

## **Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland**

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## Volunteering in Queensland February 2025

I have been a volunteer member of rural fire brigades in Queensland for 25 years. I have served in Tomewin and now Currumbin Valley Rural Fire brigades on the Gold Coast.

At times I have been deployed to fight fires both intrastate and interstate.

During this time I have seen an increase in training requirements for members to ensure they have the appropriate skills and tools to undertake their volunteer work as rural fire fighters.

What I have not seen is an increase in training staff to support these members. Volunteers provide communities across the state with a resource of experience, skills and local knowledge. Their time is freely given to assist the community where governments lack resources and funding to provide services.

Training is conducted by volunteer trainers and full time Fire Department staff. While volunteer trainers are keen to help their time is limited. Most training is conducted at night and at weekends so the volunteers can attend training after work hours from their employment.

Full time training staff can be scheduled to training sessions during these out of hours times.

There are not enough Rural Fire training staff in the South East Region to provide the appropriate level of training expected to support volunteers in their roles. This places volunteers at risk and reduces their ability to assist the community.

The SES in the Southeast Region has more paid training staff than the Rural Fire Service for the same area. They provide training after hours and on weekends for their Volunteers.

The Rural Fire Service needs to increase their Full time training staffing levels to support the volunteers particularly for week end training.

In recent times where natural disasters are becoming more severe and frequent the requirement to equip our volunteers with the appropriate training and skills is a high priority for the Government.