

Case study: Leading change towards inclusive practice

Building Stronger Foundations for Inclusive Volunteering

Strong volunteer programs rely on clear systems, supportive leadership, and practices that help people feel safe, valued, and included. When Wodonga Urban Landcare Network recognised an opportunity to strengthen its volunteer management and workplace practices, it partnered with Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau (AWVRB) to review its existing systems and build stronger foundations for inclusive volunteering.

As a community-based organisation working closely with volunteers, staff, and the wider community, Wodonga Urban Landcare Network wanted to strengthen and formalise its internal systems to better support everyone contributing to its environmental and community programs.

To build a clear understanding of the organisation's operations, culture, and existing practices, AWVRB undertook a series of site visits and consultations. This included meetings with board members, interviews with volunteers and employees, and a review of existing policies, procedures, and volunteer documentation. Together, these activities identified strengths, gaps, and opportunities to improve its volunteer management and workplace practices.

While much of the work focused on policies and procedures, its purpose was simple: to make volunteering easier to understand, safer to participate in, and more welcoming for people from all backgrounds.

One priority was ensuring volunteers and employees had a shared understanding of what a psychologically safe workplace looks like. AWVRB supported the development of a Psychosocial Safety Policy to create a respectful environment where people felt supported, valued and able to raise concerns.

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AWVRB also reviewed and updated the Volunteer Management Policy to clarify expectations, strengthen governance, and better support volunteers throughout their journey. The revised policy and supporting recommendations were presented to the board and formally endorsed.

Building on this work, AWVRB was then engaged to review and rewrite volunteer position descriptions and standard operating procedures. This process helped clarify volunteer responsibilities, improve consistency across roles, and enhance the overall volunteer experience.

A key focus throughout the project was ensuring that systems and practices supported diversity, inclusion, and accessibility for all community members. The work considered the needs of migrants, First Nations people, young people, and people with disabilities, with the aim of helping create a more welcoming, culturally safe, and inclusive environment for participation.

Key outcomes

The collaboration resulted in:

- Development of a Psychosocial Safety Policy
- Review and improvement of the Volunteer Management Policy
- Board endorsement of strengthened volunteer governance practices
- Clearer volunteer role descriptions and responsibilities
- Greater consistency across volunteer processes
- Stronger organisational systems to support volunteers and staff
- Increased focus on psychological safety and wellbeing
- More inclusive and accessible volunteer practices
- Improved readiness for future volunteer recruitment and engagement

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Lessons for other organisations

The following recommendations were identified to support ongoing improvement and sustainable volunteer engagement practices:

- ❖ **Seek support** from your local Volunteer Resource Bureau and make use of practical resources available through the Volunteering Victoria website.
- ❖ **Review policies and procedures regularly** to ensure they remain inclusive, accessible, and aligned with current legislation and good practice.
- ❖ **Embed diversity and inclusion principles** throughout volunteer recruitment, onboarding, and ongoing engagement.
- ❖ **Develop volunteer resources using clear, accessible language** that is easy for people from diverse backgrounds to understand.
- ❖ **Create safe and consistent opportunities** for volunteers and employees to provide feedback and raise concerns.
- ❖ **Build culturally safe and welcoming environments** for migrants, First Nations communities, young people, and people with disability.
- ❖ **Monitor volunteer wellbeing** through regular check-ins and reflective conversations, so volunteers and staff feel safe to raise concerns and contribute ideas.

By strengthening its policies, clarifying volunteer roles, and embedding inclusion into everyday practice, Wodonga Urban Landcare Network is better placed to recruit, support and retain volunteers from a broad range of backgrounds. The project demonstrates how investing in strong organisational foundations can create a safer, more inclusive experience for volunteers and staff.

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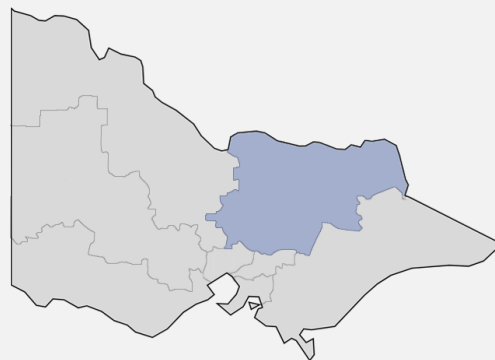
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<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



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Volunteering Victoria acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.