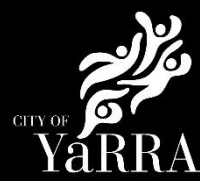


Yarra Volunteer Policy



Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

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Overview

Introduction

People in Yarra love to volunteer. As many as one in four women and one in five men participate in volunteer work. A higher proportion of people in Yarra volunteer compared to Greater Melbourne (<https://profile.id.com.au/yarra/volunteering>). Their contribution makes Yarra a more vibrant and enjoyable place to live, work and play. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our community. They are crucial to the success of many community projects, programs and events.

Benefits to volunteers

Volunteering allows individuals to contribute their skills for the common good, enhancing personal satisfaction and building community spirit. Engaging in volunteer activities that align with an individual's interests and skills promotes a sense of belonging and general wellbeing (Veerasingam, Sambasivan and Kumar, 2013; Oliveira et al., 2020). Designing volunteers' tasks to maximise motivation and satisfaction can significantly improve the volunteer experience and engagement (Hager and Brudney, 2008).

Volunteering can enhance life satisfaction, by providing a sense of purpose and social connectedness, and can help reduce symptoms of depression and improve self-reported health (Binder, 2014). A longitudinal analysis found significant positive effects on older adults, showing improved life satisfaction and reduced symptoms of depression (Russell et al., 2019).

Additionally, volunteering offers opportunities to develop new skills and gain experience, which can be valuable pathways to employment (Spera et al., 2013). Research in Greater Dandenong found that newly arrived migrants, facing significant employment barriers due to a lack of local experience and Australian qualifications, can boost their confidence and develop employment skills through volunteering, enhancing their inclusion into Australian society (Leong, 2008).

Volunteering also expands social networks by providing connections that enhance involvement and support, fostering a sense of belonging and community cohesion, and contributing to overall wellbeing and social integration (Yeung, 2021). Engaging in volunteer activities introduces individuals to diverse groups of people, leading to increased participation in community activities and strengthening communal bonds.

Benefits to Council and the broader community

Engaging volunteers in Council-led programs allows Council to extend its capacity for delivering programs and activities that respond to the wider community's needs and challenges. Volunteering brings new skills, expertise, valuable points of view and innovation to our programs.

Furthermore, volunteering contributes to community strengthening, promoting social inclusion, and building connections within the community. It fosters community cohesion, tolerance, and understanding, thereby enhancing the community's overall social fabric and resilience (NSW Government, 2023; What Works Wellbeing, 2021).

Council's role in volunteering

Yarra City Council supports local volunteerism by providing opportunities for community members to engage in Council-led programs, enhancing their delivery and advancing

community goals. The Council also supports and celebrates local volunteers and managers through various initiatives.

The Yarra Volunteer Leaders Network (YVLN) fosters an open forum for those interested in volunteerism, offering connections, collaborations, professional development, resource sharing, and sustainable practices. Quarterly meetings are open to those managing volunteers or starting new initiatives in Yarra. For more information, contact the Community Development Officer at volunteer@yarracity.vic.gov.au.

Our free training program offers sessions on grant applications, relationship management, governance, project management, and media strategies throughout the year. Participants can attend as many sessions as they like. Details are available through the Community Training [annual program](#).

The [Yarra Community Awards](#), held annually, recognise local heroes. A community Panel selects winners across seven categories: Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year, Community Initiative of the Year, Contributions to Sustainability, Contributions to Sport, Contributions to Arts and Culture, and Contributions to Diversity and Inclusion. We invite community members to nominate individuals or groups making a difference in Yarra.

We provide [community grants](#) and [discounted venue hire](#) to not-for-profit groups in Yarra. Community organisations can also apply for [Federal Volunteer Grants funding](#).

The Council also promotes volunteering through various social marketing and other communication activities.

Purpose

This policy guides all Council business units that deliver programs and activities involving volunteers registered with Yarra City Council. It details the processes of conducting volunteer recruitment, management, and recognition, embeds best-practice principles and articulates the mutual obligations and responsibilities of both the Council and the volunteer workforce within the organisation.

It aligns with and complements existing strategies, policies, and plans, promoting a cohesive approach across various initiatives towards supporting and strengthening the local volunteering sector and encouraging community participation and social interaction in the Yarra community.

Scope

This policy applies to all current and future volunteers engaging with and representing the Council and those Council staff managing and supporting volunteers across the various business units across the organisation.

The policy is also relevant to organisations, groups, and charities involving volunteers in the Yarra community, where the Council provides practical support as outlined in this policy.

Please note: It is recognised that people also volunteer their time by participating in Council's advisory groups and other committees. This participation is deeply appreciated and valued by the Council. This form of voluntary participation is not included within the scope of this policy and is addressed in the Council's governance policies and procedures, which are available [here](#).

Policy Statement

Council recognises and values the importance of volunteering in our community's social, environmental, cultural and economic fabric whilst acknowledging that community participation brings many benefits to the volunteers.

Council is committed to:

- Providing appropriate volunteering opportunities to the community, accessible to people from all backgrounds and life experiences, and reflective of the community we serve.
- Protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of the volunteers we engage.
- Ensuring high standards of professional conduct are maintained with all who have dealings with Council.
- Ensuring that volunteers are appropriately selected, supported and inducted into the organisation.
- Ensuring that we meet our obligations with respect to indemnities, liability and workplace incidents and injuries.
- Ensuring volunteer roles add value to Council's capacity to deliver community programs and not replace paid staff positions at Council.
- Working in accordance with the principles of volunteering as defined in Volunteering Australia's National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (2024).

Review

A review of the policy will occur at the point of major change to Council's policy landscape or the broader policy environment.

Principles

National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

The relationship between the organisation and our volunteers involves trust, recognition, and mutual obligations. Volunteers take on agreed obligations and responsibilities, and in return, the organisation is committed to being responsive to the needs and expectations of those who volunteer their services.

Council supports the best-practice principles that volunteers are managed, supported, and resourced per Volunteering Australia's [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#).

Volunteer Management Framework

Council has developed an operational procedures manual for volunteers engaged at the organisation and for staff that manage them, which includes links to key documents, including the Volunteer Handbook, Agreement and Induction.

In terms of operations, the Volunteer Management Framework and associated processes and systems guide and enable the induction and ongoing management of volunteers at Council. The Framework includes the Volunteer Handbook, Volunteer Agreement, procedures, templates, and a cloud platform for recruiting and onboarding volunteers.

Volunteers at Council are covered under Council's Public Liability Insurance and Personal Accident Insurance. To be covered, volunteers must be formally registered with Council as a volunteer, be working on Council-authorized duties under Council's supervision and performing their duties with reasonable care and due diligence.

Volunteer managers are responsible for ensuring that a risk assessment is conducted for volunteer program activities and for providing appropriate screening, induction, training, and ongoing support.

The relationship between volunteers and paid Council staff

Council uses Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering: "Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain." Volunteers can bring unique perspectives, skills, and individualised attention to their roles, enhancing the organisational mission without infringing on paid employment.

The Fair Work Act 2009 governs workplace relations in Australia. Council notes:

- Section 682(1)(a): Volunteers should not replace paid employees.
- Section 789FB: Volunteer roles should not provide consequential economic benefit to the organisation, such as substantial financial savings or revenue generation.

Council is committed to ensuring that volunteers will supplement, not supplant, paid staff, by adhering to the following principles:

- Council will not use volunteers to reduce or eliminate paid staff positions, as per the Fair Work Act. This includes not replacing staff with volunteers during budget cuts or avoiding hiring paid staff because volunteers can perform the work.
- Tasks suitable for volunteers will be clearly distinct from those requiring the specific skills and qualifications of paid staff.
- Volunteer managers will conduct thorough task analyses to identify suitable volunteer assignments that support but do not replace paid staff roles.
- Suitable tasks for volunteers include those that do not require daily attention, can be performed off-site or after hours, or provide additional value to clients without overlapping with employee responsibilities.
- Volunteers perform tasks that allow paid staff to focus on their primary responsibilities, ensuring effective utilisation of professional skills and resources.
- The value and contribution of volunteers should be recognised without diminishing the roles of paid staff. Volunteers should handle tasks that do not fall within the primary responsibilities of employees.

Council's responsibilities to volunteers

- Engage volunteers as per anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation, and actively embrace diversity and inclusion in terms of practices for promoting, recruiting, retaining and rewarding volunteers.
- Provide volunteers with a healthy and safe workplace.
- Provide a formal induction to all volunteers before they are allocated tasks.
- Provide all relevant and supporting documents required to ensure volunteers success, including the organisational code of conduct, applicable policies and procedures and current and relevant training to be completed.
- Define volunteer roles and develop clear Volunteer Role Descriptions.
- As required, train volunteers to improve their skill set and assist them in performing their voluntary role.
- Ensure that a volunteer does not perform any role or task that they are not appropriately qualified or skilled to undertake or would be the responsibility of a paid employee.

- Provide appropriate public liability insurance coverage for volunteers, where applicable.
- Provide feedback on performance.
- Inform volunteers of their responsibilities and ensure that their work complements, but does not undermine, the work of paid employees.
- Reimburse volunteers for pre-agreed out-of-pocket expenses, in line with organisational procurement policies and procedures.
- Regularly acknowledge and recognise the contributions of volunteers.
- Provide volunteers with information on grievance and dispute processes, as required.

Volunteer's responsibilities to Council

- Undertake a Volunteer Police Check (paid for by Council).
- Undertake and maintain a Volunteer Working with Children Check per Council's Child Safe Policy.
- Be responsible in making a realistic commitment in terms of time and areas of involvement and honouring those commitments.
- Comply with all the requirements of their individual Volunteer Role Description.
- Comply with all health and safety requirements and report any issues, contributing to a safe work environment for other volunteers, paid employees, clients, and public members.
- Complete and maintain currency for training and support opportunities provided by Council and will provide ongoing support to volunteers operating within Council.
- To treat Council, personal, and confidential information per the Privacy Act 2000 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).
- Bring to the management's attention any issues that may adversely impact their performance as a volunteer worker, including personal health or circumstances, conditions within Yarra City venues where volunteer activities are conducted, and any other concerns that may impact their experience as a volunteer.
- Adhere to the Yarra City Council Code of Conduct while undertaking duties or tasks on behalf of Council.

Policy Context

The Volunteer Policy refers to the following policies at a national and state level.

National

The [National Strategy for Volunteering 2023-2033](#) was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, led by Volunteering Australia, and co-designed by the entire volunteering ecosystem.

The eleven strategic objectives of this strategy identify what needs to be achieved over a ten-year timeframe to achieve the vision and aims. The objective themes are:

1. Focus on the volunteer experience
2. Make volunteering inclusive and accessible
3. Ensure volunteering is not exploitative
4. Diversify the understanding of volunteering
5. Reshape the public perception of volunteering
6. Recognise the inherent value of volunteering
7. Enable a community-led approach
8. Make volunteering a cross-portfolio issue in government

9. Build strong leadership and shared accountability
10. Commit to strategic investment
11. Recognise the importance of volunteer management

State

The [Victorian Volunteer Strategy 2022-2027](#), from the Department of Family, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and led by Volunteering Victoria, is a five-year plan to reinvigorate, reimagine and strengthen volunteering in partnership with the volunteering community in Victoria. The five key goals of the strategy are:

1. Making volunteering inclusive and accessible
2. Making volunteering flexible and easier
3. Supporting volunteers to be resilient, supported and empowered
4. Creating volunteering connection and pathways
5. Ensuring volunteering is recognised and celebrated

Local

Councils are the most connected to communities of the three levels of government. Councils regularly engage residents and community groups and are very responsive to the needs of their constituents. For our community to thrive as much as possible, Yarra City Council plays a proactive role to promote, support and celebrate local volunteerism.

This policy aligns with the [Council Plan \(2021-2025\)](#) and [Yarra 2036 Community Vision](#) in relation to social equity and health to invest in community infrastructure that will support health and wellbeing and provide equitable access and opportunities for people to participate in community life in Yarra.

The Volunteer Policy refers to the following legislation, policies, plans and procedures.

Relevant legislation

- Volunteer Protection Act 2023
- Child Safety Act 2005
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Gender Equity Act 2020
- Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006
- Local Government Act 2020

Relevant Council plans and policies

- Council Plan 2021-2025
- Yarra 2036 Community Vision
- Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2021-2025
- Code of Conduct (the most relevant policies are referred to in the Volunteer Handbook)

Our Commitments

Our commitments are themed into three priority areas that have been informed through extensive community feedback from a range of stakeholders, analysis of demographic data and national, state and local policies, as well as current trends in the sector.

Our policy objectives demonstrate how we will act as a Council to ensure volunteering and active community participation is encouraged, supported and celebrated in the City of Yarra.

Priority 1: Encourage and promote volunteering

Council has a key role in promoting opportunities for residents to connect with and participate in community life to enhance social, health and wellbeing. Council will use its varied resources to inform the community about volunteering through a range of media and activities.

We are committed to:

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1.1 | Promoting volunteer opportunities in the Yarra community. |
| 1.2 | Encouraging volunteering as a way for people to connect with and participate in their community. |

Examples of these initiatives include:

- Creating opportunities and volunteer management infrastructure for community members to volunteer at Council.
- Accessible for staff and the community, the dedicated [Volunteering in Yarra webpage](#) on Council's internet site contains e-newsletter, while the online noticeboard [Yarra Jobs](#) is a recruitment platform for advertising paid jobs and volunteer roles.
- Working across a range of areas in Council and the community to encourage and promote diversity and inclusion in volunteering e.g. creative industries, environmental, sports and leisure, youth and senior programs, etc.
- Utilising different forms of media to promote volunteering such as social media, printed collateral, and community events.

Priority 2: Support and strengthen the local volunteer sector

Council will provide opportunities to support and strengthen the capacity of volunteers and people who manage volunteers and assist with developing collaborative, sustainable relationships to support volunteering in the community. Building networks and partnerships between Council and the volunteer sector is essential for increasing capacity to deliver better outcomes for the community and enhance the experience for volunteers.

We are committed to:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | Supporting volunteers and people who manage volunteers. |
| 2.2 | Strengthening relationships and create linkages. |

Examples of these initiatives include:

- Networking and partnership facilitation (e.g. Yarra Volunteer Leaders Network).
- Training for skills development and other capacity building.
- Pathways to employment through volunteering.
- Grant funding opportunities.

- Creating linkages with agencies such as Yarra's Neighbourhood Houses.

Priority 3: Recognise the value of volunteering

Council will continue to provide meaningful ways to acknowledge and celebrate volunteers and those who actively go above and beyond in contributing to the Yarra community.

Promoting the positive benefits of volunteering and fostering inclusivity and diversity will help attract a wide range of ages, cultures and abilities within the volunteer workforce and facilitate the growth of the local sector.

We are committed to:

3.1	Recognising the contributions made by volunteers and people who manage volunteers in the Yarra community.
3.2	Promoting the benefits of volunteering and ensuring volunteer management processes and initiatives that encourage diversity and inclusion for volunteering.

Examples of these initiatives include:

- Working with community groups, agencies, and individuals to ensure volunteer recruitment practices are inclusive and enable participation from our diverse community.
- Recognition awards for outstanding volunteers in the Yarra community.
- Initiatives and events to acknowledge and celebrate volunteers and people who manage volunteers during National Volunteer Week, International Volunteer Manager's Day and International Volunteer's Day.
- Advocating for the value of volunteering at an organisational level and working with the peak body, Volunteering Victoria.

Definitions

The following definitions are most relevant for the purpose of the policy.

Key Term	Definition
Volunteer	<p>Council uses Volunteering Australia's definition of volunteering:</p> <p>'Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain'.</p> <p>Key characteristics of a genuine volunteering arrangement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parties do not intend to create a legally binding employment relationship. • The volunteer is under no obligation to attend the workplace or perform work. • The volunteer role, in its entirety, can be performed in less than 16 hours per week. • The volunteer doesn't expect to be paid for their work.
Council Volunteers	<p>Council defines volunteers as people who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake activities that benefit Council and the community; • participate of their own free will and without coercion; • receive no financial payment form Council for their services: and • participate in a designated Council volunteer position. <p>Council volunteers include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • volunteers who are registered to add value to the delivery of Council-led programs and activities on an occasional, regular, short-term or long-term basis. <p>Note: Council Advisory Committee members assist Council with its community engagement processes and provide valuable information to support the decision making of Council. Not all committee members are volunteers, as there may be circumstances in which they receive a small stipend in return for their input.</p>
Volunteer Management	<p>The function of managing, leading, and supporting volunteers. Council officers who take on this role are referred to as Volunteer Supervisor, Volunteer Coordinator or Volunteer Leader although they may</p>

	<p>have a different position title.</p> <p>Note: The Volunteer Handbook and Agreement refers to volunteer managers as "Volunteer Supervisor".</p>
Council-Managed Programs	<p>Volunteers are directly managed by Council officers who serve as Volunteer Managers to deliver programs and services, for example, the Companion Animal Support Program, which is facilitated by Aged and Disability Services.</p>
Workplace	<p>Is any place where a person attends for the purpose of carrying out any function in relation to their volunteer engagement with Council. This includes undertaking outreach activities "off-site".</p>
Volunteer Involving Organisations	<p>Council can support Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs), including running activities using Council-managed facilities or on Council land, for example, such as Men's Shed Programs operated from the Neighbourhood Houses in Yarra.</p>
Independent volunteering	<p>There are many diverse forms of formal and informal volunteering, such as sports clubs with their own structures. These clubs are an essential part of the community fabric, contributing significantly to our community's health and wellbeing, thus benefiting the Council as well.</p>

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