

VOLUNTEERING POLICY

Last updated 1 October 2023

Key Points

Volunteers are highly valued at Caritas Australia.

Volunteers have rights and responsibilities.

As with all personnel, volunteers need to undertake background checks and training.

1. Why this policy exists

At Caritas Australia, we recognise that volunteering is an essential element of how we fulfil our mission.

Volunteering is as necessary and valuable to Caritas Australia as monetary donations. Volunteers bring personal commitment, skills and experiences to our endeavours. The support that volunteers offer – and the views, ideas and suggestions they contribute – help us achieve our goals and improve what we do. This policy reflects our commitment to how we engage and welcome volunteers.

2. This policy applies to

This policy applies to all personnel.

3. Definitions used in this policy

When we use ...	we mean ...
volunteer	A volunteer is someone who provides services without receiving payment or any benefit (such as meals, transport or accommodation) in return.
volunteering	Time willingly given for the common good without financial gain.
office-based volunteers	Volunteering that takes place at Caritas Australia's Head Office or interstate offices
community-based volunteers	Volunteering that takes place in the community, such as in parishes and schools
employee	Person working for Caritas Australia who is paid
personnel	Any person doing paid or unpaid work for, or on behalf, of Caritas Australia including Australian-based employees, in-country employees, Board of Directors, Diocesan Directors, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, consultants

4. Guiding Principles

4.1 Dignity

We treat our volunteers with respect and as a valued part of our organisation.

4.2 Voice

We welcome the ideas and suggestions of volunteers.

4.3 Reciprocity

Both Caritas Australia and our volunteers gain value from the volunteering relationship. We value the time and skills they invest. Our volunteers may gain real-life work experience, the satisfaction of making a difference and the opportunity to put their faith in action.

4.4 Recognition

Although our volunteers do not get paid, we recognise their efforts in alternative ways such as joining agency week.

4.5 Supplementary support

Volunteers are engaged to provide support to employees or teams to carry out their work, or to bring specialist short term skills that are needed for specific projects or activities.

4.6 Compliance

While volunteering engagements are less formal than employee engagements, we still have the highest standards of compliance, in particular safeguarding and work health and safety.

4.7 Community Support

We know that our volunteering levels reflect our levels of community support. When people want to volunteer with us, it shows that our reputation is held in high regard.

4.8 No Obligation

Both Caritas Australia and the volunteer are entitled to discontinue the arrangement at any time. A volunteer is under no legal obligation to work at any particular time.

5. Policy Commitments

Volunteers have both rights and responsibilities.

5.1 Volunteer Rights

Unlike employees, volunteers are not covered by awards or work-place agreements. Volunteers however do have rights, some which are enshrined in legislation and some which could be considered moral obligations of an organisation.

Volunteers have the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe environment (refer to various Work Health and Safety Acts)
- Be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation
- Be adequately covered by insurance
- Be given accurate and truthful information about Caritas Australia

- Be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses
- Be given a copy of the organisation's volunteer policy and any other documents that affect their work
- Not fill a position previously held by an employee
- Not do the work of employees during industrial disputes
- Have an agreed summary of your role and working hours
- Have access to a grievance procedure
- Be provided with induction to the organisation
- Have their confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988
- Be provided with sufficient training to carry out their role if required

5.2 Volunteer Responsibilities

- The volunteer also has responsibilities to the organisation including:
- Work within the mission of Caritas Australia
- Sign our Code of Conduct
- Carry out duties in line with their role statement
- Participate in any training or information sessions required
- Take responsibility for their own safety at work
- Report incidents and hazards to their supervisor and the People team

5.3 Accessing and communicating the policy

5.3.1 This policy will be available on our website and shared with our personnel.

5.3.2 We will ensure that all personnel are notified of and made aware that they are required to follow the policy.

5.4 Reviewing this policy

5.4.1 We are committed to continuous improvement to our policy, procedures and practices. This policy will be reviewed at a minimum every three years to ensure it is working in practice and updated to accommodate changes in legislation or circumstance.

5.4.2 Feedback on this and other policies is openly encouraged. We will use this, as well as emerging good practice and lessons learned, to strengthen this and related policies and procedures.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

At Caritas Australia, a culture of volunteering starts with strong leadership.

6.1 The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- Ultimate accountability for our organisational policies
- Guiding governance and culture of Caritas Australia through strategic leadership
- Approving this policy and holding the Leadership Team accountable to how effectively this policy is implemented

6.2 Leadership Team members are responsible for:

- Ensuring our procedures, practices, plans and operations align with this policy
- Reporting to the Board via the CEO on volunteering matters
- Ensuring their team is aware of this policy and understand their responsibilities, in particular the supervisor of a volunteer (and their manager)

6.3 The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is upheld
- Informing the Board of any concerns relating to volunteering and giving progress reports
- Ensuring all senior employees are accountable to this policy

6.4 The Volunteer Focal Point is an employee of Caritas Australia who, in addition to the responsibilities above, are responsible for:

- Keeping the volunteer database updated
- Coordinating all aspects of office-based volunteers to ensure:
 - Recruitment is completed
 - Relevant inductions are set up
 - Online trainings are completed
 - Liaising with the supervisor about the volunteer's performance
 - Escalating any issue to the relevant Leadership Team member
 - Coordinating recognition events
- Liaising with the supervisors of community-based volunteers to ensure:
 - Background checks are completed before the volunteer's first day
 - Relevant inductions are set up
 - Online trainings are completed
 - Liaising with the supervisor about the volunteer's performance
 - Escalating any issue to the relevant Leadership Team member
 - Encouraging supervisors to provide recognition to the volunteer

6.5 The Supervisor is responsible for:

- Providing training
- Outlining work tasks and providing feedback
- Liaising with the Volunteer Focal Point about any issues or concerns
- Providing recognition to the volunteer. We have a shared responsibility to ensure development and humanitarian principles are at the forefront of our work.

6.6 Volunteers are responsible for:

- Communicating clearly regarding their availability, and any changes that may occur
- Completing background checks, signing the Code of Conduct and other onboarding requirements

- Completing online training and other training as required

6.7 Personnel (including you) are responsible for:

- Understanding and following this policy and related procedures
- Ensuring that your actions are in line with this policy, and that your work reflects the Guiding Principles and Policy Commitments above
- Not encouraging others (directly or indirectly) to breach this policy
- Reporting any breach to your manager. However, if it is a sensitive complaint, you must report it to confidential@caritas.org.au (the Complaints Focal Point) or [Stopline whistleblower service](#).

We each have a shared responsibility to ensure that volunteering is mutually beneficial for both the volunteer and Caritas Australia.

7. Related Documents

This policy supports Caritas Australia's compliance with the following:

7.1 Legislation:

- Fair Work Act /Unpaid Work

7.2 Standards:

- National Standards for Volunteer Involvement April 2015
- Volunteering Australia

7.3 Caritas Australia governance documents:

- Code of Conduct
- Speaking Up Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Policy
- Volunteering Procedure
- Work Health and Safety Policies and Procedures (various)

8. Appendix List

- n/a

9. Information about this policy

Can be accessed by	Anyone via website
Can be shared with	Internally and externally (including with other organisations)
Distributed to	Volunteers, supervisors of volunteers and their managers, Board of Directors, Leadership Team
Document Owner	Volunteer Focal Point
Approved by	Board of Directors
Commencement Date	1 October 2023
Next Review Date	1 October 2026
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How this policy has changed over time

Version	Approval Date	Summary of changes
v1.0	22 Sep 2020	Integrates two previous separate policies: Volunteering (Office-Based) and Volunteering (Community-Based).
v1.1	05 Nov 2020	Put in new format. Changed Document Owner from Volunteer Focal Point to Head of People & Culture (no substantive change because the Volunteer Focal Point is currently the Head of People & Culture)
v2.0	1 October 2023	Updated the recognition principle under guiding principles (see section 4.4).