



Guideline

Volunteer Guideline

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1. Purpose

This guideline provides general advice and guidance to Parliamentarians who have volunteers performing tasks in a voluntary and unpaid capacity. It outlines expectations and standards to ensure a safe, respectful and valuable volunteer experience.

These guidelines apply to parliamentarians and volunteers.

2. Key Principles

- Volunteers contribute to the work of parliamentarians by supporting community engagement, political campaigns, and parliamentary activities.
- In accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act), a worker includes any person who works, in any capacity. Volunteers have the same WHS duties as paid workers.

3. Expectations and Responsibilities

3.1 Volunteers

- Adhere to the [Behaviour Standards](#).
- Ensure their own safety, and the safety of others, while carrying out volunteer activities.
- Notify the parliamentarian and the [PWSS](#) of any accident or injury sustained while undertaking volunteer activities.
- Do not misuse or misappropriate Commonwealth property.

3.2 Parliamentarians / Authorised Persons

- Take out personal insurance cover for volunteers in the event of an injury or workplace incident.
- Provide an induction or orientation (see induction checklist in **Appendix A**).
- Communicate clear expectations and responsibilities to ensure that volunteers understand their scope of activities.
- Provide sufficient instruction and supervision for the volunteer.
- [Notify the PWSS](#) of any accident or injury sustained by a volunteer.

4. Volunteers

Using volunteers to support parliamentarians is invaluable to political campaigns and community initiatives.

Parliamentarians may allow individuals to perform tasks in a voluntary and unpaid capacity. Volunteers may be work experience students, members of the community or family members of the parliamentarian.

A volunteer is a person who undertakes activities:

- without monetary reward
- of their own free will
- of benefit to the community or to the individual, or to gain work experience
- that complement but does not replace the services provided by *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S)) employees.

Common volunteer roles include, but are not limited to, administrative duties, door knocking, letter drops, handing out 'how to vote' cards at polling booths, and making phone calls to voters. A Sample Volunteer Activity Description is available at **Appendix B**. The Volunteer Activity Agreement Template at **Attachment C** can be used to document the actual tasks that the volunteer will be undertaking.

5. Important Considerations

5.1 Workers' Compensation and Insurance

Volunteers perform tasks for the parliamentarian rather than the Commonwealth and **are not** covered by the Commonwealth's workers' compensation scheme (Comcare) or insurance fund (Comcover) in the event of an injury or workplace incident.

Parliamentarians who have volunteers are encouraged to take out their own personal insurance cover to ensure that volunteers have coverage in the event of an accident or injury. Parliamentarians should also consider any security and confidentiality factors relating to the use of volunteers to assist in the electorate office.

5.2 Employment Relationship

It is crucial to clearly define the nature of the volunteer role to ensure that there is no misunderstanding about the absence of an employment relationship. Setting expectations early – such as confirming the voluntary, unpaid nature of the role and emphasising flexibility of participation – reinforces the distinction.

Volunteer roles should complement, rather than replace the work performed by existing MOP(S) Act employees. By drafting 'activity statements' for volunteers (see Section 6.3) and position descriptions for employees you can support role clarity and minimise potential conflict to ensure both employees and volunteers can contribute effectively.

Parliamentarians should not provide payment to a volunteer, as that may constitute a payment for services and create an employment relationship. There are different legal obligations depending on whether a person is an employee or volunteer.

Parliamentarians should set clear expectations that the volunteer is not obligated to attend the workplace or to provide any certain level of volunteer activity, and that volunteer arrangements are flexible. However, to ensure effective coordination, volunteers are encouraged to communicate their availability in advance and adhere to any agreed-upon activities where possible.

Please refer to the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) for more information regarding unpaid work and employee relationships.

5.3 Work Experience Students and those under the age of 18

Parliamentarians and their staff need to be mindful of the allocation of tasks when engaging volunteers under the age of 18, including work experience students. Consideration should be given to minimising their exposure to potentially traumatising material, conversations and interactions. For example, it is not recommended that volunteers under the age of 18 answer constituent phone calls.

If the volunteer is under the age of 18, appropriate supervision should be provided. Parliamentarians should also consider the need for their staff to undertake [Working with Vulnerable People Checks](#).

6. Using Volunteers

Parliamentarians should verify the volunteers' suitability for roles, especially those involving public interaction or sensitive data.

6.1 Privacy and Confidentiality

Parliamentarians should ensure that the volunteer understands their obligation to protect sensitive information, consistent with privacy laws. Parliamentarians may wish to provide some training to volunteers to ensure that they only collect necessary information, that it is securely stored and is only used for the purposes for which it was provided. A privacy awareness course is available through [APSLearn](#).

6.2 Compliance with Electoral Laws

Volunteers must follow laws regarding election campaigns, including the distribution of materials, voter engagement, and fundraising.

Volunteers must avoid deceptive or misleading practices when engaging with voters.

6.3 Activity Description / Agreement

It can be useful to have a written description of the activities and responsibilities associated with the volunteer role. This will help clarify the role to any potential volunteers and help parliamentarians to guide their activities.

Prior to writing an activity description (example at **Appendix B**), parliamentarians will need to determine the responsibilities of a particular volunteer role, including any skills, knowledge, personal qualities, and time commitment required. Clarifying the parameters which the volunteer is expected to operate in delineates the distinction between volunteer and paid roles.

Activity descriptions can include:

- the role's purpose
- tasks and responsibilities
- skills and capabilities required (if any)
- time commitment
- instructions for using tools like databases, call scripts and apps
- tips for respectful communication and handling difficult situations that may arise.

A sample volunteer activity agreement template can be found at **Appendix C**.

6.4 Volunteer Induction/Orientation

- Parliamentarians should ensure that their volunteers receive a short induction (see induction checklist in **Appendix A**).
- Parliamentarians should ensure that the volunteer is provided with key contact information i.e. who to contact if they are unable to attend their volunteer work on a scheduled day and who to approach for support or direction.
- Volunteers should disclose any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest that could impact their work for the office. This includes personal, financial, or other commitments that may affect their ability to carry out tasks in alignment with the office's objectives. If a conflict arises, volunteers should inform the office so it can be appropriately managed.
- In the political environment, volunteers may encounter constituents who share sensitive or challenging issues, such as experiences of abuse or family violence. To ensure volunteers are prepared to handle these situations appropriately and responsibly, the following measures should be in place:
- **Boundaries and Role Clarity:** Emphasise that volunteers are not counsellors or advisors. Their role is to listen and, when necessary, refer constituents to appropriate support services or authorities.
- **Escalation Protocols:** Train volunteers on when and how to escalate serious matters to campaign staff or external services, such as child protection or crisis hotlines.

- **Awareness of Support Services:** Ensure volunteers know about the services offered by the PWSS Counselling and Support team. The PWSS can be contacted via phone 24/7 on 1800 747 977, by SMS on 0487 112 755, email at support@PWSS.gov.au, or in person at M2.105 in APH from 8.30am-8:00pm sitting days or 8.30am-5:00pm all other business days. Visit pwss.gov.au for more information.
- **Referral Resources:** Equip volunteers with a list of local and national support services (e.g., Lifeline, domestic violence helplines, child protection agencies) to provide to constituents if required. Ideally, they should provide referrals to local support services. Some helpful resources include:
 - **Mental health:** [Find Support | National Mental Health Commission](#)
 - **Sexual assault, family and domestic violence:** [List of Support Services | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)
- **Disclosed Vulnerabilities:** Parliamentarians and their staff may ask volunteers if there are any topics or tasks that they find particularly distressing based on their personal experiences or preferences (if they choose to disclose them). This information can help ensure tasks are assigned with sensitivity, taking into consideration any disclosed concerns.
- **Certification Requirements:** For certain roles where sensitive interactions are more likely (e.g., community outreach events or electorate offices), it is recommended that the volunteer undergoes a [Working with Vulnerable People check](#).
- **Debriefing Opportunities:** Provide regular debriefing sessions for volunteers to discuss challenging interactions with supervisors in a safe and supportive space.
- **Clear Reporting Channels:** Volunteers must have a clear and accessible pathway to report any difficult encounters or disclosures. This includes contacting a designated team leader or campaign manager and documenting the interaction (if appropriate) to ensure accountability and follow-up.

7. Work Health and Safety (WHS)

WHS is a shared responsibility aimed at eliminating and minimising risks to physical and psychological health and safety. In accordance with the WHS Act, parliamentarians must provide a safe environment for volunteers, whether they work onsite, in the field, or remotely.

Parliamentarians are responsible and liable for work health and safety matters relating to their volunteers. This includes meeting the cost of any work health and safety related equipment or services, such as ergonomic workstation assessments and the provision of any specialised equipment. Additionally, as noted above, parliamentarians engaging volunteers are encouraged to take out their own personal insurance cover.

7.1 Workplace Policies and Procedure

A range of WHS policies have been developed to support safe and healthy working environments for parliamentarians and MOP(S) Act employees. Volunteers are workers under the WHS legislation and as such, parliamentarians have the same duty of care to ensure their safety and wellbeing as they do for their paid workforce. Some policies to help in managing WHS responsibilities for volunteers are as follows:

- [Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#)
- [First Aid and Emergency Management Policy](#)
- [Fatigue Management Policy](#)
- [Family and Domestic Violence Policy](#)
- [Work Related Violence and Aggression Policy](#)
- [Workplace Adjustment Policy](#)
- [Infection Control Policy](#)

7.2 Reporting Workplace Incidents and Hazards

Volunteers must have access to procedures for reporting incidents, hazards and grievances, and must receive support if they raise concerns.

All work-related incidents and hazards must be reported to the PWSS WHS Team by:

- Phone: 1800 747 977 (option 3) or
- Email: whs@pwss.gov.au

The team are available 9.00am-5.00pm (AEDT/AEST) business days.

8. Support

8.1 PWSS

The PWSS is available to provide a range of human resource and work health and safety support and guidance to parliamentarians and employees. We also provide wellbeing support, conflict resolution and early intervention to all who work in a Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace including volunteers.

The PWSS can also be contacted via phone 24/7 on 1800 747 977, by SMS on 0487 112 755, email at support@PWSS.gov.au, or in person at M2.105 in APH from 8.30am-7:00pm sitting days or 9.00am-5:00pm all other business days. Visit pwss.gov.au for more information.

For advice relating to this policy, call 1800 747 977 (option 3) or email whs@pwss.gov.au.

9. Definitions

Term	Definition
Employee	Employees are staff employed under the <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984</i> (Cth). MOP(S) Act employees are employed by Parliamentarians on behalf of the Commonwealth.
Parliamentarian	This term refers collectively to Members of the House of Representatives and Senators.
PWSS	Parliamentary Workplace Support Service
Volunteer	A person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task without being paid.

10. Useful Resources

Legislation	Guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 • Parliamentary Workplace Support Service Act 2023 • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 • Privacy Act 1988 • Fair Work Act 2009 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Work Australia Volunteers Guide • Volunteering Australia Guide • Safe Work NSW - WHS Induction Checklist

11. Document Control

Version Control	
Approving Authority	Chief Executive Officer of the PWSS
Date Approved	November 2025
Current Version	V2.0
Internal Stakeholders	
Record ID	
Review	This document will be reviewed every two years or when a business requirement to do so is identified.
Notes	

Appendix A – Volunteer Induction Checklist

Parliamentarian Name	Click or tap here to enter text.	Location	Click or tap here to enter text.
Volunteer's Name	Click or tap here to enter text.	Volunteer Role/Title	Click or tap here to enter text.
Induction Date	Click or tap to enter a date.	Manager/Supervisor Name	Click or tap here to enter text.

Introduce key people and their roles:

Y/N/NA

- Manager / Supervisor
- Co-workers
- WHS Site Officer
- Emergency Officer
- First Aid Officer

Explain volunteer arrangements:

- Description / responsibilities
- Notification of unavailability / absences
- Attendance times and meal breaks

Explain WHS procedures:

- Consultative / communication processes (including how to raise a WHS issue)
- Hazards associated with their role
- WHS policies and procedures
- Hazard / incident reporting procedures
- What to do if injured
- Support services available through PWSS (e.g. counselling support) and how to access these

Explain emergency procedures:

- Emergency / evacuation procedure, location of fire extinguishers, exits, assembly point
- First aid facilities and location of first aid equipment

Other local procedures/information:

- List:

Name of person conducting induction

Signature:

Appendix B – Sample Volunteer Activity Description

Role: Political Canvasser

Location: Various locations across Australia. Primary address for the electoral office to be completed by person responsible for the volunteer

Type: Volunteer

Description: The Political Canvasser plays a crucial role in engaging with the community, promoting the political party's platform, and gathering voter support. The role is central to fostering meaningful connections, raising awareness about key policies, and ensuring voter turnout during elections.

Key Responsibilities

- **Community Engagement:** Act as the face of the campaign, interacting with voters through door-to-door canvassing, phone calls, and street stalls.
- **Information Sharing:** Clearly communicate party policies, values, and candidate messages to the public.
- **Data Collection:** Record feedback, voter concerns, and support levels accurately using provided systems or applications.
- **Issue Escalation:** Report significant voter concerns or misconceptions to campaign managers.
- **Promote Campaign Events:** Distribute flyers, posters, and invitations to campaign events.
- **Support Voting Efforts:** Encourage voter enrolment and participation, explaining voting processes where needed.

Skills and Attributes

- **Communication:** Strong verbal communication skills to confidently engage with diverse audiences.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Friendly and respectful demeanour to build trust with voters.
- **Resilience:** Ability to handle rejection or criticism while maintaining professionalism.
- **Organisation:** Capable of managing time effectively to meet canvassing goals.
- **Adaptability:** Comfortable working in various environments and adjusting to different voter perspectives.
- **Teamwork:** Willingness to collaborate with campaign staff and other volunteers.

Duties

- Conduct daily outreach to voters in assigned areas.
- Provide accurate and concise explanations of party policies and initiatives.
- Respond to basic voter queries, referring complex questions to campaign managers.
- Accurately record data on voter interactions and support levels.
- Maintain campaign materials and ensure they are distributed effectively.
- Always represent the party in a positive and professional manner.

Requirements

- If under the age of 18, the volunteer should be under the guidance of an employee.
- Familiarity with the Australian political system and electoral processes.

- Ability to undertake activities on a flexible basis, including evenings and weekends.
- Physical ability to walk long distances and work outdoors in various weather conditions.
- Commitment to the values and policies of the political party.
- Previous experience in customer service, sales, or community engagement (preferred but not essential).
- Access to reliable transport (preferred for regional canvassing).
- Depending on the role, it may be a requirement to undergo a [Working with Vulnerable People check](#).

Note: Volunteers should disclose any actual, potential or perceived [conflicts](#) of interest that could impact their work for the office. This includes personal, financial, or other commitments that may affect their ability to carry out tasks in alignment with the office's objectives. If a conflict arises, volunteers should inform the office so it can be appropriately managed.

Why Join Us?

- Be part of an exciting and dynamic campaign team.
- Gain valuable experience in political advocacy and community engagement.
- Help make a tangible difference in your community and Australia's future.

Application Process (if applicable)

To apply, submit your resume and a brief cover letter outlining your interest in the role and alignment with the party's values. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis.

Appendix C – Volunteer Activity Agreement Template

Once a volunteer has agreed to assist the parliamentarian, this template can be used to document their agreed activities.

Sample Activity Description Template

Name of volunteer	Click or tap here to enter text.
Position title	Click or tap here to enter text.
Parliamentarian name	Click or tap here to enter text.
Team/section name	Click or tap here to enter text.
Location	Click or tap here to enter text.
Contact details (phone/email)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Emergency contact details	Click or tap here to enter text.
Start date/End date (if applicable)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Hours and days per week (if applicable)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Supervisor name and contact details	Click or tap here to enter text.
Role/position description	Click or tap here to enter text.
Key responsibilities	Click or tap here to enter text.
Skills, experience and attributes	Click or tap here to enter text.
Training requirements (if any)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other requirements of the role (if any)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Volunteer manager signature	Click or tap here to enter text.
Volunteer signature	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date	Click or tap to enter a date.
Date of PD review	Click or tap here to enter text.