

**Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024-2032**

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**Interpreter**

**Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. **

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## Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn and work.

We acknowledge those of the past, the ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and who have passed on their wisdom.

We acknowledge those of the present for their leadership and ongoing efforts to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

We acknowledge those of the future, the Elders not yet born, who will inherit the legacy of our efforts.

We recognise it is our collective efforts, and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments, to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.

This publication may contain images or references to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are deceased. The Queensland Government does not wish to cause distress to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community members.Message from the Premier

Volunteering is a powerful act of community giving which enriches the people who volunteer, the recipients of their service and the communities they call home.

From supporting our frontline responders during storm season, to caring for the elderly and sick, volunteers play a crucial role enhancing the fabric of Queensland communities.

The Queensland Volunteering Strategy will help sustain and grow the state’s vibrant and diverse volunteering sector. It will help us create opportunities for people to contribute their unique talents to the volunteering effort, retain their interest in volunteering over the long haul and better direct their effort so that the benefits flowing to the community are maximised.

Volunteers have always played an important role in community organisations, including in sport. When the global spotlight hits Brisbane for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, volunteers will help ensure Queensland shines brightly on the world stage.

To this end, the Queensland Government is committed to advancing volunteer-driven initiatives that underpin community strength and cohesion. This Strategy will help deliver important reforms for the sector and better outcomes for volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and their communities.

Queenslanders have volunteering in their DNA and it shows - with around 2.8 million people volunteering over the course of a year.

Volunteering doesn’t happen by accident. Successful volunteering is supported by the strength and dedication of the volunteering sector and the critical role of volunteer managers.

Our vision for volunteering can only be realised through collaborative efforts with  
the volunteering sector. By forging stronger partnerships and enhancing resources for volunteers, we aim to cultivate a culture where volunteering becomes even more accessible and rewarding for all Queenslanders. No matter your background, culture, age, gender, sexuality, or ability – all Queenslanders should have the opportunity to volunteer in a safe and supported way.

This strategy is our plan to work together so that volunteering can thrive in Queensland and continue to weave the critical thread that strengthens the fabric of our communities.

**Hon. Steven Miles MP**

Premier of Queensland

# Message from the Minister

Volunteering enriches Queensland’s communities in countless ways.

Each year volunteers in Queensland create social value for their communities worth tens of billions of dollars. The estimated cost to replace the labour volunteers freely give each year is more than $31.3 billion.

This contribution to the future of Queensland is irreplaceable. The Queensland Government is committed to nurturing a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable volunteering sector and that is why we developed the Queensland Volunteering Strategy.

Many Queenslanders often engage in volunteering for causes that resonate deeply with them. They may engage with the sector through formal or informal means. Many are driven by the need for personal wellbeing, a sense of purpose and a supportive community.

Volunteering also remains pivotal in disaster management and community recovery efforts.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Queensland’s community services sector, which is playing a strong role in providing cost of living relief to Queenslanders in need and providing programs and services to combat the scourge of social isolation and loneliness.

We will continue to work with the sector to strengthen the ways volunteers can get involved with the countless organisations that epitomise Queensland’s volunteer spirit. We want to encourage more people to volunteer and for existing volunteers to continue to feel supported in their important work.

I extend heartfelt thanks to the many sector representatives who generously gave their time and provided important insights as part of extensive consultations, which helped shape the Queensland Volunteering Strategy

I also reserve special thanks to Volunteering Queensland for their steadfast contributions and support, and to the volunteer leaders and managers across Queensland who work tirelessly behind the scenes to make volunteering happen.

Through volunteering, we strengthen the fabric of Queensland’s communities, promote inclusivity and shape a brighter future for many. Together, let’s inspire and support one another in building a more resilient, compassionate and prosperous Queensland through volunteering.

**Hon. Leeanne Enoch MP**

Minister for Treaty

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

Minister for Communities

Minister for the Arts Message from the CEO of Volunteering Queensland

Volunteering Queensland is delighted to welcome the launch of the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, a crucial initiative we advocated for under the Communities 2032 Action Plan 2022-2025. We are proud to collaborate with the Queensland Government in reinforcing and advancing the vital role of volunteering across our state.

The strategy is a significant step forward in addressing and advocating for the priorities of the volunteering sector, ensuring that the invaluable contributions of our amazing volunteers are recognised and supported. With over 2.8 million Queenslanders volunteering in 2023, volunteer managers have consistently highlighted the importance of a robust supporting strategy. This will provide a foundation to strengthen volunteering across Queensland, which is essential to building the vibrant, inclusive, supported and connected communities that form the vision of Communities 2032.

The Queensland Volunteering Strategy acknowledges the challenges faced by the sector in recruiting and retaining volunteers, and sets out a framework for responding to the issues we know matter to the sector – sustainability, inclusivity and ensuring our volunteers are celebrated.

Volunteering has unique value – it leverages people’s existing skills and effort for  
common good, whilst fostering continuous personal and professional growth for those who participate. In recognition of this, the Queensland Volunteering Strategy provides a platform to strengthen and support different types of volunteering, formal and informal, long term and episodic, all of which contribute to sustaining our communities.

The Strategy also acknowledges that Queensland is a large and diverse state with unique opportunities and challenges, including our renowned familiarity in disaster management. The focus on recognising the vital role of volunteering during disasters, along with renewed emphasis on increasing youth involvement, underscores the importance of investing in the future of Queensland’s communities. As a mechanism to guide this investment, the Queensland Volunteering Strategy will help ensure that volunteering remains a strong, vibrant force for generations to come.

We are committed to seeing this strategy succeed and ensuring that every community can actively engage with and benefit from its implementation.

We thank the volunteers, Volunteer Resource Centres and volunteer involving organisations who collaborate with us and we look forward to continuing to work together under this Strategy to achieve a thriving volunteering ecosystem.

**Jane Hedger**

Chief Executive Officer

Volunteering Queensland

# **Queensland Volunteering Strategy 2024-2032**

The **Queensland Volunteering Strategy** is our plan to support and strengthen volunteering for all Queenslanders.

Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we aim to:

* acknowledge the important role that volunteers already play in Queensland and celebrate the significant value that volunteering delivers for individuals, organisations, and communities
* set an ambitious but actionable roadmap that responds to the significant challenges and opportunities the sector has told us about, including attracting and retaining more volunteers
* improve the way we work together, and strengthen our partnerships, so that we can all realise a future where volunteering is thriving in Queensland.

Every day in Queensland, volunteers make enormous contributions to our state’s prosperity. Volunteering is not just the one-way act of giving. It is an invaluable exchange that enriches both volunteers and the communities they serve.

Whether by delivering meals, cleaning up a neighbour’s place after a storm, assisting on game day, helping in a neighbourhood centre, or sitting on the board of a local community group—volunteers build individual and community wellbeing and strengthen the social, cultural, and economic fabric of every community that makes up our state.

Volunteers give their time willingly to help others, and through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, the government supports them to do so.

The Queensland Volunteering Strategy recognises how vital volunteering is for our communities to flourish. It outlines our vision for a future where volunteering is thriving, and where Queenslanders and their communities are fully realising the opportunities, benefits and value that volunteering brings.

The vital role of volunteering in connecting communities was highlighted in the ***2021 Parliamentary Inquiry into social isolation and loneliness in Queensland***.

The Queensland Government responded to the Inquiry and its recommendations with a holistic, broad-ranging whole-of-government strategy to support our communities and combat social isolation and loneliness, launching ***Communities 2032*** in 2022.

In recognition of the importance of volunteering to social connectedness, one of the key actions under Communities 2032 was the development of a volunteering strategy.

## Our vision

A thriving volunteering ecosystem, strengthening the fabric of every Queensland community.

## Our principles

**Equity, access, participation and human rights**

We support all Queenslanders to have equitable access to participate in volunteering in their communities and uphold their human rights.

**Volunteering, in all its forms**

We’re embracing the diversity of volunteering in its many forms, including:

* the full spectrum of informal and formal volunteering
* different cultural understandings and interpretations of what it means to give your time.

**Focus on the volunteering experience**

We want volunteering to be infectious, so in everything we do we ask, *‘*how will this improve the experience, and encourage more volunteering?’

**Place-based and community-led**

We recognise that communities are experts in their own lives. Place-based and community-led approaches empower people to take the lead on what matters to them.

**Systemic and collaborative**

Collaboration, common approaches, shared resources and system connectors are critical to ensuring everybody can make the most of the opportunities and resources they have.

## Our focus areas

The Queensland Volunteering Strategy has three focus areas where we will prioritise our efforts, investments, and partnerships to maximise volunteering participation and impact.

Our focus areas are:

### Supported and sustainable

**Reinforce the foundations and strengthen the conditions for volunteering to thrive.** We will:

* enable more people to volunteer more often
* ensure that volunteers are respected, valued, safe and supported
* value the vital function of volunteer management
* build the skills that people and the sector need for now and the future
* strengthen the conditions for volunteering to thrive.

### Vibrant and inclusive

**Promote inclusive volunteering that reflects the vibrancy and diversity of Queensland’s many communities.** We will:

* ensure that volunteering has a place for everyone
* strengthen the role that volunteering plays in responding to social isolation and loneliness
* build community through volunteering
* provide more opportunities for people to volunteer, at every stage of life
* remove barriers to participation so that more people can experience the lifechanging experience of volunteering.

### Recognised and celebrated

**The true value of volunteering will be recognised and celebrated.** We will:

* ensure that volunteering is recognised in everything we do, including through formal awards
* provide more opportunities for people to recognise and celebrate the role that volunteering plays in their lives and communities
* celebrate the diverse interpretations of what it means for people give their time
* recognise and demonstrate the value of volunteering.

# Queensland’s volunteering opportunity

***The Queensland Volunteering Strategy is Queensland’s first, dedicated framework for building a sustainable, diverse and thriving volunteering system.***

The Strategy represents the start of a journey for the Queensland Government and our partners across the sector – including volunteers and volunteer involving organisations – to collaborate and align our efforts and investment into the future.

Volunteering weaves a common thread through many of our state’s challenges, opportunities, and strengths.The factors that make Queensland distinct are central to why we have developed a volunteering strategy specifically for Queensland.

Our state is home to diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whom we recognise as the traditional owners and custodians of the lands and seas. We acknowledge and celebrate First Nations languages, histories, traditions and cultures as central to our state’s identity, and recognise that we have much to learn from the strength, resilience, and unique ways of knowing, being and doing of First Nations peoples, including in relation to community giving and volunteering.

The state of Queensland spans from the coast to the outback, the metropolis of the south-east corner to the natural wonders of the Far North, and across the many distinct regions, cities, towns and communities that lie between. It is this diversity of geography, culture and natural beauty, coupled with our great economic opportunities and lifestyles that continue to draw more people to make a home in Queensland.

While our significant population growth has unsurprisingly tested some of Queensland’s systems and infrastructure, it has also presented a significant opportunity to grow volunteering and strengthen our communities through the skills, cultures and diverse experiences and perspectives that these new Queenslanders bring with them.

Our distinctive geography also means that Queensland is prone to experiencing natural disasters such as cyclones, floods and bushfires. As climate change increases the likelihood and severity of these events, the importance of volunteering for building resilience and strengthening our ability to respond to and recover from adverse events will continue to grow.

Queensland will also host the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Brisbane 2032 Games provide a once in a lifetime opportunity to showcase Queensland to the world, but they also provide us with a significant horizon from which to reflect, plan and prepare for the future of volunteering. By acting now, we can develop the supporting systems, and vibrant and diverse networks that Queensland needs to promote and sustain all forms of volunteering, for the benefit of our communities long after 2032.The state of volunteering in Queensland

In 2024 Volunteering Queensland released the second State of Volunteering in Queensland Report. Data for this report is collected from the biggest survey of volunteers and volunteer managers in Queensland.

## Key statistics

* 64% of Queenslanders volunteered in 2023: 2.8 million people.
* The value of volunteering to the Queensland community is $117.8 billion
* People spent an average of 21.6 hours per month – that’s 719.8 million hours volunteering in 2023.
* The increase individual wellbeing attributable to volunteering is 4.4 percentage points.
* Return on investment: For every $1 invested in volunteering, $4.70 is returned.

### The cost of giving

* Average volunteer expenses per hour volunteered: $15.57
* Percentage share of total expenses:
  + Volunteer involving organisations: 23.8%
  + Volunteers: 76.2%

### Intentions

* 29.1% of volunteers intend to volunteer more in 3 years
* 27.6% of non volunteers intend to volunteer more in 3 years
* 26.8% of volunteer managers say that more people will be volunteering with their organisation in 3 years.

## Why and how people volunteer

### People are motivated to volunteer:

* to help others: 64.2%
* for enjoyment: 41.3%
* to be active: 37.5%

### Top 3 ways people find volunteer roles:

* word of mouth: 56.6%
* social media: 37.9%
* Google search: 24.0%

### Top 3 recruitment channels:

* word of mouth: 80.8%
* social media: 61.9%
* website: 54.6%

## Participation

### Overall participation

* 2020: 75.7%
* 2023: 64.3%
* This represents a reduction of over 10%

### Formal volunteers (Volunteers with an organisation)

* 2020: 69.6%
* 2023: 49%
* This represents a reduction of 20%

### Informal volunteering

* 2020: 85.8
* 2023: 69.6
* This represents a reduction of 15%

### Number of hours volunteer each month

* 2020: 24.9 hours per month
* 2023: 21.6 hours per month
* This represents a reduction of just under 20%

## Barriers for Queenslanders volunteering more

### Top 3 challenges of the last three years for volunteer-involving organisations

1. Volunteer hours have decreased
2. Volunteers need more training
3. Fewer people want to volunteer

### Top 3 issues in volunteering for volunteer-involving organisations

1. Volunteer retention: 87%
2. Volunteer health and safety: 86.5%
3. Volunteer recruitment: 77.7%

### Challenges for volunteers

1. No time: 41.8%
2. Costs: 14.5%
3. Health reasons: 13.1%
4. Burnout (over-volunteering): 12.3%
5. Not interested in volunteering more: 11%

### Challenges for non-volunteers

1. No time: 62.6%
2. Not sure how / never been asked: 23.3%
3. Health reasons: 17.9%
4. Not interested in volunteering: 17.6%
5. Lack confidence: 13.1%

All data supplied courtesy of Volunteering Queensland.

[Review the State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024 report to find out more.](https://volunteeringqld.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/State-of-Volunteering-in-Queensland-2024-Report.pdf)How this strategy was developed

This strategy has been developed through the valuable contributions of many stakeholders who generously shared their time, insights and aspirations for volunteering.

This included:

* More than **20 codesign meetings** with government and volunteering sector leaders.
* Consultation workshops and presentations with more than **110 volunteering sector representatives**
* **Detailed and thorough incorporation of learnings from a strong, existing evidence base**, including state, national, and international reports, articles, and strategies, such as:
  + Volunteering Queensland’s *The State of Volunteering in Queensland* reports and sub-reports
  + Volunteering Australia’s *Volunteering Research Papers Initiative*
  + analysis of other jurisdictions’ volunteering strategies and initiatives

# What we heard

**Attracting and retaining volunteers is becoming more challenging now.**Overall, less people are volunteering, for less hours, but this trend is not felt equally across all types of volunteering.

**Volunteers’ habits and preferences are trending towards issues based, informal and episodic volunteering,** and with changing expectations around the volunteering experience. Digital access, service and system design, leadership capabilities and different recruitment and retention strategies are more important than ever to cater for wide-ranging preferences.

**The value of volunteering to society and individuals is undeniable, but under-recognised.**There are significant opportunities to collaborate more on promotion, communication and ensuring that volunteering is recognised and celebrated by everyone in our communities.

**Many volunteer involving organisations are experiencing the cumulative impacts of growing demand and increased costs, alongside a reduction in availability of volunteers.**

**Operating environments are growing in complexity.** This includes regulatory, insurance and training requirements, increasing service demand, disconnected systems, navigating emerging risks, and responding to broad global trends.

**Administrative requirements could be streamlined and made the ‘right-size’ for different settings,**making volunteering more accessible and inclusive, promoting efficiencies and improving safety and the volunteering experience.

**Volunteers freely give their time, but volunteering isn’t free.** Good practice, and sustainable volunteering requires investment in the function of volunteer management and supporting infrastructure, resources, and systems.

**Improving access and removing barriers would foster greater diversity in the volunteer network and strengthen the role that volunteering can play in challenging inequities and bringing people together.**Stakeholder suggestions ranged from practical ideas (covering transport costs) to systemic (supporting organisations to build cultural capability, or increasing participation rates of men to reduce the economic burden on women).

**Challenges and barriers are acutely felt by smaller, community-led and grass-roots organisations**with less resources, more capacity challenges and who operate in ambiguous governance environments. We also heard that many rural and remote organisations face distinct geographic challenges.

# Focus area 1: Supported and sustainable

***Reinforce the foundations and strengthen the conditions for volunteering to thrive***

Whether it’s a single volunteer trialling a new technology to improve things for their community group, or a large government department updating their policies, we all have an important role to play to ensure that volunteering is supported, sustainable and thriving.

## Enable more people to volunteer more often

At the heart of the Queensland Volunteering Strategy is our desire to nurture and grow volunteering by increasing participation rates across the volunteering sector. To achieve this, we need to ensure that:

* existing volunteers have a great experience, want to keep participating and act as ambassadors for volunteering
* those who are not yet volunteering feel inspired to give it a go,
* volunteer involving organisations are supported to adapt and evolve their recruitment strategies to meet changing preferences, and to embrace new technologies and approaches.

Growth in volunteering participation should also seek to diversify the system. This means recognising that women currently engage in more voluntary work than men, but women are also more likely to have unpaid caring responsibilities. There is an opportunity to promote greater gender equity in economic wellbeing and employment opportunities for women, by focusing on encouraging greater volunteering participation rates of men, particularly in the care and support services sector.

We know that word of mouth and social media are the top two recruitment strategies used by volunteer involving organisations, and that retention remains the most significant challenge. By focusing our efforts on improving the experience of our current volunteers, they are more likely to remain participating, and to spread the good word to their friends, family and social networks about the incredible value of volunteering in their lives.

To improve the volunteering experience, there are opportunities for greater collaboration across government and the volunteering sector to make it easier for people to find volunteer activities they are passionate about that fit with their lifestyles and commitments, and ensuring that the support they need to get (and stay) involved is adequate and available.

For volunteer involving organisations, it is more important than ever to think about diversifying approaches to volunteer promotion, to meet people where they are – in their community settings, workplaces, friend groups, and particularly on social media. We heard from the sector about the steps some organisations are taking to embrace digital marketing, but that more support is required across the system to harness emerging technologies.

We also heard from the sector about some of the ongoing operating challenges of being a volunteer involving organisation. Training requirements, regulations spanning different levels of government and jurisdictions, disparate administrative systems and limited resources all add to the complexity of involving volunteers.

Many current requirements exist for good reasons—including to help volunteers feel safe and supported. However, we heard that too often, the task of involving volunteers is unnecessarily confusing, duplicative, and disproportionate to the risks.

* *Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we want to work together with the sector to improve the volunteering experience for everyone.*

### Case study: ActiveKIT Click to Court

The Department of Tourism and Sport’s ActiveKIT program supports innovative solutions within the active industry to increase physical activity opportunities for target cohorts and contribute to the industry’s capability and resilience.

Through Round 1 of the ActiveKIT program, Tennis Queensland received funding of $200,000 to implement the Click to Court online booking system.

The implementation of Click to Court has delivered significant benefits for clubs, volunteers, and Queensland communities, leading to reduced volunteer hours and workload, increased accessibility of courts and ease of court bookings across Queensland.

As a result of the Queensland Government’s investment in this innovative solution, the 74 clubs involved in the project have saved 3900 volunteer hours with a 34% increase in online bookings, with Joan Berzinski from the Port Douglas Tennis Club commenting “The 'Click to Court' lock system is affordable and easy to use. Our court bookings have increased, and it has saved our volunteer committee so much time because we no longer have to issue keys and manage key deposits. I love that I can give people access to the courts when needed without having to drive into the Club."

## Promoting safety and wellbeing

Supported and sustainable volunteering is underpinned by a responsibility for every person to foster safe and supportive volunteering environments, regardless of role or position.

Whether it’s by identifying and mitigating physical and psychosocial hazards that impact on volunteer safety, health and wellbeing, or by providing vital social and economic supports to ensure everyone can participate, there are many ways we can all ensure volunteering is safe and supported. Promoting and supporting volunteer wellbeing, and strengthening the volunteer workforce, also reduces the risk of hazards like burnout that deplete volunteers and the time that they are able to contribute.

Safe and supported volunteering also means recognising the inherent value of people’s cultural knowledge and lived experience, acknowledging that there are instances where people should be remunerated for their time and wisdom, and not be expected to share this voluntarily.

We must ensure that our collective efforts to promote safe and supported volunteering are fit for purpose and proportionate to the many types of volunteering—including informal, ad-hoc, spontaneous, regular, and formal volunteering.

* *We want all volunteers to feel valued for their contributions. It’s critical that volunteers feel respected, valued, safe and supported, and don’t feel exploited for their experiences or time given.*
* *Volunteering is not a replacement for paid work, nor should it compensate for a lack of investment or inadequate resourcing.*
* *By embracing person-centred and ethical volunteer engagement practices that promote healthy boundaries, we can all work towards a thriving volunteering ecosystem that upholds human rights, builds on people’s strengths, promotes access and participation, and respects individual capacity, capability and culture.*
* *Volunteering support needs to be responsive to the diversity of volunteering. We must strike a healthy balance between promoting safety and not being burdensome and unnecessarily restrictive.*

## Valuing volunteer management

Most of us can think of an example of volunteers making a difference in our own communities. However, we are less likely to recognise that these highly visible components of volunteering don’t just happen by themselves.

Behind the scenes of any volunteering is an army of people and a range of structures and processes working to ‘set the stage’ and ensure that volunteers are as co-ordinated and impactful as possible.

Supported and sustainable volunteering means valuing the important role played by those who co-ordinate, manage and lead volunteers.

Volunteer managers can be volunteers themselves, choosing to step up and lead the way in their communities. Others are undertaking paid employment in volunteer involving organisations, operating in more structured and formal environments. Regardless of the nature of their work, we recognise that their contributions are essential to ensuring that volunteers are appropriately recruited, trained, and supported to undertake their roles.

Supported and sustainable volunteering also means ensuring that the function of managing volunteers is supported by the culture we set, embedded in policy and investment decisions, and reinforced by the systems, processes, and technologies we implement.

* *Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we acknowledge the vital role that volunteer managers play in ensuring that volunteering is safe, supported and sustainable.*
* *To be effective, the function of volunteer management needs to be broadly acknowledged and valued, adequately resourced, supported by systems, processes and technology, backed up with a constructive enabling environment and empowered and championed by organisational and community leaders.*

## Equipping people with the skills they need, for now and the future

The training, skills and capabilities that people need to successfully volunteer are as diverse as the types of volunteering activities undertaken. A sports referee will require vastly different training, skills and support for their volunteering than a treasurer volunteering on the board of a community organisation, or a volunteer responding to a natural disaster in their community.

While much of the training and development of volunteers happens directly within organisations, we know that government’s role as a policymaker and system steward presents specific opportunities to build capacity and capability across the various facets of volunteering. Importantly for Queensland, this includes taking a specific focus on building a sustainable supply pipeline (and appropriate skills, experience and wellbeing considerations) of volunteers preparing for, responding to and recovering from natural disasters and emergencies.

We also recognise that many people undertaking paid employment within the volunteering ecosystem have different and changing skills and training requirements. Growing the capacity and capability of the paid workforce that surrounds volunteering is an integral part of realising our vision for a thriving volunteering ecosystem.

* *Volunteering has always been a powerful tool for individuals to develop their experience, skills, and networks*—*unlocking potential and realising new social and economic opportunities.*
* *We recognise that volunteers, volunteer managers and the many people that work across volunteering each contribute their talent and expertise. We want to support everybody with a stake in volunteering to develop the skills they need for now and the future.*
* *Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we have an opportunity to build capacity and capability, better support and recognise the skills gained through volunteering, and unlock new opportunities.*

## Strengthening the conditions for volunteering to thrive

Volunteering activity occurs every day, facilitated by all kinds of organisations and in every community across the state.

The interconnected web of people, processes and systems required to support on-going, sustainable volunteering, can only thrive with the right enabling conditions. These enablers include strategic investment, effective policy at all layers of the system, and vibrant and collaborative networks.

Supported and sustainable volunteering means looking for opportunities to build core and common infrastructure, shared systems and resources, and innovative approaches that will support volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations to make the most of the resources they have.

It also means recognising that there are significant opportunities to strengthen our partnerships and networks with others who also want to see volunteering thrive.

Many governments, institutions, philanthropists, businesses, corporations, peak bodies and industry groups have a significant stake in volunteering.

While there are diverse motivations and perspectives, a shared commitment to sustaining and growing volunteering is a powerful foundation for new partnerships, shared learnings, reduced duplication and more effective investments.

* *The volunteering ecosystem needs to be empowered with the right policy, strategic investment, and vibrant and collaborative networks.*
* *Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we will see governments and system leaders continuing to work together to ensure we are all considering the needs, impacts and opportunities for promoting volunteering through policy settings and investment.*

### Case study: Recovering and rebuilding through volunteer power

When natural disasters and adverse events occur, Queensland communities rely heavily on long term support from volunteers who help clean-up, deliver essential goods, and provide care, comfort, and personal support to affected people and communities.

We know how important it is for emergency volunteers to be ready, available, safe, and supported. That’s why our investment of over $2.4 million in a volunteering peak body supports Volunteering Queensland to operate the Emergency Volunteering Community Response to Extreme Weather (EV CREW) system.

This service links spontaneous volunteers with councils and community organisations in times of natural disaster, with our investment enabling Volunteering Queensland to work alongside councils, agencies and volunteer involving organisations to provide coordinated disaster recovery volunteer teams when and wherever disaster strikes.

### Case study: Ready when disaster strikes

As the most disaster-prone state in Australia, Queenslanders regularly see first-hand the important role that volunteering plays in ensuring our communities can respond to and recover from natural disasters and emergencies. We also know that as our state faces a future of more frequent and severe disasters, the growing pressures and demands on volunteering will require us to adapt our underlying systems, frameworks and supports to ensure we’re prepared for whatever lies ahead.

Through the largest and most significant changes to Queensland’s disaster and emergency management framework, the Queensland Government is committed to ensuring our volunteers are supported to continue their valuable lifesaving work.

These reforms are building on Queensland’s world-class services, helping create a stronger, more resilient Queensland, and providing greater reassurance for Queenslanders when natural disasters and other emergencies impact the state.

Reforms include:

* Progressing significant legislative change, including the passing of a new *State Emergency Service Act 2024* and *Marine Rescue Queensland Act 2024.*
* Establishing the new entity Marine Rescue Queensland, which brings together volunteer coast guard and marine rescue activities.
* Delivering a $60 million budget for State Emergency Service (SES) to support local communities with more resources, volunteers, critical safety equipment and protections.
* Releasing a new SES recruitment video as a celebration of the great work of SES volunteers and a call out for people who want to help their community and join the orange army.
* Integrating the PCYC Emergency Services Cadets within the Queensland Police Service to better align emergency volunteer activities across Queensland.

# Focus area 2: Vibrant and inclusive

***Ensuring that volunteering reflects the diversity and vibrancy of our communities***

Just as belonging in our communities shouldn’t be determined by our age, gender, ethnicity, culture, beliefs, sexuality or ability, our opportunities to fully participate in volunteering shouldn’t be impacted by our differences, our incomes, our education or our postcodes.

By addressing barriers to participation, responding to social isolation and loneliness, building our individual and organisational capability and capacity, and creating vibrant and inclusive volunteering environments, we can ensure that volunteering has a place for all Queenslanders.

## A lifetime of volunteering

For most people, volunteering isn’t a static endeavour—their interest and participation will change dramatically throughout their life stages, depending on circumstances, interests and family commitments. Reducing barriers and boosting volunteering participation rates across the life course requires tailored approaches to volunteer promotion that meets people where they are.

### Young people

Young people bring fresh perspectives, energy, and unique motivations to volunteering. Not only does volunteering give young people a chance to develop skills in areas they are passionate about, volunteering can also act as a valuable step towards achieving the future they want and allow them to create meaningful connections that last a lifetime.

Evidence from the *National Strategy for Volunteering* suggests that the rate of youth volunteering is gradually increasing, particularly for informal volunteering, despite all-age participation rates declining.

Queensland therefore has immense opportunity to harness the strengths of our young people and empower them to shape the future, by listening to their experiences and supporting them to overcome any barriers to participation.

The Young Queenslanders Strategy provides a framework for government to support young Queenslanders on their various life pathways, including by *cultivating their futures* through access to tailored opportunities that nurture their unique needs and interests. The Queensland Volunteering Strategy facilitates this pathway, by promoting volunteering opportunities for young Queenslanders, to support their skill and network building, and to foster an enduring interest in and culture of volunteering that benefits them, and Queensland, for years to come.

### Adults

Throughout our working lives and as we raise families, it can be extra challenging to find the time to identify and take up volunteer opportunities that suit, even if people are motivated to give back to their communities. There are opportunities to support workplaces across all sectors and industries to engage in corporate volunteering programs and act as enablers for expanding the volunteer network.

In doing so, volunteer involving organisations can benefit from the vast diversity of skills and experiences that Queenslanders from all walks of life gain throughout their professional careers. This includes the full spectrum of trades and technical skills, but also many of the essential components for sustaining small businesses and not-for-profit organisations, such as governance and finance, policy, IT and communications and marketing.

### Seniors

Older Queenslanders are the custodians of great wisdom and a lifetime of experience that benefits our communities. The Queensland Volunteering Strategy supports the implementation of the *Queensland Seniors Strategy 2024-2029*, and champions the intentions of the World Health Organisation’s Age-friendly Communities Framework – particularly the domain of *civic participation and employment* of older people.

We know that older Queenslanders are motivated to volunteer, not only out of altruism, but because volunteering is a fulfilling form of community connection, particularly for those who may be living alone in their later years. Maintaining meaningful relationships with other people is essential for our quality of life as we age. It is protective against the progression of dementia and mental decline, meaning less need for domestic support, and greater independence.

Inspired by satisfying volunteer work and participating in a broad range of formal and informal volunteering activities, we want to continue to support and promote opportunities for older Queenslanders to participate in their communities through volunteering.

This includes supporting flexible and accessible volunteering opportunities that fit with older Queenslanders’ busy lives, existing commitments and individual access and support requirements.

* *Volunteering is a dynamic but enduring experience throughout many people’s lives.*
* *Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we want to promote a long-lasting culture of volunteering by creating and supporting opportunities for more people to volunteer at all life stages.*

## Creating a place for everyone

We want everybody to feel welcome to participate in their communities through volunteering.

Not every volunteering opportunity is going to be the right fit for every person, but wherever possible, we need to ensure that volunteering is flexible, inclusive and accessible.

This might mean adapting the way things have always been done to fit better with people’s lifestyles, family and caring responsibilities or work commitments. It could also mean trialling new approaches and adjusting our processes and environments so that volunteering is accessible for those who haven’t previously been able to join in.

Vibrant and inclusive volunteering is also about embedding a culture of inclusivity and building the capability of everyone involved in volunteering to recognise and embrace diversity. Volunteers, paid workers and leaders all play a part in creating volunteer environments that are culturally and psychologically safe.

* *We all have a role to play in ensuring that people feel comfortable and supported to volunteer.*
* *Vibrant and inclusive volunteering promotes equity, access and participation, and upholds the human rights of all Queenslanders.*
* *By taking conscious steps to improve volunteering environments and build cultural capability and capacity, we can ensure that volunteering has a place for everyone.*

## Responding to social isolation and loneliness

Social connection is essential for physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing.

While we know that social isolation and loneliness are complex problems experienced in different ways, by different people, for different reasons, we also recognise the exceptional power of volunteering as a vehicle for community connection, combatting the impacts of social isolation and loneliness on people and communities.

By providing the space and a shared purpose for connection, volunteering is a catalyst for social networks and deep community ties. For the patrons of a volunteer’s service, regular contact with that volunteer might represent a key source of social connection and the highlight of what might otherwise have been a lonely and isolated day.

* *By building more inclusive, accessible and connected communities through volunteering, we can create better social, cultural, religious, spiritual, and place-based connections to environments and people, to drive social inclusion.*

### Case study: Taking pride in being part of the solution

Toby Robinson, a remarkable young volunteer, has dedicated the past 10 months to making a difference in the lives of those experiencing homelessness through his involvement with Sleepbus. Toby's journey of volunteerism began after a personal tragedy, and since then, he has been passionately contributing his time and energy to provide safe sleeps for those in need.

The decision to volunteer with Sleepbus stemmed from Toby's desire to make a positive impact in his community. Witnessing homelessness during a visit to Brisbane with his family prompted Toby to take action. Learning about Sleepbus and its mission, Toby reached out to volunteer and has since become an integral part of the team.  In his 120 hours of volunteering, Toby has facilitated around 180 safe sleeps, creating a tangible and meaningful impact on the lives of those facing homelessness. Every time he cleans the Sleepbus, he is reminded of the difference they are making and feels a sense of fulfillment.

Toby's perspective has been shaped by his volunteer experiences. He acknowledges the sadness of homelessness but takes pride in being part of the solution. Volunteering with Sleepbus has opened his eyes to the diverse ways he can contribute to his community, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding. One memorable experience for Toby is being named the 2024 Young Volunteer of the Year, a recognition of his dedication and impact on the Sleepbus initiative. The camaraderie and acceptance he experiences from the Sleepbus team has left a lasting impression, reinforcing the idea that age should never be a barrier to making a difference.

Toby's advice to potential volunteers is straightforward: "Definitely do it!" He emphasises the positive impact volunteering has on both the community and individual well-being. Volunteering, Toby believes, helps individuals learn new skills, share existing ones, and ultimately feel good about themselves. Describing his volunteer journey in one word, Toby chooses "Rewarding." This word encapsulates the joy and fulfillment he finds in helping his community become a better and safer place. Every interaction, every safe sleep facilitated, reinforces Toby's belief that they are indeed making a meaningful difference.

*Story supplied courtesy of Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre*

## Creating community through volunteering

Queenslanders are inspired to volunteer for many reasons. Some are motivated by a sense of duty, a commitment to the common good or an act of service. Others feel that volunteering is a reflection of deeply held values, beliefs and convictions, and an opportunity to promote and advance causes they feel passionate about. For many, it’s a chance to find likeminded people to connect with. Often, volunteers are motivated by a combination of many of these reasons and more.

Many incredible Queensland communities are established and sustained through the power of volunteerism. Sports clubs, grassroots advocacy, pride networks, environmental and conservation groups, cultural communities, faith groups, health promotion and community services organisations all unite Queenslanders in common good and add to the vibrant experience of living in this state.

As experts in their own lives, experiences and communities, volunteers are best placed to take action on the things that matter to them within their own volunteering communities.

* *Place-based and community-led approaches are the most effective way to support communities to achieve change in their own way. Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we want to build on the strengths of the many existing volunteering networks and communities that make Queensland a great place to live.*

## Removing barriers to participation

Whilst many Queenslanders are already actively volunteering, we know that for others, costs, access to transport, training, equipment and technology requirements, personal circumstances and even the built environment can present as barriers.

To fully realise our vision for volunteering to thrive, and for the benefit of all Queenslanders—this needs to change.

Vibrant and inclusive volunteering means actively identifying and removing barriers so that more people can experience the power of volunteering, and more communities can benefit from a greater diversity of experiences and perspectives.

* *Volunteering can be a life-changing experience that enables people to develop their skills, unlock new economic and social opportunities, and realise their potential.*
* *Identifying and removing barriers to participation is essential to ensuring that all Queenslanders can participate in their communities through volunteering.*

### Case study: The ripple effect

In the heart of the Gold Coast, a small team at Volunteering Gold Coast is orchestrating a quiet revolution. Their fuel? Community Transport. It is a lifeline for many, and one that is powered predominately by dedicated volunteers. Each day, this service charts about 350 journeys, not just ferrying people to destinations but weaving a tapestry of connections.

Among its patrons is Betty. At the annual Christmas gathering organised for its customers, Betty couldn’t contain her joy. She spoke of the phone calls she receives before every trip—simple acts of reassurance, handled by a dedicated volunteer. For Betty, these phone calls, and the familiar face of her driver Marco represent more than just rides—they are the only two occasions of the week where Betty is guaranteed to connect with another person.

Her driver Marco, on the other hand, finds his role as a volunteer driver provides a deeper fulfillment than any paid job could offer. “This is the best job I’ve ever had”, he said. His words carry the weight of personal commitment and satisfaction from the personal act of giving.

And then there’s Joanne, a volunteer carer who often accompanies Marco on these outings. Her sentiments run deep as she reflects, “volunteering saved my life”. For her, it’s not just about the act of giving; it’s a lifeline that has restored purpose and sense of hope.

A survey of passengers unveils a stark reality: 60% have no meaningful interactions throughout the week besides those facilitated by the volunteers of this transport service. This statistic underscores the service’s vital role, and the volunteers who power it, in battling social isolation and loneliness.

Stories like Betty’s, Marco’s and Joanne’s intertwine to reveal a tapestry woven by volunteering, each thread strengthening the fabric of the community. When everyday heroes put on their volunteer hats, the ripple effect of volunteering is clear.

*\*Names have been changed for privacy.*

# **Focus area 3:** Recognised and celebrated

***Ensuring that the true value of volunteering is recognised and celebrated***

Queensland’s volunteer workforce is larger than any other single sector. That is equivalent to just over half of the entire paid workforce, with the cost of replacing a year of volunteer labour estimated to be over $31 billion.[[1]](#endnote-2) However, the value of volunteering for our communities is much deeper than a measure of the time that volunteers contribute.

Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we want to strengthen the recognition and celebration of volunteering by cultivating broader, deeper, and more regular recognition of the value of volunteering and celebrating the people that show up day in and day out to make a difference in their communities.

## Celebrating volunteers through everything we do

We want volunteers to have meaningful and enriching experiences. It’s important that volunteers can see how their efforts are making a difference and that they feel valued for their contributions.

Celebrating volunteering should extend beyond acknowledging National Volunteer Week, and awards ceremonies. Although these activities are important, we want volunteering to be recognised and celebrated through everything we do.

Recognising and celebrating volunteering also cannot be left as a task solely for volunteer involving organisations, or one that is delegated to volunteer managers. We want to work towards a future where more Queenslanders are recognising the vital role of volunteering, celebrating the contributions of volunteers, and feeling inspired to get involved.

* *Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we acknowledge that the things everybody does matters, every single day, across all parts of our communities.*
* *We want to promote opportunities for everybody to recognise and celebrate the important role of volunteering in their lives and communities.*

## Respecting diversity of language in volunteering

Our individual understanding of ‘volunteering’ is greatly influenced by our values, cultures, faiths, experiences, and geographic locations.

In some cases, people might not consider their acts of community giving to be ‘volunteering’—even though it meets our definition of ‘time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain’.

Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we want to promote an expansive and inclusive understanding of volunteering, in its many forms. This means recognising and learning from different cultural interpretations of what it means to give your time—including Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander kinship-giving, and the ways that people undertake cultural responsibilities in Queensland’s many culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

However, it's important to recognise that there are situations where it is not appropriate to refer to activities as volunteering even if they appear to meet the definition. Our commitment to promoting human rights and utilising person-centred approaches means that Queenslanders themselves are ultimately best placed to define their acts of community-giving—but wherever possible and appropriate we want to make sure that volunteering has a place for everyone.

* *Volunteering is incredibly diverse. It is understood and expressed in many ways by many people.*
* *We uphold the principle of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise them as the custodians of their own languages, lands, cultures, and ways of knowing, being and doing.*
* *We are committed to Closing the Gap and reframing the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the Queensland Government. We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be empowered to determine, drive, and own the outcomes related to their own lives, including related to the understanding and expression of volunteering.*

### Case study: Volunteers powering Townsville Pride

Pride networks in Queensland are often community-led by volunteers who identify within Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex and Asexual plus (LGBTQIA+) communities. These networks build connections across Queensland and advocate for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people.

An example of this spirit of volunteering was showcased in 2024 in the heart of Townsville, where a vibrant celebration unfolded—the first Townsville Pride Festival, a momentous celebration of local LGBTQIA+ communities.

With contributions from dedicated volunteers, this festival fostered inclusivity and shone a spotlight on the diversity thriving within Townsville.

The journey to this Pride event was a labour of love, spearheaded by a passionate group of volunteers who poured their energy into every aspect of the festival. They juggled full-time jobs, family commitments, and personal lives, yet their commitment to making the festival a reality endured.

“Seeing the impact it could have on our community, especially the youth and other LGBTQIA+ people, Brotherboys and Sistergirls who often feel marginalised, drove us forward,” said Brenton Creed, Traditional Owner and Native Title Applicant of Gurambilbarra and Yunbenun, lands and seas of the Wulgurukaba People, and volunteer of the Townsville Pride event.

The 2024 Townsville Pride Festival exceeded expectations, largely thanks to many volunteers—a testament to the power of grassroots community-led organisation and volunteering.

*Every day in Queensland, volunteers like this are giving their own time, coming together for a common purpose. The Queensland Government honours and thanks the volunteers who dedicate their time and effort to support causes such as LGBTQIA+ rights and community celebration and making a difference within their communities.*

## Recognising the true value of volunteering

Many of the organisations and services our communities depend on can only continue to operate thanks to the efforts of volunteers.

Recognising and celebrating volunteering is about acknowledging this and strengthening our appreciation for the contributions of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.

It also means recognising that volunteering’s value is much more than a measure of time willingly given. For the individual, volunteering provides a valuable source of social connection and purpose and can help to develop new skills as a pathway to employment. For our communities, it strengthens the social fabric, and can fill gaps, provide additional capacity, and respond in ways that formal service systems cannot.

Whether you’re a CEO or Minister setting strategic priorities, a frontline worker delivering services, a program manager making investment decisions, or an individual contributor—by applying a volunteering ‘lens’ to our work, we can all better recognise the value of volunteering and the opportunities we each have available to us to contribute to thriving volunteering in Queensland.

We recognise that volunteering doesn’t belong to any one business unit, agency, portfolio, or jurisdiction—and that our collective efforts will be more impactful when we collaborate, share our learnings and investments, and strive to capitalise on the opportunities we each have to strengthen volunteering.

Improving how we measure volunteer participation and impact is also essential. Collecting, using, and sharing quality data, information, insights, knowledge and evidence will enhance our understanding and ability to showcase the profound value of volunteering in our communities.

* *Volunteering reaches across many parts of our society and communities, significantly impacting our everyday lives.*
* *Volunteering creates deep and lasting value for the people that volunteer, the recipients of their service, and the communities where volunteering occurs.*
* *Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we will take action to strengthen the recognition of volunteering’s value.*

# Working together to strengthen volunteering

The Queensland Government has a multi-faceted role in the volunteering ecosystem. We are:

* *A volunteer involving organisation* - that directly engages volunteers in many of our programs and services.
* *A commissioner and funder* - that engages organisations to deliver services and programs on our behalf—many of which rely on volunteers to do their important work.
* *A policymaker and system steward* - that sets policy to support volunteering, works with other governments, and funds peak bodies, sector building and research activities.

Through the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we will leverage our unique position to strengthen volunteering - demonstrating our commitment by leading the way, sharing our learnings, and setting an example in the things we do.

Many other people, organisations, institutions, and governments also play an important role in supporting volunteering. We recognise that working better, together is vital to realising our future vision of a thriving volunteering ecosystem.

# Next steps

The release of the Queensland Volunteering Strategy is just one step on a much bigger journey.

Through the life of this strategy, we are committed to working in partnership with volunteers, communities, governments, and everyone involved in volunteering to continuously refine and deliver on this vision.

Queensland Government has a critical role to play, and our success is dependent on strong partnerships, collaboration and the support of everyone who has a stake in volunteering.

Most importantly, we will maintain our focus and invest our efforts in supporting the continual growth and development of a thriving volunteering ecosystem that strengthens the fabric of every Queensland community.

# Notes on language

Volunteering:

For the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we have adopted the common definition of volunteering as ‘time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.'[[2]](#endnote-3)

However, many times throughout this document we use the term ‘volunteering' in a broader sense than just the act of volunteering. This is intended to be inclusive of the ecosystem that supports and sustains volunteering.

### Volunteering ecosystem:

There are a range of terms regularly used to describe the universe of volunteering. These include system, sector, network, and ecosystem.

In the Queensland Volunteering Strategy, we have opted to use the term ‘ecosystem’.

When we use this term, it is intended to encompass the various interconnected parts and people that enable volunteering, as well as the way they connect and interact. This includes:

* individual volunteers and their participation through the act of volunteering
* the people they connect with through volunteering
* the organisations and institutions that they work through and with, and
* the various people, processes, technologies, practices, policies, regulation, legislation, and relationships that impact and influence volunteering.

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This strategy has been influenced by the contributions of many people, organisations, and institutions with a stake in volunteering. We would like to acknowledge their ongoing work, which has helped us greatly in shaping the Queensland Volunteering Strategy. This document has been informed by:

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