



## VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS: ENGAGING WITH VOLUNTEERS DURING COVID-19

The Centre for Volunteering acknowledges that building relationships between Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) and their volunteers requires time, effort, resources, communication skills, and active engagement in the volunteering process. The Centre for Volunteering further recognises that its' current work and advocacy encompasses the unprecedented challenges of social isolation being enforced to restrict the spread of COVID-19 for its members and volunteers.

The Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order 2020 under the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW), which was signed on 30 March 2020, defines work as including work done as a volunteer.

At this testing time, it is vital to enhance the quality of the volunteer experience in order to retain existing volunteers and attract new volunteers; particularly as volunteering can only be undertaken in very restricted forms such as e-volunteering or physically distant volunteering at this time. For Volunteer Managers, this will be a continuing process over the coming months and will require adaptable and strategic planning processes and considered implementation.

The following are some suggestions to provide a positive experience for volunteers and volunteer managers:

### 1. Keeping your volunteers engaged by:

- Actively acknowledging the vital roles each individual volunteer is playing in the operation of your organisation.
- Providing online engagement where possible, for the roles they currently occupy
- Think "out of box" – can the roles you currently have for volunteers be redesigned to meet the needs of your clients?
- Ask for their input in relation to how they can contribute to your organisation at this time of social distancing
- Consider whether your volunteers can be used for record keeping or administrative tasks through the use of the Internet or telephone connections
- Provide training opportunities at this time to polish up the skills of your volunteers

### 2. Tips for online engagement

- Ensure that the individual volunteer is suitable for the online role
- Do they have training for the role they will be required to fulfil?
  - It can be distressing to converse with persons who are socially isolated particularly where they are frail and elderly
- Do they have the equipment at home?
- Do they have the capacity for the work?



- Are they familiar with the software they will be using such as Facetime, Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp etc.?
- Can the volunteer be trusted not to get personally involved in the lives and crises of those they try to assist?
- Have a set time for when the volunteer will be volunteering

### 3. Key concerns of the Volunteering Sector

As a VIO, you may be liable for the acts of your volunteers; therefore, you need to consider the following matters:

- Is the individual volunteer legally able to undertake the volunteering task which you have assigned?
  - Do they have the proper visa?
  - Do they have a current Police Check?
  - Are they required to have a current Working with Children Check?
- Will your volunteer insurance cover any liability where the volunteer acquires COVID-19 in the course of their volunteering?
- What, if any, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will you provide where your volunteer is:
  - dropping off groceries
  - picking up medical scripts and delivering the medicines dispensed
  - providing transport for medical appointments or other appointments?
- What, if any, provisions and facilities do you have in place to debrief your volunteers to ensure that their mental health is protected?

Please be advised that the information contained here is not exhaustive and each VIO needs to make their own assessment as to their volunteers and what projects they can undertake within the scope of their own resources at this time.

Remember to inspire, engage and think beyond the current situation to forecast appropriate programs for your volunteer involving organization.

Further information is available at the following sources:

Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order 2020 under the Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)

<https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>

<https://preview.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/government-services>

<https://www.health.gov.au/>

For further resources, in managing your volunteers, please go to The Centre for Volunteering's member's only resources area on our website or become a member today by contacting [membership@volunteering.com.au](mailto:membership@volunteering.com.au)

The Centre for Volunteering

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The Centre for Volunteering has a range of services available for volunteer involving organisations.

For more information, contact us on 02 9261 3600.

