



Include me!

Creating volunteer opportunities
for people with a disability



CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. How to use Include Me!	3
2. Volunteering	4
3. Inclusion and the Local Community	6
4. Success Stories	8
5. Getting Started	11
6. Recruitment	13
7. Reference Checks for Volunteers	14
8. Induction and Orientation	14
9. Supporting Volunteers	16
10. Gaining Additional Assistance	16
11. More about Disability and Inclusion	17
12. Contacts and Resources	19

1. HOW TO USE INCLUDE ME!

This publication is an introduction to inclusive volunteering and provides some helpful tips for creating opportunities in the local community that will benefit everyone involved.

Include Me! has been developed for local businesses, not for profit organisations and community groups who are looking for ways to be more inclusive and enhance the diversity of their organisations in a sustainable way without compromising the standard of their work.

This booklet can be viewed as a demonstration of inclusive practices, a set of recommendations or guidelines, or even as a basic inclusive volunteering manual. Disability organisations such as Inclusion Melbourne are more than willing to assist your business, organisation, or community group on the journey to becoming more inclusive. Contact details and further resources can be found at the end of the booklet.

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2. VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering has many faces, motivations and uses. After all, there are around five million Australians engaged in volunteering!

Volunteering is more than just doing things for free – it is also about doing things freely, and for the benefit of others. Some volunteering advocates see volunteering as the very core of community development. Any business, organisation or community group that creates a space for volunteering – and volunteering that is diverse and inclusive – will reap the tremendous benefits of a powerful yet often neglected workforce.

So what does volunteering look like?

- A university student needing to develop experience in their chosen field finds a volunteer position in a firm and accrues hundreds of hours of work experience. For some young people, this type of volunteering is a vital step to starting a career.
- A natural disaster strikes and neighbours mobilise themselves to save personal belongings in each other's homes.
- A woman spends half a day each week helping at an aged care residence. The carer is a volunteer and is not affected by staffing changes, thus adding an element of stability to the lives of the elderly people for whom she is visiting.

- A retired accountant gets involved with a local not-for-profit organisation providing valuable mentoring in management, marketing and accounting to the younger staff. Enjoying not having to work for a full day, the flexible conditions around the volunteer position mean that the retiree can add tremendous value to the organisation and get a strong sense of fulfilment.
- The owner of a gardening business decides to take on some extra help. A volunteer with an intellectual disability is chosen to do some basic tasks. The volunteer works one day each week and is trained from scratch in basic gardening skills. This may lead to a paid position or be linked to an apprenticeship or other training.
- A young lady with a disability delivers library books to elderly people's houses once a fortnight. Her voluntary work leads to wonderful relationships with some of the recipients of the service. She is supported by a paid support worker who helps make things run smoothly.
- Every year, thousands of Australians hand out flyers for political parties on election days. They do this work because they believe in the party's cause and care about their community.

- A footy team decides to give blood at the Red Cross Blood Bank as part of their team building process. They go to the blood bank together.
- A professional office worker with a young family and a 9-5 well paid job has a strong desire to give back to the local community. He signs up as a Leisure Buddy volunteer at the disability organisation near his home and spends one Saturday morning each month with a young man with autism. They play games, go to movies, and have brunch together at trendy cafés.
- A primary school organises a working bee for children's parents one Saturday.
- A disability organisation runs an op-shop in a country town. The organisation has a training service to skill-up young adults with a disability in retail. The op-shop has a paid manager and is staffed by the young adults who volunteer in order to gain work experience and complete the practical aspect of their training.

3. INCLUSION AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Volunteering is a major way in which Australians participate in the local community. Research has shown that being socially active can increase happiness to the same degree as doubling one's income or obtaining a college degree!¹ Inclusion Melbourne employs an approach that supports people with an intellectual disability to build meaningful lives in their local communities. Through training, relationship building, careful planning, and strong and accountable support networks, the people we support are able to break through the imposed societal limitations of the past and ensure they take their place as equal members in their communities.

An increasing number of people with a disability are looking at ways to meaningfully participate in their local communities. Local businesses and organisations have an opportunity to be a part of this process. People with a disability are a tremendous resource, yet this is often untapped due to unhelpful stereotypes, a lack of knowledge about their presence in local communities or ineffective communication about their desire to get involved.

Having an inclusive approach to volunteering is an effective way for local businesses and organisations to get the ball rolling. This approach can include offering fixed term internships or regular work experience opportunities to people with a disability who will help support your business. This opportunity will also allow them to get involved in their community, learn new skills, build a CV and gain social connections.

Some points to consider:

For businesses:

- *Becoming more inclusive can lead to greater visibility in the community, particularly through increased social interaction and accolades or awards for inclusive businesses.*
- *One in five Australians has a disability. Involving people with a disability and their unique (and often highly specialised) skills has the potential to grow new markets and create new business opportunities.*

For not for profit organisations with volunteer programs:

- *A body of volunteers that reflects the diversity of the larger community will always be more attractive to that community and potentially offer a broader set of skills, expertise and life experience.*

For all:

- *Becoming more inclusive can lead to positive outcomes for staff and volunteers at any organisation, for example through learning new forms of communication and developing advocacy skills.*
- *People with a disability have knowledge and skills – often highly specialised and unique skills – that enhance organisations and businesses.*

- *This booklet presents several options for developing a flexible and cost-effective volunteering strategy that will allow your organisation to include supported volunteers (see **sections 5-10**).*

New opportunities for volunteering are emerging all the time with a vast range of activities available. Activities involving community groups have long been a field in which volunteering is critical, although these opportunities have not always been perceived as volunteering. Internships, work experience positions and volunteer roles can include:

- *Planning events or fundraising*
- *Stocktake*
- *Reception and administration*
- *Gardening*
- *Roles in sporting clubs and organisations*
- *Giving guided tours*
- *Starting or maintaining a blog or other social networking website for your organisation*
- *Completing those large or small jobs that no one else has the time to get to.*

¹ The Daily Stat, Harvard Business Review, June 5, 2012.



4. SUCCESS STORIES

Michael...



...is an active man in his forties who loves to work.

Michael has two work experience positions, one at a mechanic's workshop and one in a café/minimart.

Through his work experience positions, Michael has become well known in his local community and has developed a strong sense of self-esteem. People at his local gym once commented "I know you – you work at that place on Hawthorn Road!". He replied with a beaming grin "Yeah that's right, that's me, yeah I do".

Robyn, from Inclusion Melbourne, says:

Michael thoroughly enjoys being 'One of the blokes' at the mechanic's workshop – he had an interest in cars and his support person mentioned that Michael helped him clean the car. I thought that Michael may have further interests than just cleaning cars and asked him if he would like to get his hands dirty and work at a garage – Michael enthusiastically said 'Yes!'

Inclusion Melbourne set about finding a garage for Michael to gain some experience. In no time at all, he was hands on changing tyres, checking the oil, charging batteries and loving it. At the beginning of each work experience position, Inclusion Melbourne offered to support Michael, however both businesses chose to teach Michael the work tasks themselves.

Laura...



...is a staff member at Boroondara Libraries. Laura coordinates the delivery of library books to local community members and is assisted by a team of volunteers, including a person with a disability supported by Inclusion Melbourne.

Boroondara's volunteer policy includes the clauses:

Boroondara Council has a volunteer policy intended to encourage and support the involvement of volunteers in the development and delivery of Council's social, environmental and community services.

Volunteers... have the same rights in relation to equal opportunity as paid workers.

Laura writes:

The help provided by the volunteers for the home library service is invaluable to council and is greatly appreciated by the recipients of the service as well. It is hoped that the program will also be of great benefit to the volunteers involved in terms of developing networks, social interaction and sharing in the development of the local community.

The libraries' commitment to an inclusive ethos allows people with a disability to participate and use their skills in the valued role of linking the library with the community. More than simply delivering books, the volunteers represent the public face of the libraries to the people they visit.

Toby...



...is a young man who loves playing cricket and getting fit.

Toby has several volunteer roles, one of which would make any Melbourne sports fan green with envy! He is a volunteer tour guide at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Rebecca, a support coordinator at Inclusion Melbourne, explains the background:

Toby started at the MCG in January 2009. The connection was made by looking into Toby's wants, dreams and hopes for the future and his passions, one being sport and, as he says, 'giving back to others'.

Rebecca approached Peter, the Tourism Volunteer Program Co-ordinator at the Melbourne Cricket Club. Toby started fortnightly with support until he was established in the role and the organisation. He soon felt that he could attend independently and this has since grown to a weekly opportunity.

Following on from his work at the MCG, Toby began volunteering at a primary school assisting the Physical Education teacher. Toby attended this school and is known by many teachers. The principal was very welcoming. To help establish Toby, a paid Inclusion Melbourne staff member provided occasional coaching and advice for several months until he was confident in the role.

5. GETTING STARTED

The first step is to consider where or how someone can add benefit to your organisation, workplace or community group.

- *What does your business, organisation or charity need that could be of interest to the broader community? What people-oriented tasks need attention?*
- *Do current volunteers have the range of skills needed to cover all tasks? Could one of your organisation's needs be met by a person who needs some work experience?*
- *Does your business or organisation have extra resources or goods that could be connected to people in need in the local community? Do you need a volunteer to help with distribution?*

Inclusion Melbourne can help you get started and is keen to build a register of businesses and community groups looking to trial volunteering with a person with a disability.

Developing a role

Volunteers deserve a valued role and this depends on the expectations and aspirations of the individual. For example, some people (including those with a disability) enjoy basic repetitive tasks while others prefer lots of contact with people. Though your organisation may require a specific outcome from a volunteer, it may be possible to negotiate the fine details once someone has been recruited and their

personal preferences have been determined. Research has shown that small businesses often experience difficulty in recognising how volunteers can help. For further information, please contact your local Volunteer Resource Centre; contact details are at the back of this publication.

Volunteers will also receive different titles depending on the type of organisation. Cultural institutions, community groups, not for profit organisations, charities, businesses, local services such as libraries and large corporates will use a variety of terms: *work experience staff member, intern, project officer, volunteer, community advocate, or team member.*

Abilities, not disabilities

Don't assume that volunteers with a disability will fit any stereotype you may have regarding physical, intellectual or behavioural limitations. Appearances can be deceiving! Sometimes, a person may need extra help learning a task but will excel at performing it once it has been explained and demonstrated clearly. The person's support network can be involved in helping the person settle into the role.

There are many quick and cost-effective methods of opening up positions in your business or organisation to volunteers with a disability, even volunteers with profound physical or intellectual limitations. Most of these methods can be put into action when a volunteer first joins your organisation. Often, it is the ethos

6. RECRUITMENT

of the organisation and the communication around a position that needs to be modified, rather than the core tasks. Of course, for some organisations this may require a culture shift, but it is one that is being made across Victoria.

Preparing your organisation or group

Businesses and organisations need not fear a long process of tedious adjustment and retraining when seeking to be more inclusive of people with a disability. New volunteers and their host organisations usually work together to reach agreements naturally. Here are some things to consider:

- **Training** – Is your staff and volunteer training flexible enough to include any support workers who may accompany your new volunteer? Your local council can provide disability training for your staff members if required. Please contact your local *MetroAccess* worker using the contact details at the back of this publication.
- **Costs** – Volunteers may not receive a wage, but they still require occasional support, training and supervision. You may also choose to offer recognition gifts as a way to say thank you.

- **Insurance** – If your volunteer is supported by an organisation such as Inclusion Melbourne, the volunteer will already be covered by insurance. Most community organisations also have Public Liability and Personal Accident insurance coverage in place.
- **Flexibility** – a ‘one size fits all’ approach is not helpful when developing roles for people with a disability. As new volunteers settle in, new boundaries are usually established naturally.



Recruiting volunteers is different to hiring paid employees. Paid employees are usually chosen using a position description that specifies required qualifications and experience and has been developed according to an organisation's needs. Volunteers, on the other hand, are hired using a wide range of processes and criteria. Some volunteers join in before a need is advertised. Others respond to a general advertisement and then negotiate a specific role that is tailored to the volunteer's skills and availability. Some volunteers are sourced using position descriptions that are virtually identical to those used for paid positions. Whichever method your organisation, business or community group chooses, the following tips will ensure that your recruitment process is flexible and inclusive.

Advertising

- *Contact Inclusion Melbourne and inform us of your new position(s). We will utilise our networks to assist you to fill a role.*
- *Contact your local registered Community Service Organisation.*
- *Post an ad on Seek Volunteer (www.volunteer.com.au) or Jobseeker (www.jobseeker.org.au).*
- *Contact the MetroAccess or RuralAccess Officer at your local council and ask who might be interested in the position.*

- *Contact your local Volunteer Resource Centre. These centres are excellent sources of information about volunteering.*
- *Local newspapers and small community publications are great places to advertise for positions. Many will advertise volunteer positions for free. Speak to the head of classifieds and ask for advice on how to best advertise your inclusive position.*

Communication

Using a blend of advertising media is important to ensure that people with a disability can access your volunteer opportunity. Some people with a disability will be dissuaded from applying if they cannot access the recruitment process due to a lack of alternative format, for example, large print, easy English, audio/radio and online. It is acceptable to specify that positions are suitable for a volunteer with support needs, with a disability or with special needs.

Meeting with prospective volunteers

Inclusion Melbourne holds introduction sessions and brief interviews with new volunteers. Some organisations use formal interview procedures while others hold informal meetings that are followed up by reference checks.

If you do hold an interview or face-to-face meeting, volunteers may require the presence of a support worker, carer, family member or other

7. REFERENCE CHECKS FOR VOLUNTEERS

advocate. Your organisation can make meetings run smoothly by:

- *Discussing the content and purpose of the meeting with the volunteer and/or the volunteer's advocate(s) in advance.*
- *Giving the volunteer some reading material or a list of questions before the meeting so that they can prepare.*

Clarifying the role

A period of negotiation before, after or in place of an interview is often necessary to make sure the volunteer's skills and talents are matched to the right role. This process can include:

- *Clearly outlining the training and/or support that will be available to prospective volunteers (see **sections 9-10**).*
- *Preparing and providing additional assistance to address any concerns and ensure the voluntary role is a positive and sustainable contribution to the person's continued development.*
- *Discussing the need for a mentor or supervisor, especially during the induction stage (see **sections 9-10**).*
- *Discussing potential barriers and jointly developing adjustments to address these.*
- *Having a flexible approach to days and hours worked and the specific tasks associated with a role. Individual, tailored arrangements are often the most beneficial.*

All volunteers should be subject to the same checks and screening processes that you would ordinarily use in your organisation. These may include:

- *Proof of Identity/Qualifications*
- *Police Check*
- *Working with Children Check*
- *Reference check*

8. INDUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Orientation is vital in ensuring a successful match with your organisation. Volunteers with a disability need to know that they are as important to the organisation or business as any other staff member or volunteer.

Some people with a disability require assistance in the community, while others have unique methods of learning and communication. Learn each person's style and adapt where possible. If you are unsure, ask one of the person's friends, family or support staff for advice.

Some information you might like to share during orientation includes:

- *An outline of operating hours and public holidays.*

- *A clear explanation of workplace rules. (Volunteers with a disability are subject to the same rules as every other staff member. There is no excuse for bad behaviour, particularly if support is provided for the volunteer. Being lax about conduct may seem acceptable in some circumstances, however it may not help volunteers learn and grow.)*
- *The organisation's safety and emergency procedures (if relevant).*
- *Clear step-by-step procedures for tasks in multiple forms – visual, spoken, demonstrated.*
- *Thorough explanation of responsibilities and information about who to go to when the volunteer needs help!*

Please consider the following helpful tips when demonstrating tasks to volunteers with a disability:

- *Ask questions!*
- *Encourage the volunteer to ask questions.*
- *Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but don't assume that a person with a disability needs or wants it.*
- *Ensure that tasks and instructions are clear and specific.*
- *When explaining a new task or concept, use open questions to check understanding. Go slow if necessary. Solid explanations save time later!*

- *Use concrete examples.*
- *Provide as much 'hands on' experience as possible.*
- *Remember that some people require time to process information.*
- *Consider providing handouts or simple written or illustrated directions to reinforce steps in instructions.*
- *Provide enough time for volunteers to communicate.*
- *Use plain language.*
- *Break tasks down into small achievable segments.*
- *Give praise often and when deserved.*
- *If the person has a support worker, speak to the volunteer, not to the support worker.*

Feedback

Feedback interviews are a good way of regularly gauging how volunteers with a disability are faring in their volunteer experience. If a volunteer is being supported by a staff member or another volunteer, or the volunteer has a support coordinator at another location, involvement of the support person may be helpful too.

9. SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

In addition to a strong introduction, regular oversight and mentoring is essential for any volunteer in a new role.

Mentoring can be a very useful approach for supporting volunteers with a disability, as can be gaining feedback. Many businesses, organisations and community groups pair volunteers with a buddy or mentor to facilitate smooth entry into a role.

An assessment of the volunteer arrangement will help gauge how successful your orientation, mentoring and training has been. Inclusion Melbourne evaluates the progress of volunteering activities in the community using some set questions, such as:

- *Does the volunteer appear to enjoy their work? Do they get on well with other volunteers and paid staff?*
- *Does the volunteer have a valued role? Are they provided with variety in their work? Can they change roles if they wish?*
- *Is there a career path in the organisation for volunteer staff? How can the role grow?*
- *Is the volunteer developing meaningful connections with the people with whom the role brings them into contact?*

10. GAINING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

Increasingly, support for people with a disability is being individually funded and the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme will ensure that people with a disability have choice and control in designing their supports to help them participate and give back to the community. The personalised support model used by organisations like Inclusion Melbourne allows people with a disability to receive direct one-to-one support from a paid worker or volunteer for a portion of their week.

Volunteers who are supported by services such as Inclusion Melbourne will usually come with a strong support network including professional staff, support coordination and volunteers. This support means that local businesses and organisations that take on volunteers with a disability will have access to assistance from the support service if concerns arise. Support services can also organise training, transport and other practical arrangements for volunteers with a disability to make the transition to a new volunteer role in the community smoother.

11. MORE ABOUT DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

The question “What is disability?” once had a set of predictable and concrete answers drawn from a medical perspective. Disability was often viewed in terms of genetic abnormality or experienced limitation caused by physical, psychological or mental impairment acquired genetically, in the womb, at birth or at a later point. These answers gave rise to a system of institutions, doctors and patients, treatment and seclusion. Some Australians have memories from school days when people with a disability were integrated into regular classes, though it was still very clear who had a disability and who did not. For others, disability is about wheelchair signs, ramps and translators. Some people who receive a disability pension in Australia often relate to the notions above, while others do not. For many, disability is experienced as an inability to work or function in the midst of difficult circumstances.

The British social model, established in the 1970s, answers the question in a different way. A British disability advocacy group expresses its view about physical disability in the following extract:

“... In our view, it is society which disables... people [with a disability]. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. ...We define... disability as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by

a contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have... impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities.” (UPIAS statement, reproduced in Oliver, M. [1996]. Understanding disability: from theory to practice. Basingstoke: Macmillan, p. 22.)

In other words, viewing disability as a set of limitations requiring labelling is an out-dated approach. This is underscored by Australian and Victorian legislation and disability planning that mandates the building of an inclusive society in which acceptance, support and equal access are provided to all people so that they can reach their full potential.

In addition, disability services such as Inclusion Melbourne are compelled (under the Disability Act 2006) to play a key role in the inclusion of people with a disability. The Disability Act states that “persons with a disability have the same rights and responsibilities as other members of the community and should be empowered to exercise those rights and responsibilities.” These include the right to:

- *respect for their human worth and dignity as individuals*
- *live free from abuse, neglect or exploitation*



12. CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Government Departments:

Office for Disability Victorian Government
Ph: 1300 880 043
www.officefordisability.vic.gov.au

Department of Human Services' Disability Intake and Response Service

1800 783 783

MetroAccess & RuralAccess Workers

Call 1800 783 783 and ask for the representative in your local area

Local MetroAccess Workers

Glen Eira: (03) 9524 3283
Stonnington: (03) 9521 2255
Port Phillip: (03) 9209 6829

Volunteer bodies and resource centres:

Volunteering Victoria West Melbourne
Ph: (03) 8327 8500
www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au

Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre Camberwell
Ph: (03) 9278 4550
www.bvrc.org.au

Community Information Glen Eira Glenhuntly
Ph: (03) 9571 7644
www.cige.org.au

Monash Volunteer Resource Centre
Glen Waverley Ph: (03) 9562 0414

- realise their individual capacity for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development
- exercise control over their own lives.

The Act also states that disability services (like Inclusion Melbourne) should:

- advance the inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability with the aim of achieving their individual aspirations
- be flexible and responsive to the individual needs of persons with a disability
- maximise the choice and independence of persons with a disability

and that:

- persons with an intellectual disability have the right to opportunities to develop and maintain skills and to participate in activities that enable them to achieve valued roles in the community
- services for persons with an intellectual disability should be designed and provided in a manner that ensures developmental opportunities exist to enable the realisation of their individual capacities.

The National Volunteering Standards ensure inclusive and equitable practice in volunteering. Visit the Volunteering Australia website for more information, including a list of Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities:

www.volunteeringaustralia.org

Inclusion Melbourne commissioned a manual for organisations wishing to establish or enhance an inclusive volunteer program. The manual can be downloaded from the Inclusion Melbourne website:

www.inclusionmelbourne.org.au

The Avenue Neighbourhood House, together with EACH and Eastern Volunteers assembled a set of training manuals aimed at training volunteers with a disability and volunteer mentors, assisting volunteer programs to become more inclusive, and providing disability awareness training to local organisations. The manual can be downloaded from the Eastern Volunteers website:

www.easternvolunteers.org.au/volunteers/resources/



Together, let's imagine what's possible.

Inclusion Melbourne is Victoria's oldest day service for people with a disability. Based in Armadale and founded in the 1940s, we encourage and enable people with an intellectual disability to achieve and maintain a valued quality of life. We support people to create highly personalised and flexible lifestyles based on their needs and desires, and to participate in activities and develop relationships with people in their local community.

Inclusion Melbourne is strongly guided by the fundamental belief in the worth and value of every person, and that it is everyone's right to live in, contribute to and be recognised by their community as an equal. We are the only disability service provider in Victoria to have transitioned into a fully personalised, flexible person-centred service that supports people with an intellectual disability to live the way they want. We support people of all levels of ability.

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