation-wide changes to directly target increasing volunteerism in response to declining rates and membership. While examples may be drawn from specific sectors, the core insights are broadly relevant to **diverse volunteering contexts in Queensland**.

The purpose of this submission is to present the **Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework** as a practical tool. By adopting decision-making processes and organisational attitudes that **prioritise and maximise volunteer enjoyment and utility**, we can:

- **Unlock greater volunteer participation.**

- **Enrich the volunteer experience.**
- **Build a more robust and dynamic volunteer sector in Queensland.**

## **Section 2: Pillar 1 - Strategic Task Design for Maximised Volunteer Utility**

The first pillar of the Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework is **Strategic Task Design**. This pillar recognises that the **design of volunteer tasks** is the most direct way to influence volunteer enjoyment and, therefore, participation.

At the heart of this pillar is the principle of **Volunteer Utility Maximisation**. This principle acknowledges that volunteers, like all individuals, seek to maximise their personal 'utility' – their overall satisfaction and sense of value. In volunteering, utility is maximised when the **enjoyment derived from a task outweighs the effort** required to complete it.

**Task design is the key lever to enhance volunteer utility.** Organisations seeking to increase volunteer contribution must adopt a strategic approach to designing tasks that **actively boost volunteer utility**. This requires a systematic process of task analysis and redesign, centred on the '**Remove, Reduce, Enhance Enjoyment**' principle.

This principle provides a practical framework for task optimisation, focusing on three core actions:

- **Remove Non-Essential Tasks:** Organisations should rigorously identify and **eliminate tasks that are not essential** to their core mission or that provide minimal value or enjoyment to volunteers. This streamlining of effort directly increases volunteer utility by freeing up time and reducing unnecessary burdens.

- **Reduce Task Burden:** For tasks that are essential, the focus should shift to **minimising the burden on volunteers**. This can be achieved through process improvements, providing better resources and support, simplifying complex procedures, and distributing workload effectively. Easier, less demanding tasks directly contribute to higher volunteer utility.
- **Enhance Task Enjoyment:** Crucially, organisations must actively seek to **maximise the inherent enjoyment and satisfaction** volunteers gain from their tasks. This involves aligning tasks with individual skills and interests, fostering social connections and teamwork, providing recognition and appreciation, and ensuring volunteers understand the meaningful impact of their contributions. Enjoyable tasks are intrinsically high-utility tasks.

## Technology as a Strategic Enabler

Technology, particularly automation and artificial intelligence, represents a powerful tool for implementing Strategic Task Design. Rather than treating technology as merely an efficiency tool, forward-thinking organisations are using it to fundamentally transform how volunteers engage with their roles.

AI-powered solutions can be designed to adapt to how volunteers naturally work, rather than forcing volunteers to adapt to rigid technological systems. For example, at [REDACTED], we're developing approaches that analyse existing volunteer workflows and then implement AI solutions that complement these natural patterns rather than disrupting them.

This approach drastically reduces training requirements—a significant barrier identified by many volunteer organisations. Instead of investing substantial time training volunteers on complex systems, organisations can deploy adaptive technologies that meet volunteers where they are. This shift from 'volunteer adapts to technology' to 'technology adapts to volunteer' directly enhances volunteer utility while reducing barriers to participation.

The Queensland Croquet Association is implementing this approach by using AI to streamline administrative systems, automating routine tasks and creating intuitive interfaces that require minimal training. This allows volunteers to focus on the aspects of croquet they enjoy—growing the sport and enhancing the player experience—rather than struggling with administrative burdens.

**Poorly designed, low-utility tasks act as a significant structural barrier to volunteerism.** Embracing Strategic Task Design, guided by the 'Remove, Reduce, Enhance Enjoyment' principle and leveraging tools like technology, is essential for organisations to **maximise volunteer utility, drive increased participation and retention, and build a thriving volunteer sector.**

## **Section 3: Pillar 2 - Volunteer-Centric Organisational Structures and Governance**

The second pillar of the Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework addresses **Volunteer-Centric Organisational Structures and Governance.** This pillar shifts the focus to the **fundamental purpose of a volunteer association:** *who* it is truly designed to serve, and how this shapes its operational effectiveness.

The core principle is the **Volunteer-First Organisation.** This model argues that volunteer associations, at their structural core, should be designed and governed to **prioritise and serve their *volunteer base* as their primary concern.** While associations ultimately exist to deliver services or benefits, a Volunteer-First approach recognises that **volunteers are the lifeblood** and that **prioritising their needs is not just ethical, but strategically vital for organisational success.** This is a deliberate shift from simply focusing on the *recipients* of volunteer efforts to recognising the central role of volunteers themselves.

**Volunteer-Centric structures directly lead to improved planning and decision-making.** When an association genuinely prioritises its volunteers, its strategic planning and policy development become inherently more effective.

Decisions are made with a clear focus on **enhancing volunteer utility and removing barriers to participation**. This, in turn, leads to actions and policies that are far more likely to **increase volunteer engagement and, crucially, volunteer hours contributed**. This direct alignment of organisational actions with volunteer benefits is the hallmark of effective volunteer-centric governance.

**Constitutions and governance models must enshrine this volunteer-centric priority.** This re-evaluation is particularly critical for organisations like the Queensland Croquet Association (CAQ), where **misalignment between organisational decisions and volunteer benefits has been a significant challenge**. A volunteer-centric interpretation of constitutions, as **I have proposed for CAQ**, is essential to rectify this. It requires a fundamental shift to ensure governance documents unequivocally **prioritise volunteer empowerment, enjoyment, and well-being**, ensuring that all planning and decision-making is viewed through this lens.

This volunteer-centric restructuring should be guided by key principles such as:

- **Decisions Benefit Volunteers First & Foremost:** All organisational decisions, from long-term strategy to day-to-day operations, must be rigorously evaluated on whether they demonstrably **enhance the volunteer experience and increase volunteer utility**. The guiding question becomes: "How will this decision directly and positively impact our volunteers and maximise their contribution?"
- **Empowerment and Voice for Effective Decisions:** Governance must not just *include* volunteers, but actively **empower them as central drivers of effective decision-making**. Volunteer insights and perspectives, grounded in their on-the-ground experience, are invaluable for informed and impactful planning.
- **Flexibility and Responsiveness for Optimal Outcomes:** Volunteer-First structures must be **agile and responsive to volunteer needs and feedback** to ensure optimal outcomes. Rigid or unresponsive structures directly undermine volunteer utility and lead to disengagement. Adaptability

is key to ensuring planning and decision-making remain aligned with volunteer realities.

The concept of **"Clubs are our Boss"** strongly embodies this Volunteer-First approach. This isn't merely a slogan but reflects the constitutional reality of Croquet Association of Queensland, where the constitution explicitly establishes a bottom-up governance model where the management committee is elected by and accountable to member clubs, operating within policy frameworks set by clubs' representatives. This decentralised, service-oriented structure is unique and ensures that **planning and decisions are driven by the needs of the volunteer base** rather than top-down administrative priorities.

**Government support for the volunteer sector should strategically prioritise Volunteer-First Organisations.** Public funding and resources will be most effectively leveraged when directed to organisations that demonstrably **embed volunteer-centric principles into their governance and decision-making processes**. Supporting this model is a strategic investment in building a volunteer sector that is not only larger, but also more effective, sustainable, and genuinely volunteer-driven.

**Prioritising Volunteer-Centric Organisational Structures and Governance is not just a matter of principle, but a practical imperative for effective volunteer organisations.** By fundamentally structuring associations to serve their volunteers as their primary concern, and by embedding this principle in governance and decision-making, we can **ensure that all actions and policies are strategically geared towards maximising volunteer utility and driving increased volunteer contribution, creating a truly thriving volunteer sector in Queensland.**



## Section 4: Pillar 3 - Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation through Enjoyable Volunteer Experiences

The third and final pillar of the Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework centres on **Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation through Enjoyable Volunteer Experiences**. This pillar gets straight to the heart of why people volunteer: **volunteers are 'paid' in enjoyment**. This 'payment' comes from **intrinsic motivation** – that inner drive that makes an activity enjoyable for its own sake.

**Intrinsic motivation is what keeps volunteers coming back.** It's not about external rewards; it's about the **satisfaction and enjoyment** volunteers find *within* the volunteering itself. Long-term volunteer engagement depends on creating experiences that are **inherently enjoyable and personally fulfilling**.

Instead of just focusing on tasks, organisations should think about creating **genuinely enjoyable volunteer experiences**. The key is to make volunteering itself rewarding and satisfying, not just a list of duties.

This focus on enjoyable experiences can be achieved through simple, practical ideas:

- **Focus on "Croquet/Sport/Activity Things, Not Admin Things":** Volunteers are there for the *activity* – croquet, sport, helping others – not paperwork. Volunteer time should be spent doing **what they signed up for and enjoy**, not just admin tasks. Minimising admin and maximising time on core activities boosts enjoyment.
- **Harness the "Hobby + Croquet/Sport/Activity" Concept:** The best way to make volunteering enjoyable is to **connect it to existing hobbies and interests**. When volunteer roles tap into what people already love doing, it creates instant intrinsic motivation. Think about how volunteers' hobbies –

gardening, photography, socialising – can be woven into their volunteer roles to boost enjoyment.

- **Embrace "Tasks, Not Roles":** Keep volunteer commitments manageable and appealing by offering **clear, specific tasks, not overwhelming, open-ended roles**. Smaller tasks are less daunting, easier to fit into busy lives, and provide a sense of accomplishment. This makes volunteering more accessible and intrinsically rewarding.

**Government can play a crucial role in supporting this pillar by strategically directing grants.** Specifically, **government funding should be targeted at enabling volunteer organisations to reduce or eliminate non-core, administrative tasks that detract from volunteer enjoyment.** Grants could facilitate outsourcing these tasks to contractors or implementing AI-powered automation solutions. By **freeing volunteers from admin drudgery**, they can dedicate their time and energy to their core passions – growing their sport or activity and enhancing the experience for participants. This **more efficient and impactful use of volunteer resources** benefits both volunteers and the broader community they serve.

Excessive training requirements represent another significant barrier to volunteering. When volunteers must complete extensive training to perform basic functions, their enthusiasm often wanes before they can contribute meaningfully. By minimising mandatory training through intuitive systems and focusing training efforts only on truly necessary skills, organisations can dramatically reduce this barrier to participation.

Prioritising enjoyable experiences is the most direct way to **boost volunteer motivation** and improve volunteering overall. When volunteering is genuinely enjoyable, it creates a **positive cycle**. Enjoyable experiences lead to higher motivation, increased engagement, and a stronger volunteer sector.

**Cultivating intrinsic motivation through enjoyable volunteer experiences is the most powerful way to build a thriving volunteer sector.** By focusing on making volunteering inherently rewarding and fulfilling, and by using simple ideas

like connecting hobbies and offering manageable tasks, organisations can **unlock deep volunteer motivation, leading to greater participation, better experiences, and a more robust volunteer sector across Queensland.**

## Section 5: Conclusion

This submission has presented the **Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework**, a practical approach to strengthening volunteerism in Queensland built upon three core pillars:

- **Strategic Task Design for Maximised Volunteer Utility:** Focusing on *removing, reducing, and enhancing* the enjoyment of volunteer tasks to boost volunteer utility and participation.
- **Volunteer-Centric Organisational Structures and Governance:** Structuring organisations to **prioritise and serve their volunteer base** as their primary concern, ensuring decisions and governance actively empower volunteers.
- **Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation through Enjoyable Volunteer Experiences:** Moving beyond task management to **experience design**, creating inherently rewarding and fulfilling volunteer engagements that tap into intrinsic motivation.

At its heart, the Enjoyment-Driven Volunteering framework recognises a fundamental truth: **volunteers are 'paid' in enjoyment.** By strategically focusing on enhancing this 'payment' – by prioritising volunteer enjoyment and utility in task design, organisational structure, and overall volunteer experience – Queensland has a unique opportunity to **unlock the full potential of its volunteer sector.**

The Queensland Croquet Association's implementation of this framework offers a valuable demonstration project to measure outcomes and effectiveness. As CAQ

applies these principles across its clubs—in both metropolitan and regional Queensland—it can provide real-world evidence of the framework's impact on volunteer recruitment, retention, and satisfaction. This evidence-based approach aligns with the Queensland Volunteering Strategy's emphasis on supported and sustainable volunteering and could provide valuable insights for broader application across the volunteer sector.