

Question on Notice
Number: 540
Asked on Wednesday 19 May 2004

MR T SULLIVAN asked the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (**MR PITT**)-

QUESTION:

- (1) Will he identify what research is being undertaken by his department in the area of volunteering?
- (2) What will be included in the research and how does Government intend to utilise the outcomes?

ANSWER:

The implementation of *Engaging Queensland: the Queensland Government Policy on Volunteering*, is being co-ordinated by the Department of Communities through an inter-departmental Steering Committee comprising 19 Queensland Government agencies and Volunteering Queensland, the peak body for volunteering in this state.

A volunteering audit of participating Steering Committee agencies was conducted in 2003. From this audit, an action plan was developed, which includes the priorities of a whole-of-government policy on the management of volunteers with government agencies; a website and a training needs analysis of volunteers.

The Committee is currently addressing the need for research into volunteering to establish a baseline for the state of volunteering across Queensland's regions.

Baseline data is important to establish the status of volunteering in the community and changes in volunteering as much research in the area was undertaken around the United Nations International Year of Volunteers in 2001.

Government support for the International Year raised the profile for volunteering. Since that time, major international sporting events held in Australia have played a key role in bringing volunteering under the spotlight, mobilising volunteers and highlighting the benefits of volunteering. Also, overall volunteering rates are expected to increase as a greater proportion of the Australian population enters retirement.

Research is needed to establish the changes in participation rates across age groups, trends in areas of volunteering activities and within volunteer expectations and the impacts of these factors on volunteering organisations and service sustainability for the community. Research will inform the priorities and direction of policy implementation initiatives.

The baseline data research project for volunteering is proceeding through the inclusion of a number of items in the May Queensland Household Survey. The project will examine the trends and differences in motivation for volunteering, differences in the amount and type of work conducted across the state and in different Queensland regions and the time and frequency of volunteering work. Based on questions run by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the research questions will allow some interstate comparability. Data gathered for the study will be analysed using a range of demographic variables.