

16 September 2025

Rose van Dijk

Aged Care Volunteering Policy

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BRISBANE QLD 4001

Email: agedcarevolunteer@health.gov.au

RE: Consultation on Mandatory Training for Volunteers in Aged Care

Dear Rose,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation. We strongly endorse the focus on protecting the rights and safety of care recipients. We have shared the survey link widely and directly emailed our members engaged in the aged care sector, urging them to respond.

As the state peak body, Volunteering Victoria represents a strong network of volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs), and stakeholders across many sectors. Part of our remit is to understand what is happening with volunteers and share these insights with those who also work alongside them. Our recent [State of Volunteering Report](#) (SOVR) highlights the challenges for volunteers and volunteering and the areas for greatest opportunity.

Drawing from that report, and insights from our members we wish to highlight four critical considerations to bear in mind as you carry this work forward:

1. Older people ARE volunteers

Many older people are themselves active volunteers, and volunteering is in itself a significant source of wellbeing, connection, and purpose. Current screening and training requirements are already a barrier for this group; adding further mandatory compliance risks excluding them from the very roles that sustain their health and social engagement.

This is an important distinction: the conversation so far has largely focused on volunteers working with older people, but it must equally consider older people as volunteers themselves. How and why volunteering happens in later life is central to both the sustainability of the sector and the wellbeing of older Australians.

- Compliance can create a “gatekeeping effect” that deters or excludes some (SOVR, p.26).
- The burden of compliance can be discouraging (SOVR, p.26).
- Onerous rules limit program capacity (SOVR, p.26).



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2. The decline in formal volunteering

Formal volunteering is in long-term decline, accelerated by the increasing compliance burden. This has and will continue to have a serious impact on volunteering in aged care. Our experience from other sectors is that small and medium organisation will simply reduce their use of volunteers if new requirements are too onerous, further undermining sector capacity and health and wellbeing benefits. The risk is a chilling effect: more regulation leading to fewer volunteers.

- COVID had a particularly severe impact on volunteering in Victoria. While volunteering numbers had climbed back to 58.9% by 2024 this remains below the national average of 64.3% and most of the recent growth has occurred in informal and non-traditional settings.
- SOVR found that “A lack of consistency across sectors and jurisdictions add to the complex and at times ambiguous regulatory environment for volunteering.”

3. Training must start from the volunteer’s perspective

Training and standards must be simple, accessible, proportionate to risk, and designed around the needs of volunteers rather than imposed from the top down. Otherwise, organisations without the resources to manage additional compliance will opt out of engaging volunteers.

- Role-specific and risk-proportionate – low-risk roles should not be overburdened (SOVR, p.64).
- Accessible – flexible formats, times, and support for diverse volunteers and organisations (SOVR, p.64).
- Portable – one system so training and screening isn’t repeated when volunteers move organisations (SOVR, p.64).
- Streamlined – less red tape so volunteers can start quickly (SOVR, p.63).
- Technology – should simplify volunteering, not complicate it and must be relevant and inclusionary for older volunteers (SOVR, p.73).

4. We strongly recommend building on existing frameworks

Australia already has the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, widely recognised as the benchmark for safe, effective, and inclusive volunteer practice. Any mandatory requirements should align with and build upon these standards rather than create a parallel system. This would reduce red tape, provide consistency, and support organisations to implement proportionate, sustainable approaches.

We support the principle of ensuring safe, quality care, but urge that the unintended impacts on volunteers be given equal weight. In particular, older people must be recognised not only as recipients of care, but as active volunteers whose wellbeing and community connection are sustained through volunteering itself.

If designed with volunteers at the centre, training and standards can strengthen volunteering. If not, they risk accelerating decline and becoming exclusionary at a time when we need more volunteers, not fewer.

We are happy to support this process in any way we can and if we can be of assistance please reach out.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Sharp', with a stylized, cursive script.

Geoff Sharp
CEO, Volunteering Victoria

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