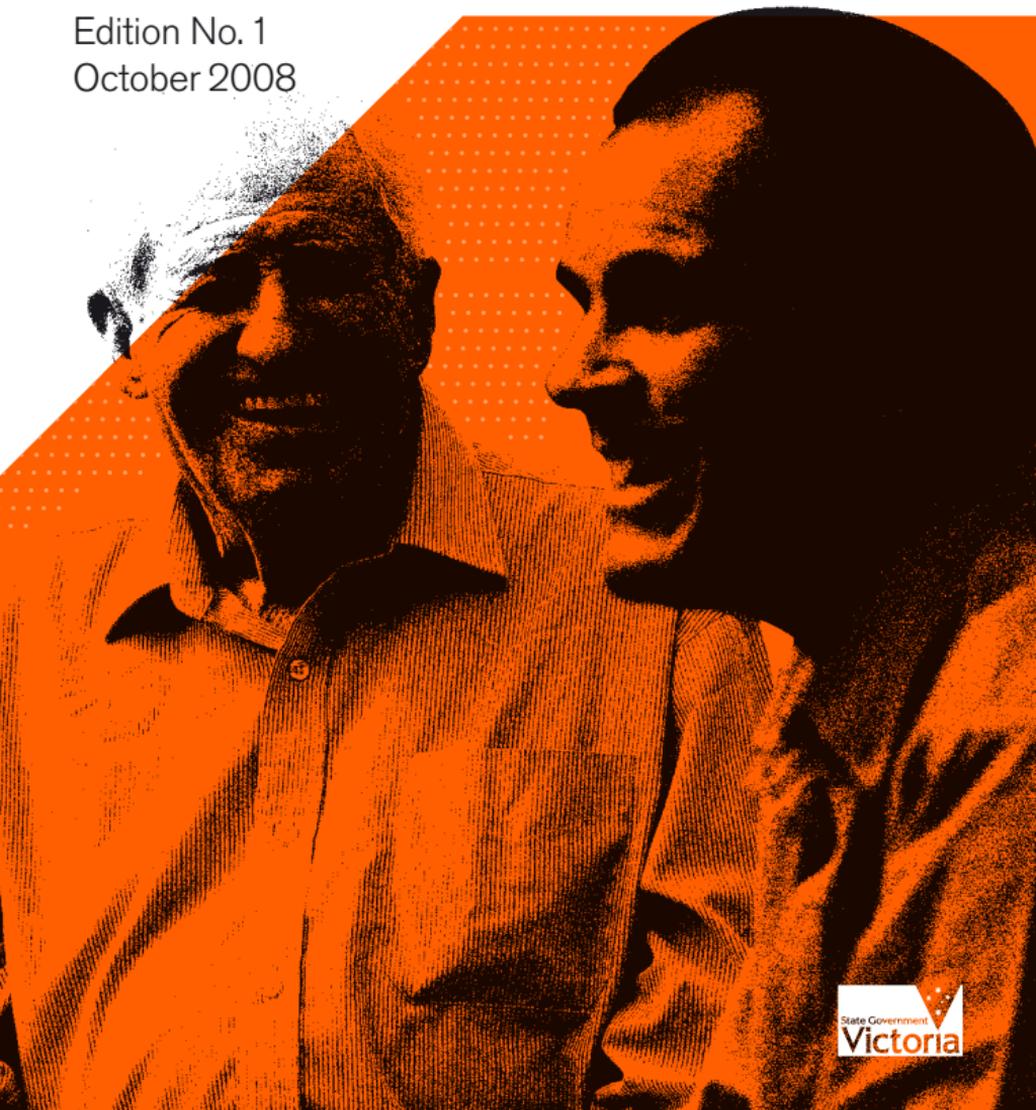




**What you need to know
about health and safety**

Volunteers in community services

Edition No. 1
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What you need to know about health and safety

Make health and safety a priority

As a volunteer you have the right to feel healthy and safe. The organisation you volunteer with also needs you to be healthy and safe to help deliver its important services to the community.

Be aware of the risks

The community service sector includes a variety of volunteering roles, such as organising sausage sizzles, running charity shops and helping in private homes. All of these roles involve risks.

Injury and illness can result if safe work practices are not followed. For example, volunteers may suffer from:

- back or shoulder pain from lifting heavy objects (eg moving people or furniture)
- stress from dealing with difficult clients or overwork
- muscle injury or strain from slipping, tripping or falling in a client's home.

The law provides that your volunteer role should be carried out in a safe environment. This relates to:

- physical risks (eg injury from lifting heavy things or from a violent client)
- psychological risks (eg stress or trauma relating to your work).

Feel safe and comfortable

The place you carry out your volunteer role should be clean, secure and well-lit. It should also have a:

- comfortable temperature
- tidy floor that is free of any hazards that could cause you to slip, trip or make it hard to get out of the building in an emergency
- secure place to keep your personal belongings
- comfortable workstation so you don't feel any pain.

Your health and safety is also a priority if you are volunteering in a private home or in the community. You should ask for a risk assessment to be done before you start your role. If you are volunteering in these environments, you should also:

- make sure your supervisor knows where you are at all times
- have access to a mobile phone or other emergency communication systems
- use appropriate vehicles and equipment
- withdraw from situations where you don't feel comfortable (eg aggressive persons or animals in a private home).

Tell someone with authority about any concerns you have.

Information and training

Your organisation has an obligation to give you the information, training and instruction you need to fulfill your volunteer role safely. You are entitled to be given training when:

- you start your volunteer role
 - before you start any new task
 - if new procedures or equipment is introduced.
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Before you start

Before starting your role, your organisation should:

- have a system in place for managing volunteer activity
- explain your tasks and the boundaries of your role
- tell you how you will be supervised
- outline any risks that may arise
- explain the health and safety procedures (eg instructions for equipment you will be using or security arrangements if you are away from the organisation)
- show you the emergency exits and other emergency and first aid arrangements
- tell you who to talk to if you have any health and safety concerns
- explain how to report any health and safety incidents and hazards
- tell you what situations you should remove yourself from
- explain arrangements for debriefing or counselling after an incident or other traumatic circumstance
- give you a written statement setting out your role and responsibilities.

Your help is valued

Volunteers are a vital part of many community service organisations. If you have any questions or want to know more about health and safety, speak to someone with authority at your organisation.

Look after your health and safety

- Be familiar with your organisation's health and safety procedures.
- Know who is responsible for health and safety at your organisation.
- Follow health and safety instructions.
- Report any health and safety issues and incidents as soon as possible.
- Tell someone with authority if you are suffering from any illness or injury that is related to or may affect your volunteering.
- Be aware of your own health and safety and don't neglect it. Do this for your own health and safety and also that of other people, including other volunteers.

Talk about health and safety

- Raise health and safety concerns with someone with authority at your organisation.
- Speak up if you are asked to do something you haven't been trained to do.
- Nominate a spokesperson. If you are part of a group of volunteers, you can choose someone to speak to your organisation on behalf of the group.

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You can also visit Volunteering Australia's
website (**volunteeringaustralia.org**)
for more information and resources.

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