

Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in many community events, including Australia Day.

In 2010, 6.1 million people (36%) of the Australian population aged 18 years and over participated in voluntary work. There are three key things that volunteers value and cite as the rewards of volunteering:

- + A feeling of self-worth
- + The appreciation they receive
- + A strong sense of 'family', friendship and camaraderie.

Recruiting volunteers

- + Invite people who you feel have the right skills or expertise to help you recruit volunteers
- + It may be an opportunity to involve existing volunteers who are looking for some extra involvement
- + Look out for volunteers with marketing, promotional or public speaking experience
- + If appropriate, consider inviting a representative from the local ethnic community to participate
- + When inviting an outsider (not already a volunteer) to be on your committee they may not know much about your organisation - to win them over, you'll have to promote yourselves a little.
- + Consider your local Council - their publicity officer or another staff member may like to help. You might find that these people already have contacts and records of people looking for things to do who might be suitable and available.

When recruiting young people

- + Market your position with young people in mind
- + Think of the image that you are portraying
- + Be flexible about working around young people's other commitments such as study and part-time paid work
- + Don't forget to check that your volunteer insurance policy covers younger volunteers

Attracting volunteers

- + Create a list of what you can offer a volunteer – what's in it for them (e.g. a reference, something to add to their CV, training, opportunities to meet new people, personal satisfaction, helping a cause they believe in, or learning new skills)
- + Tell your volunteers how your committee can offer added benefits (e.g. reimbursement for travel expenses, monthly get togethers for staff and volunteers)
- + Prepare a job description listing tasks so people know exactly what they are volunteering to do
- + Think creatively about your volunteer roles—divide tasks into 'projects' and think about which tasks could be done by a team of volunteers
- + Try to identify some work requiring short commitment (possibly through identifying more project-based tasks).

Inviting volunteers

- + Use local newsletters to invite parents, grandparents, and friends to volunteer.
- + Place an ad in the local paper or distribute flyers in local shops to invite members of the local community to volunteer.
- + Approach your local radio station to see if you can talk about your need for volunteers and the benefits (even better if you have some enthusiastic volunteers who can join you to give their firsthand experience).
- + Consider attending other events (for example a sports carnival, or agricultural show) and asking the organisers about volunteer interest. You could ask permission to place a poster or invitation to volunteer in a prominent spot at these venues.

Show flexibility and sensitivity to volunteers' other commitments

- + Be flexible about the timing of involvement—some people may need to regularly change the day that they help to fit in with their other commitments. Remember, many people are juggling work, study and family so may need to adjust their volunteering hours as their commitments change.
- + Make it easy for people to get involved – minimise the screening/induction process. Invite the volunteer in so that you can meet them and tell them more about the possibilities or about what you are looking for and, if you are happy that they can perform the role and they are still interested in helping you, set a time for them to start.
- + Provide a choice of jobs that volunteers can help with – not everyone enjoys the same thing (e.g. creating publicity materials, preparing food, working at a computer, filing, collecting resources).
- + Introduce shorter shift options or shorter blocks of time during peak periods.

Sourcing volunteers

- + Some local council have volunteer coordinators – contact them to ensure your Australia Day events are listed as an option for potential community volunteers.
- + Find volunteers for events by approaching your local service clubs, such as Lions Australia (lionsclubs.org.au), Rotary in Australia (rotary.org.au), and Scouts and Rovers (nsw.scouts.com.au), as well as educational and training institutions that offer event courses.
- + Youth officers in the community may have ideas and be in contact with young people who might be interested in volunteer work.

Rights and responsibilities in relation to volunteers

You need to be aware of your rights and responsibilities in relation to volunteers including insurance, occupational health and safety, orientation and training, and reference, police and other checks.

Insurance

You should seek professional advice about the type of insurance you will require to cover volunteer activity. You should also check to ensure that any existing insurance policies cover volunteers. Some you might consider are:

- + Volunteers/workers
- + Personal accident
- + Public liability motor vehicle
- + Professional indemnity liability

Occupational health and safety

Volunteers are entitled to the same safe conditions that are provided to paid employees.

Appropriate orientation and training

Organise orientation and training to ensure volunteers are able to do their assigned job effectively. Note that volunteers serving alcohol at a licensed event must be trained in the responsible service of alcohol.

Reference, police or other checks

Depending on the role assigned to a volunteer (such as working with children), it may be necessary to carry out checks. If checks are relevant, volunteers should always be advised and their permission sought.