



## Volunteer Policy

“No matter what happens in society at large, we as Buddhists have to act in accordance with Buddhist principles and be open to people of all kinds, and their needs.  
“They are our members, not some people out there, but our members.”  
— Sangharakshita

### Overview

The Melbourne Buddhist Centre (MBC) is a community-based, not-for-profit, incorporated association.

We are a predominantly volunteer-run organisation which recognises that, without the efforts of volunteers, we could not fulfil our aims in a sustainable way.

We recognise that volunteering is an expression of generosity, one of our highest Dharmic ideals.

For many in our community, volunteering is a significant aspect of their spiritual journey. Our volunteers range from Order Members to those who are just beginning to investigate Buddhism but, regardless of the level of engagement, it is vital that the volunteering experience be a positive one. Mutual appreciation and encouragement are necessary aspects of this.

We intend to maximise volunteers' potential, make best use of their skills and support them to develop.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Volunteers are supported in accordance with our Dharmic Principles and Ethical Precepts.
- The needs of the MBC are met.
- Volunteer management adheres to legal requirements and the principles of Volunteering Australia.



## Definition

Volunteering Australia has defined formal volunteering as an activity which takes place through not-for-profit organisations or projects, and is undertaken:

- To be of benefit to the community and to the volunteer.
- Of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion.
- For no financial payment.
- In designated volunteer positions only.

In accordance with the Australian Government's National Volunteering Strategy and the National Standards and the National Work, Health and Safety Act, the MBC considers volunteers as unpaid staff members with similar rights and protections — including work, health and safety provisions — to paid staff members.

## Kinds of Volunteers

Volunteers fall into three broad categories:

### 1. Office volunteers

All volunteers who support the MBC within our premises.

### 2. Remote volunteers

Volunteers who support the MBC in locations outside the building, usually virtually.

### 3. Event volunteers

Volunteers on retreats or at other off-site events.



## **Volunteer Manager**

The ongoing management of volunteers is the responsibility of one or more Volunteer Managers.

The Volunteer Manager may be any of the following people, as appropriate:

- The MBC Office Manager.
- The MBC Chair.
- A Mitra Convenor.
- An Order Member with knowledge of the volunteer's task.
- A member of the MBC Management Committee.

Volunteers are not to work alone at the MBC, unless approved by their Volunteer Manager. When a volunteer is working alone, the Volunteer Manager will be aware of the volunteer's presence at the MBC, and will be contactable during the volunteer's shift.

In the case of roles that carry spiritual responsibility, the Volunteer Manager is responsible for mentoring the volunteer. Such roles include:

- Shrine creation and maintenance, whether at the MBC or off-site.
- Any redecoration of the MBC premises.
- Supporting courses, retreats or other activities where the Dharma is shared.

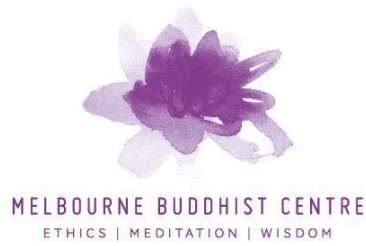


## **The MBC's Obligations**

The MBC will:

- Clearly specify the volunteer's role, providing a task list or role descriptions.
- Match tasks to volunteers' skills, interests and capabilities as far as practicable.
- Provide induction as necessary.
- Provide ongoing support as required.
- Provide a safe workplace, in accordance with the Workplace Health and Safety Act.
- Ensure the volunteer obtains a Police Check or Working with Children Check, as required.
- Reimburse volunteers for purchases that have been agreed to be necessary to the task, where receipts can be provided (noting that volunteers will not be reimbursed for personal expenses — such as phone or travel costs — unless this has been approved in advance).
- Ensure an appropriate level of insurance cover for volunteers.

If a regular volunteer is unexpectedly absent, their Volunteer Manager will contact them to ensure their wellbeing and confirm any changes to the on-going arrangement.



## **Volunteers' Obligations**

Volunteers are expected to:

- Contact their Volunteer Manager if they are unable to perform tasks as agreed.
- Adhere to the MBC's Policies, Guidelines and Ethical Precepts.
- Report any incidents and hazards, as soon as possible, to their Volunteer Manager.
- Acquire a Police Check or Working with Children check, if so requested by their Volunteer Manager.
- Interact harmoniously with the MBC's staff and Management Committee, as well as their Volunteer Manager.

Volunteers need not be professed Buddhists.

Volunteers have the right to refuse work.

Volunteers have the right to discontinue their role, which can be done by informing their Volunteer Manager, preferably with advance notice.

In accordance with the MBC's Practising with Children policy, no person under the age of 18 may engage in activities at the MBC, unless they are under the supervision of a parent or legal guardian.

Any grievances are to be raised with the Volunteer Manager in the first instance. If this is not practicable, they may be raised with any of the following people, as appropriate:

- The MBC Office Manager.
- The MBC Chair.
- A Mitra Convenor.
- An Order Member.
- A member of the MBC Management Committee.
- An MBC Safeguarding Officer.



## **Supporting Volunteers**

In order to maximise volunteer participation, the National Survey and the National Standards recommend:

- Informed top-level management support for volunteering.
- Ensuring that the work of volunteers connects with an organisation's strategic goals.
- Effective management of diverse volunteer interests and resources.
- Facilitating productive relations among staff and volunteers.
- Protection against volunteer-related liabilities.

All major surveys of Australian volunteers indicate that the most satisfying form of engagement is ongoing, regular volunteering.

They suggest that volunteers have shown increasing expectations around supervision levels, organisational engagement, training opportunities and flexible volunteering arrangements.

Conversely, where minimal effort is put in, the result is minimal outcomes, meeting neither the needs of the organisation nor those of the volunteers involved.

The general result of this is decreased volunteer engagement.

## **Insurance**

Volunteers are covered by the MBC's insurance policy whilst engaged in designated activities.

The MBC's insurance policy does not cover volunteers engaged in activities outside of the MBC or designated activities.



## **Related Documents**

The Australian Government's National Strategy for Volunteering

<https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/get-involved/national-strategy-for-volunteering/>

Volunteering Australia's National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations, 2001

<https://volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/VA-National-Standards-for-involving-volunteers-in-not-for-profit-organisations.pdf>

The Australian Government's National Survey of Volunteering Issues, 2011

[https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files\\_mf/1377045635VANSVI2011.pdf](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1377045635VANSVI2011.pdf)

The National Work, Health and Safety Act

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>

Fair Work Australia's Internships, Vocational Placements & Unpaid Work fact sheet

<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/factsheets/FWO-fact-sheet-Internships-Vocational-Placements-Unpaid-Work.pdf>



## **Appendix I**

### **Volunteering and Young People**

Young people can be attracted to volunteering that offers flexible, project-based roles, meaningful work with room for autonomy, innovative use of technology and rewarding social connections. Points of contact, forums for exploration and platforms of engagement across new media and social media are enormously and increasingly important for young people wanting to engage as volunteers.

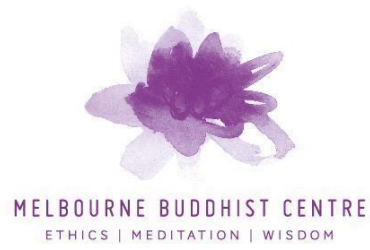
#### **Virtual Volunteering**

Virtual volunteering involves the completion of tasks off-site, in whole or in part, using any internet-connected device. Virtual projects can be promoted as a way of engaging young people, who expect more flexible and more technology-enabled activities. Projects might include research, web design, writing, copy editing, graphic design or providing expert advice.

#### **Micro-Volunteering**

This is a form of virtual volunteering that takes up to a few hours to complete, and does not require ongoing commitment. It is comprised of a task, or a series of tasks, undertaken by an individual or a team, either online via an internet-connected device (including smart phones), or offline in small increments of time. This enables a much more dynamic means of participation which can be appealing to young people.





Drafted by Talia Eilon / Maitrīdhāraṇī, Secretary and Public Officer: 21st February, 2023  
Ratified by MBC Management Committee: 11th March, 2023