

Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland

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CAQ Submission to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland

Author: \[Your Full Name]

Organisation: Croquet Association Queensland (CAQ)

Level of Approval: Executive Committee \[or specify relevant level]

Contact Details:

Email: \[Your Email Address]

Mailing Address: \[Your Mailing Address]

Daytime Telephone Number: \[Your Phone Number]

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Terms of Reference Addressed: 2, 3, and 5

Introduction:

Croquet Association Queensland (CAQ) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland. As a volunteer-led organisation dedicated to promoting and supporting croquet across Queensland, we recognise the vital role volunteers play in our sector and across the state. This submission draws upon our experiences and insights to address key terms of reference, particularly focusing on improving the volunteering experience and identifying areas for enhanced government support.

Term of Reference 2: Current barriers to volunteering, including excessive legislative and regulatory burdens and other restrictions adversely limiting active volunteers.

For volunteer-based sporting organisations like CAQ and our affiliated clubs, several barriers impact volunteer recruitment and retention:

Time Commitment: Modern life often means individuals have less discretionary time. Volunteering roles, particularly those requiring significant or inflexible time commitments, can be challenging to fill. We observe potential volunteers are often hesitant to commit to roles perceived as overly time-intensive.

Administrative Burden: Increased regulations and compliance requirements, while often well-intentioned, can create significant administrative burdens for volunteer-run organisations. This can deter volunteers who prefer to dedicate their time to the core activities of the sport rather than paperwork and bureaucracy. Examples may include complex grant application processes, insurance requirements, and reporting obligations that are disproportionate to the size and resources of volunteer clubs. _Furthermore, volunteers often spend considerable time answering basic queries and directing people to information, taking away from time spent on strategic tasks. This administrative load is exacerbated by a shortage of volunteers willing to take on administrative roles in many clubs._

Perception of "Work" over "Enjoyment": If volunteering is perceived as overly demanding, stressful, or lacking in personal reward and enjoyment, it becomes less attractive. We believe focusing on making volunteer roles fulfilling, social, and enjoyable is crucial to overcoming this barrier.

Digital Divide & Technology Adoption: _While technology offers solutions, many of our clubs, particularly smaller or regional ones, face challenges in adopting new technologies. This can be due to a lack of digital literacy amongst some members, reluctance to embrace new systems, or limited resources to invest in and implement technological solutions._

Term of Reference 3: Current experiences, motivations and challenges for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations and their recommendations for addressing challenges and improving the volunteering experience.

Our experience at CAQ highlights the following regarding volunteer experiences, motivations, and challenges:

Motivations: Volunteers are primarily motivated by:

Passion for Croquet: A genuine love for the sport and a desire to see it thrive in Queensland.

Community Contribution: Wanting to give back to their local community and contribute to a positive social environment through sport.

Social Connection: Enjoying the social interaction and camaraderie that comes with volunteering in a club environment.

Personal Fulfilment: Experiencing a sense of purpose, achievement, and personal growth through their volunteer roles.

Challenges: Volunteer-involving organisations like CAQ and our clubs face challenges in:

Volunteer Recruitment: Attracting enough new volunteers to sustain and grow our activities. _This is particularly acute for administrative roles, which are often less appealing than on-field or coaching roles._

Volunteer Retention: Keeping valued volunteers engaged and preventing burnout.

Task Management: Effectively organising and distributing tasks amongst a limited volunteer workforce to avoid overburdening individuals.

Recognising and Valuing Volunteers: Ensuring volunteers feel appreciated and that their contributions are genuinely valued and recognised.

Onboarding and Training: Providing adequate support and training to new volunteers to enable them to confidently and effectively fulfil their roles.

Information Overload & Communication Bottlenecks: _Volunteers can be overwhelmed by the amount of information they need to access, and communication bottlenecks, such as reliance on email for all queries, can be inefficient and frustrating._

Resistance to Change & Technology: _Some volunteers and clubs are hesitant to adopt new technologies or change established ways of working, even when these changes could improve efficiency or volunteer experience._

Recommendations for Improving the Volunteering Experience:

Streamline Administrative Processes: Government initiatives to simplify grant applications, reduce regulatory burdens, and provide templates or support for compliance would significantly ease the pressure on volunteer administrators.

Promote Flexibility and Micro-Volunteering: Encourage and support organisations to create flexible volunteering roles and micro-volunteering opportunities to accommodate individuals with limited time. _This could include promoting the concept of breaking down larger tasks into smaller, more manageable sub-tasks that volunteers can easily fit into their schedules._

Invest in Volunteer Recognition and Appreciation Programs: Government-backed or promoted programs that provide resources and ideas for volunteer recognition could help organisations better acknowledge and celebrate their volunteers' contributions.

Support Volunteer Training and Development: Increased funding and accessible training programs focused on volunteer management, leadership, and specific skills relevant to sporting organisations would enhance volunteer effectiveness and satisfaction. _This should include training and support to improve digital literacy and confidence in using technology for club administration._

Promote the Social and Enjoyable Aspects of Volunteering: Public campaigns that highlight the fun, social, and community-building aspects of volunteering in sport could attract a wider range of individuals.

Embrace Technology and Automation: _Encourage and potentially provide resources for volunteer organisations to explore and implement technology solutions to improve efficiency and communication. For example, CAQ is currently developing a "Club Hub" – a centralised online platform designed to provide volunteers with quick answers to common questions, access resources, and reduce reliance on email for routine enquiries. This type of initiative can significantly reduce administrative burden and improve volunteer satisfaction. However, support is needed to ensure all clubs, regardless of size or location, can effectively adopt such technologies._

Develop Volunteer "Jobs Boards": _To better connect volunteers with suitable roles, we recommend promoting the use of volunteer "jobs boards" or similar platforms. CAQ intends to incorporate a jobs board into our Club Hub, allowing prospective and current volunteers to easily find roles that match their skills, interests, and time availability. This can improve volunteer recruitment, particularly for administrative positions, and ensure skills are effectively utilised._

Term of Reference 5: The extent, effectiveness and efficiency of current government support at all levels for the volunteering sector in Queensland and sustainable opportunities for improvement.

While we appreciate existing government support for the volunteering sector, there are opportunities for improvement:

Targeted Support for Volunteer-Run Sporting Organisations: Consider tailored support programs specifically designed for volunteer-based sporting organisations, recognising their unique challenges and contributions to community health and well-being. _This

could include grants specifically for technology upgrades, software subscriptions, development of online platforms like our "Club Hub", and crucially, digital literacy training and support for volunteers to effectively utilise these technologies._

Simplified Access to Funding and Resources: Streamline application processes for grants and funding, and make information about available resources more readily accessible to grassroots volunteer organisations.

Long-Term, Sustainable Funding Models: Explore more sustainable funding models for the volunteering sector to provide greater stability and allow organisations to plan for the future with confidence.

Promote Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing: Facilitate networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities between volunteer organisations across different sectors to share best practices and innovative solutions, _including successful examples of technology implementation, online resource hubs, volunteer jobs boards, and strategies for overcoming resistance to technology adoption within volunteer groups._

Conclusion:

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Croquet Association Queensland and countless other organisations across the state. By addressing the barriers to volunteering, including the digital divide and volunteer capacity limitations, and actively working to improve the volunteer experience, and ensuring effective and sustainable government support, we can strengthen the volunteering sector in Queensland and ensure its continued vibrancy and contribution to our communities. CAQ is committed to working collaboratively with the Queensland Government and the broader volunteering sector to achieve these goals. _We believe that initiatives like our "Club Hub" and focus on utilising technology, combined with targeted support and training to bridge the digital divide, can offer scalable solutions to enhance volunteer engagement and efficiency across the sector._

We thank the Committee for considering our submission.

Key Additions:

Administrative Volunteer Shortages: Explicitly mentioned the shortage of volunteers for admin roles as a challenge.

Digital Divide as Barrier: Added "Digital Divide & Technology Adoption" as a barrier in Term of Reference 2 and "Resistance to Change & Technology" as a challenge in Term of Reference 3.

Digital Literacy Training: Included "digital literacy training and support" as a crucial component of government support in Term of Reference 5 and "Support Volunteer Training and Development".

Knowledge Sharing - Tech Adoption: Added "strategies for overcoming resistance to technology adoption" to the knowledge-sharing recommendation.

