

Volunteering Rights and Responsibilities

This document is for organisations that engage volunteers and for individuals considering or participating in volunteer roles.

It outlines volunteer rights and responsibilities and the expectations and obligations of volunteer-involving organisations. While volunteers are not covered by industrial awards or workplace agreements, they are entitled to certain legal protections and organisational standards.

The guidelines in this document are intended to support safe, fair and effective volunteering. For guidelines on best practice volunteer involvement, see the [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#).

Relevant legislation

Legislation may apply to organisations across the following topics:

- Work Health and Safety
- Privacy and Data Protection
- Civil Liability / Negligence
- Child Safety and Screening Requirements
- Organisational Governance
- Employment

Legislation can be federal or state based and may vary between states.

Legal Requirements listed throughout this document reflect Australian laws commonly applicable to volunteer-involving organisations. Applicability will depend on your organisation's structure, location, funding and activities.

Insurance is not universally mandated by statute but is strongly recommended and often required by funders. Volunteers are protected from personal civil liability in certain circumstances, while organisations may bear liability in others.

Disclaimer: This document contains general information only and is not legal advice. Always check the legislation relevant to your organisation and seek legal advice if you are unsure.



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.

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Volunteers

Legal Requirements	Expected Practice
Volunteers have the right to: • choose whether they want to volunteer or not – no one can be forced to volunteer • reach initial agreement about their volunteering commitment • be treated fairly prior to and during their engagement, and in accordance with applicable anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws • be asked for consent before any screening checks are undertaken • have personal information handled according to privacy legislation • volunteer in a healthy and safe environment • be provided with information, instruction, training, supervision and support necessary to perform their role safely • be consulted on safety issues that affect their role • protection from civil liability in accordance with applicable legislation, for acts done in good faith when carrying out community work.	Volunteers can expect to: • receive clear and accurate information about the organisation, including its purpose • receive an orientation or induction to the organisation and their role • receive training and support in their role • receive copies of all relevant policies and procedures • receive a role description and agreed times for volunteering • be covered by volunteer personal accident insurance • be consulted on matters that affect their role • have opportunities to give feedback and to raise issues or grievances in accordance with relevant policies and procedures • be recognised and appreciated • receive reimbursement for agreed and approved out-of-pocket expenses • receive a statement of service after completing a minimum commitment period set by the organisation.
Volunteers have the responsibility to: • complete mandatory training and screening checks as appropriate for their role • take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others • follow the organisation's reasonable instructions, policies and procedures • respect and maintain privacy and confidentiality • report incidents, hazards or unsafe situations in line with the organisation's policies and procedures.	Volunteers are expected to: • engage with ongoing training as required • be punctual and reliable • commit to the organisation's aims and objectives • respect the organisation's values and ethics • follow the organisation's code of conduct, policies and procedures • adhere to the responsibilities and tasks outlined in their role description • inform the organisation if unable to perform, start or complete a task • value, respect, support other volunteers, staff, the organisation, and clients • ask for help or support when needed • use appropriate communication channels in the organisation • participate in feedback and evaluation processes when appropriate • give reasonable notice before leaving the organisation • volunteer for no more than 16 hours per week in any one role.

Organisations

Legal Requirements	Expected Practice
Organisations have the right to: - request and implement any mandated legal requirements, such as screening checks or specific training - choose the volunteer best suited for the role - end the volunteer relationship using appropriate procedures - set policies and expectations - require volunteers to adhere to policies and procedures relating to health and safety.	Organisations can: - place volunteers in roles according to the needs of the organisation, subject to their skills and expertise (as required) - change role and task assignments of volunteers as necessary - expect volunteers to adhere to organisational policies, procedures and values - give volunteers constructive feedback on their performance.
Organisations have the responsibility to: - treat volunteers fairly, and in accordance with applicable anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws - provide and maintain a safe and healthy working environment for volunteers - consult volunteers on health and safety matters that affect them - provide volunteers with information, instruction, resources, support and supervision to work safely - share expectations such as role requirements, code of conduct, policies and procedures - maintain the privacy and confidentiality of volunteers in line with applicable privacy legislation - not place volunteers in roles that replace paid positions - obtain consent before undertaking screening checks.	Organisations are expected to: - maintain adequate insurance - communicate clearly and openly with volunteers - provide meaningful roles with clear role descriptions and expectations - provide volunteers with an orientation or induction to the organisation and their role - provide ongoing training and support for volunteers in their roles - inform volunteers of relevant organisational changes - involve volunteers in planning and decision-making where appropriate - offer reimbursement for agreed and approved out-of-pocket expenses - provide volunteers with access to relevant organisational policies and procedures, including grievance procedures - provide opportunities for volunteer feedback and recognition - not engage volunteers in any role that would require more than 16 hours per week.

