

**Question on Notice
No. 575
Asked on 20 May 2004**

MR J O'BRIEN asked the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors (MR PITT)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the *Get Involved* Volunteering brochure launched during National Volunteering Week- In what ways can people in Cook Electorate get involved as volunteers and how is the Queensland Government encouraging that involvement?

ANSWER:

Volunteering is an important activity that occurs at local level in local communities through formal and informal networks. Volunteering plays a critical role in building community cohesiveness and capacity, assisting individuals to develop skills and social networks and contributes a stronger sense of belonging for individuals and families.

The Government respects the action of cultural reciprocity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first Australians. Respect for the value of their cultural practice through community obligation is critical. It is known for instance that of the estimated 25% indigenous and 10% overseas born populations of the Cook electorate, many also contribute their time and skills to a wide range of mainstream volunteer activities.

Community engagement practices focused on building strong relationships with communities are building the capacity of communities in remote and rural areas of the State. These practices commonly involve volunteers and promote levels of service delivery that would be otherwise unattainable in these areas.

The Get Involved in Volunteering brochure is designed to encourage people across the state, including youth, the growing numbers of retirees, seniors, groups and companies to get involved in volunteering. Various popular volunteering opportunities are suggested, including the diverse range of tasks to support sporting teams and associations, theatre groups, scouts, guides, military cadets, service clubs and animal shelters.

The brochure encourages readers to consider their favourite pursuits and interests as areas in which they may like to volunteer. It also encourages people to seek out information from a number of identified sources, including for example, Volunteering Queensland, the peak organisation for volunteers in Queensland. Various government departments engage the services of volunteers and work with community organisations that in turn, engage volunteers. Examples of opportunities for volunteering associated with a number of these departments are presented in the brochure. The brochure also reminds readers that volunteering work involving children requires a blue card. Contact details for information regarding the Working with Children Check are provided.

Government departments, including the Department of Emergency Services, Queensland Police, the Environment Protection Agency, Natural Resources Mines and Energy, Education Queensland, Queensland Health and the Department of Communities are committed to working with local and regional communities across the Queensland, including the indigenous communities of Cape York and the Torres Strait, to build sustainable services.

Enhanced community capacity through training and support for volunteers is an essential ingredient in these service models. For example, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services, and volunteer State Emergency Service of the Department of Emergency Services, and Queensland Ambulance First Response Service all undertake training for volunteers in the community. Getting involved in volunteering to support policing, crime prevention and building safer communities is also encouraged: Crime Prevention Queensland and the Queensland Police Service are co-ordinating their activities with other agencies to deliver initiatives in these areas involving trained volunteers.

A broad range of volunteer opportunities from basic administrative tasks to patient care and support are available in the delivery of local health services with Queensland Health throughout the state. For instance, a pre-hospital care service involving trained volunteers has been developed and implemented in the communities of Coen, Horn Island and Kowanyama. This service model serves the local and surrounding communities, as well as the related homelands and outstations.