



Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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ADJOURNMENT

Noosa Electorate, Volunteers

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (9.24 pm): Tonight I give my immense gratitude to every resident and organisation in my electorate and across Queensland who selflessly dedicates their time and expertise without pay. They are much adored volunteers, our unpaid workers. As well, I recognise those who have passed who gave for decades without seeking or requiring recognition. I would need many hours to list much loved Noosans who have made our community incredible. They put in real efforts every day saving lives, providing sports for our kids, caring for our elderly, fundraising for services and supports, and the list goes on. Every single resident benefits yet may not realise.

For eight years we have put forward their challenges, including the extensive processes, rising operational costs and assistance needed for meals, phones and fuel. Finally, the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland has estimated that the economic value of volunteering sits at over \$117 billion annually. Unsurprisingly, it found that participation rates are declining significantly and recommended that barriers be reduced and supports be provided. The government has responded with a 10-year plan; however, as we have seen, plans that are not resourced may not become reality or can gather dust.

The inquiry appears to have missed the role that flawed government processes play in the challenges volunteers face, and I want to give the House some examples. The Kinaba Information Centre, which was closed and left to rot many years ago by government, has been brought back to life by volunteers. For 15 years they have sought to have some interpretive signage so that school groups can return and the river users who use the amenities can be educated. That is not too much to ask.

As a result of insurmountable conditions, including restoration and contractor costs, the Cooroy Mountain Spring Festival—an annual charity event since 2014—will end. There may be some damage from this walk; however, we need to ask how the environmental ‘tick box’ is working when for seven years governments of both colours have not reduced the thousands who use the beaches in the Cooloola Recreation Area as a highway during peak times. What is the damage of walking once a year versus thousands of vehicles driving daily? Like the Cooroy Mountain Spring Festival, the Pomona King of the Mountain has faced insurmountable conditions. It was an internationally recognised event, but it has ended.

Do any of these examples pass the pub test? There are many more. We have the rural fires—28,000 volunteers defending 93 per cent of Queensland. Issues taken to government remain unactioned and do not appear in the recommendations to be resolved. I say to the government: before developing a 10-year plan in the lead-up to the Olympics, think about the volunteer organisations that are battling flawed processes now, where the systems themselves make it impossible for the unpaid workers to deliver to our communities.