



**volunteering**  
queensland

**2020 Queensland  
State Election Platform**  
*resilience through volunteering*



**Queensland would not be the same without its volunteers. The services they provide are a vital part of our communities, social infrastructure, and daily life. Volunteering is not limited to local community groups and charities. It plays a critical role in the delivery of health, disaster management, culture and heritage, social wellbeing, and environmental protection – just to name a few.**

Throughout the recent bushfire and cyclone/ monsoonal flooding seasons and COVID-19 pandemic, the indispensable quality of volunteers has been clearly demonstrated. While the ongoing need for volunteers in service delivery has been confirmed, there is a question of how this need will be supported at the State level. With the Coronavirus pandemic far from over and upcoming storm seasons predicted to be among the worst, there is a requirement to prepare the sector by funding the initiatives presented in this platform.

Queenslanders will always step up in times of need, but strong, effective, and coordinated leadership is required to turn their goodwill into successful outcomes. During both times of disaster and fortune, the capacity and strength of the volunteering sector requires investment and support to reflect the continuing benefits that volunteers provide in all aspects of Queensland life.

As the State's peak body for volunteerism, Volunteering Queensland is positioned to continue guiding the sector and address its challenges – both ongoing and emerging. Through the peak body and the initiatives outlined below, there is an opportunity in Queensland to acknowledge the vital contribution of volunteers and build capacity for enhanced future contribution. In uncertain times, the ability of a community to persevere is informed by its ability to engage volunteers. This platform empowers Queensland's resilience through volunteering.

# Economic *value* of volunteering

The economic value of volunteering in Queensland in 2014 was conservatively estimated as **\$11.6 billion**. This is comprised of:

- **\$4.6 billion in formal volunteering** with a recognised organisation or group that has a formal volunteer program with appropriate protection and coordination of its volunteers; and
- **\$6.9 billion for informal volunteering** through self-organising community groups that unite under a cause, and unpaid help and care within personal networks of friends, neighbours, communities of interest and acquaintances.

## Current state of *volunteering*

Queensland faces the compounding risks of declining volunteer participation rates and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics found that volunteering rates within the State have seen a marked decrease from 35.4 per cent in 2010, 26.6 per cent in 2014, to 18.8 per cent in 2016.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further impacted volunteering across the State. In April, volunteer organisations reported that:

- **80%** stood down their volunteers
- **46%** didn't have enough volunteers
- **71%** had to adapt their volunteering programs.

### **Among their top concerns were:**

- volunteer safety during the pandemic;
- the ability to retain and re-engage volunteers after a long period of inactivity; and
- drastic reductions in the organisation's income and financial sustainability going forward, their ability to host volunteers, and their ability to achieve their mission.

### **Several critical needs have been identified, with a view to surviving the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging better, stronger, and more resilient. Priority needs included:**

- securing funding and increasing income;
- meeting the challenges of the pandemic and its affect on safety, volunteer management and retention; and
- the ability to transition back to required operations when public safety allows.

The recent successes of Care Army, the renewal afforded by COVID-19 and increased engagement with government all present an opportunity to guide volunteers and volunteer involving organisations through this difficult time. With the correct support in place, the sector won't just survive – it will thrive. However, without this valuable workforce, many services in Queensland will stop.

# Queensland Volunteer Sector Election Platform

There are six key opportunities to build community resilience, increase volunteer participation rates and support volunteer involving organisations. This platform has been created to reinvigorate the volunteer workforce and prepare volunteer programs to contribute to Queensland's economic and social recovery in a post-pandemic world.

**1 Sustaining, developing, and utilising Queensland's unique Emergency Volunteering CREW (EV CREW)/ Care Army capabilities. This will reinforce the sector and build stronger, resilient, connected communities at times of disaster and 'peace'.**

➤ *An ongoing investment of \$250,000 per year should be allocated to this critical service.*

**2 Leveraging, increasing and recognising local social capital through five-year funding of existing Queensland Volunteer Resource Centres and Hubs, as well as the establishment of five additional Volunteer Support Services Hubs in Toowoomba, Mackay, Rockhampton, Ipswich/ Brisbane, and Carpentaria.**

➤ *This requires an annual investment of \$750,000 per year to be shared amongst 15 Volunteer Resource Centres and Hubs across Queensland.*

**3 Keeping the volunteer ethos alive across Queensland, communicating the benefits of volunteering, and improving volunteer management practice. This will be achieved through sector capability building, including National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and online inclusion training and resources that improve volunteering outcomes. This will aid Queenslanders to volunteer and volunteer organisations to recruit and retain the volunteers they need.**

➤ *An investment of \$250,000 per year for three years should be dedicated to building the capacity and capability of volunteer organisations to together reinvigorate volunteering in Queensland.*



**4 Building a strong evidence base to fully understand the current volunteer landscape and proactively identify and meet future challenges. This will include the undertaking a State of Volunteering in Queensland report.**

➤ *A one-off investment of \$120,000 is needed for this vital research.*

**5 Protecting Queensland's volunteers through state-wide insurance coverage, covering all areas of volunteering including spontaneous disaster volunteers.**

➤ *An in kind and monetary investment needs to be ear-marked for a feasibility study, modelling, and commitment going forward.*

**6 Recognising Volunteering Queensland's role as a key provider of Queensland's frontline volunteer workforce to essential service providers. Volunteering Queensland would therefore be eligible for Guaranteed Queensland's Social and Community Services Equal Remuneration Order in 2020 and beyond, to the benefit of the State and its desired outcomes.**

➤ *The investment of a commitment and guarantee is required to address equity and parity for Volunteering Queensland going forward.*

# Conclusion

**A commitment from the Queensland Government is required to reinvigorate volunteering, ensure the growth and sustainability of the volunteer workforce, and to support the sector through a period of major upheaval.**

Volunteering Queensland's immediate priority is to work with State Government to guide the sector as it navigates and advances from the profound impact of COVID-19. The State Government - through a strategic, whole-of-government approach - can empower Volunteering Queensland to mobilise the volunteering workforce and sector to make important contributions to the economic and social recovery of Queensland.

Investing in the six key opportunities outlined above will bolster volunteering in Queensland and enable hundreds of thousands of Queenslanders to contribute through their volunteering efforts. It will allow millions more to experience the human, social, economic and environmental benefits that our volunteer workforce continually brings to our communities and the State.

## *further information*

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