Submission to the Inquiry into volunteering in Queensland
Local Government, Small Business and Customer Service Committee

Introduction
commonkind welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Queensland Parliament's Inquiry into Volunteering. We are a small, **entirely unpaid volunteer-led**, Brisbane-based nonprofit that provides age-appropriate community service opportunities for children and their families to assist fellow Australians suffering disadvantage and distress. We focus our benevolent relief on tackling poverty, eliminating food insecurity and improving health and wellbeing.

We have a strong belief that by harnessing the power of our youngest changemakers, through community service, we can build a kinder and more connected world (Appendix A).

Our volunteer team develops and runs our community service sessions for children and families. In addition they manage relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders including child and family volunteers, schools and other education/care providers, sponsors and supporters and also identify and grow our network of Charity Partners. All of our administrative, fundraising and marketing are also run by volunteers.

As an organisation dedicated to fostering community connections through volunteering, we recognise the vital role volunteers play not only in our organisation but also in strengthening the social fabric of Queensland.

This submission outlines key challenges faced by volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) and offers recommendations for enhancing volunteer participation and support across the state as well as illustrative Case Studies to provide additional context.

Explanatory Notes

1. *commonkind participated in the consultation process for the Volunteering Queensland "State of Volunteering in Queensland 2024 Report" and supports the general findings of the report.*
2. *In this submission, a child is defined as an individual under 18 years of age.*

Our Position
We contend that the **definition of volunteer is too narrow and should be broadened to include child volunteers** (and their families) who are a capable, yet underutilised segment and, especially in the case of children, are the long-term future of volunteering in our state.

As we look toward the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, **now is our opportunity to cultivate an even younger generation of volunteers and future-proof the state of volunteering for generations to come**. A volunteer aged 18 in 2032 is just 11 years old today.

We invite you to join us in building a future where children and their families are able to fully participate and be recognised in the volunteering ecosystem - becoming valued contributors to increasing social cohesion and innovative and engaged partners in tackling our biggest societal challenges.

From speaking with peers in the not-for-profit space, we have found that children (under 16) are generally excluded from participating in meaningful volunteer opportunities due to misconceptions about their capability as well as concerns from VIOs about the “hassle” of involving children, including but not-limited to child protection requirements, liability and not to mention exorbitant insurance. Engaging children and families often falls in the “too hard basket”. What VIOs forget is that with a child, you typically get an adult parent or carer.

We all know there is a well-documented, national trend of declining adult volunteer rates and that especially in this cost-of-living crisis, charities and not-for-profits have overwhelming needs compounded by underwhelming resources.

Even if we ignore the potential of children as volunteers, and look only to their adult parents or carers… the reality for modern families in all their configurations is there are only so many hours in a day. At present, for a parent/carer to volunteer typically means that they need to find child-care in order to participate.

Further, many parents/carers also want to instill compassionate values in their children from a young age, and volunteering is a practical way to do this, but children and families struggle to find meaningful volunteer roles at organisations that will accept their help.

This is a missed opportunity. It doesn’t have to be this way.

At commonkind (www.commonkind.org), we have rewritten the old “rules” around volunteering to create an innovative model that offers a win-win for beneficiaries, volunteers, charities, the volunteer ecosystem, and society as a whole.

We partner with charities to extend their impact. Our commonkind leaders engage our community of child and family volunteers in suitable, developmentally appropriate activities to support the needs of the third sector, meeting their quality standards and deadlines (Appendix B). This allows our charity partners to assign their limited adult volunteers to value-enhancing activities (e.g. fundraising or service delivery) while our children and families play a valuable supporting role to achieve their aims. At the same time, our child and family volunteers enhance their social, emotional and ethical understanding of the issues facing Queensland and develop a lifelong commitment to volunteering.

1. The Value of Volunteering

Volunteering is an essential part of Queensland's social and economic infrastructure. Volunteers contribute to community resilience, social cohesion, and the delivery of essential services. Research has typically focused on adult volunteers and indicates that volunteering enhances mental health, fosters community engagement, and provides pathways to employment.

A broader view on who is a volunteer is useful and is why we argue that children (especially those under 16) and families should be included in the definition of a volunteer.

Children and adolescents benefit significantly from volunteering, as evidenced by several studies and research findings which highlight numerous benefits for them such as positively impacting their mental and physical health, social skills, academic performance, and long-term well-being (Appendix C).

Furthermore, when children volunteer, society as a whole reaps significant benefits, ranging from stronger communities and better educational outcomes to improved mental health and a more skilled, empathetic future workforce (Appendix D).

2. Key Challenges in Volunteering

Structural and systemic barriers are limiting the capacity for volunteering to reach its full potential.

2.1. Declining Volunteer Participation

Recent studies have shown a decline in volunteer numbers, particularly post-pandemic, with many organisations struggling to attract and retain volunteers. Key factors include:

- Increased work and life commitments reducing available time for volunteering.
- Financial pressures making unpaid work/volunteering less viable for many individuals.
- Lack of flexibility in volunteer roles.

2.2. Barriers to Inclusion and Accessibility

Volunteering should be accessible to all Queenslanders, yet several barriers persist:

- Limited opportunities for children, parents/carers, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and culturally diverse communities.
- Regulatory and administrative burdens that deter participation.
- Digital exclusion that prevents older or less tech-savvy individuals from accessing volunteer opportunities.

2.3. Funding and Support for Volunteer Organisations

Many VIOs operate with minimal funding, making it difficult to provide necessary resources, training and coordination. Funding challenges include:

- Insufficient government and corporate support.
- Unstable or short-term grant funding.

- Rising operational costs, including insurance for volunteers.
- Long processing time by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to obtain charitable status – something that is important to volunteer organisations that seek to raise funds to support groups/communities/and special causes.

2.4. Burnout and Volunteer Wellbeing

Long-term volunteers are experiencing increased burnout due to high expectations, lack of support, and the growing complexity of roles. Without adequate recognition and structured support systems, volunteer retention remains a significant challenge.

3. Recommendations for Strengthening Volunteering

To foster a culture of volunteering, drive up participation rates, strengthen community connections to tackle social isolation and loneliness and generally make our Queensland community more resilient, our suggestions are outlined below.

3.1. Strengthening Government Support and Policy

- **Financially and practically empower VIOs' capacity** to engage more volunteers by:
  - implementing **sustainable funding models** that provide long-term security for VIOs to expand volunteer opportunities through more grants that:
    - ➢ do not require DGR1 status
    - ➢ do not require matched funding
    - ➢ allow for salaries/wages to be paid
  - **reducing insurance costs** which are prohibitively expensive
  - **reducing financial audit fees** for small not-for-profits which take up a disproportionate percentage of overheads (annually around $5K)
  - **eliminating fees for police/criminal record checks** to vet volunteers
  - **eliminating Volunteering Queensland Membership fees** for VIOs with turnover of less than $50,000 p.a.
  - **providing fee-free First Aid and CPR courses and other relevant qualifications** (e.g. Child Safety) to nominated personnel at VIOs
  - **negotiating free software** and other technological enablers for not-for-profits (e.g. Xero, Zoom)
  - **facilitating the Blue Card process to make it easier for older Australians** (without drivers licenses to obtain)
  - **providing practical support and templates to make staying compliant with regulatory and legislative changes easier** for VIOs without having to resort to seeking costly legal advice
  - **reducing the cost and expediting the decision process of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission** (we have been waiting more than 8 months for a decision on our application). This lengthy period

negatively impacts our bottom line and consequently the money we have available to provide benevolent relief e.g.
    - ➢ On the revenue side, this delay means we are potentially missing out on grant opportunities that require DGR status
    - ➢ On the cost side, we are not eligible for reduced rates on software packages (e.g. Google Workspace and Canva) until we have a registered charity number
- **Queensland Treasury:** consider ways to **encourage philanthropy for Queensland causes,** to make funding the not-for-profit sector more sustainable
- **Department of Education: enhance practical curricular opportunities to develop a generation of student volunteers** and make Queensland the leader in this space as part of the Australian Curriculum "Personal and Social" capability https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/personal-and-social-capability?element=2&sub-element=PSCSOAA
    - **Extend existing Social Emotional Learning** (SEL) pedagogies to Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (aka "SELv2.0") to incorporate systems thinking and understanding of interdependence and the role of compassion-based volunteering for resilient and connected communities
    - **Incorporate an (ideally mandatory) termly (or at least annual), community service component** within the curriculum for all primary and secondary school students in Queensland to develop an appreciation and practical understanding of the value of volunteering from a young age
        - ➢ **Engage established providers** (such as commonkind) to offer these volunteer opportunities at school, during school hours, to minimise additional administrative/ teaching burden on school staff (Appendix E)
- **Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety: fund facilitation and delivery of Intergenerational Learning Programmes (ILPs)** between children and older Australians to strengthen community connections.
    - These ILPs have **a strong evidence base for effectiveness for both younger and older participants across various domains** (Appendix F) **and are typically run by volunteers,** such as commonkind's Heart to Heart programme (Appendix G)
- Develop a **statewide volunteer strategy** that includes children, parents/carers and families and aligns with the needs of modern volunteers and organisations.
- **Identify and eliminate outdated operating models that are constraining VIOs and allow room for innovation** (as encouraged in the for profit sector)
    - Watch the documentary "Uncharitable" to learn how the not-for-profit sector is constrained by outdated rules that hinder our potential to deliver (https://uncharitablemovie.com/)

3.2. Expanding Volunteer Participation

- Promote **flexible and micro-volunteering opportunities** to fit busy schedules.
- Strengthen **volunteering pathways for children, parents/carers, families, seniors, and people with disabilities**.
    - Incentivise VIOs through grants to provide opportunities e.g.

        - ➢ for the unemployed to develop skills to improve their employment prospects
        - ➢ for the underemployed, such as seniors, who may want to work but are discouraged because earnings may impact their benefits
    - For children (especially under 16 years):
        - provide accessible, developmentally appropriate, meaningful volunteer opportunities through specialised providers such as commonkind
- **Remove cost barriers to participation** for all volunteers.
    - For adults this includes tax breaks or incentives for volunteering
    - For children and families this includes **removing the fee** to participate in:
        - ➢ The Bridge Award https://www.qld.gov.au/youth/get-involved/youth-programs/bridge-award
        - ➢ Duke of Edinburgh Award https://www.qld.gov.au/youth/get-involved/youth-programs/duke-of-ed and
        - ➢ Certificate in Active Volunteering and other such awards that incorporate community service https://volunteeringqld.org.au/training-events/active-volunteering-certificate-i
    - **Funding suitable providers**, such as commonkind, to run highly-valued community service sessions in schools and Outside School Hours Cares providers (Appendix H).
- Enhance **digital inclusion initiatives** to ensure access to online volunteer matching platforms.

3.3. Volunteer Recognition and Wellbeing

- Introduce a **statewide volunteer recognition program** that formally acknowledges contributions.
- **Recognise parents/carers and families as a valuable lever to increase volunteer rates and reduce financial barriers to their participation by:**
    - funding organisations such as commonkind to provide suitable volunteer opportunities for families including children
    - **providing volunteer leave for parents to participate in school holiday child and family volunteer programmes** (thereby, reducing the need and associated cost of holiday care for their children and providing an opportunity for working parents to spend more time with their children and engage in community service)
- Provide **mental health and wellbeing support** for volunteers, particularly in high-pressure roles.
- Encourage and acknowledge **corporate volunteering partnerships** to engage businesses in community service initiatives.
- Encourage and acknowledge **student volunteering partnerships** to engage school-aged children to participate in community service initiatives.

4. Conclusion

commonkind believes that a thriving volunteer sector that includes children and families is essential for Queensland's social and economic prosperity. By addressing the barriers to volunteering and implementing targeted support measures, the Queensland Government can ensure a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable volunteer sector and also be well-prepared to showcase Queensland to the world in 2032 as the volunteer vanguard.

5. Appendices

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We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry and welcome further discussions on how to strengthen volunteering in our communities.

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Appendix A: About commonkind

Appendix B: CASE STUDY Child volunteering in action to support Stationery Aid, a commonkind Charity Partner

REVIEW OF 2024 COMMONKIND CHARITY PARTNERSHIP: Stationery Aid

Stationery Aid (https://stationeryaid.org) collects, sorts, cleans, renews and reuses excess and used education materials across SE Queensland and Mackay, to create sustainable school booklists for vulnerable and disadvantaged students to start the school year.

Support Provided
As part of commonkind's 2024 calendar of benevolent activities, in commonkind sessions, child and family volunteers provided the following support to Stationery Aid aligned with United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No Poverty) to ultimately **save Stationery Aid >200 hours** to focus on more complex operations to further their mission:

1. Testing and sorting donated markers

279 child and family volunteers gave
↓
215 volunteer hours to test and sort
↓
17,000+ markers to fill booklists for
↓
1469 disadvantaged Australian students

2. Decorating bags for school booklists

27 child and family volunteers gave
↓
33 volunteer hours to hand paint
↓
82 bags to hold booklists for
↓
82 disadvantaged Australian students

Appendix C: Benefits of volunteering for children

Benefits of volunteering for children and adolescents include:

1. **Improved Mental Health:** Volunteering is associated with better mental health outcomes for children and adolescents for example children who volunteered were 66% more likely to be considered "flourishing" and 35% less likely to have behavioral problems[1]. Additionally, research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies showed that children involved in volunteering before age 13 had a 28% reduced likelihood of experiencing poor mental health[2].
2. **Enhanced Physical Health:** Children who volunteer are 34% more likely to be in excellent or very good health compared to those who don't participate in community service[1]. This suggests that volunteering may have positive effects on overall physical well-being.
3. **Reduced Anxiety:** For adolescents aged 12 and older, volunteering was associated with approximately 25% lower likelihood of experiencing anxiety compared to peers who didn't volunteer[1,3].
4. **Development of Prosocial Skills:** Volunteering provides opportunities for children to develop empathy, care for others, and show kindness. These prosocial behaviors are linked to an 11% lower likelihood of experiencing mental ill-health[2].
5. **Academic Benefits:** The University of Minnesota Youth Development Study found that volunteering promotes higher grade point averages and academic confidence. Service learning, which combines community service with academic topics, can enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills[4].
6. **Leadership and Teamwork:** Group volunteering helps break down social hierarchies, allowing children to discover their natural leadership abilities and build teamwork skills[4].
7. **Increased Empathy:** Volunteering helps children understand how others live, building their sense of empathy and putting their own challenges into perspective[4].
8. **Long-term Positive Effects:** Volunteering in adolescence has been associated with decreases in risky health behaviors and depressive symptoms in adulthood[3].

Citations:

1. https://time.com/6283458/volunteering-good-for-kids-health/
2. https://aifs.gov.au/media/teens-volunteering-protects-against-poor-mental-health
3. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10230312/
4. https://internationalschoolmn.com/school-news/eight-great-ways-kids-benefit-from-volunteer-work
5. https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/childrens-week/
6. https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/some-assembly-required/202401/volunteering-benefits-the-health-and-wellness-of-kids-and-teens
7. https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Evidence-Insights-Volunteering-and-mental-health-Final.pdf
8. https://www.rosterfy.com/blog/10-reasons-why-students-should-volunteer

Appendix D: Benefits to society of child volunteering

Society benefits significantly from children volunteering, as evidenced in the research:

1. **Improved Community Connections:** When children volunteer, they develop a stronger sense of community and civic responsibility. This leads to more engaged and connected communities, as children learn about local issues and how to address them through civic action[1,2].
2. **Long-term Civic Engagement:** Children who volunteer are more likely to continue volunteering and participating in community activities as adults. This creates a cycle of ongoing community support and involvement[4].
3. **Enhanced Educational Outcomes:** Volunteering is associated with better academic performance and higher graduation rates. A study found that children who regularly volunteer tend to perform better in school and have higher high school and university graduation rates compared to those who do not volunteer[1]. This leads to a more educated and skilled workforce for society.
4. **Reduced Mental Health Issues:** Research by the Australian Institute of Family Studies showed that children involved in volunteering before age 13 had a 28% reduced likelihood of experiencing poor mental health[4]. This can lead to lower healthcare costs and a more productive society in the long run.
5. **Development of Prosocial Behaviors:** Children who volunteer are more likely to develop empathy, care for others, and show kindness. These prosocial behaviors were linked to an 11% lower likelihood of experiencing mental ill-health[4]. This contributes to a more compassionate and supportive society.
6. **Skill Development:** Volunteering helps children develop important life skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and communication[2,3]. These skills are valuable in both personal and professional settings, contributing to a more capable workforce.
7. **Increased Diversity and Inclusion:** Volunteering exposes children to diverse perspectives and lived experiences, fostering empathy and understanding. This helps create a more inclusive society with decreased bias in the long term[2].
8. **Economic Benefits:** By providing valuable services to communities, child volunteers contribute to economic savings for society. Their efforts in various sectors can help reduce the need for paid services in some areas.
9. **Intergenerational Connections:** When children volunteer, they often interact with people of different ages, fostering intergenerational understanding and cooperation within communities[1].
10. **Positive Youth Development:** Volunteering provides opportunities for children to discover new interests and abilities, potentially leading to future career paths or lifelong passions that benefit society[1,5].

Citations:

1. https://littlesunshine.com/5-benefits-children-can-gain-from-volunteering/
2. https://www.pointsoflight.org/blog/5-benefits-of-volunteering-as-a-family/
3. https://www.gviaustralia.com.au/blog/smb-volunteering-with-children-personal-and-professional-impact/
4. https://aifs.gov.au/media/teens-volunteering-protects-against-poor-mental-health

5. https://www.mindchampselc.edu.au/blog/benefits-a-child-can-gain-from-volunteering-activities/
6. https://www.parents.com/benefits-of-volunteering-for-children-6891670
7. https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/benefits-of-volunteering
8. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10230312/

Appendix E: CASE STUDY Evaluation Report indicating positive impact for commonkind's "Learn by Heart" school volunteering programme REDACTED

commonkind
Evolving Australia from the lucky country to the loving country.

EVALUATION REPORT: Learn by Heart (2024)

commonkind's school-based community service sessions

Thank you for choosing commonkind to partner with you to provide a hands-on, meaningful and developmentally appropriate community service opportunity for your students. We thoroughly enjoyed working with your school students and staff and witnessing the positive impact your school community achieved during the sessions.

For: [redacted] **Report Date:** 11/12/2024

Summary

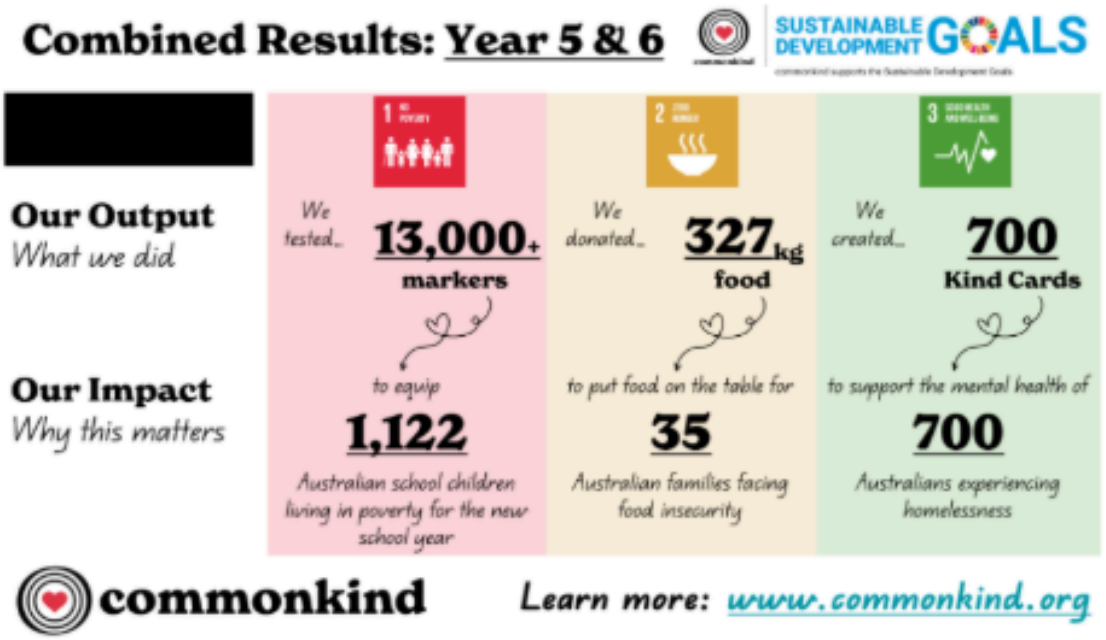
Two successful, whole year commonkind Learn by Heart community service sessions were held in Term 4, 2024. The students achieved a lot in a short period of time and families were engaged in giving food donations. Feedback from students, staff and parents was overwhelmingly positive and indicated a desire for further community service opportunities.

Overview

With supervision and the participation of class teachers, commonkind ran two sessions for your students:

- 11 November 2024: 1.5hr session for 130 Year 6 students
- 18 November 2024: 1.5hr session for 130 Year 5 students

Impact



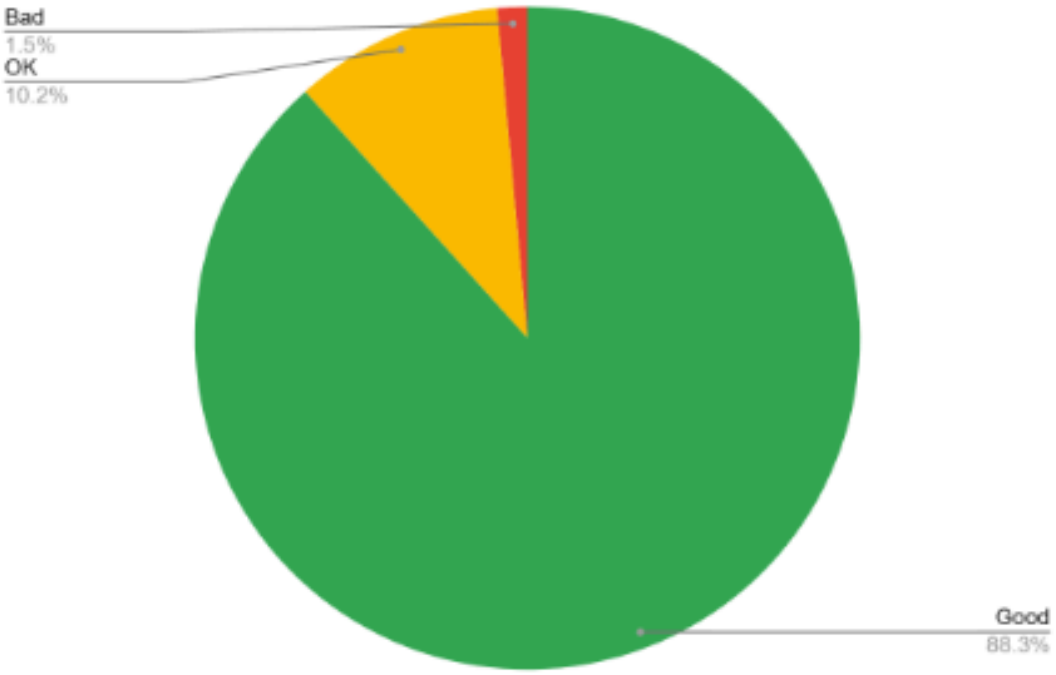
Feedback

A. Students

At the end of each session we asked students to rate it. We received **206** responses.

88% **voted that they had a GOOD time in the session**

Question: Vote GOOD if you enjoyed the session and want to do it again, vote OK if you wouldn't mind doing it again and vote BAD if you didn't like the session and would not want to do it again.



A post-session survey link was provided to the school to circulate to students. We left the survey open for four weeks. We received **20** responses.

Comments include:

- *I don't have anything else to say other than I loved it and it was really fun and made you feel better about yourself by helping others.*
- *I had so much fun, thank you for this opportunity!*
- *It would be good to be able to do this activity or something like it another time in the year.*
- *Thank you for helping our cohort experience this.*

100% **liked one or more things about the session**

Question: What was your favourite part of the session?

Comments include:

- *My favourite part of this session was that I knew that it was going to a good cause and that people who didn't have access to certain things were going*

to now have access to them.

- *The feeling of helping others*
- *Knowing that I was making a contribution to the health and wellness of the less fortunate in our community.*
- *I liked every part of the activity but most of all I liked packing the food because I knew that I was helping poor people not starve.*
- *We could have fun with our friends while we did something good for the community. It was so fun and heartwarming when we did it.*

B. Staff

A post-session survey link was provided to the school to circulate to students and staff. We left the survey open for four weeks. We received **1** response.

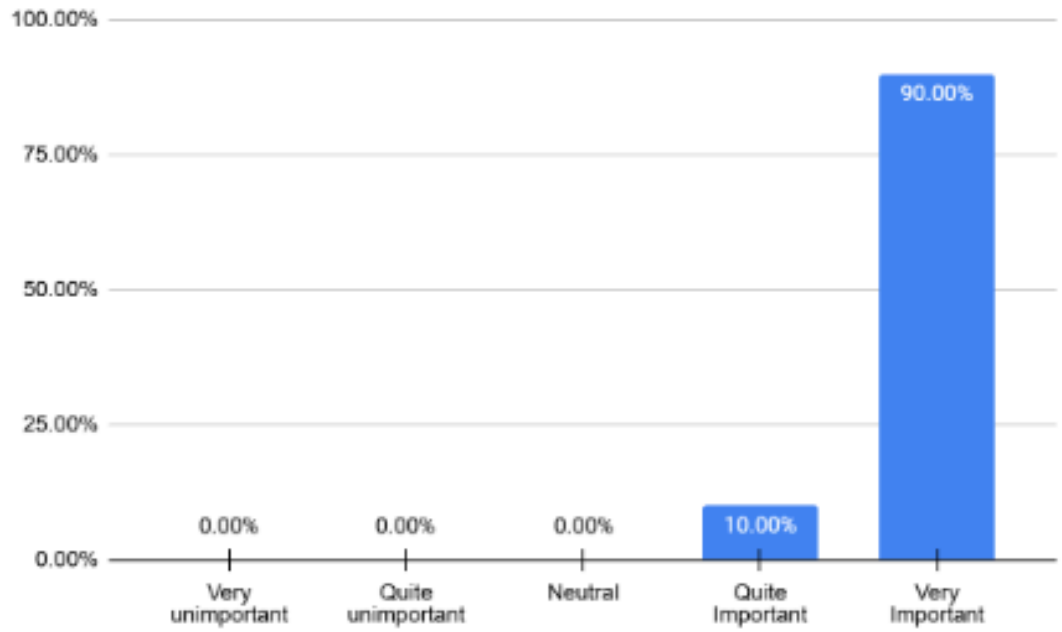
The teacher said they would be EXTREMELY LIKELY to recommend this session to a peer and that *"The hands on work was fantastic."*

C. Parents/Carers

A post-session summary and survey was provided to the school to circulate to parents/carers. We left the survey open for four weeks. We received **10** responses.

100% **say teaching their child about community service is IMPORTANT**

Question: How important to you is teaching your child about community service?



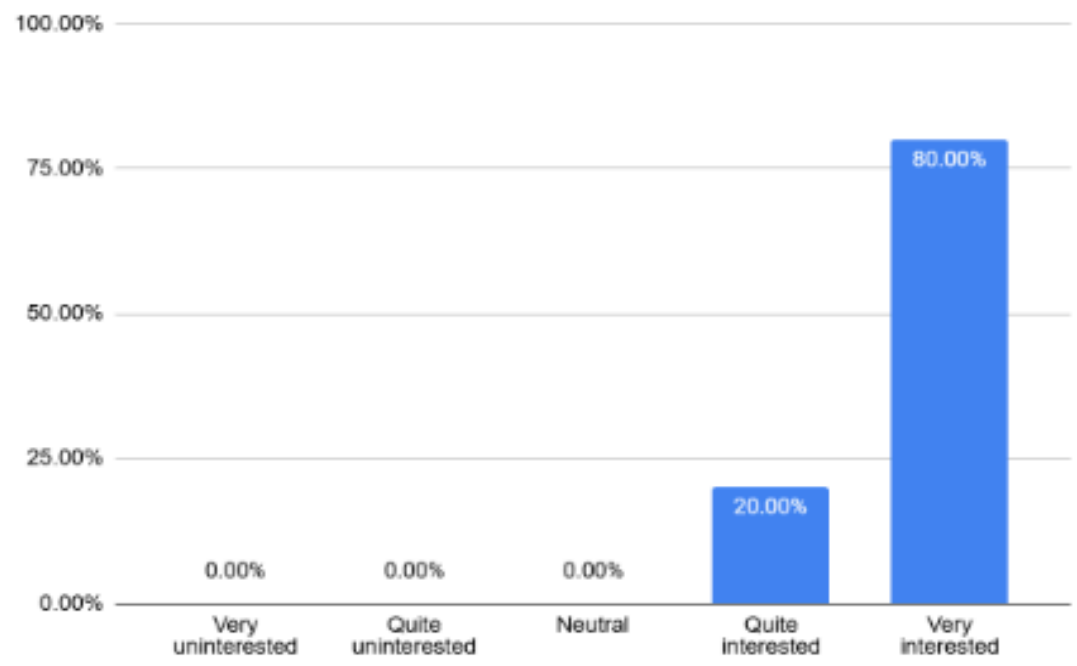
Comments include:

- *We want her to understand the disparity between different individuals and challenges faced but also to know that there are useful and practical tasks she can do to improve things for others.*

- *I think it is important that our children (who are very fortunate) spend time doing something for others less fortunate than them. I think it helps to make us grounded and grateful.*
- *It's a vital lesson for them. I feel the activities and the impact of it is such a good life lesson.*
- *Kindness, empathy and caring for others are qualities I want in my daughter. Volunteering shows that small actions can make a big difference in the lives of others.*
- *Our children are privileged & it's a gift to be able to give back to & support others. Learning about community service connects the act with greater meaning & relevance*

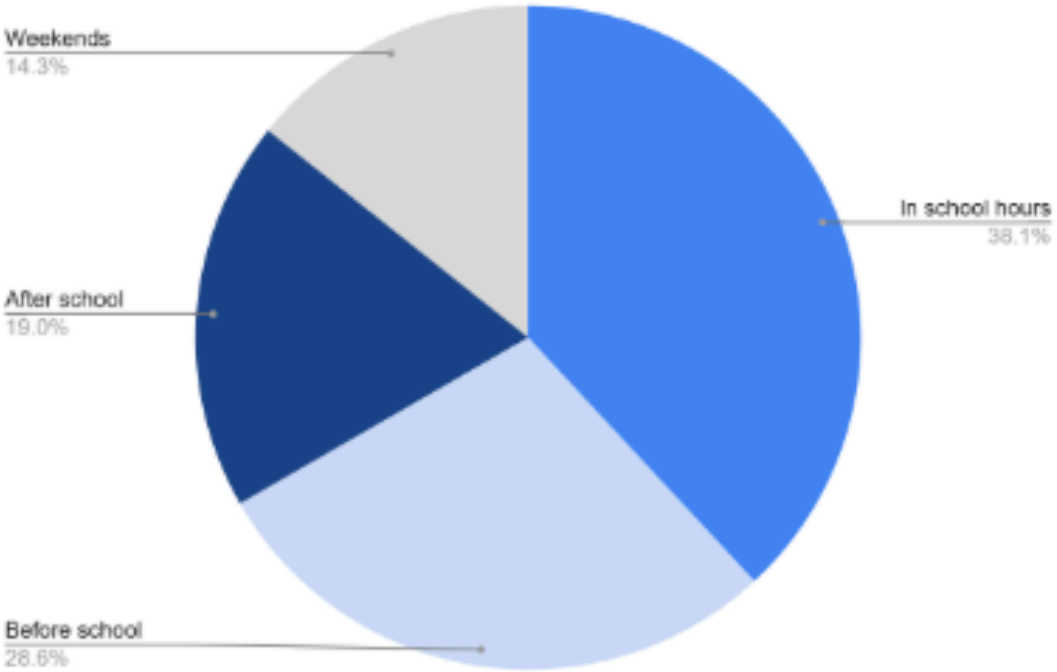
100% **are INTERESTED in age-appropriate meaningful volunteer opportunities that suit their child's schedule**

Question: How interested are you in your child/ren engaging in age-appropriate meaningful volunteer opportunities that suit their schedules?



85%+ **would prefer their child complete community service during the school week**

Question: When would you prefer your child/ren complete community service?



Thank you

Huge thanks go to [redacted] for all of the work you did in facilitating these sessions. Thank you also to all the teachers and support staff who made the sessions such a success. Thank you to Principal [redacted] for joining us.

We appreciate you choosing commonkind to support [redacted].

We would be delighted to work with you again in 2025.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions.

In kindness,

Carolina Puleston
CEO & Founder
[redacted]
www.commonkind.org

Appendix F: Evidence supporting Intergenerational Learning Programmes (ILPs)

Intergenerational learning programs have substantial evidence supporting their effectiveness and benefits for both younger and older participants. Multiple studies and systematic reviews demonstrate positive outcomes across various domains.

Intergenerational learning programs have been shown to:

1. **Improve social and emotional skills** for both generations[1,2]
2. **Enhance health knowledge and life skills**[2]
3. **Promote positive attitudes and relationships** between generations[2,3]
4. **Improve academic performance and communication skills** in children[3]
5. **Provide a sense of purpose and improved well-being** for older adults[1,3]

Research suggests that intergenerational learning programs can have lasting effects:

- **Improved reading outcomes** in children[3]
- Decreased likelihood of delinquency in children later in life[3]
- Enhanced well-being among older adults and holistic development of children's attitudes toward older adults[3]

Citations:

1. https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au/bitstream/handle/10072/416671/Radford2923526-Published.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y
2. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7787929/
3. https://aiip.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Intergenerational-Practice-in-Early-Childhood-Education-Trial.pdf
4. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01882/full
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6. https://aiip.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Session-1-Radford.pdf
7. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8278471/
8. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7687250/

Appendix G: CASE STUDY Evaluation Report indicating positive impact for "Heart to Heart" Intergenerational Learning Programme (100% volunteer run) REDACTED

EVALUATION REPORT: 2023 "GRANDFRIENDS" INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM PILOT

for [redacted]

Author: **Carolina Puleston (Intergenerational Facilitator & Founder)**

Children's drawings
(at the end of the program):
"Me & My Grandfriend/s"

EVALUATION REPORT:
2023 "GRANDFRIENDS" INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM PILOT
for [redacted]

Summary

Eight children from the [redacted] kindergarten program who would be going to Prep in 2024 were selected by [redacted] Educators to participate in an Intergenerational Learning Program "ILP" (see Appendix 1: ORIGINAL PROJECT BRIEF). They were paired with 4 grandparents (termed "Grandfriends" for this program) from families within the [redacted] Community who could commit to an 8-week, 1-hour session during the school day (see Appendix 2: PARTICIPANTS).

The sessions were led by Carolina Puleston (Intergenerational Facilitator); [redacted] and one additional [redacted] Educator. The sessions focused on the commonalities between different generations on starting school and school life in general. The content was tailored to any fears, questions or knowledge gaps the children had about going to school. The children, their parents, the Grandfriends and [redacted] educators all reported positive outcomes from the program (see Appendix 3: OUTCOMES).

At the end of the program ALL cohorts showed or reported positive outcomes:

1. Children: showed a positive trend across every dimension
   - ✓ Feelings about school
   - ✓ Knowledge of older people
   - ✓ Perceptions of older people
2. Parents: reported a positive trend across every dimension
   - ✓ Perception of their child's school readiness
   - ✓ Impact of the program on their child's development
3. Grandfriends: showed a positive trend across every dimension
   - ✓ Subjective wellbeing
   - ✓ Optimism
   - ✓ Quality of life
4. Educators: reported a positive impact of the ILP on their students

Recommendation: Given the positive outcomes achieved by the ILP and the commitment of [redacted] to NQF Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities, an ongoing ILP should be explored taking into consideration feedback provided by the participants (see Appendix 4: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK).

Thank you to the [redacted] community and especially [redacted] for your commitment to the ILP.

[redacted]

Carolina Puleston
Intergenerational Facilitator & commonkind Founder
Date: 27/02/2024

APPENDIX 1: ORIGINAL PROJECT BRIEF

[redacted] Intergenerational Learning Program PILOT
When: 1-2pm Wednesdays Term 3, 2023
Where: [redacted]
Why:

- To suppor[redacted] commitment to NQF Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities.
- To provide opportunities for mutually beneficial learning between [redacted] students and community elders.
- To support children in preparing to transition to primary school through the universality of the experience (regardless of age) as well as support the EYLF Learning Outcomes, specifically:

  Learning Outcome 1: A strong sense of identity
  - ➢ Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities
  - ➢ Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

  Learning Outcome 2: Connection to and contribution with their world
  - ➢ Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities
  - ➢ Children respond to diversity with respect

  Learning Outcome 3: A strong sense of wellbeing
  - ➢ Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing

  Learning Outcome 4: Confident and involved learners
  - ➢ Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity
  - ➢ Children resource their learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials

  Learning Outcome 5: Effective communicators
  - ➢ Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

- To provide opportunities for elders to share their valuable experiences and skills and in support of Australian Aged Care Quality Standard (AACQS) specifically:

  Standard 3 (3)(a) (iii): Safe and effective care that optimises their health and well-being, including:
  - ➢ physical and mental state
  - ➢ spiritual and emotional life (feelings, thoughts, beliefs, attitudes)
  - ➢ social life (relationships, attitudes, cultural values and the influences of those around them, such as family and community).

  Standard 4 (3)(b): Services and supports for daily living that are important for my health and well-being and that enable me to do the things I want to do.
  - ➢ emotional, spiritual and psychological

How: Facilitated by Carolina Puleston with **staffing provided by** [redacted] to maintain correct ratios
Who: Students as determined by [redacted], ideal ratio of 2 children:1 elder.

Appendix 2: PARTICIPANTS

Data as self-reported by parents (for children) and Grandfriends.

Children

- Eigh[redacted] Kindy Program children
  - Age: 4-5 years
  - Gender: 6 Female, 2 Male
  - Housing: With parents at home
  - Grandparents: 100% had living grandparents
    - 3/8 had grandparents in Brisbane, 2/8 had grandparents in QLD, 3/8 had grandparents overseas
    - 4/8 see their grandparents in person weekly, 1/8 monthly, 3/8 less than once a year
  - Interactions with elders: 5/8 have regular meaningful interactions with people over 65

Grandfriends

- Four grandparents recruited from within the[redacted] Community
  - Age: 62-75 years
  - Gender: 3 Female, 1 Male
  - Housing: Independently at home
  - Education: Minimum Year 11
  - Health: all generally well with no major health concerns limiting participation

Appendix 3: OUTCOMES

OUTCOMES[1]		Before	After	Trend
CHILDREN	**Feelings about school** How do you feel about starting school?	75% felt GOOD 25% felt BAD *e.g. "I will miss my friends and family".* *"I'm feeling a little bit scared. All the children - will they play with me?"*	87.5% felt GOOD 12.5% felt OK *e.g. "Because I miss the Grandfriends and having afternoon tea."*	↑
	Knowledge of older people What do you know about older people?	12.5% knew what an "older person" meant	100% knew what an "older person" meant	↑
		0% could name an older unrelated person *e.g. "My daddy is the only old person I know."*	100% could name an older unrelated person *e.g. Names of Grandfriends*	↑
		50% could describe an older person WITH prompting	100% could describe an older person WITHOUT prompting	↑
	Perceptions of older people *How would you describe an older person?*	25% had positive perceptions WITH prompting ("like grandparents") *e.g. "They know lots of Chinese."* *"They can do everything."*	100% had positive perceptions WITHOUT prompting *e.g. "They are happy. They are good."* *"They are good. They are also very kind to me."* *"They are friendship."*	↑
	Do you like older people?	25% knew and liked older people *e.g. "Always bring jam drop biscuits"*	100% knew and liked older people *e.g. "They do nice things for us like drawing things we can't draw."* *"He told me good stories."*	↑
	Do you like spending time with them?	25% could explain why they liked spending time with older people (related) *e.g. "They are my friends."* *"I have sleepovers with them."*	100% could explain why they liked spending time with older people (unrelated) *e.g. "Because she's my grandfriend. I'm going to miss her because I love her."* *"Because they are so cute. They every time comed. It was the best week."*	↑
	How much time do you like spending with them?	25% said a LOT	100% said a LOT	↑
	Do you think other children should meet Grandfriends?	n/a	100% said YES *e.g. "Yes they would like meeting them."* *"Yes they would like to see the Grandfriends."*	↑

[1] Response rates:
- Children: all 8 children were interviewed in person before and after the program
- Parents: all 8 parents were surveyed via questionnaire before and after the program of which 4 parents returned the post-program questionnaire.
- Grandfriends: all 4 Grandfriends were surveyed via questionnaire before and after the program
- Educators: 5[redacted] Educators were given a questionnaire to complete of which 3 returned them.

PARENTS	**School readiness**	8.5 (out of 10) - average score indicating high readiness for school	9.5 (out of 10) - average score indicating improved readiness for school	↑
	Program impact	100% agreed that: ✓ there was a positive impact on their child from their involvement in the ILP *e.g. "I think the program has been a positive and enriching experience for (Child). (Child) has been learning so many interesting things through the conversations and activities. I feel that having a different way of learning than what she normally is used to has also helped her absorb this new information."* *"(Child) loved going to Kindy on Wednesdays - didn't want to miss out on meeting (child's) 'grandfriend'. (Child) loved meeting children from different rooms and felt very special leaving to go to the group. (Child) told me about the activities (Child) did each week - especially loving the 'kindfulness' activities - thinking (they) meant mindfulness!"* ✓ they would be extremely likely to recommend the ILP to a peer (scoring the program 10 out of 10) *e.g. "… thanking you for giving us and our child to participate in the program."* ✓ the program should be run again *e.g. "Absolutely yes. (Child) loved it, and looks forward to (child's) visit to the music room each Wednesday. I really appreciate the volunteering and support that is required, and just hope that it is available to enable the program to keep running. (Child) is lucky enough to have grandparents nearby, but having this structured program and the topics discussed has given her a deeper understanding of the world we live in."*		↑
GRANDFRIENDS	**Wellbeing** (WHO-5)	78 (out of 100) - average score indicating positive wellbeing	86 (out of 100) - average score indicating improved positive wellbeing	↑
	Optimism (LOT-R)	19.25 (out of 24) - average score indicating moderate-high optimism	19.75 (out of 24) - average score indicating improved optimism	↑
	Quality of life (ASCOT-4)	0.75 (out of 1) - average score indicating positive quality of life	0.78 (out of 1) - average score indicating improved quality of life	↑
	Program impact	100% strongly agreed that they: ✓ were satisfied with the ILP ✓ enjoyed the activities with the children ✓ developed friendships with the children ✓ observed a positive change in the children *e.g. I "noticed a lot more eye contact from the children who were quite reserved initially."* ✓ felt the program had a positive impact on themselves *e.g. I felt "accepted, valued, respected and somewhat challenged at times e.g. drawing!"* ✓ would be extremely likely to recommend the ILP to a peer (scoring the program 10 out of 10) *e.g. "It was very organised, yet flexible. The content/activities were engaging. The staff and children were friendly and respectful. There was time for questions and comments."*		↑
EDUCATORS	**Program impact**	100% agreed that: ✓ they observed a difference in the children who participated in the ILP *e.g. "Very positive, (Child) is showing more readiness to start school next year as it is one of the topics that they talked about."* ✓ the program should be run again *e.g. "Yes I think it's a wonderful opportunity for all participants."*		↑

Appendix 4: PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

	FEEDBACK
CHILDREN	LIKES: ✓ 62.5% Session Activities especially drawing (37.5%) ✓ 25% Celebration Party ✓ 12.5% Sharing Afternoon Tea DISLIKES × 75% Liked everything × 12.5% Mindfulness × 12.5% Afternoon Tea IMPROVEMENT AREAS: None
PARENTS	LIKES: ✓ 100% Interacting with Elders DISLIKES × 25% Liked everything × 25% Liked everything especially the weekly summary stories shared to parents × 25% Program was too short × 25% Celebration party during the work day so some parents could not attend IMPROVEMENT AREAS: • 50% Involve parents more • 25% Have the program run for a whole semester • 25% No suggestions for improvement
GRANDFRIENDS	LIKES: ✓ 25% Everything! ✓ 25% Structure and goals ✓ 25% Seeing positive changes in the children ✓ 25% The session was relaxing DISLIKES × 100% Liked everything IMPROVEMENT AREAS: • 50% No suggestions for improvement • 25% Extend the session length to 1.5hours • 25% More education on the Montessori method
EDUCATORS	IMPROVEMENT AREAS: • Extend the session to use the 2pm afternoon tea time • Educate the Educators more about the program • Get the Educators/Teaching Assistants more involved

Appendix H: SAMPLE Testimonial from Outside School Hours Care Service Leader on the value of commonkind's "Follow your Heart" service learning programme REDACTED

28 November 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

It is with great pleasure that I write this testimonial regarding the invaluable partnership between [redacted] and the esteemed charity organization, Commonkind. As a leading provider of outside school hours care, our collaboration with Commonkind has significantly enriched the experiences of our children while fostering a culture of compassion, empathy, and community engagement.

Since the inception of our partnership, the impact has been profound. The children a[redacted] have not only embraced the opportunity to participate in Commonkind's charitable activities but have thrived on the sense of purpose and fulfillment these sessions bring. Witnessing their enthusiasm, empathy, and eagerness to contribute to the greater good has been truly heartwarming.

The feedback from parents has been overwhelmingly positive. They greatly appreciate the exposure their children receive to such meaningful charity work, recognizing the immense value it adds to their holistic development. The opportunity for their children to engage in acts of kindness and service to others outside the regular school curriculum is something they cherish and actively encourage.

At[redacted] our leadership team acknowledges the profound importance of these sessions within our outside school hours care program. These activities not only align seamlessly with the My Time, Our Place (MTOP) learning outcomes but also go above and beyond in nurturing children's social and emotional development, fostering a sense of belonging, and instilling a deeper understanding of community responsibility.

The value of these sessions extends far beyond the immediate impact. We wholeheartedly believe that such experiences are instrumental in shaping conscientious, empathetic, and socially responsible individuals. It is with this conviction that we highly recommend Commonkind's sessions to other care providers seeking to enrich their programs with meaningful, purpose-driven activities.

In conclusion, the collaboration between[redacted] and Commonkind has been a resounding success. The joy, learning, and sense of fulfillment experienced by our children, the appreciation from parents, and the alignment with our program's objectives make this partnership an indispensable component of our offerings.

We look forward to continuing this partnership and further empowering our children to become compassionate and engaged members of society.

Kind regards,

[redacted]

Service Leader

[redacted]