



Young people volunteering: Removing the barriers

Growing Up In Queensland
Issues Paper

Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



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Acknowledgement

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) acknowledges the unique and diverse cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and notes, throughout this issues paper, the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander has been used to collectively describe two distinct groups of people.

The QFCC also acknowledges all children have a right to have their voices heard and participate in decisions made about them.

We acknowledge children as experts on their own life experiences and thank the children and young people who provided the QFCC with their views on volunteering. We know their ideas contribute to better decision making about strategies and practices that involve them.

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1. Introduction

In 2018, the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) undertook the *Growing up in Queensland* project.

The project engaged more than 7,000 Queensland children and young people, aged four to 18 years, to hear their thoughts, views and opinions about their community, hopes and dreams and the issues most important to them. The findings were released in *This place I call home: the views of children and young people on growing up in Queensland*.

During consultation, children and young people said volunteering is a good way to gain useful skills to improve employability as well as to give back to the community. However, participants said they were often prevented from volunteering because of their age. One secondary student in south-east Queensland reported,

Even volunteering is difficult to get into if you are trying to get experience. We wanted to help out at the Children’s Hospital and we found out you have to be aged 18 to volunteer.¹

To address these concerns, the QFCC worked with Volunteering Queensland to speak to volunteer-involving organisations across Queensland about the benefits of volunteering and ways to increase and support youth volunteering.

The QFCC also heard from 247 children and young people through an eHub survey² to understand their experiences of volunteering, learning from them about barriers, opportunities and benefits of volunteering.

This information is considered together with contemporary research to present discussion across three main issues for youth volunteering:

- employment and economic outcomes
- individual and community wellbeing
- barriers and opportunities.

What is volunteering?

Volunteering Australia, the peak national body for volunteering states, ‘volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain’.³

Volunteering benefits a young person’s positive mental wellbeing. It contributes to social capital by helping connect people to their community, delivering services to community members.

Volunteering can help young people develop work-related soft skills, the interpersonal communication skills that help young people build networks and create influence in the workplace.⁴ Other positive impacts include building self-esteem, improving academic outcomes and developing technical skills, all of which can lead to better employment outcomes.⁵

In the 2016 Census, 19.6 per cent of Queenslanders aged 15 to 19 reported they had participated in volunteering for an organisation or group. By comparison, only 15.18 per cent of Queenslanders of all ages reported they had participated in volunteering for an organisation or group.⁶

Volunteering includes **formal volunteering**, for an organisation, and **informal volunteering**, where people help out in their community outside of formal organisations.

2. Placing volunteering on the policy agenda

Engaging young people in volunteering contributes to whole-of-person and whole-of-community objectives.

Young people and organisations report volunteering as a good way to gain useful skills to improve employability, as well as to give back to the community.

Increasing opportunities for youth volunteering contributes to employment and economic outcomes for Queensland, supporting the wellbeing of Queensland's people. These benefits are discussed at sections 3 and 4 of this issues paper.

The benefits from youth volunteering can contribute to achieving objectives outlined in Queensland Government strategic plans.

The Queensland Government *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities* includes six priority focus areas to advance Queensland—both now and into the future.

Create jobs in a strong economy is one focus area of the plan with a contributing objective to 'engage more young Queenslanders in education, training and work'. To do this, the Queensland Government has committed to investment and action so that young people receive the appropriate education to meet the demands of the future economy.⁷

The *Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018-2023* sets out the five-year direction for a whole-of-person, whole-of-community and whole-of-government approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of Queenslanders.⁸

Better Lives is a focus area under this plan. Strategic priorities within this focus area include removing barriers to social and economic participation by strengthening social inclusion, and increasing participation in education, employment and training. Overcoming barriers to employment, social connections and community life are important considerations to help people with lived experiences of mental health enjoy better lives.⁹

Although the benefits of youth volunteering are demonstrated by research and acknowledged by young people and professionals, there is no Queensland volunteering strategy to drive and connect young people with volunteering. Young people continue to report barriers to accessing volunteering opportunities. Opportunities to remove these barriers are discussed at section 5 of this issues paper.

3. Employment and economic outcomes

Many volunteers report they volunteer in order to learn or maintain skills, particularly where those skills can be useful in finding work or developing careers.¹⁰

Volunteering has been shown to lead to positive employment outcomes. This can be particularly relevant to socially disadvantaged young people, who are more likely to see volunteering as a pathway to employment.¹¹ A French study has shown positive employment outcomes for volunteers who learned to refer to their volunteer experience when applying for work,¹² while a US study demonstrated youth volunteering was associated with higher lifetime earnings.¹³

Research has shown the soft skills developed by volunteers boosts young people's employability, and that corporations consider volunteering experience to be equally as valuable as paid experience when evaluating candidates.¹⁴

Volunteering creates social and economic benefits. Volunteering Queensland reports volunteers make up Queensland's largest workforce.¹⁵ Nationally, volunteering has been estimated to contribute \$290 billion to Australia's economy.¹⁶ One Western Australian report has calculated every \$1 invested in volunteering provides a benefit of \$4.50 to the economy.¹⁷

The social and economic impacts of volunteering are interrelated. Many important social services are delivered by volunteers, particularly in regional and remote areas. These social services are important to maintaining regional economies, where youth unemployment can be higher than the national average.¹⁸ Volunteering also plays a role in improving the rates of youth employment, by building skills and providing a bridge toward paid employment.¹⁹

Rates of volunteering are consistently higher in regional areas, both in terms of likelihood to volunteer on a given day, and the amount of time donated to volunteering.²⁰ Declining rates of volunteering are also felt more strongly in regional areas, where communities rely on volunteers to provide essential services.²¹



Through volunteering, children and young people can develop the initial skills that help them build the confidence to apply for a traineeship, apprenticeship or paid employment.

Volunteering Queensland

Volunteering Queensland is the peak body 'dedicated to advancing volunteering for the economic, social, cultural and environmental wellbeing of Queensland'.

Volunteering Queensland:

- supports volunteer-involving organisations
- operates a searchable register of volunteering opportunities across Queensland
- hosts annual Queensland Volunteering Awards
- runs the Students as Active Volunteers Initiative, providing volunteering opportunities to high school students.



Young people's perspectives on volunteering and employment

Through the eHub survey, young people directly attributed the skills and knowledge they gained through volunteering to helping them engage in paid employment.

As well as learning skills related to their volunteer work, many young people spoke about transferable skills important to professional environments, such as organisation, time management, and public speaking.

“It gave me general job experience while in high school. Thanks to it, I knew how to operate a cash register,

manage my time efficiently, and interact with patrons before I left high school for work. Post-high school, I have learnt how to obtain a blue card and work with teenagers from volunteering, as well as some programming and use of certain computer programs.”

Several young people reported volunteering taught them to become more independent and responsible.

“To show more initiative and independence, understand what it's like to have proper responsibility over something important”.

Organisational perspectives on volunteering, employment and regional economies

During consultation, volunteer-involving organisations reported a range of benefits to communities from engaging young volunteers. These include:

- encouraging young people to stay in the community and find local work opportunities
- increased rapport between local people, businesses and young people
- opportunities for a community's young people to gain work-related skills and training through volunteering
- opportunities for young people to give their unique skills to the community, for example through teaching others about new technology.

They reported volunteering provides young people with diverse work-related skills and experiences, including:

- networking
- problem-solving
- interpersonal skills
- opportunities to be mentored
- structures and systems
- developing goals and ambitions.

Recognising informal volunteering for employment and economic outcomes

Rates of informal volunteering, where people proactively help in their community without joining formal organisations, are generally higher than formal volunteering and contribute more to the economy.²²

The proportion of formal to informal volunteering varies between communities and regions, influenced by the level of trust people have in formal organisations.²³

Young people are likely to underestimate their informal volunteering activities, particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Young people are also less likely to recognise their own activities as 'volunteering' because they see their participation as serving personal purposes and interests.²⁴

Young people can be reluctant to use the word volunteering, or see themselves as volunteers, preferring to see themselves as working or being involved with an organisation. Volunteering is sometimes seen as performing lower-level tasks, whereas 'working' or 'being involved', even if unpaid, suggests a position of leadership and inclusion.²⁵

Informal volunteering could be better recognised. This could include organisational support for children and young people to continue volunteering in their communities. It could also include supporting them to identify the skills they have gained through informal volunteering, to promote these experiences when applying for paid work.



Young people who volunteer informally may need support to translate their experiences into work-related skills they can use to build resumes.

Reflections

The following reflections are provided to assist individuals and organisations consider this issue and ways forward to strengthen employment and economic outcomes.

Policy and strategy

- How can future policy strategies integrate youth volunteering?
- How can workforce strategies include youth volunteering to support future workforce development and support regional economies?
- Are there opportunities for community, industry, government and non-government organisations to partner to better understand how volunteering can contribute to individual and whole-of-community economic outcomes?

Communication and education

- In what ways can volunteering opportunities be better communicated to attract young people as a way to gain meaningful employment skills?
- How can children and young people be practically supported to translate knowledge and skills gained from formal and informal volunteering into capabilities and attributes for paid employment?

4. Individual and community wellbeing

Volunteering is considered an indicator of the strength of civil society²⁶ and the level of **social capital** in a given community.²⁷

The term social capital refers to the networks, norms and social trust that make it possible for people to work together. Higher levels of social capital are linked to more interpersonal trust, stronger civic engagement, lower crime and more effective government.²⁸

Young people's perspectives on developing skills to participate in their community

Children and young people reported one of the main benefits of volunteering was the chance to develop interpersonal skills. They discussed conflict resolution, public speaking and interacting with different people. Several young people noted that they learned how to speak to adults or engage younger children.

“I’ve learnt how to work with primary school kids, at many different ages, from many different ages, how to work in that primary school library and how to interact well with adults and children. I’ve also volunteered with my school’s charity fundraisers and I learnt about money and teamwork.”

Young volunteers typically report their primary motivation to volunteer is to contribute to society and their community.

Volunteering Queensland conducted research to identify how young people engage with formal volunteer-involving organisations.²⁹ The findings show young people respond most strongly when an organisation has a strong culture aligning with a cause, where volunteers can feel ‘a part of’ the organisation, and where all volunteers can see themselves as having a leadership role.

Youth volunteering raises social and political awareness among adolescents, fosters their sense of principle, increases their trust in institutions and connects them to their communities.³⁰ It can also help overcome isolation and perceived powerlessness.³¹



Young people respond positively to organisations that have a cause, make them feel ‘a part of’ the organisation, and offer them leadership roles.

Volunteering is a form of pro-social behaviour. Communities benefit from young people being actively involved in civic life.³²

Organisational perspectives on individual and community wellbeing

Volunteer-involving organisations reported a range of benefits to the individual wellbeing of young volunteers, including:

- connection (to culture, country, community and each other)
- a sense of social responsibility
- personal skills and attributes, such as
 - improved mental health
 - growth and resilience
 - empathy
 - self-confidence
 - risk-taking
 - interpersonal skills.

They also reported a range of benefits to communities from engaging young volunteers. These include:

- strengthened community bonds and values
- young people developing greater skills and experience
- less anti-social behaviour
- increased positivity and enthusiasm throughout the community
- opportunities for young people to voice their concerns and aspirations for the community
- opportunities for young people to act as advocates for particularly vulnerable groups, such as culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Informal volunteering supporting community wellbeing

Informal volunteering covers a range of activities that support community wellbeing. These activities include helping friends and neighbours in self-managed ways, such as driving a person to an appointment, looking after their children or taking out their bins.³³ Broader informal volunteering may include supporting community events, mentoring or teaching without pay, assisting sports clubs or teams, and providing settlement and welcoming activities to new members of the community without taking part in a formal organisation.³⁴

There has been a recent rise in ‘virtual volunteering’, where young people manage social media pages for causes, or contribute to online communities, such as editing Wikipedia pages. These forms of volunteering are often ‘invisible’ and can go unnoticed, however they contribute to the same positive outcomes as other forms of volunteering.³⁵

People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities have higher rates of informal volunteering. In one survey, Volunteering Australia reported 72 per cent of culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers had participated in informal volunteering, compared with 21 per cent engaged through an organisation. Of these, 56 per cent volunteered within their own communities and broader society, while 39 per cent worked only in their own communities.³⁶



Informal volunteering contributes a high value to diverse communities and plays an important role in building social cohesion.

Volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have a high level of community engagement, contributing considerable time to their volunteer activities. These activities are understood as part of shared community ethics for the common good. While not organised through formal organisations, community volunteering is still organised, through cultural and religious networks. Yet these volunteers are less likely to define their activity as ‘volunteering’, seeing their work as something that should not be separated from everyday life as an individual or as part of the wider community.³⁷

Young people's perspectives on individual and community wellbeing

Children and young people also reported how interacting with different cultures and backgrounds taught them perspective. One young person reported:

“the importance of having a greater perspective on life and how people across the world live in remarkably different ways”

Another young person talked about how they learned the importance of caring for those less fortunate through their church:

“At our church, our Sunday school made and sold brownies and cookies to raise money for the people who lost their homes or their loved ones during the floods. This surprisingly taught me how to persuade people to buy a product, and the fact that we did prevent people from starving taught us/me to always care for the poor and marginalised.”

Young people also reported community volunteering helps develop life skills:

“Just in the volunteer work that I have done, I have gained independent life skills such as cooking, garden maintenance and housekeeping”.



Volunteers from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, have a high level of community engagement but are less likely to define their actions as ‘volunteering’, as they see their role as inherent to their everyday life as an individual or community member.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have high levels of informal volunteering. Most community members are regularly involved in community activities, such as caring for the elderly, providing transport, and organising and participating at cultural and community events. This is underpinned by complex systems of kinship and family obligations, which can extend beyond ‘immediate’ or ‘extended’ families and are less likely to be captured in volunteering research and statistics. These activities are a fundamental part of life, in contrast to voluntary help.³⁸

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, volunteering can be vital to maintaining culture and making sure the community can thrive. It also helps to maintain remote communities, where access to services is limited, transport is a challenge, populations are smaller and communities are physically isolated.³⁹ However, this type of volunteering is generally underacknowledged and fails to attract recognition and support.

In a Volunteering Far North Queensland study, culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers reported that despite their strong contributions to their communities, they did not feel comfortable or welcome in formal organisations. In addition, informal volunteers felt their local councils did not appreciate the contribution they were making, and they lacked help, support services and funding.⁴⁰

Reflections

The following reflections are provided to assist individuals and organisations consider this issue and ways forward to strengthen individual and community wellbeing.

Policy and strategy

- What can be done to include youth volunteering in policy strategies aimed at supporting community wellbeing, particularly in regional communities?
- How can volunteering be better connected with strategies supporting youth mental health?
- What are the costs and benefits, including benefits to the community in increased social capital, of providing practical support to increase youth volunteering?
- How can government measure, and practically support, informal volunteering to promote community wellbeing?

Communication and education

- How can communities be better informed about benefits of youth volunteering?
- How can young people be connected to volunteering opportunities, particularly in remote and regional areas?
- Can communities promote youth volunteering opportunities in areas where there are higher rates of anti-social behaviours?

5. Barriers and opportunities

Despite the many benefits to individuals and communities, there are a range of barriers impacting rates of youth volunteering reported both by young people and organisations. Reported barriers relate to legislation, policies, insurance, costs, logistics and engagement practices. However, there are opportunities to remove actual and perceived barriers.

Organisational perspectives on barriers to youth volunteering

Organisations reported:

- concerns around working with children checks and creating child safe environments
- insurance policies do not always cover volunteers under the age of 18
- volunteers are not 'free', as organisations need resources to train, induct and supervise volunteers
- young volunteers often lack the work experience of older volunteers and require greater supervision
- very young volunteers need appropriately qualified supervision to make sure they are safe
- age-appropriate roles need to be available
- volunteering opportunities for children need to be offered outside school hours
- children often need parental support to volunteer
- opportunities need to be close to reliable transport
- young volunteers, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, need to feel culturally safe in organisations.

While volunteering can be impacted by legislation and policies related to workplace safety and insurance, this should not exclude young people from volunteering. There is no legal barrier in Queensland preventing organisations from identifying and designing volunteer roles suitable for children under the age of 18 years.

Generally, organisations that have working with children check arrangements and child safe organisation policies are still able to engage young people as volunteers.



Organisations benefit from including young people as volunteers, as they bring creativity, enthusiasm, knowledge of technology and contemporary approaches to the work.

Engaging young volunteers will create a sustainable network of experienced volunteers into the future.

Insurance

Myth: insurance policies will not cover children under the age of 18 who are volunteering.

Fact: organisations are generally able to organise insurance policies that cover children under the age of 18 when volunteering. Organisations need to demonstrate to their insurance provider the young volunteers will be in age-appropriate roles and will be properly supervised.

To become an approved voluntary work organisation, community-based organisations must hold two types of insurance. These are:

- **Public liability insurance** – this covers injury to third parties and damage to third party property
- **Personal accident insurance** – sometimes known as voluntary worker’s insurance, this covers volunteers for any accident or injury that occurs while working with the organisation.⁴¹

Some insurance companies place age restrictions on their policies, which could affect a child or young person’s ability to volunteer. For example, students or people on work placements may not be included under some personal accident insurance policies, and motor vehicle comprehensive insurance may exclude or have an excess for drivers under the age of 25 or on their probationary licence. Forward planning will help alleviate any insurance barriers volunteer-including organisations may face when supporting young volunteers.

Working with children checks

Myth: where children are volunteering in an organisation, all volunteers are required to have Blue Cards (working with children checks).

Fact: organisations providing regulated child related services are required to make sure staff and volunteers that are 18 years and over have a Blue Card under the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000*. Children who are volunteers are not required to apply for a Blue Card. A Blue Card will be required once the person turns 18.

When a young person volunteers in an organisation that does not provide regulated child-related services, staff are not required to hold a Blue Card merely because a child is volunteering there.

Requirements in Queensland, including working with children checks, regulations for child employment and principles for child safe organisations, are explained at **Appendix A**.

Young people’s perspectives on barriers to volunteering

Young people reported:

- not being happy with responses from volunteer-involving organisations
“they didn’t get in contact with me enough for me to be able to volunteer, I was very passionate about the event however lack of communication from their side led to me not being able to help.”
- being told they were ‘too young’ to volunteer
“The volunteers needed to be 18 years old and I was not yet 18 at the time I applied.”
- feeling they needed to focus on study or other paid employment
“I ended up with too much on my plate and forgot about them - by the time I realised I was so embarrassed and just never contacted them again”. “I was over-committed. Would have been interested otherwise.”

Opportunities to increase youth volunteering

There are opportunities for government, organisations and individuals to increase rates of youth volunteering.

While volunteering is included in strategies such as the *Queensland Sport and Recreation Strategy 2019-2029*, there is no overarching Queensland strategy to drive whole-of-government direction and investment.

The Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia all have dedicated volunteering strategies in place. These are further detailed at **Appendix B**.

South Australia Statewide Strategy for Volunteering (2014–2020)

- investment in the foundations of volunteering
- promote and inform on the benefits of volunteering
- implementing leading practice and high-quality standards
- progressively adapt through continuous improvement.

Western Australia Volunteering Strategy: Enriching lives, strengthening communities

- responding to emerging trends and issues
- encourage and facilitate participation in community life through volunteering
- support volunteer-involving organisations
- recognise and value volunteers and volunteering.

New South Wales Volunteering Strategy 2016-2020

- expanding participation in community life through volunteering
- creating digital media avenues to support volunteering
- developing a mainstream media campaign and local marketing strategies to promote volunteering
- designing and developing new volunteering options
- building capacity in volunteer organisations to innovate and deliver best-practice volunteer management
- enhancing programs to recognise the positive contribution of volunteers.

Australian Capital Territory Volunteering Statement Action Plan 2018-2021

- promoting volunteering to government, business and the wider community
- encouraging collaboration to link people with meaningful volunteering opportunities
- tailoring promotion to people of all cultural backgrounds, ages, abilities and gender identities
- supporting professional development of volunteers and managers of volunteers.



Outside government, there are many ways the status of volunteering can be strengthened. Volunteer-involving organisations identified actions to create positions, attract and support young people.

Organisational perspectives on opportunities to increase youth volunteering

Volunteer-involving organisations reported mapping community needs, especially in regional and rural areas, was a good strategy to identify places where children and young people could help.

Networks between not-for-profit organisations, schools, sporting and recreational clubs and youth organisations would create greater awareness of needs and opportunities across the community. They spoke to implementing actions such as:

- community education about the benefits of volunteering
- feedback from children and young people about how to tell positive stories about volunteering
- ‘buddy programs’ and other ways to get young people to shadow volunteers
- school-based volunteering programs
- central hubs for volunteering opportunities
- promoting youth volunteering ambassadors
- building strong relationships with young volunteers, particularly those with experience in out-of-home care or youth justice.

Advocacy and community education about volunteering was acknowledged by stakeholders as a current gap. They spoke about the need to educate people and organisations about legal requirements and advocate for young people to get involved.

Social media and youth-friendly platforms were raised as effective approaches to attract young people to volunteering roles and build partnerships with schools and training organisations.

Inclusive recruitment and training

Socially disadvantaged young people are more likely to see volunteering as a pathway to employment. This cohort is also underrepresented as volunteers, as they face greater barriers to participation.⁴² For example, education is correlated with participation in volunteering, and young people with lower levels of education are less likely to volunteer.

One reason for this may be that the formalisation of volunteering opportunities has struggled to attract young volunteers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.⁴³

Efforts to recruit volunteers through well-organised programs may have the unintended consequence of excluding some candidates with genuine enthusiasm and experience to offer their communities.



Recruitment activities should be inclusive and balance formal processes with an approach that is open and welcoming to all potential volunteers.

Recruitment and training processes should be as inclusive as possible, to make sure young people across all communities have a chance to contribute through volunteering.

Volunteering supports individual and community wellbeing, contributes to regional economies, and helps young people develop the skills and networks that lead to paid employment.

Increasing rates of volunteering will contribute to advancing Queensland as a state in which individuals, communities and economies thrive.



Innovative and flexible formal or informal volunteering opportunities can support children and young people to participate. These can include:

- 'family' volunteering
- corporate volunteering
- micro / macro volunteering
- episodic volunteering
- spontaneous volunteering
- 'voluntourism'
- virtual and online volunteering.⁴⁴

Reflections

The following reflections are provided to assist individuals and organisations consider this issue and ways forward to strengthen youth participation in volunteering.

Policy and strategy

- How can strategy overcome barriers to engaging young volunteers?
- What sectors and clients would benefit from including young people as volunteers in service delivery?
- What are the sector capability needs to develop age-appropriate roles and youth-friendly models of recruitment and training?

Communication and education

- What resources would help organisations to better understand the legal and policy environment that supports young volunteers?
- How can young people be better connected to local volunteering opportunities?

Appendix A: Law and policy

Requirements for organisations looking to engage young volunteers are set out in legislation.

Blue card system

The *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)* sets out the working with children check system in Queensland, often called the blue card system. It promotes and protects the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people.⁴⁵ In addition, this Act requires certain organisations to implement child and youth risk management strategies.

Chapter 8 of the *Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)* sets out the requirements of the blue card system. The purpose of the blue card system is to minimise the risks of harm to children when receiving services and participating in particular activities.⁴⁶

The blue card system determines a person's eligibility to work with children based on known past police and disciplinary information. All volunteers working with children in regulated employment must hold a Blue Card prior to commencing their volunteering activities. Regulated employment generally refers to employment providing services to children. These include, for example, child care, education, health, counselling and support, and sport and cultural activities.

Regulated organisations are required to make sure individuals providing services or activities directly to children undergo a working with children check. However, children who are volunteers are not required to apply for a Blue Card, even if they will be providing services or activities directly to children. A Blue Card will be required once the person turns 18.

Child and Youth Risk Management Strategies

Regardless of whether a Blue Card is required, volunteer-including organisations need to consider how they might foster safe environments for children and young people in their workplace.

Organisations falling within the scope of the blue card system are required to implement child and youth risk management strategies.⁴⁷ The purpose of these strategies is to ensure that organisations have appropriate policies and procedures in place which help identify and minimise the risk of harm to children and young people in regulated service environments.

Child Employment Act 2006

The *Child Employment Act 2006 (Qld)* outlines conditions and restrictions to safeguard working children. This Act aims to protect children from being required to perform work that may be harmful to their health and safety, or physical, mental, moral and social development.⁴⁸

The *Child Employment Act 2006* applies to all organisations engaging children under the age of 18 in work, including voluntary work, in Queensland.⁴⁹ While children must be 13 years of age or older to do most paid work, a child of any age may volunteer.⁵⁰

Parent's consent

A distinction is made within this Act between 'school-aged children' and 'young children'. A school-aged child is a child under 16 years who is also required to be enrolled at a school. A child below the age of 16 years is not a school-aged child if the child has completed compulsory schooling or is not required to be enrolled at a school, according to the *Education Act 2006 (Qld)*.⁵¹ A young child is a child who is not old enough to be enrolled for compulsory schooling.

A volunteer-involving organisation is required to obtain a parent's consent prior to engaging a school-aged child or young child in volunteer work.⁵² The parent's consent form must be a form approved under this Act.⁵³

The form must include information pertaining to the child, the proposed employer, times when the child is required to attend school, and a statement that the parent consents to the child performing work for the employer. The form must be signed by a parent or guardian and kept on file by the employer.⁵⁴

Hours of work

The *Child Employment Act 2006* includes specific restrictions on when a child would be able to work. A distinction is made between school-aged children and young children.

This Act makes it an offence to require or permit a school-aged child to perform work when they are required to attend school.⁵⁵ A school-aged child can work a maximum of four hours on a school day, or eight hours on a non-school day, but no more than 12 hours during a school week, or 38 hours during a non-school week. A school-aged child must be given at least a one-hour break after the end of the fourth hour of work. A school-aged child must have a 12-hour break after completing work, before starting work again.⁵⁶

A young child can work up to four hours a day and 12 hours per week. A young child must have a 12-hour break after completing work, before starting work again.⁵⁷

Safety, health and wellbeing

A volunteer-involving organisation employing a child (the employer) must ensure the child is given induction training appropriate to the child's age, including workplace health and safety training.⁵⁸ Employers must make sure a child is appropriately supervised by an adult, which means to make sure an adult is near and in regular contact with the child.⁵⁹

Employers of a child must ensure a child does not work in a role or situation that is 'inappropriate for the child, having regard to the child's age, emotional and psychological development, maturity and sensitivity',⁶⁰ and take reasonable steps to ensure the child is not subject to 'deliberate or unnecessary social isolation or any behaviour likely to intimidate, threaten, frighten or humiliate the child'.⁶¹

An employer of a child must allow and take reasonable steps to ensure that the child is able to contact a parent or other nominated person in all reasonable circumstances.⁶²

Record-keeping requirements

Under the *Child Employment Act 2006*, any employer of a child is required to keep basic employment records. Employers of a school-aged or young child are also required to keep the following information in their records:

- the number of hours worked by the child during each day and week
- the times at which the child started and stopped work
- the details of work breaks including meal breaks
- the parent's consent form for the child.⁶³

Records are required to be kept for a minimum of two years. They must be kept in Queensland at a workplace of the employer.

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) provides the framework to protect the health, safety and welfare of all workers at work by eliminating or reducing workplace risks. All workers in Queensland are protected by the WHS Act, including volunteers.⁶⁴

However, this does not include volunteers working for any volunteer association which does not employ any workers, as they do not qualify as conducting a business or undertaking for the purpose of the WHS Act.⁶⁵

An important component of the WHS Act is the requirement for the volunteer-including organisation to provide workers with the information, instruction, training and supervision needed to work safely and without risks to their health.⁶⁶

The organisation is also required to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health.⁶⁷ The definition of 'health' under the WHS Act includes psychological health as well as physical health.⁶⁸

As workers, volunteers also have responsibility and liability under the WHS Act and are required to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, as well as that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.⁶⁹ They must also cooperate with any 'reasonable instruction given', and any 'reasonable policy or procedure' to comply with WHS regulation.⁷⁰

The WHS Act covers workers of all ages. Young volunteers are therefore afforded the same rights and protections as older volunteers and workers and have the same duties of responsibilities as any other worker or volunteer.

Volunteer-involving organisations can support young volunteers by ensuring WHS information, instruction, training and supervision are presented and available in a way that is accessible to young people. Additionally, identifying roles and activities suited to each person's level of experience and ability will help reduce workplace risks.

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991

The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* promotes equality of opportunity by protecting from unfair discrimination in certain areas of activity, including work. Under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*, discrimination based on age is prohibited.⁷¹

However, in a work or work-related area, the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* stipulates it is not unlawful to discriminate if there are 'genuine occupational requirements'.⁷² In these instances, a person may impose genuine occupational requirements for a position.

Civil Liability Act 2003

The *Civil Liability Act 2003* (Qld) includes statutory protection for people performing voluntary work from incurring personal civil liability under certain conditions. The protection is afforded for any act or omission by a volunteer in good faith when doing community work:

- organised by a community organisation
- as an office holder of a community organisation.⁷³

A volunteer is unable to claim the benefit of protection from personal liability if the volunteer knew or ought reasonably to have known they were acting outside the scope of the activities authorised by the organisation or contrary to instructions given by the organisation.⁷⁴

Furthermore, a volunteer is unable to claim the benefit of protection from personal liability if the volunteer:

- was intoxicated while doing the work and failed to exercise due skill and care
- engaged in conduct that constitutes an offence.⁷⁵

Liability would not be excluded if the liability is one that the volunteer is required to be insured against, or for motor accidents covered by a compulsory third-party insurance policy.⁷⁶

National standards and principles

The **National Standards for Volunteer Involvement** were developed by Volunteering Australia in 2015. The eight standards provide a framework for volunteer-including organisations to consider to effectively engage volunteers. The Standards can be used by organisation as a guide to good practice.⁷⁷

The aim of the standards is to ‘ensure the rights of volunteers are protected and that they are supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities’.⁷⁸ While the Standards are general enough to apply to all types of organisations, organisations who are engaging or considering engaging volunteers under the age of 18 years can refer to the standards as a basis for good practice.

The following areas of volunteer involvement are relevant to effectively engaging people under the age of 18 in volunteer roles.

| Standard | Overview |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Leadership and management | Leading and promoting positive culture, and effective management systems, including policies and procedures across the organisation that support the engagement of young volunteers, including records keeping. |
| Recruitment and selection | Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies meet the needs of young volunteers, including demonstrating compliance with anti-discrimination legislation. Screening processes are applied to volunteer roles that help maintain the safety and security of young volunteers, as well as service users, employees, other volunteers and the organisation. |
| Support and development | Volunteers are provided with appropriate supervision and support, including training and development relative to their skill needs, to enable them to practice safely and effectively in their capacity as volunteers. |
| Workplace safety and wellbeing | Workplaces and environments are protective to young people health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers is in the workplace, including mental health. Volunteers have access to complaints and grievance procedures. |

On 20 February 2019, the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the **National Principles for Child Safe Organisations** (National Principles). These reflect the 10 child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. They are designed to allow for flexibility across all sectors engaging with children and young people.⁷⁹

The National Principles are:

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

If an organisation seeks to include young volunteers on a regular basis, the National Principles provide a foundation to help make sure the organisation provides a safe environment for children to volunteer.

Appendix B: Jurisdictional overview of volunteering strategies

South Australia

The *Volunteering Strategy 2014-2020 for South Australia* contains four focus areas and recommended actions to enable a coordinated approach to address the diverse needs of volunteers and communities.⁸⁰

| Focus area | Actions |
|---|--|
| Invest in the foundations of volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote volunteers and volunteer management • clarify and delineate between volunteers and other forms of paid and unpaid employment • facilitate capacity building to train volunteers and manage volunteer recruitment and retention • facilitate update to accreditation and uptake of using the National Volunteer Standards and best practices • facilitate partnership building between organisations, minority groups, young people and communities of interest • identify fiscal or resource barriers and researching solutions • review the definition of volunteering to identify emergent trends. |
| Promote and inform on the benefits of volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a holistic promotion strategy for volunteer recruitment • positively promote volunteers and the diversity of roles • identify innovative new IT models to recruit, train, engage and fund volunteers • research and promote corporate volunteering and encourage employers to provide working arrangements to facilitate this • recognise volunteering as a pathway to employment or retirement outcomes for individuals or community connections • simplify recruitment processes and consider common templates. |
| Implement leading practice and high-quality standards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify issues and gaps in volunteer rights for workplace health and safety, governance and recognition • review government and private funding criteria to incorporate volunteer costs, training and management • investigate the portability and development of guidelines for criminal history record checks across organisations and jurisdictions • improve access to information relating to regulations, good governance, risk management and reduce 'red tape'. |
| Proactively adapt through continuous improvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support research and advocacy that values and impacts volunteering • address the time barrier to volunteering by developing innovative means to volunteers, such as family volunteering, online roles, 'voluntourism', episodic roles and roles for students, employees and the singles segment • adopt a governance structure to implement the strategy with stakeholders and partners • review the strategy annually to ensure its relevance and ability to consider current trends, practices and to maintain partner and bipartisan support. |

Western Australia

The *WA Volunteering Strategy*, developed by the former Western Australian Department of Local Government Communities, outlines a suite actions for the whole community to work together to encourage and support volunteering within the state.⁸¹

| Focus area | Outcomes and strategies |
|---|---|
| Respond to emerging trends and issues | <p>The volunteering sector recognises and responds to the changing needs of volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting and providing flexible opportunities • understanding and responding to volunteer motivations • researching emerging trends and issues promoting corporate volunteering • building capacity of volunteer-involving organisations to respond to emergent trends and issues • retaining volunteers and broadening the scope of their involvement • minimising financial and administrative volunteering barriers. |
| Encourage and facilitate participation in community life through volunteering | <p>The volunteering sector harnesses technological innovations to facilitate participation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising awareness and understanding of volunteering and its benefits • targeted promotion of volunteering opportunities • addressing barriers to volunteering • attracting and engaging volunteers from diverse backgrounds • reducing barriers to recruit and participate • supporting volunteering in regional Western Australia • supporting and encouraging use of technology. |
| Support volunteer-involving organisations | <p>Communities and organisations can effectively involve volunteers for mutual benefits by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting volunteer-involving organisations to manage risk, legal liability and legislative requirements • training volunteer-involving organisations • providing administrative and governance support for volunteer-involving organisations • reducing financial burden on volunteer-involving organisations. |
| Recognise and value volunteers and volunteering | <p>Volunteers are recognised, celebrated and valued for their community contribution by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting volunteer recognition programs • developing innovative ways to recognise and value volunteering • providing training and development opportunities for volunteers. |

New South Wales

The New South Wales Government developed its second volunteering strategy, the *NSW Volunteering Strategy: 2016-2020* to make volunteering more accessible, including a focus on how to attract and retain young people.⁸²

| Priority Action Areas | Actions / Strategy |
|--|--|
| Expand participation in community life through volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote short- or long-term volunteering options through different age-appropriate channels • support volunteer organisations to develop and provide a broad range of integrated volunteering opportunities that match the expectations of people from diverse ages, backgrounds and circumstances • research how to engage more local participation. |
| Create digital media avenues to support volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a NSW Volunteering Participation Portal and apps that are relevant and accessible to people from different backgrounds, ages and with varying degrees of technology literacy, particularly for people with disability • develop online tools to support volunteers transitioning to new roles across life stages • expand and improve time banking for people across all life stages. |
| Develop a mainstream media campaign and local marketing strategies to promote volunteering | <p>Campaigns will be designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appeal to people from different backgrounds across the life course (with particular focus on students, young people, those with disability and those soon to retire) • connect interested people with organisations, opportunities, contacts and avenues • highlight the extensive reach of volunteering and the critical role volunteers play • identify and promote local volunteering opportunities • promote health, personal, educational, professional and community benefits of volunteering. |
| Design and develop new volunteering options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design place-based strategies to attract and retain diverse volunteers across the life cycle • develop tools and resources that attract and retain local volunteers and expand volunteer bases • develop resources and case studies that illustrate the difference between volunteering and unpaid work • increase the evidence base on approaches to expanding volunteering • work with communities, other government departments, non-government and business sectors to understand local volunteering needs. |
| Build capacity in volunteer organisations to innovate and deliver best-practice volunteer management | <p>Work with volunteer organisations to establish a culture of excellence and innovation through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expanding the coverage of the Statement of Principles for the Recognition of Volunteers • building digital engagement capacity and developing digital tools to support best-practice volunteer management and promote access and inclusion for volunteers from different age groups and different backgrounds • developing best-practice, large scale, spontaneous volunteer management framework • developing organisational leadership capacity • providing volunteer management training. |
| Enhance programs to recognise volunteers' positive contributions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expand the Premier's Volunteer Recognition Program to include a category for newly retired people • further promote and continue to support the Volunteer of the Year Award. |

Australian Capital Territory

In 2018, the *ACT Volunteering Statement Action Plan 2018-2021* was released, including activities for ACT Government Directorates, Volunteering and Contact ACT.⁹³ This plan aimed at realising the intentions of the *ACT Volunteering Statement* (2017), which outlined principles to ensure that volunteering is recognised, valued, diverse and supported. The action plan was designed to contribute to engaging and managing volunteers, providing a more integrated and person-centred support for volunteers and volunteer organisations, improving wellbeing, social inclusion and community connectedness, and higher quality services and activities for the Canberra community.

| Key theme and expected outcome | Action |
|---|---|
| <p>Recognised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> volunteers in the ACT are acknowledged and celebrated individuals, community organisations, businesses and government all play a role in promoting the contribution of volunteering in the ACT volunteers are celebrated and recognised through a wide range of ACT Government and community events. | <p>Promote volunteering to government, businesses, and the wider community to ensure that people are aware of the breadth of opportunities and supports available and the value of volunteering across the community.</p> |
| <p>Valuable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organisations enable volunteers to draw on their passion, skills and experience to build a more inclusive, creative and sustainable city and region. improved coordination and collaboration across sectors, of volunteering opportunities and support. | <p>Encourage collaboration to link people with meaningful volunteering opportunities.</p> |
| <p>Diverse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> volunteering is recognised as being for all ages and abilities, and volunteers contribute in all sorts of ways. organisations demonstrate commitment to social inclusion and diversity by encouraging and supporting volunteers from all walks of life. | <p>Tailor promotion of volunteering opportunities for people of all cultural backgrounds, ages, abilities and gender identities.</p> |
| <p>Supported</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> volunteers are included in the life of organisations and have clear roles. organisations are committed to best practice in volunteer management, providing appropriate training and supporting and taking pride in the role of volunteers. | <p>Support the professional development of volunteers and managers of volunteers and facilitate access to relevant resources.</p> |

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