

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland



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About Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)

Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) is a state-wide, not-for-profit organisation led by and for people with diverse disability. We are dedicated to advancing disability rights and advocacy in Queensland. QDN is the Executive Peak Body for people with disability in Queensland, providing overarching leadership and coordination across funded peak bodies around the state. QDN operates a state-wide network of over 3,000 members and supporters all over Queensland. Guided by our motto “nothing about us without us,”

QDN ensures that people with lived experience of disability are central to shaping policies, services and supports. Our vibrant and dynamic membership is made up of people with diverse disability who are at the centre of everything we do. QDN as an organisation is in a unique position of representing people with a diverse range of disability.

QDN’s work is underpinned by a commitment to inclusion, co-design, collaboration, and innovation and is guided by the pillars of inform, connect, lead and influence. By partnering with communities, service providers, businesses, and government, QDN fosters systemic solutions that empower individuals, amplify the voices of people with disability, and create sustainable, inclusive systems of support, working toward a more equitable and inclusive Queensland.

Through a powerful and engaged network of individuals and 32 Peer Support Groups, QDN informs, leads and influences change on issues impacting the disability community. QDN’s extensive body of work includes connecting people through peer support groups, supporting future leaders through the Emerging Leaders Program, and influencing government policies and programs through targeted advocacy. QDN’s initiatives are co-designed and co-delivered with people with disability. QDN successfully engages with diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups, and rural and remote populations across Queensland. We believe that Queenslanders with disability need to be empowered active and valued citizens, and fully included in the economic, social, civic and cultural life of Queensland.

Introduction and acknowledgements

QDN welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback and strategies to improve the current state of volunteering in Queensland. QDN supports the Queensland Government’s Queensland Volunteer Strategy 2024-2032 and Queensland Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2026. QDN also acknowledges Australia’s commitments to upholding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD), Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992, and Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031.

QDN acknowledges the important role that people with disability play as volunteers and the individual benefits from social and civic participation including connection, inclusion and belonging that are gained. QDN also acknowledges the broader community benefits that come from the participation of people with disability as volunteers across all parts of our community that help shape and influence community awareness of the value and contribution that people with disability make and help influence community attitudes.

QDN embraces volunteers through our programs, particularly our 32 peer support groups across Queensland. Our volunteers are valued and supported to lead groups that in a peer-to-peer model, that provide information, connection, and activate leadership to be able to influence change in communities across Queensland. The peer support groups also support people to have their voices heard in a safe space.

QDN also developed a volunteering guide, [Successfully Engaging Volunteers with Disability](#), in collaboration with people with disability and Volunteering Queensland. Volunteering plays a significant role at major sporting events. Queensland saw the value and important role that people with disability played when we hosted the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast in 2018. QDN collaborated with Urbis to develop the Game Changers Report which outlines key strategies focused on employment and volunteering to be able to deliver a world leading Olympic and Paralympic Games in Brisbane in 2032. This report provides an important blueprint for key actions in the runway to Brisbane, the event to enable a legacy of inclusion and accessibility that delivers better outcomes for Queenslanders with disability. QDN also hosted an online member forum in December 2024, Access and Inclusion: Paris 2024 and the runway to Brisbane 2032 where the topic of volunteering and employment opportunities for people with a disability was discussed. Members expressed that a comprehensive volunteer recruitment program would increase opportunities for inclusiveness and diversity.

Terms of Reference

The current state of volunteering in Queensland and the value it contributes, including benefits to volunteers, organisations, communities and the state

Volunteering plays a critical role in the lives of people with disability as well as the flow on benefits to our broader community. Volunteering is a meaningful experience, and it can contribute to a greater sense of inclusion for people with a disability. Volunteering can enhance confidence and wellbeing, and combat loneliness by increasing social interaction. Volunteering can also provide people with a disability an opportunity to develop skills that could lead to potential employment opportunities. The Queensland Strategy of Volunteering 2024-2032 highlights that volunteering can enrich the lives of individuals, and benefits communities by helping organisations provide services and projects that might not be able

to be delivered due to lack of funding and resources such as in sports clubs, environmental groups, advocacy and community organisations. It also stated in the Queensland Strategy of Volunteering 2024-2032 that the value of volunteering to Queensland communities was 117.8 billion, so there are great economic and civic benefits as well. ¹

Volunteering Queensland released a State of Volunteering report in 2024 that highlighted that 20.7% of people with a disability engage in formal volunteering. ² The report also stated that 25% of people in general are volunteering online, or at home and that people with a disability were more likely to volunteer online. ³ It was stated 46.5% of volunteers with a disability felt their disability made it more difficult to volunteer with other people. ⁴

QDN have peer support groups that promote QDN's 4 pillars Inform, Connect, Lead and Influence. We support 37 Group Convenors and 150 Peer leaders across Queensland who volunteer their time to help people with a disability stay informed and connected in the community. Group Convenors form part of QDN's broader Peer Leader network which also includes our Emerging Leaders Program. Our network of Peer Leaders take on paid and voluntary roles in their communities across a diverse range of areas over the past 10 years including helping people understand the NDIS, develop skills in energy literacy, digital literacy, be safe during COVID-19, as well as being prepared for disasters through Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP), Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) and Building Inclusive and Disaster Resilient Communities (BIDRC) programs. Peer support groups and peer volunteering benefits participants through increased social inclusion, connection with others and shared learning.

The peer support groups at QDN are a safe place for sharing lived experiences, exchanging information, supporting and connecting with people that have a disability in the local community or around a shared topic such as NDIS, local issues such as e-scooters, housing, health, transport, education, employment and human rights. Some of the in-person groups meet up for events or meet up at local coffee shops.

Many QDN Group Convenors and Peer Support Leaders have also become mentors to other people who might themselves lead groups in the future. QDN acknowledges the important role that our volunteers play and the leadership of people with disability not only in their own lives but also in their communities. QDN Group Convenors have reported that their role has provided them with a sense of self-determination, increased confidence and provided opportunities with paid employment, to be on committees and be involved in other disability initiatives that have enriched their lives. This has led to more people with a disability feeling included and valued in their communities in Queensland.

Volunteer participation enhances QDN's advocacy, increases capacity to deliver services, develops volunteer skills, and fosters community engagement. For Queensland, volunteering promotes social inclusion, improves community wellbeing, has a positive economic impact, builds skills, and encourages civic engagement. Together, these benefits create a more inclusive, supportive, and thriving community for all.

QDN identifies the following key areas of focus to improve the current state of volunteering in Queensland:

1. Increase the awareness and understanding of people with disability about why they volunteer and the pathways to volunteering.
2. Increase the awareness, knowledge and skills of organisations who engage volunteers to:
 - a. Understand the benefits of engaging volunteers with disability.
 - b. Create and deliver accessible inclusive volunteering opportunities.
 - c. Provide access via variety of mechanisms for organisations to develop their knowledge, skills and capabilities in inclusion and accessibility to deliver effective support and environments for volunteers with disability.
 - d. Connect to community networks and pathways to find and attract volunteers with disability as part of their volunteer pool.
 - e. Access incentives and be acknowledged through recognition programs
 - f. Share and showcase good practice and outcomes.
3. Provide structures and systems that deliver efficient and effective ways to work across government, not-profit organisations and businesses to collaborate and coordinate.
4. Develop consistent data recording systems that measure participation and impact of volunteering.
5. Undertake policy and research to inform future strategies and work.

The views of volunteers, prospective volunteers and the volunteering sector on the current barriers to volunteering, including excessive legislative and regulatory burdens and other restrictions adversely limiting active volunteers

QDN recognises that people with disability experience increased barriers when engaging in volunteer opportunities. The National Strategy of Volunteering 2023-2033 highlights challenges such as acquiring the relevant documentation required to volunteer, and the need for screening checks that might exclude people with a criminal record and can impact people wanted to take on a volunteering opportunity.⁵ Queensland Volunteering stated that 72.2% of volunteer managers in organisations are concerned with risk, legal requirements and insurance and that can impact recruiting volunteers.⁶

Through QDN's work, we have also identified the challenges that organisations identify in knowing how to ensure they are creating and delivering an inclusive and accessible environment for volunteers with disability. This includes recruitment processes, onboarding, support during the activity as well as training, development and learning opportunities. Other barriers people with a disability might have include issues with a lack of transportation options, facing stigma, discrimination, experience episodic illnesses associated with their disability that can result in fluctuations in their health and wellbeing and the financial costs associated with volunteering such as having to buy food, transportation and childcare. QDN identifies the following key areas for focus to reduce barriers to volunteering:

1. Explore options to simplify legislation and regulations that deliver balanced approach to provide safeguards and reduce regulatory burden on organisations and individuals.
2. Provision of accessible information including Auslan to ensure that all members of the community, including those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, have equal access to important services and information. By offering materials in Auslan, we can promote inclusivity, ensure effective communication, and enable individuals to fully participate in various aspects of volunteering.
3. Build community and sector capacity to be more inclusive through:
 - a. Awareness raising about the importance of inclusion and the positive impact on people with disability.
 - b. Inclusive volunteering training, learning and development opportunities and resources that are led by people with disability.
 - c. Digital clearinghouse and communities of practice to share learnings and knowledge based upon successful examples of inclusive volunteering.
4. Identify opportunities through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) reforms and targeted initiatives to activate participants with volunteering and employment goals in their plans to connect into pathways to volunteering.

The current experiences, motivations and challenges for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and their recommendations for addressing challenges and improving the volunteering experience

Through QDN's work and experiences, there are several challenges that have been identified that need to be addressed. For volunteers with disability, this includes volunteer burnout, difficulty in finding organisations and businesses where they can volunteer, inaccessible or non-inclusive processes and systems within organisations, and limited accessible information.

QDN acknowledge that organisations engaging volunteers with disability also face challenges. These include low levels of understanding about disability, conscious and

unconscious bias about disability, and community attitudes about disability. Additionally, organisations struggle with attracting and recruiting volunteers with disability, particularly in being able to match people to the right roles. There are also challenges with induction and onboarding of volunteers, limited support mechanisms to enable people with disability to carry out their roles, and a lack of knowledge regarding inclusion and accessibility practices that create the best environments and experiences for volunteers with disability.

Case Example of Good Practice of supporting volunteers: QDN's Peer Support Groups

QDN's groups are led by Group Convenors who are people with disability. To ensure there are systems of support in place, QDN's model includes a range of mechanisms to provide the scaffolding and support that enables volunteers to carry out the activities of their role. This includes:

- Co-design with people with disability to co-create resources, systems and process.
- Develop resources to support the activity and role.
- Peer Support Group Convenor Guide which includes templates for meeting agendas, note-taking and more.
- Streamlining processes to make it easier to undertake volunteering role.
- Practical support for office-based staff to book meeting venues, catering, guest speakers, communication about events and meetings.
- Provide support to volunteers through structured processes.
- Pre and post meeting check-ins.
- Debriefing if experienced challenges with group members or situations.
- Peer mentoring program being established in 2025.
- Deliver learning and development opportunities.
- Monthly Group Convenor Community of Practice.
- Twice yearly forums to bring people together face-to-face.

It is also important for staff to recognise the episodic nature of disability and that volunteers do not feel any pressure to run groups if they are not well. Staff are available to debrief with volunteers. There is a challenge for some organisations to support volunteers with vicarious trauma. Organisations that have volunteers need to develop self-care strategies given some of the stories that people might hear can be triggering and they might need support. QDN identifies the following key areas for focus to improve motivation and address challenges of volunteers and organisations. Co-design comprehensive training programs with and for people with lived experience of disability to ensure that:

- a. The content is relevant and addresses the real-world challenges faced by individuals with disability.

- b. The training materials and methods are accessible and inclusive, catering to diverse learning needs to ensure.
 - c. Participants feel valued and empowered, contributing their unique insights and perspectives.
 - d. The programs promote a deeper understanding of disability rights and advocacy.
 - e. The effectiveness and impact of the training are continuously improved through feedback and collaboration.
1. Provide access to appropriate emotional support including counselling services, support groups, and peer networks.
 2. Promote work life balance by encouraging regular breaks, manageable workloads, and flexible scheduling.
 3. Foster a positive and supportive volunteer culture where volunteers with disability feel valued and respected.
 4. Conduct regular check-ins to assess wellbeing and address concerns, with a dedicated support person for large events to ensure tailored support and accessibility.

The unique challenges experienced by people from diverse backgrounds, genders, age groups, abilities and locations, and opportunities to improve volunteering participation, accessibility and experience for these groups

QDN recognises that people with disability may encounter physical and attitudinal barriers, as well as a lack of accessible volunteering opportunities. There is opportunity to ensure volunteer roles and environments are accessible and inclusive, offering necessary reasonable adjustments and support.

It is important for organisations to follow a social disability model that would ensure volunteers with a disability have accessible communication formats and training, accessible physical spaces and where reasonable adjustments can be made. Volunteering should also include remote opportunities to provide flexibility.

QDN has developed a resource with Volunteering Queensland called Successfully Engaging Volunteers with Disability, funded by the Department of Social Services. The guide was created to strengthen inclusion and diversity with the aim to encourage organisations to develop greater awareness of how to work with people who have a disability. The guide provides recommendations for organisations to reflect on whether they have an inclusive approach to volunteering and provides strategies on how to attract and recruit volunteers, induction and onboarding of volunteers. The guide also explores the need for the capability to have accessible communication and resources for various disability, customising volunteer roles, identifying reasonable adjustments, managing organisational processes,

how to build rapport and engagement strategies, and co-design principles. This guide is useful for organisations wanting improve accessibility and improving the volunteering experience for people with a disability.

Another challenge is retaining volunteers. It was highlighted in Volunteering Queensland's 2024 State of Volunteering Report that people with a disability were less likely to be volunteering the same amount in three years' time.⁷ It is important that organisations have clear strategies and resources to retain and support people with a disability to continue to have positive volunteering opportunities.

QDN makes the following recommendations to address the unique challenges experienced by volunteers with disability:

1. Ensure volunteer roles and environments are accessible and inclusive with appropriate communication formats, training, and adjustments.
2. Utilise inclusive resources such as the Successfully Engaging Volunteers with Disability guide to attract, recruit, and support volunteers with disability.
3. Offer remote volunteering opportunities to accommodate diverse needs.
4. Implement strategies to retain volunteers with disability, addressing the challenges identified in recent reports.

Regularly evaluate and improve your approach to volunteering based on feedback from volunteers with disability.

The extent, effectiveness and efficiency of current government support at all levels for the volunteering sector in Queensland and sustainable opportunities for improvement

The Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024-2032 emphasises the importance volunteers have in our society, and the challenges in recruiting and retaining volunteers. However, both the Queensland Volunteer Strategy 2024-2032 and Queensland Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-2026 lack a focus on trying to attract, engage and support more people with a disability to volunteer in society.

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) recently asked for feedback for Draft NSW Disability Inclusion Volunteering Guidelines that is an initiative under NSW Volunteer Strategy 2020-2030.⁸ The draft guidelines recognise the United Nations CRPD and provide strategies to retain and recruit people with a disability into volunteering. Similar guidelines could be beneficial for the Queensland Government to implement to guide organisations to support people with a disability in their volunteering roles.

QDN makes the following recommendations for sustainable opportunities for improvement in the effectiveness of current government support at all levels:

1. Simplify and streamline legislative and regulatory requirements to reduce the burden on volunteers and organisations.
2. Expand funding programs to provide more resources for volunteer-involving organisations, particularly those supporting marginalised communities that these organisations have the necessary support to address the unique needs of underrepresented groups effectively. By expanding funding, we can enhance the capacity of these organisations to offer essential services, create inclusive environments, and empower marginalised individuals to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential. This initiative also promotes social cohesion, diversity, and equality, ensuring that no one is left behind.
3. Develop and promote accessible volunteering opportunities, ensuring that people with disability can participate fully.
4. Foster collaboration between governments, non-profit and community organisations, and businesses to create a coordinated approach to volunteering by:
 - a. Establishing joint initiatives to address shared community goals.
 - b. Sharing resources and expertise for maximum volunteer impact.
 - c. Creating comprehensive training and development for volunteers.
 - d. Promoting public awareness of the importance and benefits of volunteering.
 - e. Implementing policies that encourage corporate social responsibility.
5. Utilise digital platforms to connect volunteers with opportunities and provide training and support remotely.
 - a. Greater accessibility and inclusion for volunteers from diverse backgrounds and locations.
 - b. Efficient matching of volunteers with roles that suit their skills and interests.
 - c. Ongoing training and professional development through online courses and webinars.
 - d. Real-time communication and feedback between volunteers and organisations.
 - e. Enhanced flexibility for volunteers to engage in activities at their convenience.

Opportunities for the Queensland Government to leverage all portfolios to support growth in volunteering across Queensland, including through hosting the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games

In 2024, QDN and Urbis released the Game Changers Report which offers an analysis of the current employment landscape for people with disability and provides strategic recommendations to shape and enhance the employment opportunities leading up to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.⁹

The Game Changers Report also reflects QDN member views and the opportunities for volunteering as part of Brisbane 2032 and recognition of how volunteering can develop skills and confidence and lead to further inclusion. The report highlights how previous Olympics and Paralympics volunteering opportunities can provide individual and community benefits through participation and can also act as an important step towards inclusive employment. The report recommends key strategies including:

- Ensuring people with a disability are a part of the decision-making process right from the start of planning for the Games and that there is a commitment to co-design.
- Develop a clear employment and volunteer strategy for people with a disability.
- Planning and setting volunteering targets for people with a disability.
- Volunteers and staff at the Paralympics need to have disability awareness training.
- The need for accessible communication and spaces at venues and villages.
- Encourage businesses to hire and include people with a disability.

The Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games showed how important it is to connect different parts of the city so everyone can get around easily and make it more accessible for everyone. The 2012 Olympics and Paralympics Games in London were the first to focus on leaving a lasting impact by creating job and training programs to promote equality and diversity. The 2020 Olympics and Paralympics Games in Tokyo nurtured a culture of volunteering that resulted in more people wanting to continue volunteering after the Olympics had finished. 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Queensland could leave a legacy of a more inclusive, accepting and accessible society.

QDN offers the below recommendations to support people with disability to support growth in volunteering:

1. Ensure people with disability are involved in the decision-making process from the start, with a commitment to co-design.
2. Develop a comprehensive employment and volunteer strategy an implementation plan for people with disability, including specific strategies that include
 - a. setting specific volunteering targets
 - b. development of pilot and scalable programs including employability programs that use volunteering as means of training and stepping stone to employment
3. Provide disability awareness training for volunteers and staff at the Paralympic Games.
4. Ensure venues and villages have accessible communication formats and physical spaces.
5. Promote and incentivise businesses to hire and include people with disability.

Opportunities to increase emergency response volunteering in Queensland, including how to optimise the engagement, support and integration of volunteers assisting with natural disasters and community recovery

Natural disasters are common occurrence in Queensland and people with disability are at a higher risk of injury, or death.¹⁰ QDN has a national reputation and footprint in leading work in building the capacity of local communities through the leadership of people with disability, to increase their inclusiveness in preparedness, response and recovery to disasters. QDN has supported people with disability in both their individual emergency preparedness and in their leadership skills to empower them to transition into volunteer or paid opportunities within their communities. This includes through the Queensland Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction DIDRR projects, and the co-design and co-production of the Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) tool with the University of Sydney. Link to PCEP [Person-centred emergency preparedness \(P-CEP\) Workbook](#). This work has produced a range of evidence-based research and resources for people with disability, disability and community services as well as local disaster and emergency management sectors and publication in the International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Organised volunteering plays a critical role in times of disaster, with volunteers making up a significant portion of Queensland's emergency services, including the State Emergency Service (SES) and the Rural Fire Service (RFS). Emergency preparedness is one of the most effective ways to reduce disaster risk. It is important that people with disability, along with their support networks, actively participate in emergency preparedness planning to ensure their health and safety. Alongside this, it is critical that our Queensland emergency service volunteers can work effectively with people with disability before, during and after a disaster or emergency event. Disability inclusive and Disaster -resilient Queensland provides a framework and toolkit that delivers the roadmap for working together. Link to document: [Framework and Toolkit | Collaborating 4 Inclusion](#)

Additionally in 2024, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) worked with Professor Michelle Villeneuve's team at the University of Sydney Centre for Disability Research and Policy to develop the **Disability Inclusive Emergency Management (DIEM) Toolkit**. It is a national toolkit to help emergency planners, governments, and community organisations include people with disability in their emergency plans.

<https://www.nema.gov.au/our-work/resilience/diem#TheDIEMToolkit>

The contributions of volunteers within emergency services extend beyond immediate disaster response as they are important to community resilience, preparedness activities, and long-term recovery efforts. Importantly, people with disability are uniquely positioned to contribute to these efforts, bringing valuable lived experience and skills. When people with disability are included in volunteering, they increase the diversity and inclusivity of

emergency management teams, which can lead to better outcomes for the entire community.

QDN offers the below recommendations to increase emergency response volunteering in Queensland:

1. Actively involve people with disability and their support networks in emergency preparedness planning to ensure their health and safety.
2. Build the capacity of people with disability through leadership skills development, enabling them to transition into volunteer or paid roles within their communities.
3. Implement tools like the person-centred emergency preparedness (P-CEP) tool, co-designed with the University of Sydney, to enhance individual preparedness and community resilience and explore ways that this can be amplified across communities to ensure more people with disability have an individual plan for times of disaster and emergency.
4. Encourage the inclusion of people with disability in emergency services volunteering to increase diversity and improve outcomes for the entire community.
5. Build the knowledge, skills and understanding of disaster and emergency management volunteers in working effectively with people with disability during times of disaster.

Optimise engagement, support, and integration of volunteers by fostering collaboration between disability and community services, local disaster, and emergency management sectors.

First Nations peoples volunteering, including in remote and discrete communities, and the role of First Nations volunteering in Closing the Gap

Queensland Volunteer Strategy 2024-2032 highlighted the need to understand different cultural perspectives of giving time particularly with First Nations kinship giving and how they share responsibilities within in the communities.¹¹ It is also important to respect diversity in cultural languages. Many First Nations people have experienced intergenerational trauma, and there is a need to recognise the need for cultural safety in a volunteering environment. It is critical that First Nations people with disability are considered in this strategy, inquiry and subsequent recommendations. First Nations people might need more time to build trust and rapport with people in the organisation. It is important to co-design with people who have a First Nations background to make sure cultural sensitivity is bring adhered to in volunteering programs.

1. Create culturally safe volunteering environments acknowledging intergenerational trauma by:

- a. Engaging with local Indigenous leaders and Elders to gain insights and guidance on creating a culturally safe environment.
 - b. Providing comprehensive cultural competency training for all volunteers and staff to raise awareness and understanding of intergenerational trauma and its impacts.
 - c. Incorporating traditional practices, values, and customs into the volunteering programs to honour and respect Indigenous cultures.
 - d. Establishing clear protocols and policies that prioritise the safety, well-being, and dignity of Indigenous volunteers and community members.
 - e. Creating spaces for open dialogue and feedback to continuously improve the cultural safety of the volunteering environment.
2. Allow time for First Nations people to build trust and rapport within organisations.
3. Collaborate with First Nations peoples to ensure culturally inclusive and relevant volunteering programs.
4. Develop accessible and relevant volunteer opportunities for First Nations peoples in remote and discrete communities by:
 - a. Working closely with local Indigenous leaders and communities to understand their unique needs and preferences. This can be achieved by:
 - b. Co-designing volunteer programs with First Nations communities to ensure cultural relevance and respect.
 - c. Providing culturally appropriate training and support for volunteers and staff.
 - d. Leveraging technology to connect remote communities with volunteer opportunities and support.
 - e. Establishing partnerships with Indigenous organisations and businesses to create meaningful volunteer roles.
 - f. Ensuring sustainable and long-term commitments to build trust and genuine relationships with First Nations peoples.
5. Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of First Nations volunteers, highlighting their impact on communities.

Recommendations for Systems Level Reform

1. Improve Awareness & Engagement for People with Disability

- Develop and implement statewide campaigns to increase awareness about volunteering opportunities for people with disability.
- Build capacity within organisations to create inclusive, accessible volunteering roles and provide resources to engage volunteers with disability effectively.

2. Reduce Barriers to Volunteering

- Streamline regulations and policies to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens while maintaining necessary safeguards.
- Make information and resources accessible (e.g., Auslan, accessible formats) to guarantee equal access to volunteering opportunities for all.
- Encourage and fund inclusive training programs and resources to ensure organisations are equipped to support volunteers with disability.

3. Strengthen Government & Sector Support

- Simplify funding processes and expand financial support to volunteer organisations, especially those focused on marginalised communities.
- Foster collaboration across government, non-profit, and business sectors to create coordinated efforts that improve the volunteer ecosystem and resource sharing.
- Invest in digital platforms that connect volunteers with opportunities and deliver training remotely, promoting flexibility and wider engagement.

4. Foster Sustainable Volunteer Cultures

- Develop co-designed training programs to be delivered by people with disability that equip volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed to support inclusive volunteering.
- Ensure emotional support, counselling services, and practical resources are available for volunteers to improve well-being and retention.
- Establish recognition programs and incentives to value and retain volunteers, fostering a positive volunteer culture.

5. Build Leadership & Capacity in Emergency Volunteering

- Include people with disability in emergency preparedness to ensure their needs are met in times of disaster.
- Invest in leadership development programs for people with disability to prepare them for roles in both volunteering and employment, particularly in disaster response and recovery.

6. Support Cultural Sensitivity in Volunteering

- Develop policies that ensure volunteering environments are culturally safe, especially for First Nations peoples, incorporating traditional values and trauma-informed practices.
- Work with Indigenous communities to co-create volunteer roles that are culturally relevant and responsive to their needs.

7. Leverage Opportunities in Major Events (e.g., Brisbane 2032)

Implement recommendations regarding volunteering from QDN and Urbis' [Game Changers Report](#) including:

- Develop a Disability Employment and Volunteering Strategy and Implementation Plan for the Brisbane 2032 Games.
- Set targets for volunteering of people with disability
- Ensure people with disability are included from the beginning at governance and operational levels in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of major events like the Brisbane 2032 Olympics and Paralympics. Integrate disability awareness training and inclusive practices into all event planning and volunteer programs, ensuring accessibility at every stage.

These actions can be also applied to major Queensland events more broadly.

Conclusion

QDN acknowledges the work of the Queensland Parliament Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee and thanks the Queensland Government for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland. Volunteers with a disability have a wealth of varied experience and insights to give many organisations, however, they need to be properly supported from the start of the volunteering journey. It is also important for organisations to understand the barriers people with a disability experience on a regular basis and the importance of making reasonable adjustments that is also explored in our resource developed with Volunteering Qld, Successfully Engaging Volunteers with a Disability. QDN always recommends co-design with people who have a disability, an emphasis on accessible spaces and communication formats and for human rights to be always upheld. QDN views the Olympics and Paralympics Games in 2032 as an opportunity for people with a disability to have volunteer

and employment opportunities that could lead to greater confidence and feelings of inclusion.

If you have any queries regarding this submission, please contact CEO Michelle Moss

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