

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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Submitted by: Better Together Community Support Inc
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Submitter Comments:

Better Together provides services and programs to a large area of the FNQ Tablelands region. We offer Aged Care packages, psychology and family support, and operate the Atherton Community Centre.: We have around 30 volunteers on the books at the moment that help and support emergency relief, personal support, tax help, community pantry, activities such as drumming, chair yoga, sewing and social morning teas. Volunteers are expressing their intention and desire to become a volunteer, however, many, due to the paperwork and two online training courses required to be on site (as well as a Blue Card application if they don't have one) is a barrier to completing the onboarding process. Unfortunately, volunteers believe that they can pop in and give their time as they would like, or start the next day upon registration of interest. We have a rigorous process in place to recruit volunteers to ensure a safe and inclusive workplace, as we are classed as a health care facility, including having a very large range of clients in the centre. Onsite client demographics include children, elderly, homeless, those seeking emergency relief, counselling and psychology clients and those participating in events and activities. This means a robust risk management system is in place as volunteer work is often occurring when there are many and varied clients in the centre at the same time. We certainly appreciate the wealth of knowledge, spirit and vitality our volunteers bring to our centre, and the NCQ feedback survey for 2024 revealed our volunteers provided \$211,750 worth of value back to the centre and community by being involved with our service. As with most unpaid programs, volunteering's main demographic at our centre is over 65, women, and looking to engage socially. This is especially difficult when there is heavy lifting, activities where being on ones feet for long periods of time are required and technology is needed to complete some tasks (onboarding, emergency relief, personal support, logging in and out to capture hours etc.). It is a fine balance between making sure you have all your legal, WHS, and HR bases covered and making the work of volunteering enticing enough to follow through. However, our volunteers are worth their weight in gold, engaging with other members in community, breaking the stigma of mental health and isolation by providing a non-judgemental and compassionate 'listening ear' and lots and lots of laughs. In summary, at our centre, volunteers make the world go 'round, easing the workload of paid staff and dually giving and receiving the benefits of human interaction, giving back and just feeling great.