Queensland Walks
We represent walking for all Queenslanders

Friday, 28 February 2025

Parliamentary Inquiry Committee
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CC: Director General Ms Linda Dobe, Department of Local Government, Water and Volunteers; Deputy Director General Bernadette Zerba, Department of Local Government, Water and

Dear Parliamentary Inquiry Volunteering Inquiry Committee

Re: Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry into volunteering in Queensland (The Inquiry). Queensland Walks Incorporated welcomes The Inquiry to engage with Queensland organisations who reflect the voices of our diverse communities throughout the state. Volunteers play an important part of the work we do, and we rely on volunteers for our future activities, governance, advocacy and events. We are excited that the timing of this Inquiry will consider the needs for volunteering in the lead up to the organising of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and well after The Games.

Who is Queensland Walks?

Queensland Walks is a community-based organisation which advocates for more walkable places, so more Queenslanders can choose to walk, or walk more often. Our organisation has represented all Queenslanders who walk, roll and stroll since 2012, managed by a Board of volunteers and committees and collaborating with organisations whose volunteerism is at the core of the work they deliver. We receive funding for project delivery, however we have not received base organisational funding to enable us to develop a volunteer program.

We support the submissions from our collaborative organisations that include, but are not limited to:

- Volunteering Queensland (VQ)
- Cancer Council Queensland (CCQ)
- Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)
- Council on the Ageing Queensland (COTAQ)
- Outdoors Queensland
- Members of the Queensland Walking Alliance.

We also include comments on behalf of Bushwalking Queensland, a volunteer organisation who represent traditional bushwalking clubs throughout Queensland.

We acknowledge the current Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024-2032 and the recent work of Volunteering Queensland by engaging with State Government and supporting smaller organisations like Queensland Walks. We endorse Volunteering Queensland's work and hope the Inquiry will help to uplift volunteering across the state.

Why is volunteering so important for the work that we do, and the lives of Queenslanders?

Walking is the most popular and least funded recreational activity in Queensland. The walking community is one of the largest informalized groups of Queensland and therefore if

appropriately funded and harnessed could provide a boost in volunteerism through outdoors engagement.

Walking is a transport choice, and many Queensland volunteers are reliant on walking and public transport for the main choice of transport. We know that providing access to a low or no cost transport solutions supports the work of volunteers. Walking improves the health and lives of Queenslanders, and walking environments are as much about equity as the health benefits gained.

From an organisational perspective, having support for volunteering within the organisation can provide capacity building for our organisation, and our advocacy, particularly with the following communities and groups:

- People with disability
- Younger people
- School communities
- First Nations and CALD communities
- Women and girls
- Linking to existing volunteering groups for capacity building
- Increasing our Citizen Science and volunteering support networks.

Our core research and data development has been the result of volunteer-based Citizen Science through walking observation, which currently remains unfunded, yet plays a critical role in our advocacy and engagement. Examples include the Walk My Street check and Safe Cities Safe | Streets for Women and Girls project.

The greatest challenge for our organisation is in developing volunteer management. Our organisation has such limited resources that we are unable to formalise a volunteer program to develop and support a volunteer manager and therefore train new volunteers. We miss good opportunities to provide volunteers with placement, without a skilled volunteer manager or funding and resources to provide volunteers with a good work environment.

For organisations like Bushwalking Queensland, their membership base is older, and they therefore struggle to keep up with technology, to promote their events and reach a newer audience to attract new members. Bushwalking Queensland report that their bushwalking clubs and members are primarily self-sufficient, however engagement and attracting new members for the club or to attend the events created is the core challenge. Thus, the organisation is finding sustainability a challenge even through their offering is *the* most popular recreational activity in Queensland.

Bright ideas for volunteers: Walking Greeters by Queensland Walks

We see a great opportunity for Queensland Walks to develop the future 'Walking Greeters' for our regions and our cities. Imagine arriving to our beautiful state, and having community based volunteer-led guided tours and advice of places in Queensland of where to walk that is cool and comfortable, connected to public transport, is accessible and connects tourists with our local small business. The Walking Greeters program could assist with transport surges and help reduce congestion concerns. With a comprehensive volunteer program investment, the Walking Greeters would leave a lasting memory and legacy for a successful and welcoming games and no doubt continue with the domestic tourist market.

Volunteer development recommendations:

1. A dedicated funding pool for organisations to access, develop and continue a basic and sustainable volunteer program
2. Funded Volunteering Queensland volunteer management triage and training, which links to their existing templates. The program will support organisations like Queensland Walks to work with underemployed groups to upskill volunteers and trainers – especially in regional or harder to reach areas
3. Insurance, liability and indemnity funding, and low cost organisational office space (like Sports House) cost coverage for organisations and regional meeting spaces
4. Working with existing organisations to develop the new and younger wave of volunteering in the community through recreation activities like walking, running, hiking and trail events through the '**Bright ideas for volunteers' program**
5. Support with technology to manage, communicate with, acknowledge and support volunteers successfully.

We thank you again for the opportunity to provide input into the Inquiry into Volunteering in Queensland.

Yours in health and walking,

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