




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (3.08 pm): I thank everybody who engaged in the committee process through submissions or appearing as witnesses. I acknowledge the paradoxical nature of the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland. The Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024-2032 and the accompanying Queensland Volunteering Strategy Action Plan 2024-26 were released in September 2024 by the former Labor government.

It is important to acknowledge that this was developed through extensive consultation with over 110 sector representatives and more than 20 co-design meetings. It outlined a new, whole-of-government strategy to recognise, celebrate and grow volunteering in Queensland. The strategy drew on existing national and international frameworks and incorporated the largest evidence base of volunteering data ever collected in Queensland. This inquiry could and should have built on the former Labor government's strategy. Instead, the Crisafulli LNP government duplicated large amounts of work already undertaken, asking many of the same organisations many of the same questions at a cost to both taxpayers and the time-poor volunteers—so much for the slogan of being respectful with taxpayers' money.

It is, therefore, understandable that some stakeholders felt caught off guard when, only eight weeks after the strategy was released, the Crisafulli LNP government announced they were proceeding with their inquiry, particularly given that the strategy had identified nearly every matter within the committee's scope for consideration, with the first action plan providing the initial implementation plan. This inquiry should have been an opportunity to test and advance reforms for the volunteering sector in Queensland. Instead, the Crisafulli LNP government sidelined weeks-old evidence-based policy, only to commence this committee process for political pointscoring, wasting considerable public resources to do so.

While we all wish to see meaningful support borne out of this inquiry, some were concerned that at an estimates hearing the minister refused to rule out having already told stakeholders that she wanted the inquiry 'to deliver three or four recommendations with no cost to government'. Coincidentally, the recommendations have pretty much made that conclusion, calling for very little financial investment from the government at all. I note the minister's poor and directionless contribution to this committee report. At no stage was any amount of money even mentioned—nothing.

Furthermore, most of the recommendations made by the committee have been couched with qualifying language—along the lines of 'that the government commit its determination to improve' and 'that the government investigate conducting a review'. Almost every recommendation delivered by the inquiry was qualified to be exploratory and investigative in nature, rather than delivering specific outcomes. In what is so typical of this Crisafulli LNP government, its response has accepted all the recommendations in principle, subject to further investigation.

These recommendations are, at best, mere suggestions for the government to commit to consider enacting, even though the inquiry has already re-prosecuted the exploratory process undertaken through the strategy's consultation. The government's position is: volunteering passport, to be explored; volunteering hubs, to investigate options; training and induction reform, to be investigated; blue card and background check reform, to be reviewed; and insurance and liability issues, subject to further review and consideration. Insurance and liability were a significant issue. We spoke to so many people, and the feedback was that insurance was a huge issue. All of these areas have just kicked the can down the road. We have not seen or heard anything.

The Crisafulli government inquiry into volunteering is impressively disappointing. Like so many of the government's commitments, it is extremely shallow. When we listen to the responses from the government members, there is no substance or concrete outcomes. All we hear are very big wishful statements with absolutely no substance whatsoever. When one looks at the magnificent contribution that volunteers made to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and the importance of volunteers and of growing volunteer numbers, this government's response to this report should be enormously concerning. It did not address any of the key components raised by so many of those who appeared before it, and that should be even more concerning.