

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

Submission No:	515
Submitted by:	GAIL RODDA
Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Gail Rodda

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING QUEENSLAND SUBMISSION

I am submitting this document as a member of the community of Biloela who has is/has been involved with several organisations:

- Rotary Club of Biloela – current active member holding position of Director of Public Relations,
- Banana Shire Regional Art Gallery – current active volunteer,
- Callide Valley Mens Shed – current active member holding position on committee,
- Biloela Enterprise – former member and executive, organisation no longer active,
- Banana Shire Art Gallery Association – former member, organisation no longer active.

I am not local to Biloela having only relocated here in 2017 for work. Becoming involved in the Rotary Club of Biloela gave me an opportunity to connect with people outside of my work environment. Being involved in volunteer roles provides me with the opportunity:

- to make a difference to my community – both locally, nationally and internationally,
- raise funds to benefit my community with specific projects,
- organise events that provide a source of connection for my community,
- develop new skills and build on existing ones,
- improve and support my mental well being,
- provide me with a sense of self worth.

In our small regional town we have seen the demise of a number of volunteer organisations including Biloela Enterprise, Banana Shire Art Gallery Association, Zonta, Apex, CWA, Biloela Eisteddfod, Biloela BMX Club etc. We are also seeing clubs, community groups etc struggling to engage with new members and retain existing members. My Rotary Club has struggled with membership having lost a third of its members over the last 5 years.

The challenges faced with member retention include but are not limited to:

- Family commitments
- Health concerns
- Relocation
- Work commitments
- Financial obligations
- Does not meet expectations.

The organisations I am/have been connected with have struggled to engage and connect with new members. We have identified some areas that are affecting this:

- Cost of membership and any ongoing costs,
- Work rosters,
- Family obligations - namely young children or elderly parents,
- A willingness to volunteer time at events but not to make an ongoing commitment.

Feedback we have received is that potential younger (under 30) members are more interested in 'cause related' rather than general involvement. Of all the reasons we have been given for becoming a member of the organisations I have been involved in, legislative and regulatory burdens have not been a reason.

Being a rural town with a population of approximately 5,700 people, we do have a portion of our workforce that is 'drive in/drive out' or 'fly in/fly out'. Whilst there are benefits to this, there is also an impact to not just the community of Biloela but also the origin of the worker. For example, a worker who lives in Gladstone drives to Biloela on a Monday morning and home again Friday afternoon. The worker is not involved in Biloela community groups, as it is not their home and they do not reside there on weekends when events may be held. As they are away from their place of origin throughout the week, they are not involved in community groups their either. Both communities are impacted negatively.

I don't know what the solution is to the situation. I believe that if volunteer involvement continues to decline, small communities such as Biloela will suffer greatly with community events disappearing from the social calendar which results in further disconnection within the community and community funded initiatives and equipment no longer being viable.

Community volunteer organisations would benefit greatly from being able to access easy to navigate resources on how to remove barriers that may be preventing them from engaging with new members.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to provide input.

Regards,

GAIL RODDA