



Speech By
Sean Dillon

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 5 March 2026

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

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr DILLON** (Gregory—LNP) (3.22 pm): It gives me pleasure to also make a small contribution regarding the inquiry into volunteering that was led by the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee. It was an absolute pleasure to support that committee in the place of my good friend the member for Southern Downs as the chair for a small number of the public hearings and some meetings relating to this. In fact, we had a number of fantastic hearings across North Queensland—in Cairns, Cooktown and Townsville. From a process point of view related to the manner in which those public hearings unfolded, it was regretful that the Labor member saw fit to attend the Cairns public hearing but not the Cooktown and Townsville public hearings. Honourable members will recall what happened a month later in this place when the member for Cairns apologised, so no doubt at the time of the hearings he did not attend he was carefully planning his social media campaign, which has been discussed at much length. It was regretful that he did not attend the Cooktown and Townsville hearings or even deputise another Labor member to attend in his place—the former member for Hinchinbrook even attended the Townsville hearing—to hear from volunteers who, as this report has gone to great lengths to identify, are buckling under the pressure. Sometimes that is due to the administrative burden.

I want to go to the far north to Cook and the Cook shire mayor, Councillor Robyn Holmes, who pointed out some of the issues facing rural fire brigades which primarily are made up of First Nations people. On page 49 of the report Councillor Robyn Holmes is quoted as saying of the Laura Rural Fire Brigade—

... they have one current registered volunteer who is also their first officer and their fire warden.

He is probably the secretary, chief fundraiser, maintenance officer—you name it. It goes on—

He is roughly 80 years old. He is unable to attract volunteers because most of the Indigenous people who did support the rural fire brigade are unable to get blue cards, which immediately makes them unable to assist.

We heard in Townsville the following day from a number of not-for-profit organisations and volunteer organisations that provide support not just in the Townsville region but across North and North-Western Queensland. We heard about the work they do to centralise—and that is always a scary word—the administrative and regulatory oversight for things like blue cards, white cards and the various different cards or permits. We also heard of the accessibility issues that are required to be cleared before volunteers can commence some level of work. What we heard through those hearings was that the process to become a volunteer was tiring some small committees but also was acting as a deterrent for volunteers. In the Far North—and I have heard some of my colleagues from the Townsville region and also around Cairns mention this—they have a large number of interstate visitors during the winter

months. These people have the accreditation that is required to volunteer or support volunteer organisations interstate; however, the lack of transferability of things like working with children checks and the trouble they have to go to in terms of accreditation often means they dedicate their time to other means. Consequently, the groups that historically would benefit from their support are unable to do so.

The electorate of Gregory, its social opportunities and most elements of our emergency services would not exist without volunteers. Unfortunately, the best rugby league side in the electorate of Gregory is the Alpha Brumbies, not the Brisbane Broncos, so it is fully resourced by volunteers, not paid staff. Our show societies do not operate on their own grounds and they are run entirely by volunteers, yet the WHS requirements—and this has been raised several times—and even just maintaining a register of volunteers, which is mentioned in this report, are onerous requirements.

When I hear Johnny Muscat, a Rural Fire Service volunteer with more than 30 years experience—I think he attended the Rockhampton hearing—talk about training and the need for a new recruit or new volunteer to attend somewhere that is over 700 kilometres drive or about \$1,200 in flights, it points out to me that we had a volunteer system that was not being supported in Queensland. This inquiry and the background and the genesis of it has now delivered a report that will give the various ministers, especially in this case the Minister for Fire, every tool in the box to understand the need of locals and provide a better outcome for volunteers right across regional Queensland.