




Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

---

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Volunteers**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (11.20 am): I rise in this chamber to speak about the importance of volunteerism. However, firstly, I will share with the House some very wise words from the former American President, the Cold War warrior himself, Ronald Reagan. He stated—

No matter how big and powerful government gets, and the many services it provides, it can never take the place of volunteers.

When it comes to volunteerism, these wise words from one of the world's greatest leaders could not be truer. I take this opportunity to congratulate all volunteers not only within my electorate of Chatsworth but also throughout the whole state of Queensland

The year 2001 was hailed as the International Year of Volunteers and at the time was seen as an opportunity to develop direction for the future of volunteering. Volunteerism comes in all shapes and sizes—whether that be informally by doing a few hours behind the school canteen or going to the greater lengths of becoming a volunteer firefighter. In order to keep volunteerism alive in our local communities, it is crucial to provide flexible and varied ways to volunteer. Every contribution, whether that be great or small, saves the economy untold millions. As the old saying goes, many hands do indeed make light work.

Volunteerism is an important concept that our younger generation should not lose sight of. It is crucial to find dynamic ways to engage our future generations by broadening communication techniques via social media. As we all know, Australia has an increasing ageing population and volunteer renewal is now something that needs to be taken seriously. Through the younger generation embracing volunteerism, it gives the older members of our community a golden opportunity to pass on their pearls of wisdom to their younger counterparts.

In this day and age there may be different ways to embrace volunteerism. However, there is no change in the overall need for individuals to become volunteers. In many of the sporting and service clubs I visit, it is the same unsung heroes who step up to the plate to undertake voluntary roles. In many cases, they have performed admirably for many years, but find it ever increasingly harder to seek active members from the community to take over roles or to join up and volunteer time, whether that is as a coach, to assist with Meals on Wheels or become a scout leader. Unfortunately, in many ways society is turning into living a two-button lifestyle, as I call it. People press a button to open their garage door when they get home from work and drive in their car. Then, once settled, they press the second button to turn on the plasma TV so that they can chill out, escape and retreat into their castle.

A report compiled by Volunteering Australia in 2012 found that, when it comes to making the decision to indeed become a volunteer, early experiences of volunteerism is a major influencing factor. A person is more likely to see the importance of volunteerism if there is a strong culture built up early on. One of the most important gifts that a parent can give a child is to instil the virtue of volunteerism—thinking of others and giving something back.

It comes as no surprise that Australia is considered to be one of the world's most giving nations, ranking in the top three in the World Giving Index 2011. When you live in one of the greatest countries on the globe, it is no wonder that Queenslanders are so giving of their time. However, the essence of volunteerism needs to be maintained to ensure that the various clubs and organisations throughout the state continue to prosper in coming years. Mateship is a strong foundation and cornerstone of volunteerism. In recent years we saw that demonstrated time and time again when natural disasters struck our great state. It was heart-warming to see the mud army banding together again, turning up at a stranger's house with the intent of lending a hand when the chips were down.

Being a volunteer is beneficial not only because of the important contributions that are made but also because it gives people a sense of fulfilment. Volunteerism promotes greater social inclusion, harmony and acceptance of different social groups in the community. This concept does a great deal in promoting positive interpersonal relationships for all the parties involved. It cultivates a sense of belonging to a community. As Eleanor Roosevelt once said—

When you cease to make a contribution, you begin to die.

It is my great pleasure to pay homage to the individuals who selflessly give up their time to make such valuable contributions to our great state of Queensland. I commend all volunteers from Coolangatta all the way through to the cape and everywhere in between for their contribution—and not only in the past but also undoubtedly what they will make in terms of the essence of volunteerism throughout this great state in the future. I commend to the House each and every one of the men and women and boys and girls who so effortlessly give up their time.