



youth affairs network qld

"Working together to improve the quality of life of young people in Queensland
and thereby improve the quality of life of society."

Submission Response

from

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ)

to

***Engaging Queensland:
A Queensland Government Draft Policy and Discussion Paper
on Volunteering***

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1. About the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ)

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc. (YANQ) is the peak community youth affairs organisation in Queensland. Representing over 400 individuals and organisations from Queensland's youth sector, YANQ promotes the interests and well being of young people across the state. YANQ advocates for and with young people, especially marginalised and disadvantaged young people, to government and the community. Further, YANQ encourages and participates in the development of policies, programs, projects and research that are responsive to the needs of young people and we promote and support cultural development.

2. Introduction

YANQ welcomes the opportunity to comment on *Engaging Queensland: A Queensland Government Draft Policy and Discussion Paper on Volunteering*.

During 2001 various youth sector programs, networks, organisations and individuals gave direct and indirect input to YANQ as the youth sector Peak Body through various events and forums focusing on the international year of the volunteer. As such, it is timely that YANQ is able to add the sectors voice to the draft discussion paper.

3. General Comments

YANQ would wish to make some brief general comments relating to the definition of volunteering used in the paper before feeding back on the principles and outcomes contained in the draft policy and discussion paper.

We would like to commend the Government for the broad based definition of volunteering used in the draft policy and discussion paper.

It is a strongly held view in the youth sector that the activity of volunteering should not be used in order to comply with an activity test related to government benefit, and the linking of volunteerism to this concept is an undermining of traditionally held understandings of volunteerism and the benefits volunteers can bring to the community.

Secondly, YANQ is of the opinion that the definition will allow for volunteerism developments in the community context and will be of benefit to the community by the inclusion of this "broad" based definition that acknowledges the experience and understanding of volunteering from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and backgrounds as well as the altruistic community view of volunteering.

4. Specific Content Comments, Concerns & Issues

4.1 Principles

YANQ has no significant comments on the seven principles that underpin the draft policy and volunteering. They are clear and broad enough to allow the further evolution of volunteer policy to be adaptable and dynamic enough to ensure the evolving nature of volunteering remains relevant to a changing society.

4.2 Key Outcomes & Strategies

YANQ believes that the outcomes in the draft policy document are appropriate and applicable to further volunteering in Queensland. However, while much of the youth sector desires to maximize its use of volunteers there are a number of significant barriers facing organizations and it is the implications of these barriers that remain a significant obstacle to the sector enhancing its volunteer involvement. These barriers do not appear to have been addressed in the policy document and the gap is more noticeable since a number of outcomes and strategies seem to be heading towards the most significant need, but doesn't arrive at the hoped for destination.

YANQ would wish to make comments on this gap within the policy that crosses over a number of outcomes and strategies, particularly, but not limited to, –

Outcome 1

Strategy 1.5 Promote good practice in the management of volunteers

Outcome 2

2.1 Roundtable on risk management

Outcome 3

3.1 Need to increase regional capacity

In the sector, there are a number of realities which must be addressed before there can be an enhancement of volunteering.

First, short term volunteers mean more work for an organization in terms of systems of recruitment, training for staff and volunteers, orientation, skilled management, organizational values, and support to name the most critical. Often this means additional financial cost, resourcing and even staff to enable these necessary elements of organizational enhancement to take on volunteers to be effective.

It has been strongly noted that there will be increased costs and even concerns with initiatives such as police checking of volunteers and child protection procedures.

There will also be effects on the organizational environment with people moving in and out of an organisation and management and co-ordination become essential with a new set of management skills needed.

While networks and the removal of legislative and regulatory barriers helps, organisations will require additional resources to implement policy, practice, and staff changes needed to effectively engage volunteers and address the above realities. This has not been addressed in the Draft policy, and we believe it is vital that it be addressed.

5. Conclusion

The above are the issues that organizations will need to work on, work through, and develop policy and procedures on if they are to effectively engage people in volunteering. In the end, policies and procedures will not be enough, the human

resource element for management, support, supervision, and mentoring needs to underpin policies and procedures, and for many in the community sector, funding and resourcing is required to enable effective human resource management.

Policy is vital and important, but ultimately it will mean nothing unless it can be put into practice and effectively made into reality for the benefit of people by resourcing the sector's capacity to respond to volunteering on an organizational level.