



Speech By
Hon. Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 12 February 2026

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE**

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Hon. A LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers) (3.52 pm): We promised Queensland volunteers a fresh start. The Crisafulli government is delivering with the completion of the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland and tabling the government's response. I might note that the Labor Party never had a minister for volunteers. This is the first government to have a minister dedicated to volunteers. This was a key election commitment and we are acting now to deliver for the state's volunteer sector and into the future.

Volunteering suffered under Labor's decade of decline. Participation rates dropped by more than 10 per cent over three years to 2024, with formal volunteers falling by over 20 per cent. Queensland was bleeding volunteers under Labor, resulting in the loss of important services and the decline of the bonds that hold communities together.

Compare Labor's neglect to our action. In little over a year, we have delivered the inquiry and our response which will serve as a framework to empower the volunteering sector and deliver real change. Over 500 submissions formed the inquiry's findings, and I want to thank all of the volunteers, the volunteer managers and the volunteer organisations who took the time to make their voices heard.

I would also like to thank the members of the committee, especially the chair, the member for Southern Downs, for making sure that as many volunteers had the chance to be heard, especially those in our far-flung regional areas.

Our response supports the inquiry's recommendations in principle, outlining practical initiatives to empower the sector and celebrate and strengthen volunteer participation.

A 10-year volunteering plan to be developed this year will set out a clear vision for volunteering across the state. The Ministerial Advisory Panel for Volunteering will ensure the sector voices continue to inform government decision-making, something that never happened under Labor, and the government Volunteering Working Group will deliver and report on those government-led initiatives designed to empower volunteers.

The remaining inquiry recommendations will be further developed to find sustainable solutions. This work includes: initiatives to identify ways to celebrate and promote volunteering benefits; investigate and consider options through a network of sustainably viable volunteering hubs—something that Labor was never able to achieve; investigate legal and regulatory barriers to volunteering—Labor put quite a lot of those in the way of the volunteering sector; and ways to improve the volunteer experience through the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service volunteers.

We are listening to volunteers and volunteer organisations. I would like to acknowledge Volunteering Queensland CEO Jane Hedger for her outstanding work and advocating for the sector. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Jane. I look forward to working closely with them over the years to come and delivering real support to improve volunteering across the state, something that was not happening under Labor.

The Crisafulli government will continue to raise awareness of the value of volunteers within our communities to ensure recognition of Queenslanders who step up and help other Queenslanders every day. Our response to the inquiry recognises that results are not just driven by government alone but through enabling volunteers and the volunteering sector to excel at what they do best. Our government understands that strengthening volunteering is about empowering the sector to take action, drive innovation and achieve meaningful results, because volunteers represent the best of Queensland, and the Crisafulli government is committed to helping them succeed.

I want to place on record my congratulations to all of the Australia Day awardees right across the state. There were many in my electorate who volunteer very regularly for organisations. They really are the social fabric that does so much in so many of our communities, not only our communities here in the south-east corner but also in our regional communities. They are incredibly important to our communities. They are incredibly important to what happens in and the functioning of those communities. I want to reflect on one of the volunteers in my electorate who said when you are volunteering, it actually keeps you feeling young. I think if we all did a little bit more volunteering, then we might all feel a little bit younger.