

Volunteering Victoria Position Statement

First Nations People & Volunteering

Volunteering Victoria is committed to an ongoing process of reconciliation, acknowledging the historical and continued impact of colonisation and systemic racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We are dedicated to building an organisation that prioritises the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and respects their histories and cultures. We aim to be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within our organisation and the volunteering community.

Volunteering Victoria acknowledges that contributing to their communities is intrinsic to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have strong ideas and practices of volunteering. Definitions of volunteering may differ between non-Indigenous and First Nations communities, however are equally valuable and essential community contributions.

Volunteering Victoria acknowledges that volunteer programs in non-Indigenous organisations are often not culturally aware or safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, posing multiple barriers to the non-Indigenous definition of 'formal volunteering'. We also recognise the past and ongoing discrimination and racism experienced within non-Indigenous organisations. We respect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may prioritise volunteering within and for their own communities.

Volunteering Victoria strives to address the barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the volunteering sector. As the peak body for volunteering we take responsibility for providing leadership on reconciliation in the sector and to encourage volunteer-involving organisations (VIO's) on their reconciliation journey.

While our organisation is committed to promoting volunteer opportunities, programs, practices that are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, we seek to highlight the existing contribution that they make to their communities. It is imperative that any volunteering initiatives are driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are consistent with their cultures, motivations, and goals, and are of broader benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Volunteering Victoria acknowledges the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We commit to partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to ensure their voices inform volunteering policy positions, advocacy work and programs. We prioritise the knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their long history of community giving and volunteering.

'We inherit the responsibility, we keep our culture alive, that's why we are the oldest living culture on this planet. Our culture is built on caring and sharing, that's what has kept us strong over all the years.'

-Indigenous participant, CIRCA report, 2016

