



**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Volunteer Policy

Includes

Volunteer Application Form

Volunteer Agreement

Procedure	Volunteer Policy
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Approved by	
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide Uniting Church organisations and the people who volunteer their services to these organisations with an understanding of their obligations and responsibilities towards each other.

2. Definitions

Honorarium means a one off and ad hoc payment made to a person to reward or recognise them for a past voluntary service; or for services provided that would not traditionally attract a fee.

Participant means a person who participates in a Uniting Church event for their own personal benefit.

Participants:

- do not receive payment for participating in an event; and
- include but are not limited to, people participating in:
 - worship services such as those handing out hymn books, giving ad hoc bible readings, greeting worshippers, the choir or attending a bible study;
 - Community outreach programs e.g. men's or women's breakfasts, craft groups or English classes.

Volunteer means a person who participates in a Uniting Church event for the benefit of the organisation and others.

Volunteers:

- do not receive payment for the services they provide; and
- must be formally recognised by the governing body of the Uniting Church organisation and be authorised by that governing body to act on their behalf;
- include, but are not limited to, people:
 - Holding office such as members of church council, management committees or boards;
 - Supervising or assisting in the running of community outreach programs such as Op shops, men's or women's breakfast, craft groups or English classes;
 - Who are part of lay ministry teams that have overall responsibility for worship in the absence of a Minister in Placement;
 - Participating in working bees.

3. Honorariums

Honorariums cannot be paid to a person on a regular and/or systematic basis. Nor can their payment be contingent upon the person providing the service in the first instance.

Where payment of an honorarium is contingent upon a service being provided this turns a voluntary relationship into an employment relationship. It is strongly recommended that honorariums are not paid to persons providing voluntary services to organisations within the Church.

Under Section 25(1) of the *Income Tax Act*, honorariums can, in certain circumstances, be deemed to be assessable income and must have withholding tax installments deducted.

4. Voluntary or Paid Services?

When deciding whether the provision of services should be voluntary or paid, an organisation needs to consider:

- The level of skill, reliability, responsibility and accountability required. Core work which is essential to the operation of the organisation is normally paid. As should any work of a supervisory nature.
- The provision of voluntary services extending or supporting the work of paid employees.
- The provision of voluntary services offering the volunteer advantages such as flexibility and satisfaction of motivation.
- The provision of voluntary services fitting into 16 hours or less per week in any one role on a regular long-term basis, unlike paid employment which demands day-to-day continuity for efficiency.
- Limiting the volunteer's responsibility to a specific task. Unlike paid employment which can include responsibility for the day-to-day operation and/or management of the organisation.
- The volunteer's work not including responsibility for other employees (that is, something more than task supervision) unlike an employee's work which can include managerial responsibility for other persons, both volunteers and employees.

5. Rights and Responsibilities

Both the volunteer and the organisation have responsibilities to each other. The volunteer offers to provide services and the organisation covenants to provide the volunteer with a worthwhile and rewarding experience.

In return, each has the right to some basic expectations of the other.

Volunteers have the right to:

- Be asked for their permission before any job-related reference, police or other checks are conducted.
- A task or job worthwhile to them, for no more than 16 hours a week in any one role, on a regular long term basis.
- Know the purpose and "ground rules" of both the organisation and the wider Church.
- Appropriate orientation and training, such as but not limited to WHS, fire and emergency evacuation for the job.
- A safe place to volunteer their services in and suitable tools.
- Reimbursement of agreed expenses.
- Be heard and make suggestions.
- Volunteer Personal Accident insurance cover.

- A verbal statement of service if appropriate.

The organisation has a right to:

- Receive as much effort and service from a volunteer as a paid employee, even on a short-term basis.
- Select the best volunteer for the job by interviewing and screening all applicants. This might include reference and police checks and, where appropriate, a working with children and/or vulnerable persons clearance for all roles that involve direct face to face contact unsupervised with children and/or vulnerable persons.
- Expect volunteers to adhere to their duty statements/outlines and the organisation's and the Church's code of practice.
- Expect volunteers to undertake training provided for them and follow directions in relation to work health and safety.
- Express opinions about poor performance in a diplomatic way.
- Expect loyalty to the organisation and only constructive criticism.
- Expect clear and open communication from the volunteer.
- Negotiate work assignments.
- Release volunteers under certain circumstances.

6. Procedures for Engaging Volunteers

The members of each organisation's governing body and the wider Church can be held vicariously liable for the actions of its volunteers.

It is therefore imperative that only persons who are formally recognised by the governing body and are authorised by that governing body to act as an agent of the organisation be permitted to volunteer with the organisation.

General considerations:

1. The organisation and the members of the governing body must:
 - Formally recognise and authorise all volunteers; and
 - Establish and communicate policies for the recruitment and engagement of volunteers; and
 - Inform volunteers of the organisation's policies and procedures; and
 - Have clear lines of accountability and authority for persons appointed to volunteer roles; and
 - Confirm lines of accountability and authority with volunteers through specific lists of duties and letters confirming volunteer status.
2. The use of volunteers should not compete with, undermine, or displace paid work.
3. Legislation relating to anti-discrimination and equal opportunity also applies to volunteers.
4. All Uniting Church organisations have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their workers, so far as reasonably practicable. This may include volunteers.

Before engaging a volunteer:

1. Ask the volunteer to complete a *“Volunteer Application Form”* and attach copies of relevant documentation. Does not apply to elected office bearers such as members of a church council, management committee or Board.
2. If they are volunteering with the aged, require volunteers to undergo a criminal record check before being accepted as a volunteer. Unless a volunteer has provided evidence that they do not have a criminal record, they must not volunteer unsupervised in programs with the aged.
3. If they are volunteering with children or vulnerable people the volunteer must hold either a working with children or vulnerable person’s clearance before being accepted as a volunteer. Unless a volunteer holds these clearances they cannot volunteer in programs, which involve working with children and vulnerable persons.
4. Assess the *Volunteer Application* and determine whether the person is suitable to undertake the voluntary duties.
5. If suitable, formally recognise and authorise the volunteer to undertake volunteer duties by providing them with a copy of the *“Volunteer Agreement”* which includes a Volunteer Duty Statement. Obtain their sign off on the contents before they commence providing voluntary services. Include details such as the tasks to be undertaken; to whom the volunteer reports to; the period of the voluntary service, if applicable; procedures to claim “out of pocket” expenses; code of behaviour and reference to grievance procedures.
6. If volunteering with children in Special Religious Education (Scripture) in State Schools, the Education Department requires volunteers to also complete an *“SRE Teacher Engagement Form”* before they commence as a teacher, relief teacher or helper. Unless a volunteer has completed this form they are NOT to volunteer in SRE programs with children.
7. Make volunteers fully aware of the policies of the organisation and the church including participating in the “Safe Churches” program run by Uniting Mission and Education.
8. As volunteers are not mandatory reporters of children and young people at risk of harm, provide a system which allows volunteers to share any such concerns with a representative of the organisation, so that all concerns will be followed up.
9. Provide volunteers with orientation and training. This should include training about the tasks required of the volunteer, how supervision will take place, WHS and emergency procedures, confidentiality, duty of care, child protection matters, first aid procedures and code of behaviour for volunteers.
10. The organisation must state clearly its expectations regarding services to be performed by the volunteer. When developing volunteer roles and responsibilities, the organisation should consult the volunteer.
11. The Church’s volunteer injury and accident insurance policy does not cover volunteer’s private vehicles. It is essential that volunteers are made aware of this and that any private vehicle driven by a volunteer in the course of their providing voluntary services must be comprehensively insured to provide a reasonable level of insurance coverage for the volunteer.

During the course of the voluntary relationship:

1. Volunteers receive no monetary reward.
2. The organisation should provide recognition of the services provided by volunteers. This should be done in a form that is meaningful to the volunteer, such as presentation of certificates or “thank you” morning teas as long as it is not “payment in kind”, such as food or other material goods as this can blur ethical boundaries and may create employment obligations.
3. The organisation should provide reimbursement for “*out of pocket*” expenses. The procedure for claiming reimbursement should be set out in writing by the organisation. Any “*payments*” to volunteers for out of pocket expenses must be made after the fact; are to be substantiated by receipts and are not to be taxed. In this instance volunteers should not receive a statement of earnings.
4. If a volunteer is not satisfactorily meeting the requirements set out in the list of duties, there are proper steps to be taken. Guidance on such matters should be obtained from the Risk and Compliance section of Uniting Resources.
5. Volunteers are required to respect the confidentiality of the people with whom they work.

7. For further information

For general information on volunteers please contact the Risk and Compliance section of Uniting Resources on 8267 4365.

For work health and safety information please contact the Work Health and Safety section of Uniting Resources via wss@nswact.uca.org.au.

8. See Attached

Volunteer Application Form

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