



Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.31 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee Report No. 4, 58th Parliament, *Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland*, tabled on 18 September 2025.

I note the presence in the House of the Minister for Volunteers. This is a portfolio that the House did not have until this government gave volunteering a ministry of its own. I thank Minister Ann Leahy and the government for referring this particular inquiry into volunteering in Queensland to the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee. I am sure all committee members and those who served on the committee from time to time will join me in thanking the committee staff— inquiry secretary Kylie Guthrie, Zac Dadic and Kerri Swaine—for their tireless work. It was a very big undertaking. We travelled to 15 different public hearings held all over the state, often with quite short timeframes. It was a very difficult schedule to keep and I acknowledge their very hard work. I thank the members of the committee and those members who subbed in. In particular, I thank the member for Gregory, who usually sits behind me. I was crook and in hospital with a very bad back. I was paralysed at one point. The member for Gregory stepped in as acting chair.

**Mrs Poole:** That's what a good team does.

**Mr LISTER:** It is what a good team does; I take that interjection from the member for Mundingburra. He did a very good job and I thank him for it. I also thank the many Queenslanders who engaged with the committee in the course of its work. We received over 500 submissions and many people came to hearings that we held all over the state, which says that this is something that needed to be done much sooner.

As members of this House, we all know that volunteering, as we used to know it, is in decline. The volunteers we have are older. It is harder and harder to get someone to be chair, secretary or treasurer of an organisation. Younger people are busier and busier and they have different expectations about how they will volunteer. These things have weighed on Queensland. When we consider that volunteering has a value of over \$31.3 billion every year, it gives an indication of what we would lose. Can members imagine what it would be like not to have the local Lions Clubs, Meals on Wheels, Surf Life Saving, churches that do so much good, the Rural Fire Brigade, the SES and so many others? We would be lost without them. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to understand the value of volunteering and to know what is done so that we can ensure that volunteering has a bright future.

The government has tabled its response to the volunteering inquiry and I thank the government for doing that so swiftly. It has accepted in principle all eight recommendations of the committee. It is all about putting volunteers at the centre of the conversation in the government's response to their plight

and their interests et cetera. This is around five key things. The first is working to build a stronger future for volunteering. This government will not leave the future up for grabs. This government will not indulge in announcements with no action. This government is going to do what it takes to get out of the way of volunteers and to encourage volunteering.

We want to promote growth in the sector. We want to value volunteers and make sure that they have personal fulfilment and satisfaction when doing what they do and that they are recognised for what they do. While many do not do it for recognition, it is important that we recognise them all the same. We want to remove barriers that make volunteering more difficult than it ought to be. We want to enhance the experience across areas where volunteers support government. I have mentioned the Rural Fire Brigade and the SES, but there are also volunteer rescue services, Landcare groups and all sorts of other groups that work for government. We would be so much poorer without them.

I would like to highlight my disappointment in the miserable statement of reservation at the end of the report. Considering how little Labor did for volunteering in its decade in office in which we saw a 20 per cent decline in formal volunteering over the three years to 2024, I do not think they really have much to crow about in this regard. What was their strategy? It was just an announcement. There was nothing done. There was no department of volunteering. We saw them hang their respect for volunteers on a moth-eaten rag of a flag that was hung on a worm-eaten pole. This government will enhance volunteering in this state. I am very thankful that the government has taken this so seriously and given us this referral.