



# NEW VOLUNTEERS HANDBOOK

Campaspe - Murray Vibrant Volunteers Network



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This Handbook has been produced in partnership with Campaspe Primary Care Partnership and its allied stakeholders.

Information referenced within this document can be found on the Volunteering Victoria website, [www.volunteervictoria.org.au](http://www.volunteervictoria.org.au) and the Volunteering Australia website, [www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

### Disclaimer

The content of this Handbook is provided for general information only. It does not purport to be comprehensive. The Campaspe – Murray Vibrant Volunteer Network does not accept any liability or responsibility for any direct or indirect loss or damage which may be suffered by any person relying on anything contained in or omitted from this handbook. You should not act on the basis of information contained in this Handbook without obtaining independent professional advice relating to your specific circumstances.

On behalf of the Campaspe and Murray Shire communities, thank you for your interest in being a volunteer.

This handbook has been developed to introduce you to the wonderful opportunities that exist when you volunteer. The handbook introduces you to the principles of volunteering, your rights and your responsibilities.

The organisation or community group that you choose to volunteer with is responsible to provide you with detailed job descriptions, induction, training and adequate supervision.

No doubt there will be much to learn, so do not hesitate to ask your supervisor to explain any issues about which you are not sure.

Volunteers should always be fully informed and supported.

We trust that your time as a volunteer will be an exciting and rewarding journey for you and your chosen organisation.

## DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING

### **Volunteering Australia Definition**

*Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.*

### **Formal Volunteering**

Volunteering roles that are defined and take place within organisational settings (including institutions and agencies)

### **Informal Volunteering**

Ad-hoc and spontaneous activities or one-off events, that takes place outside of an organisational setting.

There are many reasons that people volunteer and it is a great way to become involved in your community. The focus is on doing the activity as opposed to having the activity doing for you.

Volunteering is a great way for people, regardless of their age, cultural background, location or circumstances, to get involved in the community.

But we are all different and may want to volunteer for different reasons. Some of us get involved for charitable reasons, some to meet new people or some to learn new skills.

Most of us don't know about the variety of volunteering opportunities or the many other benefits of volunteering.

Apart from the satisfaction of helping out your community, there can be heaps of reasons why you should volunteer. Here's just a few:

- Meet new people and make new friends
- To give back to, or get involved in, my community
- Experience new challenges
- Raise awareness and support important community issues
- Experience different cultures
- Help people or contribute to social change
- Develop professional networks
- Find a pathway to getting a job or into a course or training
- Learn new skills or gain experience in a variety of roles
- Explore different career and job opportunities.

Research has also found a significant connection between volunteering and good health with reports showing that volunteers have:

- Longer lives
- Lower rates of depression
- Less incidence of heart disease
- Higher functional ability

## Your Rights

As a volunteer you have the right to:

- A healthy and safe environment
- An orientation or induction session
- Information about the organisation you are working for, including policies and procedures
- A volunteer position description or volunteer agreement which outlines the tasks that you will be expected to perform and the agreed working hours
- Be provided with sufficient training and supervision
- Be reimbursed for necessary out of pocket expenses
- Be protected by appropriate insurance
- Have your personal information dealt with in a confidential manner
- Take holidays
- Say 'no' if you are uncomfortable or feel you are being exploited
- Be informed and consulted on matters which affect you and your work.

As a volunteer you should not be:

- Filling a position previously held by a paid worker
- Doing the work of paid staff during an industrial dispute
- Treated in a manner that is discriminatory.

## Your Responsibilities

Volunteer organisations should have internal policies or procedures in place, including a statement on how they manage volunteer involvement. They should have clear procedures on how they deal with complaints, grievances or discrimination. There may also be staff behaviours and values that are expected, or a code of conduct in place.

The guiding policies and procedures will most likely be discussed during your induction process. If they are not you should ask your supervisor for copies of the documents. As a volunteer you are expected to act in a manner consistent with these policies and procedures.

All volunteers are expected to:

- Be punctual and reliable
- Respect confidentiality
- Carry out the duties listed in your volunteer position description
- Be accountable
- Give notice if your availability changes or you are leaving the organisation
- Report any injuries or hazards that you notice in the workplace
- Adhere to the organisation's policies and procedures
- Deal with complaints in the appropriate manner
- Undertake training as requested
- Ask for support when needed
- Support other team members.

## Insurance

Generally, volunteers are not treated as employees for WorkSafe purposes, and are not usually covered by a WorkSafe Injury Insurance policy. For this reason, it is important to check if the organisation you are volunteering for has insurance that will cover you if you are in an accident or are injured while you are volunteering.

It is an organisation's responsibility to ensure that appropriate insurance cover is provided to protect volunteer staff and volunteer members of community management committees.

### **Volunteer Workers Personal Accident Insurance**

Personal Accident Cover for volunteers is similar to Victoria's compulsory work cover for paid employees. It covers volunteers for some expenses following accidental injury, disability or death which occurs while you are carrying out your work on behalf of the organisation.

### **Public Liability Insurance**

Public Liability Insurance covers the organisation's legal liability to pay damages to a third party (such as a member of the public or clients of the organisation) for personal injury or property damage accidentally caused by a member of the organisation, including its volunteers.

## Occupational Health and Safety

The purpose of occupational health and safety (OHS) law is to protect the health, safety and welfare of all people who come into contact with a workplace in Victoria – like employees, volunteers, clients and visitors.

Under the law everyone is responsible for OHS.

Organisations have obligations under Commonwealth and state laws to ensure that volunteers are not exposed to risks to their health or safety in their volunteer role. They must also provide you with the information and training you need to perform your volunteer role safely.

As a volunteer, you must also look after your own health and safety, and avoid putting others at risk. This means you must:

- Follow health and safety instructions
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment
- Report any injuries or hazards that you notice in the workplace.

Smoking – All organisations have a “NO SMOKING” policy. Smoking in all work areas, including outdoor eating areas is banned in Victoria & New South Wales.

## Privacy

All volunteers have the right to have personal information dealt with in a confidential manner. Organisations have obligations under Commonwealth and state laws, depending on the type of organisation they are.

Most organisations will have a privacy policy which states how they will comply with the law. In general, this policy should explain:

- How information is collected
- How information is stored
- How information is used
- How and when information is updated
- Who is responsible for keeping records
- Who can access personal information
- How information is disposed of.

If you are a volunteer and you feel your personal information is not being handled appropriately you should contact Privacy Victoria.

## Confidentiality

As a volunteer you must maintain the complete confidentiality of all privileged information in regard to the organisation, its employees and clients and other volunteers to which you are exposed.

When you find yourself wanting to reveal information about another person, stop and ask yourself, “Would he/she want me to share this? How would the person feel if they were here listening to what I am saying?” Finally, be careful of what you hear, be conscious of people’s rights to hold private conversations and be aware that this is difficult to do in some circumstances.

It is not permitted to use personal details of a client, volunteer or staff member for personal gain or for sharing with others. You must never give the address, email or phone number of a client or volunteer to a customer or use them for your own personal use. If a customer asks for these details you must first call the person concerned and get permission to do so.

## Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act

Human rights are the basic rights that belong to all of us and are about recognising and respecting the dignity of other people and foundation for freedom, justice, peace and respect.

Section 38(1) of the Charter states; “it is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way that is incompatible with a human right or in making a decision, to fail to give proper consideration to a relevant human right.” These responsibilities are imposed on all public authorities and their employees.

There are additional laws that govern:

- Bullying
- Harassment
- Sexual Harassment
- Discrimination
- Equal Opportunity

- Victimisation
- Racial and Religious Vilification

All employees, including volunteers, have a legal responsibility and rights to feel secure and valued in an environment that enables them to achieve their highest levels of performance and job satisfaction. There is no room in the workplace for any of the above behaviours and a breach of these may result in a person being held personally liable for their unlawful conduct.

### Grievance Procedure

A grievance procedure is intended to provide a mechanism whereby volunteers and employees may raise issues of concern with their coordinators or managers, so that they may be resolved as quickly and equitably as possible.

Volunteers should raise any concerns or issues that have concerning their work, how their work is organised or how they are being treated.

Issues may include but are not limited to:

- Safety issues
- Conditions of employment
- On job training

### **Volunteer Role**

When applying for a role within the community sector, you should receive an 'Expression of Interest' form and a role description which clearly details the tasks associated with the role for which you are applying.

The Volunteer Role Description should include:

- Volunteer Role Title
- Brief description of the position
- The work area and location
- Specific responsibilities
- Accountability and extent of authority
- Specific skills and experience

### **Interview**

The volunteer organisation will conduct an interview with the prospective volunteer to determine their suitability for the role they have applied for based on the Role Description Key Selection Criteria and relevant experience

### **Background Checks**

Most volunteering organisations have a checking process to protect volunteers and the people they will be working with. Typically organisations will ask you to provide identification (like a driver's licence or passport), a reference letter or contact details of referees.

For volunteer roles that involve working with vulnerable people – e.g. children, seniors or people with a disability – or where you may have access to bank accounts, you may also need to undergo further screening such as a working with children check or criminal record check.

### **Identity and Reference Check**

Volunteer organisations will ask you for references or contact details of referees and you will be asked for some kind of identification to verify that you are who you say you are.. This is not to check up on you or to judge you – it's simply a way for an organisation to find out a bit more about you.

Volunteer organisations understand that some people will not have recent employment references or referees and may ask for other kinds of references from people like teachers, religious ministers or someone in the community who knows you. Many organisations also ask for a personal reference from a friend or family member – often these are the people who know you best.

### **Police Check**

In Victoria, a police check involves getting a National Police Certificate issued by Victoria Police. To get a National Police Certificate you need to complete a 'Consent to Check and Release National Police Record' form. You will need to provide a minimum of 100 points of identification as part of your application. Identity documents that meet these requirements are listed in the form.

Not everyone has to undergo a police check but you may be required to have one if a volunteering role involves:

- Working with vulnerable people, e.g. children, asylum seekers, seniors or people with a disability

- Financial duties, especially those involving access to bank accounts
- Driving duties

### **Working with Children Check**

If you volunteer with children under 18 you may need to have a Working with Children (WWC) Check.

In Victoria, the WWC Check is a mandatory minimum checking standard to protect children from people who may put them at risk. The WWC Check applies to both volunteers and employees.

The volunteering organisation should tell you if you need a WWC Check when you apply for a volunteering position, as part of the application process or during an interview or information session.

### **Signed Agreement**

Before you commence in your new volunteer role most organisations will require you to sign a Volunteer Letter of Engagement or a Volunteer Agreement form. This document formalises the agreed terms, rights and responsibilities of your volunteering role with your desired organisation.

### **Probation Period**

The probation period for volunteers for most organisations is three months. It is the responsibility of Volunteer Coordinators, in conjunction with their Manager, to conduct a review with the volunteer at the end of the probation period. An annual review might also be conducted. Volunteers should be consulted during this period on any issues that may arise.

### **Vibrant Volunteer Network**

The Vibrant Volunteer Network was established in August 2015 by Campaspe Primary Care Partnership as part of the 12 month Vibrant Volunteer Project (July 2015 – June 2016) funded by the Department of Social Services.

Network organisations include; Campaspe Primary Care Partnership, Shire of Campaspe, Murray Shire, Community Living and Respite Services, Echuca Regional Health, Rochester Elmore District Health Service, Kyabram District Health Service, Kyabram Community Learning Centre, Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre (Network Support Partner)

The project is aimed at building the volunteering capacity of local community and health organisations by developing a shared approach to;

- Organisational structures
- Supports
- Training
- Recruitment
- Retention of Volunteers

Minimise duplication through;

- Collaboration and sharing of best practice approaches
- Consistency of service across the Murray Campaspe area
- Identify strategies to enhance promotion and recognition of volunteers within the local area

The main goal of the project is to improve capacity and sustainability of volunteering practices and support across the Campaspe and Murray areas.

### **Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre – Network Support Partner**

Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre is a vital link between the community and the organisations which rely on volunteers. This includes the Shire of Campaspe and Murray Shire regions.

