
Volunteering - Frequently Asked Questions

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

Definition from Volunteering Australia 2015

What is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is a person who chooses to help out the community and other people in tasks that benefit both the community and themselves. It is usually done for free in a Not-for-profit group or community

It doesn't matter about how old they are.

It doesn't matter where they were born or where they come from.

It doesn't matter where they live or what they do.



Why volunteer?

Volunteering is a great way for people to get involved in the community.

The benefits you receive will depend on you, your volunteer activity and why you want to volunteer.

Volunteering gives you a chance to meet new people and make new friends or increase your knowledge about people and places.

You can use existing skills or learn new ones, experience new challenges, gain experience and confidence or explore different careers and build professional networks. You can raise awareness and support important issues, give back to the community and enjoy yourself!

Volunteering can even benefit your health - studies have shown that volunteering reduces the risk of heart disease, lowers the rates of depression, increases the functioning power of the brain and increases your length of life.

Many volunteers find that the skills, experience, networks and opportunities they gain through volunteering provide benefits in other areas of their life including employment and socialisation.

Many good reasons to volunteer.

What are my responsibilities as a Volunteer?

As a volunteer you should:

- make a commitment to do the tasks you have said you will do, and do them to the best of your ability.
- be dependable and turn up for your role when you have said you will, and tell your supervisor if you can't.
- attend training if you are asked to and ask for help when you need it.
- support other volunteers and staff; treat them with respect and work to have a safe and healthy place to work.
- keep confidential all the personal or the organisation information you find out about while you are volunteering.
- let your supervisor know if your ability or inability to perform your role changes, or you decide not to volunteer with the organisation anymore.

Do I have any rights as a Volunteer?

Unlike paid staff, volunteers are not covered by awards or work-place agreements. However volunteers do have rights, some of which are part of legislation and others which are considered Best Practice for an organisation involving volunteers.

You have the right -

- to work in a healthy and safe environment (refer various Occupational Health and Safety Act[s])
- to be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti- discrimination legislation
- to be adequately covered by insurance
- to be given accurate and truthful information about the organisation for which you are working
- to be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses
- to be given a copy of the organisations volunteer policy and any other policy that affects your work
- not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker
- not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes
- to have a job description and agreed working hours
- to have access to a grievance procedure
- to be provided with orientation to the organisation
- to have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988
- to be provided with sufficient training to do your job correctly and safely.

Can I choose where I volunteer?

Yes, you can. Most of us don't know about all the places we can volunteer and the different things we can do as a volunteer.

You can look at the current list of volunteer opportunities within your area to see what options are available.

You should choose activities that fit with your skills, interests, availability and your reasons for wanting to volunteer.

Can I choose to volunteer at more than one place?

Yes, you can. Although you should take care so you don't over-commit yourself.

You can volunteer in areas such as Health & Welfare, Education, Disability Services, Child & Youth Services, Aged Care & Support, Arts, Animal Welfare, Community Service, Recreation & Sport, Environment & Conservation and many others.

How much time do I need to commit?

That's up to you and depends on the volunteer activity you do.

For many volunteer activities, you would need to commit to at least one hour per week.

Some activities will require more time than this so keep this in mind when choosing a volunteer activity.

If you don't want to volunteer regularly, you can just volunteer at one-off events.

I need hours for my Centrelink benefits, can anyone help me?

Volunteering Warrnambool can help you find a suitable volunteer role to meet your Centrelink voluntary obligations. We have many enquiries from Centrelink or Job Agency clients on Newstart or other allowances. Most of the organisations we recruit volunteers for are approved by Centrelink to accrue hours towards your allowance. Unfortunately, many organisations cannot give you the total number of hours you require, and some only have short 'shifts' so you may have to 'volunteer' at several places to achieve the total you need.

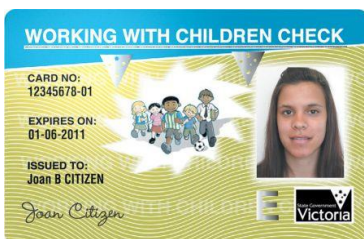
How soon can I start volunteering?

That will depend on the organisation you decide to volunteer with.

Some organisations have lengthy selection processes, so don't be disheartened if you can't start in the role straight away. Some organisations only take in new volunteers at certain times in the year.

Will I need any checks or licences before I start to volunteer?

Depending on the volunteer activity and organisation you volunteer with, you may have to have a Criminal History Check (a Police Check). Some organisations will organise and pay for the check with your consent and others will request you to apply and pay for one yourself.



If you will be volunteering in a role where you will be working with children you may also be required to have a Working with Children Check (WWCC). Your application is done online and applications by volunteers are *free*.

For more information go to www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au

For some volunteer activities, you will need other licences or qualifications, such as a Driver's Licence or a Food Handling Certificate.

Will I receive training?

As a new volunteer you should receive orientation and induction training when you start. You should also be provided with any other training needed for you to carry out your volunteer role safely. Sometimes you will also be required to attend on-going training after you begin.

How do I get started?

- Contact Volunteering Warrnambool on 5559 4920 to organise an initial meeting.
- Collect a Volunteer Information Pack from the Archie Graham Community Centre in Timor Street Warrnambool and ask for our current positions list.
- Go to the website www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au/volunteering and fill in the Expression of Interest and we'll contact you.
- Email us at volunteering@warrnambool.vic.gov.au and ask for a registration form and our current positions list.
- Get online at www.govolunteer.com.au; www.volunteer.com.au; www.volunteer.vic.gov.au, or www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au and check out the positions posted on line.

What is Volunteering Warrnambool?

Volunteering Warrnambool is a Volunteer Resource Centre which provides a free matching service to link potential volunteers in our community with organisations who are looking for volunteers.

We provide support, advice and training to volunteers and the Not-for-Profit and Community organisations throughout the region.

What happens after I make first contact with Volunteering Warrnambool?

1. We have a discussion by meeting with you, talking with you by phone, or through emails so we can find out about your interests, your skills, why you want to volunteer and the types of things you like to do.
This helps us guide you to the opportunities that we feel best suit you.
2. You register with us by completing the form from the Information Pack and look over the current positions list to see what positions are available.
3. We talk about the volunteer positions that you are interested in and help you choose three you would like to know more about.
4. We send your contact details - your name, phone number and email address (if you have one) - to the Volunteer Manager for the position you have chosen. They will contact you as soon as they can to talk to you about your volunteering with them. Try to be patient, as some managers only work one or two days a weeks as a Volunteer Manager, give them a week or two to get back to you.
5. You will be asked to have an interview. You may be asked to fill out an Application Form.
 - Organisations conduct interviews to find the right people.
Be prepared to answer questions about your previous work, talk about your skills and any qualifications you may have, and provide the names of referees if required.
 - An interview also lets you ask questions that you may wish answered about your position choice.
 - Don't lose heart if you are not offered an interview straight away.
 - Some volunteer managers or co-ordinators are volunteers themselves, and may have restrictions on their time
 - Some organisations have lengthy selection processes, so don't be disheartened if you can't start in the role straight away.
 - It is not always possible to find a position for everyone.
You may also find that when you go for the interview that the Organisation may not have the right role for you.
6. You may have to get a Police Check or get a Working with Children Check if you don't already have one.
7. You may be asked to sign a Volunteer Agreement and be given a Code of Conduct.

A Volunteer Agreement is a record of the requirements and expectations about a volunteer position. This agreement is useful as it clearly sets out what is expected of you as a volunteer.
A Code of Conduct is a guideline stating what type of behaviour is required by all staff. It is the rules of the organisation.
8. If you decide that this is the role for you, the Manager will organise a time for you to start.
If it is not the role for you, you can say no to the offer.
Then come back to see us and we will help you find another role if possible.

I have more questions. Who can I ask?

You can contact the team at Volunteering Warrnambool on 5559 4919 or send an email to our email address below, or talk to the Volunteer Manager where you are interested in volunteering.