

Barriers to VolunteeringPeople with Disability

In 2023, all volunteering peak bodies commissioned a report to identify barriers to volunteering and how to improve access and inclusion for First Nations people, people with disability, and newly arrived migrants. We have created a snapshot series to share the key findings, so volunteer-involving organisations feel equipped to engage volunteers from each group.

Please note, the language used in these snapshots follows the Australian Government's style manual. However, language is always evolving and varies by region. Always check with local peak bodies and relevant agencies in your area for the most appropriate language.

Who are people with disability?

The umbrella term "people with disability" includes individuals with mobility, vision, hearing, intellectual, psychosocial, and neurodiverse conditions. This is a highly diverse group with varying needs and capabilities. Where possible specific characteristics of disability will be identified to provide further information about types of barriers to volunteering experienced by people with disability.

Many people with disability are active members of the volunteering sector.



Nearly **1 in 5** people in Australia live with a disability



Around **41%** of people with disability volunteer informally in their communities



1.5 million volunteers in Australia with a disability – that's 24% of all volunteers!

"It has been amazing being the helper rather than the helpee."

- Interviewee

Barriers to volunteering

Negative stereotypes reduce people with disability to mere recipients of volunteering rather than valuable contributors. Core barriers are wideranging and connected.

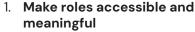
- Access to transport, physical access of the built environment, digital access and insufficient visual aids or captioning.
- Lack of infrastructure such as adaptive equipment, sign language interpreters, accessible material, or flexible volunteer hours.
- Negative stereotypes and assumptions limit opportunities and contribute to social exclusion.
- Unconscious bias or discrimination influences recruitment, selection processes, and growth opportunities.
- Medical expenses, specialist equipment and limited income impacts ability to cover volunteering costs.

Barriers to VolunteeringPeople with disability

Key insight

People with disability often face assumptions that they are only recipients of help rather than active contributors. This mindset needs to change to create a truly inclusive volunteering environment.

Recommendations:





Make volunteer roles accessible, both physically and operationally. For example, provide clear signage and step-free access to buildings. Assign meaningful tasks that acknowledge the skills and contributions of people with disability



Co-design meaningful roles
 Collaborate with disability-led
 organisations and people with lived
 experience of disability to ensure
 their insights and experiences shape
 the proposed solutions.



3. Remove pointless paperwork
Streamline application and
onboarding processes by removing
unnecessary paperwork and reducing
barriers to participation.



Reimburse costs
 Provide stipends or reimbursements to cover transport and other out-of-pocket costs for volunteers.



Provide regular training
 Provide regular disability-inclusive training for staff and volunteers, ensuring it improves workforce competency and is evaluated for impact.



representation
Use imagery and language
across communication channels
that authentically reflects and

resonates with people living with a wide range of disabilities.

For more support

6. Increase authentic

Visit the <u>Knowledge Base</u> or your volunteering peak body website for helpful advice, information, and insights on engaging volunteers with disability.

Learn more

National Disability Services
Volunteering Australia: Disability Action Plan
National Knowledge Base: Engaging Volunteers with Disability
Volunteerability















The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

