

# ***INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND: QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE***

Report No. 4, 58th Parliament

Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

December 2025



# INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are the heart of Queensland, embodying the true spirit of what it means to be a Queenslanders. Wherever there are Queenslanders, there are volunteers—stepping in, lending a hand and helping those in need.

**Volunteering provides an invaluable contribution to Queensland by building stronger, resilient communities, supporting the economy and fostering social connections and personal wellbeing.**

In Queensland, volunteering plays a critical role in delivering essential community services. More than half of all charities and many government agencies rely on volunteers to provide vital support in areas such as sports, health services, disaster response, disability, aged care, arts, environmental conservation, beach patrols, and much more.

The Queensland Government understands that strengthening volunteering is about empowering the sector to take action, drive innovation, and achieve meaningful results.

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of diverse forms of volunteering found in communities across the state, including significant volunteering activities undertaken by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, often taking place outside organisational structures. Volunteering empowers Queenslanders of all ages, backgrounds and ability to connect with others (including for the volunteers themselves), develop skills that could provide pathways from volunteering to paid work and deliver change for the common good. There is an opportunity to strengthen these benefits through greater collaboration and inclusion, including with young people and people with disability.

**The Queensland Government values the opportunity to work with Volunteering Queensland as the peak body for volunteering in our state.** We acknowledge their role in bringing the sector together, enhancing capability, and promoting best practice in volunteer management. Research by Volunteering Queensland finds that an estimated 64.3 per cent of Queenslanders (2.8 million people) aged 15 years and over volunteer, giving approximately 719.8 million hours of their time volunteering. The Queensland Government recognises the significant role of the volunteer sector for the future of the state, and is committed to working with volunteers, volunteer involving organisations (VIOs)\* and groups that help enable volunteering to improve opportunities for volunteer participation and to support volunteers.

To address sector challenges and identify opportunities, the Parliamentary Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland (the Inquiry) was established, delivering on a commitment in the Crisafulli Government's 100 Day Plan. The Inquiry released its report on 18 September 2025 which identifies eight recommendations for government consideration.

The Queensland Government **supports all Inquiry recommendations in principle (subject to further investigation).** The Queensland Government's response to the Inquiry recommendations is outlined in this document.

\* Volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) are defined as any group that engages volunteers as part of its operations or service delivery, including registered charities, governments, education bodies, sports clubs, faith-based groups, political parties, and some for-profit organisations such as private hospitals.

# INQUIRY INTO VOLUNTEERING IN QUEENSLAND

The Queensland Government committed to deliver an Inquiry into Volunteering and on 11 December 2024, the Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee (the Committee) was tasked with conducting an inquiry and preparing a report into volunteering in Queensland (Inquiry Report).

The Inquiry terms of reference tasked the Committee with investigating and reporting back to the Legislative Assembly on:

- the current state of volunteering in Queensland and the value it contributes
- the views of the volunteer sector on the barriers to volunteering
- the experiences, motivations and challenges for the volunteer sector and their recommendations to address challenges
- the unique challenges experienced by people from diverse backgrounds and the opportunities to improve volunteering for these groups
- the extent, effectiveness and efficiency of current government support and sustainable opportunities for improvement

- opportunities for all government portfolios to support growth in volunteering
- opportunities to increase emergency response volunteering in Queensland
- Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples volunteering and its role in Closing the Gap.

The Committee received 571 submissions and held 15 public hearings across the state. The Committee heard from individual volunteers, small and large VIOs, local governments, peak bodies, local community groups, advocacy groups, academics and private sector organisations.

*The Queensland Government appreciates the time and effort of all individuals and organisations that participated in the Inquiry processes. These voices have shed light on critical opportunities and issues facing volunteers and will be the foundation that shapes collective action towards building a vibrant and sustainable volunteering culture in Queensland.*





# QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The Queensland Government welcomes the Committee's findings and **supports all Inquiry recommendations in principle** (subject to further investigation) with key initiatives to commence immediately to provide a framework for progress.

**The Queensland Government response enables sector change via a staged approach, broadly sequenced in line with Inquiry recommendations and under five key themes.** Strengthening the volunteer sector requires empowering sustainability and resilience, to ensure the sector's self-sufficiency and adaptability in addressing community needs over the longer-term.

We recognise many of the challenges facing the sector are complex and require further investigation of sustainable solutions in collaboration with sector stakeholders. Shared responsibility, sector knowledge and collective resources beyond what the government can achieve alone, will be required to address these challenges. All recommendations have been accepted in-principle (subject to further investigation) to allow for a collaborative approach to developing sustainable solutions.

Volunteering Queensland is already undertaking valuable work to address the issues highlighted by the Inquiry. The Queensland Government is committed to working collaboratively with Volunteering Queensland to implement the Inquiry's recommendations effectively.

Timeframes for progressing the Queensland Government Response initiatives are **short** (0 – 6 months), **medium** (6-18 months) and **long-term** (18 months+) initiatives.

**Initial work in the first three months will establish a framework for progress**, including establishing a Ministerial Advisory Panel to ensure sector stakeholder voices inform decision-making and establishing a whole-of-government working group to reinforce the Queensland Government's capability to empower sector renewal, deliver whole-of-government initiatives and lead the way as a model volunteer manager.

Each department that engages volunteers will continue to take lead responsibility for managing and supporting their volunteers, with support and tools provided by the Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers via the Queensland Government Volunteering Working Group and Ministerial Advisory Panel.

**The Queensland Government will develop a 10-year volunteering plan for release in 2026 informed by stakeholder engagement, defining a strategic vision for the volunteer sector up to and beyond the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games (2032 Games).** The volunteering plan will be designed in collaboration with the volunteer sector and other relevant stakeholders.



The Queensland Government's response addresses each of the Inquiry recommendations, prioritised and synthesised under five key themes that reflect identified priorities for the volunteer sector.

### **1. Working together to build a stronger future for volunteering**

The Inquiry identifies a need for ongoing collaboration across government, and with the volunteer and corporate sectors, to develop long term, sustainable solutions to issues impacting volunteers and to realise the sector's aspirations in the lead up to and following the 2032 Games.

### **2. Promoting growth and volunteer sector sustainability**

The Committee recommends a series of further investigations into initiatives to support longer term sector growth and sustainability, including investigation into a volunteer passport, support for volunteering hubs, and organisational capability, training and onboarding.

### **3. Valuing volunteers and their contributions across the state**

The Inquiry highlights the importance of celebrating the contribution of volunteering across the state. Recognising the efforts of volunteers and promoting the benefits of volunteering for the individual and community, are vital for retaining existing volunteers, attracting new volunteers, and supporting a positive Queensland volunteering culture.

### **4. Removing barriers to make volunteering easy, rewarding and welcoming for all**

The Inquiry highlights the need to improve the volunteer experience and remove barriers that are inhibiting volunteer participation. The Committee recommends further investigation into legal and regulatory barriers, insurance and liability issues, and policy approaches to enhance the volunteering experiences of First Nations and multicultural communities.

### **5. Enhancing the volunteer experience across government, supporting those who support us**

Volunteers support a broad range of government policy and service delivery obligations. Many agencies directly engage volunteers, and the Committee recommends that the Queensland Government establish a working group of relevant agencies to ensure they remain model volunteer managers. The Committee also makes specific recommendations in relation to Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) and State Emergency Service (SES) volunteering.

The following section outlines each of the Inquiry recommendations aligned to each of the five themes, to be built upon as part of developing the 10-year volunteering plan with stakeholders. A Summary of the Queensland Government Response is provided on pages 15-16.

#### **Key for timeframes in Queensland Government Response**

**Short term**

0-6 months

**Medium term**

6-18 months

**Long term**

18 months+



# Working together to build a stronger future for volunteering

## INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation 1

- 1.2 The government should investigate and adopt approaches that will better support volunteers and enhance the overall volunteering experience, including developing a whole-of-government volunteering plan to provide a strategic vision for the volunteering sector up to and beyond the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics.

### Recommendation 6

- 6.6 The Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers further engages with government organisations, peak volunteer organisations and VIOs representing diverse groups to explore solutions raised during the conduct of this inquiry, including the feasibility of corporate volunteering options.

### Recommendation 2

- 2.1 The government should commit to working with volunteer stakeholders to find genuine options to reduce and remove barriers to volunteering. This includes establishing a dedicated Ministerial Advisory Panel for volunteering.

### Recommendation 2

- 2.9 Adopt a whole-of-government approach to better support and respect volunteers.

### Recommendation 2

- 2.5 Collaborate with the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and local governments to identify opportunities to reduce red tape for volunteer organisations in the local government space, as well as opportunities to provide recognition for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations through local services.

### Recommendation 6

- 6.3 Investigate the development of nationally accredited, standardised training where possible.



## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

1

The Queensland Government will work with the volunteer sector, including Volunteering Queensland and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) representing diverse groups, to develop a 10-year volunteering plan. The plan will consider all forms of volunteering, including formal, spontaneous, sporting and organic volunteering.

2

The Queensland Government will establish a Ministerial Advisory Panel for volunteering.

3

The Queensland Government will establish a Queensland Government Volunteering Working Group to deliver and report on long term coordinated initiatives that empower the sector.

4

The Queensland Government will identify barriers to volunteering that require interjurisdictional and/or inter-governmental collaboration.

Long term



# Promoting growth and volunteer sector sustainability

## INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation 1

- 1.3 Invest in volunteers and volunteering by providing funding for a network of volunteering hubs and providing funding for other government volunteering organisations.

### Recommendation 5

That the government commit its determination to improve the operating conditions for existing Volunteer Resource Centres. This includes:

- 5.1 Provision of emergency funding to each of the four existing regional Volunteer Resource Centres as appropriate, in order to best ensure their ongoing operations whilst appropriate corporate and industry support is established.
- 5.2 Develop and fund a new Volunteer Resource Centre model to establish a network of volunteering hubs across Queensland (ideally in major regional centres) so as to support place-based volunteering, connect volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) with potential volunteers, and build capacity within local volunteer networks.
- 5.3 Identifying and implementing preferred options for existing and future Volunteer Resource Centres to become better involved in the coordination of spontaneous and disaster volunteer management systems.

### Recommendation 6

- 6.4 [That the government] review and reform the government grant applications system.

### Recommendation 7

- 7.2 [That the government investigate] additional structural changes to achieve a better alignment between organisational management, operational capability and volunteer experience, particularly in regional and remote areas.

### Recommendation 7

- 7.3 [That the government investigate] amending the current training and induction models to ensure it is timely, manageable, relevant and supports volunteers.

### Recommendation 6

- 6.1 That the government investigate the creation of a dedicated volunteer passport, which enhances the portability of skills and experience for volunteers between different organisations and for career recognition, with a phased model to ensure scalability and expansion.





## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

5

The Queensland Government will:

- a) Investigate options to establish a viable network of volunteering hubs across Queensland, including in major regional centres and virtual concepts, to support place-based volunteering, build capacity within local volunteer networks and consider diverse funding models to ensure long-term sustainability.

Long term

- b) Provide one-off short-term funding to FNQ Volunteers, Volunteering North Queensland, Volunteering Sunshine Coast and Volunteering Gold Coast to 30 June 2026, whilst longer-term viable frameworks and models are considered, taking into account lessons learned from existing approaches.

Short term

6

The Queensland Government will investigate opportunities to support VIO organisational capability uplift, including working with Volunteering Queensland as the peak body and considering the needs of smaller VIOs and VIOs in regional and remote areas.

Long term

7

The Queensland Government will investigate:

- a) the relevance and adequacy of training and induction models currently being delivered to volunteers supporting government entities
- b) opportunities to support VIOs to provide manageable, relevant and beneficial training and induction models.

Long term

8

The Queensland Government will explore the concept of a volunteer passport and conduct further analysis and consultation with entities pursuing similar initiatives.

Long term



# Valuing volunteers and their contributions across the state

## INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation 1

- 1.1 That a whole-of-government approach be adopted to recognise the efforts of volunteers and the significant contributions that volunteers make to Queensland.
- 1.4 Promote the mental wellbeing benefits of volunteering through positive social interactions and physical activity.

### Recommendation 2

- 2.4 Investigate which state government charges or fees can be provided at a discounted rate, or reimbursed entirely, to volunteers who incur genuine volunteer-related expenses in relation to these charges or fees.
- 2.6 Determine the feasibility of providing any such discounts or reimbursements and the criteria by which they could be provided to volunteers.



## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

9

The Queensland Government will work with the volunteer sector to identify ways to thank and celebrate volunteers and promote the benefits of all forms of volunteering (including for the volunteer) to encourage greater participation.

Medium term

10

The Queensland Government will identify relevant state government fees and charges that are paid by volunteers and consider options that incentivise greater participation.

Long term



## Removing barriers to make volunteering easy, rewarding and welcoming for all

### INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Recommendation 8

- 8.1 The government should investigate a policy approach where government and volunteering organisations act as facilitators, providing resources and platforms for First Nations and multicultural communities to develop their own solutions.

#### Recommendation 2

- 2.2 Remove any excessive legislative or regulatory burdens that are imposed on volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.

#### Recommendation 6

- 6.5 That the government investigate avenues to allow for dispute resolution and mediation within VIOs for administrative matters.

#### Recommendation 2

- 2.7 Review the *Civil Liability Act 2003 (Qld)* to consider amending the Act to provide further protections for volunteers in line with other Australian jurisdictions.

#### Recommendation 2

- 2.8 Investigate mechanisms to drive down insurance costs for volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations in order to lessen the costs, burdens and complexities that now appear inherent in the commercial insurance options available to the volunteer sector.

#### Recommendation 6

- 6.2 [That the government investigate] the development of a streamlined national Working with Children Checks through inter-jurisdictional advocacy.



## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

11

The Queensland Government will investigate policy approaches to understand, engage with and support Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and other key groups including young people and people with a disability, to enhance their volunteering experience.

Long term

12

The Queensland Government will review legislative and regulatory obligations for volunteers to determine whether there are opportunities to improve efficiency and reduce barriers, to prevent unjustifiably overburdening volunteers and VIOs.

Long term

13

The Queensland Government will review relevant sections of the *Civil Liability Act 2003 (Qld)* and consider whether amendments are required to enhance liability protections for volunteers.

Long term

14

The Queensland Government acknowledges that increased cost pressures are impacting volunteers and VIOs, and provides such feedback to the Australian Government. The Queensland Government supports the ongoing work of the sector towards a more financially sustainable footing.

Long term

15

The Queensland Government will continue working with the Australian Government and state and territory jurisdictions towards mutual recognition of Working with Children Checks.

Long term





## Enhancing the volunteer experience across government, supporting those who support us

### INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Recommendation 2

- 2.3 Establish a dedicated task force comprised of constituent departments and agencies to develop and monitor a plan for Government Volunteering Organisations to ensure they remain model volunteer involving organisations.
- 2.9 Adopt a whole-of-government approach to better support and respect volunteers.

#### Recommendation 3

That the government urgently consider and implement changes to the Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) to address cultural and organisational issues surrounding volunteers. This includes but is not limited to:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <u>3.1</u> Investigating ways to improve the application process and onboarding system for prospective RFSQ volunteers.                  | <u>3.5</u> Returning options for the delivery of brigade infrastructure to local brigades where local brigades seek to do so.  |
| <u>3.2</u> Empowering local brigades with regard to training for their volunteer applicants.   | <u>3.6</u> Encouraging local input and knowledge in disaster events.   |
| <u>3.3</u> Standardising recognition of obtainable accreditation that could be transferable to other education outcomes, where possible. | <u>3.7</u> Adaptive consultation processes and local decision making to better reflect and address the evolving demands and experiences of RFSQ volunteers whilst working towards stronger retention rates through volunteer satisfaction. |
| <u>3.4</u> Improving the training systems for volunteers, including recognition of relevant prior service, skills and experience.        |  |

#### Recommendation 7

- 7.1 That the government investigate conducting a review of background checks and Blue Card requirements for emergency service volunteers to ensure that processes and interfaces are more volunteer-friendly and timely.

#### Recommendation 4

That the government commit its determination to improve the volunteer experience for State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers across Queensland. This includes:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <u>4.1</u> Improving the recognition and support that is provided to SES volunteers.   | <u>4.3</u> Improving the application and onboarding process for new volunteers, including options to commence training while applications are being processed. |
| <u>4.2</u> Improving the training systems for SES volunteers, including recognition of relevant prior service, skills and experience, but also the recognition of obtainable accreditation that could be transferable to other education outcomes, where possible. | <u>4.4</u> Considering any other engagement and recruitment strategies that may assist in increasing SES volunteer numbers and retention rates.                |

#### Recommendation 7

- 7.1 That the government investigate conducting a review of background checks and Blue Card requirements for emergency service volunteers to ensure that processes and interfaces are more volunteer-friendly and timely.



## GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

16

The Queensland Government commits to being a model volunteer manager, with activity to be coordinated and reported via the Queensland Government Volunteering Working Group.

Short term

17

The Queensland Government will investigate ways to build positive culture and enhance the volunteering experience for Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) volunteers.

Long term

18

The Queensland Government will investigate options to improve the volunteer experience for State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers highlighted through the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland.

Long term

# QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE SUMMARY



## Working together to build a stronger future for volunteering

- 1 Work with the volunteer sector, including Volunteering Queensland and VIOs representing diverse groups, to develop a **10-year volunteering plan**. This will consider all volunteering including spontaneous, sporting and organic.
- 2 Establish a **Ministerial Advisory Panel** for volunteering.
- 3 Establish a **Queensland Government Volunteering Working Group** to deliver and report on long-term coordinated initiatives that empower the sector.
- 4 Identify barriers to volunteering that require **interjurisdictional** and/or **inter-governmental collaboration**.



## Promoting growth and volunteer sector sustainability

- 5 a) Investigate **options to establish a viable network of volunteering hubs** across Queensland, including virtual concepts, to build capacity within local networks with consideration of diverse funding models to ensure long-term sustainability.  
b) Provide regional **Volunteer Resource Centres (VRC) one-off, short-term funding** while longer-term viable models are considered, taking into account lessons learned from existing approaches.
- 6 Investigate **opportunities to support VIO capability uplift**, including working with Volunteering Queensland as the peak body, exploring appropriate corporate and industry support, and considering the needs of smaller and regional or remote VIOs.
- 7 Investigate:
  - a) **training and induction** models delivered to volunteers supporting government entities, and
  - b) **opportunities to support VIOs** to provide manageable, relevant, beneficial training and induction models.
- 8 Explore the concept of a **volunteer passport** and conduct further analysis and consultation.



## Valuing volunteers and their contributions across the state

- 9** Work with the sector to identify **ways to thank and celebrate volunteers** and **promote the benefits of all forms of volunteering** (including for the volunteer) to encourage greater participation.
- 10** Identify relevant state government **fees or charges** paid by volunteers and consider options that incentivise greater participation.



## Removing barriers to make volunteering easy, rewarding and welcoming for all

- 11** Investigate policy approaches to **support First Nations, multicultural** and additional diverse perspectives, including youth and people with disability, to enhance their volunteering experience.
- 12** Review **legislative and regulatory obligations** for volunteers to determine whether opportunities exist to improve efficiency and remove barriers to prevent unjustifiably over-burdening volunteers and VIOs.
- 13** Review relevant sections of the *Civil Liability Act 2003 (Qld)* and consider whether amendments are required to **elevate liability protections** for volunteers.
- 14** Acknowledge that increased cost pressures are impacting volunteers and VIOs and provide feedback to the Australian Government. Support the ongoing work of the sector towards a more **financially sustainable footing**.
- 15** Continue working with the Australian Government and state and territory jurisdictions **towards mutual recognition of Working with Children Checks**.



## Enhancing the volunteer experience across government, supporting those who support us

- 16** The Queensland Government commits to being a **model volunteer manager**, with activity to be coordinated and reported via the Queensland Government Volunteering Working Group.
- 17** Investigate ways to build positive culture and enhance the volunteering experience for **Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ)** volunteers.
- 18** Investigate options to improve the volunteer experience for **State Emergency Service (SES)** volunteers.







*The Queensland Government appreciates the time and effort of all individuals and organisations that participated in the Inquiry processes. These voices have shed light on critical opportunities and issues facing volunteers and will be the foundation that shapes collective action towards building a vibrant and sustainable volunteering culture in Queensland.*

