

History of Uniting Care Werribee Support & Housing

Uniting Care Werribee Support & Housing (UCWS&H) was formed by a group of volunteers who recognised the need in the community for housing issues to be addressed by the community. UCWS&H acknowledges and welcomes the important contribution made by volunteers in the effective provision of our services. We recognise volunteering as an important vehicle of growth for the UCWS&H in welfare, community development and administration areas.

In the early stages of the agency's development, there was only one staff member and for a large part of our history, volunteers have outnumbered salaried staff. Uniting Care and Concern, a totally volunteer service, came under the umbrella of the agency in 2005, and for over 25 years the volunteers have distributed Emergency Relief to vulnerable members of the Wyndham community, and run the Opportunity Shop. Even now, when salaried staff deliver most of the services, the value of volunteering remains essential to our ethos. It is a part of our corporate history and identity.

To maximise our effectiveness, we train and deploy volunteers to assist and enhance our work in the community. At UCWS&H volunteers should be able to do any task for which she/he is available and has the appropriate skills. The organisation does not assign status differently on the basis of whether a worker is paid or a volunteer.

The contribution of volunteers remains vital to UCWS&H's operations. UCWS&H recognises and values the reciprocal nature of the relationship between organisation and individual and is committed to providing a volunteer program which both:

- Supports UCWS&H's work; and,
- Meets the expectations and needs of individual volunteers

The number of volunteers that support our agency far exceeds the number of employed staff.

North West Community Context

Melbourne's North and West region includes 14 local government areas and incorporates 29% of Victoria's population. Population growth represents one of the most significant factors impacting on the region. The region has traditionally been and continues to be Victoria's industrial heartland; however the region also has high levels of unemployment. North/West Melbourne has been identified as the most disadvantaged region in Melbourne and one of the most disadvantaged in Victoria.

The region is culturally diverse, with 30% of the region's population being born overseas, compared to the state average of 23%. Further, the region has the highest number of indigenous Victorians. Given the cultural and linguistic diversity of the communities we serve, volunteers at Uniting Care Werribee Support & Housing are required to embrace the diversity of our local communities.

Uniting Care Werribee Support & Housing Program Information

There are currently 16 staff employed within the Agency. Agency programs include:

The Housing Team provides housing support, advocacy and referral for:

- For families in crises, emergency accommodation and support
- Generalist housing support for families
- Housing support for Single Adults

Youth Services Team programs include:

- Bridges Adolescent Foster Care Program (ACP)
- SAAP Voluntary Placement Program
- RESOLVE program (including the EQUIPPED program and parent/adolescent mediation)
- Youth Housing Program

Reconnect West:

- Prevention/early intervention program for young people 12 – 18 years and their families.
 - Mediation
 - Case Management and Community Development

Wyndham Information and Support Program (WISP)

- Crises, short term and support program for anyone living in the City of Wyndham.

Staff are also employed in Management, Administration and Quality Assurance.

For more detailed information about the Agency's programs refer to the Annual Report and Agency Brochures.

Volunteer Position Summary

1. The volunteer roles that are available with Uniting Care Werribee Support & Housing are: Emergency Relief, Emergency Relief Breakfast Program, Opportunity Shop, Furniture Program, Administration, Adolescent Foster Care and Xmas presents for clients at the end of each year.
2. Volunteering creates positive change for the volunteer, Uniting Care Werribee Support & Housing and the community.
3. Volunteering is always a matter of choice
4. Volunteering is unpaid.

Definition of Volunteering

Volunteering is an activity which always takes place through a Not-For-Profit organisation or project and is :

- Of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Undertaken of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial remuneration;
- In a position not designated as paid;
- Underpinned by the Volunteer Australia "Principles of Volunteering"

General Principles

UCWS&H adheres to the principles of volunteering as defined by Volunteering Victoria:

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer;
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice;
- Volunteering is an activity that is unpaid and not undertaken for the receipt of salary, pension or government allowance;
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community;
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human and social needs;
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only;
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers;
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others;
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equity:

Recruitment

Our recruitment policy is driven by our purpose which is to fulfill the needs of our organisation and the expectations of our volunteers. UCWS&H applies the principles of equal opportunity to its recruitment processes and will not withhold a volunteer job on the basis of race, age, gender or religion.

All prospective volunteers are to be interviewed prior to placement. The area of work and level of placement will be arranged on an individual basis at the time of the interview. The selection criteria for each position depends upon particular skills needed to fulfill the duties of that position. Commitment to the goals, values, policies and procedures of UCWS&H will be an expectation as will be the ability to work as part of a team and the acceptance of the relevant roles and responsibilities.

Due to the resources required for training, it is preferable that prospective volunteers can commit to UCWS&H for at least a half day a week.

Application

All applicants will be asked to fill in a Volunteer Application form and a meeting will be arranged with a Snr. Worker. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Determine what brought the applicant to UCWS&H;
- Discuss any particular expectations regarding volunteering;
- Get to know the applicant i.e. their background, what they are doing now;
- Determine the applicants availability;
- Update the applicant on UCWS&H, its work and program areas;
- Discuss areas in which volunteers can work and the type of work volunteers do;
- Talk about expected commitment from volunteers;
- Ask about any special needs or limitations UCWS&H ought to be aware of;
- Discuss the applicants suitability for UCWS&H and UCWS&H's suitability for them
- Discuss current volunteer vacancies that are available:

Reference Checks

All volunteers are required to undertake a Police check at their own cost. Depending on the type of volunteer work, a Working With Children Check may also be requested. Two work or character references (not from a family member) may also be asked for and followed up by the Agency.

Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

UCWS&H Volunteers have the right to:

- Receive adequate information and a clear position description of what is expected and to understand why they are doing a task and how it fits into the broader program.
- Be assigned a suitable project, task or job and to say no to tasks they are unable to do, or would rather not do and to ask for a new job.
- To have on the job supervision provided by a designated person.
- Receive respect and support from their co-workers as well as recognition and feedback from the supervisor for their work.
- Be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses, providing prior approval is obtained with the supervisor.
- Be briefed on the broader aspects of UCWS&H and discuss with their supervisor whether UCWS&H is suited to them or whether they are suited to UCWS&H.
- Request a reference when applying for a paid position, providing the volunteer has worked with UCWS&H for a minimum three month period.
- Provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations regarding their job or other programs.
- Have access to dispute resolution procedures and to be supported through such a process.
- Have their personal details kept in a confidential manner.
- Work in a safe and healthy environment.
- Be provided with a place to work and suitable tools and materials.
- Be adequately insured.

We ask volunteers to agree to:

- Be reliable and committed where possible, so tasks can be planned accordingly.
- Keep UCWS&H informed of changes of address and phone number.
- Be responsible to and consult with their supervisor.
- To ask for support when needed.
- Agree to do the necessary job training in order to carry out duties as stated in their Position Description.
- Abide by any UCWS&H policies and procedures regarding their work.
- Appreciate and respect the confidential nature of information that may be acquired during the course of their duties.
- Discuss any grievances or problems with their supervisor. If they remain unresolved to speak to a Team Leader or Snr. Worker.
- Not to spend money or order goods on behalf of UCWS&H without prior approval.
- Notify their supervisor if they are no longer able to work.
- Show enthusiasm, loyalty and belief in the work of the organisation.
- Agree to work in a safe and healthy way and not jeopardise the health and safety of others.
- Inform UCWS&H of any pre-existing medical conditions or special needs that UCWS&H should be aware of that might effect the volunteer's ability to undertake certain tasks.
- Report any injury immediately to their supervisor.
- Not smoke in any UCWS&H building or vehicle.

UCWS&H's commitment to volunteers

UCWS&H recognises that volunteers contribute a vast wealth of skills, knowledge and support towards the running of UCWS&H. All UCWS&H staff in return are to treat volunteers with respect and support, as they are

valued members of the organisation.

Confidentiality

All volunteer personal information will be treated with confidentiality. The volunteer information will be protected in a locked filing cabinet. Resumes' and registration forms can be show to relevant staff in order to decide a volunteers' suitability for a position.

Key accountabilities

Uniting Care Werribee Support & Housing (UCWS&H) Philosophy:

UCWS&H values the contribution made by volunteers and seeks to recognise that by:

- Acknowledging that the relationship between volunteers and UCWS&H is a reciprocal one.
- Acknowledging that volunteers exercise free choice in committing to UCWS&H;
- Acknowledging that volunteers are of equal status and deserve the same treatment and respect as paid employees, and the UCWS&H can expect the same standards of its volunteers as it expects of its paid employees;
- Ensuring volunteers are not used to replace paid staff positions and only carry out work that they have agreed to;
- Providing an opportunity for the development of skills and experience;
- Providing support in the form of clear policy guidelines, training, recognition and support, and the provision of references if required.

Organisational accountabilities

UCWS&H will ensure that it provides:

- An induction and orientation process for all volunteers.
- Opportunities to celebrate the achievements and efforts of volunteers.
- That it will provide support, direction and feedback to each volunteer.

Volunteer accountabilities

- Undertake their assigned volunteer job in a diligent and appropriate manner.
- Volunteer in a way that is congruent with the ethos of UCWS&H (see Code of Conduct).
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality. Volunteers are asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement when joining the Agency.
- Represent UCWS&H and its Programs in a positive manner.

Key performance indicators

1. Maintaining appropriate relationships and boundaries with clients/ customers.
2. Respectful and courteous communications with others.
3. Working collaboratively with others.
4. Being punctual and notifying the Team leader / Coordinator when you are unavailable to attend work.
5. Wise and careful stewardship of UCWS&H Resources.

Additional Information

Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) All volunteers are requested to carry out their duties in a manner that does not adversely affect their own health and safety and that of others by reporting all incidents and injuries as well as co-operating with any measures introduced in the workplace to improve OH&S.

All volunteers are asked to fill in the Volunteer Sign-In book at reception (or, if applicable the Op shop) to indicate their presence in the building. This is particularly important in case of evacuation to aid safety. Smoking is not permitted in any UCWS&H Building or vehicle. Volunteers are to report any injury immediately to their supervisor.

Fires Safety and Evacuation In the event of a fire or discovery of smoke, volunteers are to notify the nearest staff member immediately. No volunteer should risk personal safety by trying to put out a fire. Should the alarms go off, all volunteers should follow staff to the nearest exit and evacuate the building immediately. Exits are to be found via the front and back doors in each building. No attempts should be made to finish current tasks or to find personal belongings. All volunteers should wait with staff outside the building at the nominated meeting place until the role has been called and everyone has been accounted for. No-one should leave the vicinity until that time.

Personal Insurance Cover UCWS&H must always have a current Voluntary Workers Personal Accident Insurance Policy. The policy will ensure all volunteers while engaged in unpaid voluntary work officially organised and under the control of UCQWS&H including necessary direct travel to and from or during such voluntary work.

Pre-existing injury Before any person can be volunteer you are required to disclose any pre-existing injuries or disease that might be affected by volunteering in this position.

Equal opportunity UCWS&H is an equal opportunity employer. All volunteers have a responsibility to be familiar with related policies/procedures such as: Code of Conduct, Sexual Misconduct and Grievance Procedure.

Probationary Period UCWS&H have a three month probationary period for all new Volunteers. This provides an opportunity for the Volunteer to determine their suitability to the role and vice-versa. At the end of the three month period, the volunteer supervisor will meet with the volunteer to advise of the completion of the three month probationary and provide feedback to the volunteer on their role. The meeting also provides an opportunity for the volunteer to discuss and provide feedback on their role.

Reimbursement of Expenses

General Expenses The supervisor should advise their volunteers of their budget limitations and must approve any purchases before they are made. Volunteers will then be reimbursed for approved purchased out of the UCWS&H's budget. Receipts must be obtained and the supervisor is to fill out a Petty Cash claim on behalf of the volunteer.

Travel Expenses With prior approval by the supervisor, all travel expenses incurred reasonably by a volunteer in the course of his/her duties shall be fully reimbursed by UCWS&H upon presentation of appropriate documentation.

Where a volunteer is required to use their own vehicle for UCWS&H's business, the volunteer shall be paid a vehicle allowance out of UCWS&H's budget, in accordance with the going rate paid to staff as stated in the UCWS&H's Industrial Agreement.