

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Committee Secretary
Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

By email: lgsbcsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

Clubs Queensland (CQ) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Committee in relation to the current state of volunteering in Queensland. This inquiry has come at a critical time for Queensland as we are seeing volunteering numbers fall across the state, which will be a challenge for us in the lead up to the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

CQ would like to thank the clubs outlined in **Annexure A** for their contribution to this submission.

About Clubs Queensland

CQ is the peak industry body for Queensland's community clubs. We represent the interests of 1,290 clubs across Queensland including all forms of sporting clubs, RSL and services clubs, surf lifesaving supporters clubs, racing clubs and all forms of social, special interest and cultural clubs.

Our member clubs range from Queensland's small local footy clubs, run by volunteers and reliant on government grants, all the way up to our large clubs that are household names and contribute millions of dollars to local communities.

The Club Industry at a snapshot



Our volunteers

The community club industry mobilises a base of 41,500 Queenslanders, which represents the largest volunteer base in the state. These volunteers take many forms, including but not limited to the following:

- Club Management Committee/Board members, sub committee members and other advisors;
- Sporting coaches, trainers, referees and team managers;
- Surf lifesavers and surf administration officers;
- Veteran and welfare support volunteers;
- Youth and seniors workers/mentors;
- Parent volunteers;
- Social coordinators;
- Administrative support volunteers;
- Hospitality/catering volunteers;
- Grounds maintenance volunteers;
- First aid volunteers;
- Fundraising volunteers;
- Event and commemorative event volunteers; and
- Social media and marketing volunteers.

Without the club industry's 'army' of volunteers, clubs could simply not operate. Volunteers are the heart and backbone of many clubs. They contribute in ways that allow clubs to thrive, ensuring that they can serve their members, sustain their operations and foster a sense of community and purpose.

The Current State of Volunteering in Queensland

Volunteering in Queensland has experienced notable changes in recent years, with an overall decline in participation rates and shifts in the demographics of those who volunteer.

Specific to Queensland's clubs, CQ data shows that we have seen a decline of 2.5 to 3 percent in total volunteers. This is across all club types, including sporting clubs, RSL and services clubs, surf lifesaving clubs and general interest clubs, statewide.

In relation to volunteering demographics, we are seeing less elderly Queenslanders volunteering, which is not being offset by any increase in younger Queenslanders seeking to volunteer.

This is concerning and is something that is also noted by other recent reports, including Volunteering Queensland's State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024 Report.¹ This report highlighted that since 2020:

- Total volunteering participation is down 10%;
- Formal volunteering within an organisation is down 20%;
- Informal volunteering is down 15%; and
- Numbers of hours volunteered each month is down just under 20%.

The above statistics are concerning and must trigger both state and federal governments to look at some practical strategies to increase volunteerism, especially in the lead up to the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

¹ State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024, Volunteering Queensland, 2024.

Why volunteers are so important?

Without volunteers, many clubs wouldn't be able to offer the same level of support, opportunities or growth for their members and the community. Volunteers are essential to clubs for the following reasons.

Volunteers save costs

Despite employing 35,000 Queenslanders, community clubs across the state engage more volunteers, at 41,500. Volunteers keep operational costs down, especially in small or community focused clubs and open up opportunities to focus on core purpose and running of the club.

Volunteers bring an increased capacity

Volunteers help clubs reach more people by providing support in areas that expand the club's capacity. For example, volunteers who fundraise, or promote events increase the club's visibility and engagement with the broader community.

Volunteers foster a sense of community

Volunteers are most often sourced from club members and locals within a community. The social interaction among volunteers, including club members, provides a social 'touch point' as highlighted in Clubs Queensland's submission into Isolation and Loneliness.

Volunteering also brings with it a sense of contribution, ownership and purpose. It fosters loyalty and support of the club's mission and vision.

Volunteers bring skills

Volunteers across Queensland bring skills that might not be available otherwise. For example, volunteers with experience in business, coaching or grant writing can provide services that would be hard to secure on a limited budget.

Why are we seeing a reduction in volunteers?

When CQ surveyed its members regarding why they are seeing a reduction in volunteer numbers in their clubs, the same common themes came through the feedback.

Aging demographic in the volunteer base

Many older Queenslanders have traditionally been the backbone of volunteer efforts in clubs, but as they age, their ability to commit to physical, time-intensive or skilled volunteer work sadly declines. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that, as the older generation step back, there is insufficient take up among younger volunteers.

Younger Queenslanders in clubs report that work commitments, family responsibilities and other commitments are the primary reasons as to why they don't have the time to step into a volunteering role in the club. As will be noted later, our feedback indicates that with the current cost of living pressures, younger Queenslanders need to prioritise paid work to ensure they can get by. Increased participation in university and things like trade apprenticeships have also been sighted as a priority for younger Queenslanders over volunteer work.

Insurance

Queensland clubs have reported that significant increases in insurance costs have also contributed to them seeing a reduction in volunteers, or not calling for volunteers in certain areas. In summary, the following concerns were raised by Queensland clubs with respect to insurance:

- Rising costs across the insurance market currently;
- Insurance policies themselves (public liability and volunteer insurance) increasing the operational costs for clubs, making it financially challenging to recruit and retain volunteers.
- Some volunteer activities within the club context, such as those involving labour, working with children, the elderly and vulnerable Queenslanders often requires specific insurance coverage, with typically higher premiums; and
- Clubs have concerns around liability and risk associated with volunteers injuring themselves while undertaking their duties, including work health and safety risks and also vicarious liability risks.

In many cases, clubs have reported that there is also reluctance by the volunteers themselves due to fear of injury and the associated complexity around a claims process and also dealing with the potential injury itself, especially among older Queenslanders or those with pre-existing health conditions.

Screening checks

While screening checks such as police checks and blue card requirements are essential for ensuring safety and accountability, the complexity around the process can act as a deterrent for potential volunteers.

Volunteers may not be willing to invest a lot of time in what is often perceived as a complicated or lengthy procedure. Clubs also reported to us that some volunteers feel uncomfortable with the level of personal information required during screening, such as providing access to their criminal record or financial history.

Clubs also reported that the costs associated with such checks can be a barrier for volunteers and the organisations. The delays associated with such checks, specifically blue card checks and inefficiencies associated with the process can also act as a deterrent.

While screening checks are essential to protect both the volunteers and those they serve, they must be balanced with the ease of access and engagement for people who are eager to contribute to causes without facing unnecessary deterrents.

Complication of roles

Many clubs have reported that overtly complicated compliance requirements are negatively impacting the experience for volunteers and are a barrier for smaller clubs to build suitable programs to attract volunteers. Our members raised the following case examples:

- Within RSL and Services clubs, roles such as compensation and wellbeing advocate roles were once suitable for volunteers. Given the complexity and compliance involved now they are much less suited to volunteering.

- Within sporting clubs, there has been an increasing trend to hire paid wellbeing coordinators, first aid providers, coaches, trainers and referees, given:
 - the complexity now associated with these roles; and
 - the requirement for certain levels of competency and training;
- Within surf lifesaving clubs, our members have reported that volunteers formally held administration and Club Training Officer positions, but small volunteer pools, associated with the complexity of the roles have resulted these becoming paid positions.

Other challenges

The consultation paper seeks to comment on the unique challenges experienced by people from diverse backgrounds, genders, age groups, abilities and locations.

Challenges in relation to age are documented above.

There were suggestions that volunteers numbers are steady among both males and females.

In relation to volunteers coming from diverse backgrounds, clubs commented that this is generally consistent with membership bases of the club. For example, one regional leagues club commented that there is a significant first nations representation among its volunteer base, which is consistent with player participation and regional location in Queensland. However, cultural clubs also reported that people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds also volunteer in a variety of organisations outside the club including animal welfare, bush care, local parishes and disability support services.

Our cultural club members reported that within their clubs, people outside the specific ethno-cultural group may feel that they are not welcome to volunteer, even though such clubs are open to broader participation. These clubs also sighted that often structured volunteering is not a cultural norm or that some volunteer tasks can appear inferior, depending on a person's background or occupation.

We must be looking to address broader social and economic challenges to build trust and engagement in volunteerism within all Queensland communities.

How do we improve volunteer numbers?

We all have a role to play and powerful tools at our disposal to increase volunteer numbers in Queensland. However, CQ considers that this must be led by both the Queensland and Federal Governments, as they are the gatekeepers to many of the below suggested initiatives. Further, with the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games fast approaching, time is of the essence in terms of mobilising what will need to be a considerable volunteer base to support the games.

Below is a summary of some strategies both state and federal government could adopt.

Formalising volunteer to career path programs

Many of the volunteer opportunities that exist within clubs (as summarised above), also exist as paid positions and in many instances, require formal qualifications. There is scope for government to conduct a review of these opportunities to determine where it may establish programs where volunteers can gain access to career opportunities or paid positions in related fields.

Governments could incentivise this by providing funding to organisations that offer job training, mentorship, or apprenticeship/traineeship opportunities to volunteers.

There is also scope for state and federal governments to introduce qualifications or certifications for volunteering experience that can be used by volunteers and recognised by prospective employers as work experience, creating a pathway from volunteering to paid employment.

Financial incentives

In our view, the most powerful tool in attracting volunteers is to look at financial incentives in the form of concessions.

Governments could look to offer volunteers tax deductions where they incur out of pocket expenses during the course of volunteering. This could include travel expenses, provision of clothing or PPE, administration costs etc.

The federal government could consider a special 'volunteering tax offset' for individuals who volunteer for a minimum number of hours each year, for an eligible entity. Such incentives exist in other countries and provide volunteers a direct financial reward for their time commitment.

The above could also be linked to childcare or family support, whereby volunteers with children could receive further childcare subsidies linked to volunteer hours with an eligible entity. This would not only offer further incentive, but remove significant barriers to participation, especially for parents of young children.

Corporate volunteering opportunities

Governments need to look at providing incentives to businesses, such as through tax concessions or other financial incentives, that allow leave for employees to volunteer at an eligible entity. Not only would this mobilise the private sector to support volunteering, it would also help younger Queenslanders who need to favour paid work over volunteering, as they would be volunteering during work hours.

Improving Volunteer Infrastructure and recognition

Governments need to invest in raising awareness of volunteering opportunities, alongside the development of volunteer management platforms that allow Queenslanders to find volunteer opportunities, track hours, and communicate with eligible volunteering entities. These platforms could also help match volunteers with projects that align with their skills and interests, improving volunteer rates.

The volunteering sector, in conjunction with government, also need to ensure volunteers are recognised through awards programs which mean something. To this end, public acknowledgment and media coverage via official ceremonies can act as powerful motivators.

Promoting volunteer opportunities to younger Queenslanders

Government and industry needs to look at collaborating and promoting volunteering and looking at incentives to younger Queenslanders through clubs and schools. This could be through providing information about opportunities, proving credits for volunteer hours, integrating volunteering into school curriculums etc.

How do we support growth in volunteering for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games?

Volunteers from community clubs in NSW were a driving force behind the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic games.

These were existing volunteers from all forms of sporting clubs, as well as RSLs, who signed up through their local club to volunteer at the games and transported by the clubs themselves to and from Olympic Games venues in and around Sydney and Olympic Park at Homebush. The coordination of the volunteers by clubs assisted greatly by reducing costs associated with volunteer recruitment, onboarding and education, as well as transportation.

CQ consider that community clubs in Queensland have a lot to offer as part of the coordination of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games and to that end, recommend the Queensland Government to establish a taskforce to explore these opportunities with the club and other relevant sectors. This taskforce should specifically examine:

- What volunteer roles will be needed;
- How existing club volunteers in sporting clubs may already have transferable skills required for the games;
- How clubs can assist in transporting volunteers to and from games venues to alleviate pressure on public transport networks;
- How clubs in regional Queensland can assist to ensure there is no negative perception about the games being Brisbane or South East Queensland centric (as was a problem the NSW Government had to deal with in the late 1990s regarding Sydney); and
- Benefits this will bring to the volunteering sector over the next eight years as Queenslanders will want to be part of the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

CQ has been in discussions with ClubsNSW in relation to how it assisted in mobilising volunteers ahead of the Sydney 2000 games and will report back to the Queensland Government, if that is of interest.

How do we mobilise emergency response volunteers in Queensland?

While the mobilisation of emergency response volunteers is outside our area of expertise, CQ takes this opportunity to advise the Queensland Government of our capacity as an industry to assist during times of natural disasters across the state.

Queensland clubs are across every part of Queensland and hold a significant asset base which can be used to assist emergency response efforts. This includes:

- Large function facilities, which can and are used as emergency hubs for displaced Queenslanders;
- Large scale kitchens and cold-rooms, which can and are used to feed volunteers and displaced Queenslanders;
- Sporting fields which assist with large scale emergency response.

Clubs also have the ability to mobilise its existing volunteers to assist with emergency response efforts.

This has been demonstrated recently when in December 2023, Cyclone Jasper devastated parts of North Queensland. Volunteers from two large clubs in Cairns, Brothers Leagues Club and Cazalys, came to the rescue by acting as emergency response hubs and mobilising volunteers to assist with clean up efforts.

Annexure B contains the media reports detailing these response efforts.

Summary

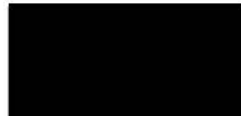
CQ's data shows that Queensland's largest volunteer base is on the decline. This is consistent with Volunteering Queensland's recent reported findings. The Queensland and Federal Governments need to take this issue seriously and look at practical measures to increase volunteering numbers.

Declining volunteer rates have a ripple effect, as fewer volunteers places pressure on remaining volunteers, resulting in volunteer burnout and compounds declining volunteer rates. It also has an impact on industries, such as the club industry, that rely on volunteers.

CQ again thanks the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and is available to attend the Public Hearing if that would be of value.

In the meantime, if the Committee has any questions at all in relation to the above, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Kelly Egan
CEO
Clubs Queensland

Annexure A

Currumbin RSL
Redlands Sporting Club
Club Services Ipswich
Club Glenvale
Club Pine Rivers
Sunshine Beach Surf Lifesaving Supports Club
Coolum Berach Surf Lifesaving Supports Club
The Waves Sports Club
Kepple Bay Sailing Club
Magpies Sporting Club
Brothers Leagues Club Townsville
Mareeba Leagues Club
Cazalys Cairns
Carpentaria Buffalo Club – Mount Isa
The Polish Club

Annexure B

08 CYCLONE JASPER'S WAKE

The Cairns Post Thursday December 21, 2023



Chris Tress sits on his overturned refrigerator with his dog, Peg, in his Mimosa St kitchen at Holloways Beach. Pictures: Brendan Radke



Jake Westmore, 11, and Maliq Wray, 11, of Cairns Brothers Leagues Club help clean up a property at Holloways Beach.



Rob Wellington in his flooded Holloways Beach apartment.

Mammoth clean-up begins

Army of volunteers raises spirits of residents in flood-ravaged Holloways Beach

Isaac McCarthy

The Far North sun returned on Wednesday to bake the mud-caked earth surrounding northern beaches properties, just days after they were inundated by record flooding.

By 9am, powerless Holloways Beach homes, awash with filth, turned to saunas.

It appeared as though some had been shaken like snow globes; their interiors had been obliterated.

Residents of Mimosa St were carting their flood-ruined possessions to the sidewalk.

Kerry Tress was drenched in sweat as she moved sodden furniture from the muddied floor of her home.

When a busload of volunteers from Cairns Brothers Leagues Club arrived to help the street's residents, tears



Jason Salecich cooks up a barbecue for the residents of Mimosa St.

welled in Mrs Tress' eyes.

"The community has been amazing," her husband, Chris Tress, said.

Mr Tress, who had earlier pulled a four-foot eel out of his driveway, estimated life wouldn't return to normal for at least six months, after in-

surance processes and repair efforts had been completed.

"Probably longer," Mrs Tress said.

Across the road, Mellisa Trommestad, who owns her own housekeeping business, was cleaning the possessions that could be salvaged.

She'd only moved into her rental 12 months prior. Now a mountain of objects sat by her gutter, awaiting disposal.

What could be saved was stacked on her kitchen bench. "The water rose an inch per second," she said.

"It rolled in at a walking pace, with an attitude of 'no-one is stopping me'."

About 72 hours earlier, Ms Trommestad was wading through the rushing water to get to her neighbour's property, where a dozen people, and a dozen animals, had convened on the second-storey deck to escape the flood.

She could only watch as the water engulfed her home.

After the flood receded, a perfect but filthy line ran horizontally above her floors, about half Ms Trommestad's height.

"The water lifted the fridge

and jammed it against the kitchen bench. That's how powerful it was," she said.

"I'm mostly worried about my car - that's my livelihood. Right now I'm not working, so I'm not getting paid."

Half a dozen Brothers' boys and girls, some as young as 11, had already started moving out the broken items from her house and backyard.

Ms Trommestad said she felt overwhelmed by the support.

"The boys have found a box of photos on a top shelf in my shed and it was dry. I was so grateful. Everything underneath it was wet," she said.

Jason Salecich, group general manager at Brothers, led the 20-strong volunteer army.

"We're a community club, that's what we do," he said.

"The easiest thing we could have done was write a cheque,

but these people need boots on the ground, so I made the decision that's what we needed to do.

"We've got young kids here, what a great experience for them learning what it means to contribute to the community."

Mr Salecich said awful circumstances had befallen the houses the group worked through on Wednesday.

"It can't be described as anything other than devastation," he said.

"The first house we walked into, sewage was across the floors. These people have been to hell and back.

"They need people to physically come and help.

"You can see some of them are feeling beaten and defeated, so to see us turn up today I think has really helped them."

Kids are helping out too as the Far North

clean-up can now hit high gear

WE WILL STICK TOGETHER IN ALL THIS MUD



Katie Lee and Rosalind Lakin cleaning up at a flooded Holloways Beach home. Picture: Brendan Rader

Taylah Fellows, Isaac McCarthy, Samuel Davis, Kate Stephenson

Clean-up crews are in full swing across Far North Queensland as most homes rally and residents wade through muddy and debris-filled houses to salvage what they can in the wake of tropical cyclone Jasper.

The Bureau of Meteorology confirmed severe weather conditions had finally eased between Cairns and Ingham on Wednesday.

But further north, river levels continued rising near the Cape York Peninsula, particularly in the Mitchell River catchment, threatening the small town of Townsview.

This prompted the evacuation of a small group of vulnerable residents including pregnant women, infants and those with health issues.

Deputy Police Commissioner Shane Chelley said he was preparing for the worst in coming days and would evacuate the entire shire if conditions worsened.

"We are well and truly prepared," he said.

Mr Chelley said police had been able to enter 16 of the 35 isolated communities around the Daintree area with no new reports of missing persons or serious injuries.

"The pleasing news there is everyone's OK, now we know the needs of those communities," Mr Chelley said.

A search for a missing 25-year-old Daintree resident last heard from on Saturday night continued, with grave concerns growing over the man's safety.

Aircraft have assisted with the search, but Mr Chelley said the destruction in the area was "devastating".

"I ask anyone in the area



Jack Westmore and Mung Wray, both 16, and from Cairns Brothers Leagues Club, help clean up a flooded property in Mirassa St in Holloways Beach, where the Barron River burst its banks. Picture: Brendan Rader

whom you have any information to please contact police," Mr Chelley said. "While I still hold hope, I hold grave concerns for this person given what I have seen on the ground."

A further 129 Wujal Wujal locals have now been safely flown to Cooktown joining the 97 evacuees rescued on Tuesday, and Australian Defence Force helicopters were kept busy relieving exhausted front-line workers who have toiled for more than a week.

The ADF may be called on to assist clean-up efforts in remote areas, with contract cleaners also engaged by the federal government.

The flood disaster is expected to have caused billions in damage, particularly to major infrastructure, with North Queensland Tourism also losing an estimated \$22m.

More than 1700 damage assessments have so far been completed, with one property tagged as destroyed, 50 severely damaged, 30 moder-



Police and ADF personnel assist in the evacuation of locals from Wujal Wujal to Cooktown, using Chinook helicopters.

ately damaged and 226 with minor damage.

At Holloway Beach, Kerry Treen moved her rodion furniture from her home's mud-covered floors while her husband Chris pulled a line out from the driveway.

Treen's spring up in Mr Treen's eyes when a busload of volunteers from Cairns Brothers Leagues Club arrived to assist in his flood-ravaged street. The group included local aged 30 Brothers' group general

manager Jason Sobolech said it was time for people to turn up and help out.

"The easiest thing we could have done was write a cheque," he said. "But these people need boots on the ground, so I made the decision that's what we needed to do."

"It can't be described as anything other than devastation. You can see some of them are feeling beaten and defeated, so to see us turn up today I think has really helped them."



The clean-up of the Captain Cook Highway at Elio Beach, north of Cairns. Picture: TMR



A child from Wujal Wujal on an Australian Army Chinook helicopter. Picture: ADF

Premier Steven Miles said temporary accommodation or long-term housing would be arranged for residents who were displaced or who had lost their homes.

Federal Minister for Emergency Management Murray Watt announced a \$100 million disaster relief for farmers and small businesses by means of freight subsidies and to alleviate costs of moving stock and operating materials.

The Captain Cook Highway between Cairns and Smithfield has been reopened, along with the access road to Yorkes Knob, allowing trucks to start resupplying supermarkets.

Access to Holloways Beach has been restricted to local traffic and emergency vehicles only, with all drivers urged to take care on the roads.

Energy Minister Mick de Brazen said 500 crew members had been deployed north to bring the power back on, prioritising the remaining 10,000 businesses and households

that supply would be restored by Christmas Eve.

But he did warn those conducting safety checks on their properties to ensure they had engaged a licensed electrician.

"We have heard some reports of some individuals posing as licensed electrical contractors who are not, so we are urging residents to do that licence check, too."

If there are people preying on the vulnerable and pretending to be licensed electricians to earn a buck, they are opportunistic grifts. I absolutely condemn anyone acting in this way. It's just un-Australian."

Disaster recovery donations can be made to the Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Care, St Vincent De Paul and Gift, with the Queensland government contributing \$1m.

"We've asked Gift to focus some of the \$100,000 we've provided to them on any children who might have lost toys that were put aside for Santa," Mr Miles said.



**Clubs
Queensland**

Strengthening Clubs.
Benefitting Communities.

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Cairns Post

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2023 - CAIRNSPOST.COM.AU - \$2.80

Picture: Brendan Radke

UNITED WE SURVIVE

Far North Queenslanders have returned to their homes to begin the clean-up after the worst flooding in 100 years smashed the region in Tropical Cyclone Jasper's wake. But they were not alone. Melissa Trommestad (pictured) said she felt overwhelmed by the support of Cairns Brothers Leagues Club volunteers — one of many community groups who stepped in to help — some as young as 11, including Jake Westmore and Maliq Wray (Inset).

SPECIAL FLOOD COVERAGE: PAGES 2-15 PLUS HELP FNQ RECOVER P6