



A Community Service Project of the
Rotary Clubs of
Bacchus Marsh, Melton Valley, Sunshine
Wyndham and Yarraville

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION GUIDE

Welcome

Welcome to our team of volunteers at Western Emergency Relief Network (WERN) and thank you for making the commitment to join our volunteer program. Volunteers are the heart and soul of WERN and are the public face, so it is important that you understand your role as a volunteer and the responsibilities that this carries. By becoming a WERN volunteer, you are joining a highly respected local organisation with a long history of helping those in need.

The WERN was established in October 1995 to provide a centralized source of furniture and household goods for distribution as emergency aid to members of our community who find themselves in need of support.

Our mission is to assist those in need with a sense of community, compassion and respect.

The main purpose of our warehouse operation is to provide furniture and other household essentials, such as, bedding, linen, kitchenware, electrical goods etc. Regardless of our role or position within the WERN, we are united by our mission and ethos and our shared objective to help those in need.

The Management Committee's role is to promote its activities locate, collect, store and distribute donated furniture and household goods to the clients of our member welfare organizations.

We have introduced this booklet to assist and guide you in your voluntary role with us. This booklet forms the basis of your orientation as a volunteer. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with its contents, as it will guide you through our fundamental principles of how we care for those in need in our community.

By volunteering your time and expertise, you will help to enrich the lives of those we support as well as providing substantial benefits to you as a volunteer.

Once again, thank you for becoming a part of the WERN team and we hope that your time with us as a volunteer is rewarding and fulfilling.

Kind Regards

Management Committee



INDEX

1. The Members
2. Principles of Volunteering
3. Volunteer Responsibilities
4. Volunteer Rights
5. Police Checks
- 5a. Working With Children's Check**
6. Probationary Period
7. Support and Supervision
8. Record Keeping and Your Privacy
9. Insurance
10. Access to Confidential Information
11. Attendance and Punctuality
12. Dress Code
13. Training and Personal Development
14. Reward and Recognition
15. Resignation and/or Retirement
16. Discipline and Dismissal
17. Equal Opportunity
18. Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace
19. Sexual Harassment
20. Dispute Resolution
21. Client/Customer Satisfaction
22. Signing In and Out of the Warehouse
23. Occupational Health and Safety
24. Medical Emergencies
25. Fire Safety
26. Fire Emergency Procedures
27. First Aid
28. Alcohol and Drugs
29. Smoking
30. Lost Property
31. Your Property
32. Fraud and Theft
33. Donated Goods
34. Purchasing Goods from the Warehouse
35. Assisting our Clients
36. Media
37. Using WERN Property
38. Parking

1. The Members

Welcome to our team!

We are proud of our WERN team, staffed entirely by volunteers, who give freely of their time and energy to assist those in our community who require support in emergency situations.

The following is a brief overview, of our volunteer roles at WERN.

Management Committee

The Management Committees is comprised of elected members representing member organisations and the community at large. Its role is

- a. to manage the operation of the warehouse through the appointment of a warehouse coordinator and nominated assistants, to be responsible for the day-to-day activities of the warehouse
- b. to implement and maintain the warehouse operational, financial and human resources policies
- c. to ensure that the warehouse operation is compliant with OHS and any other relevant regulations and legislation
- d. to manage the warehouses expenses and fundraising so as to achieve targets set in the organisation.

The Management Committee will

- a. act in good faith
- b. act with due diligence
- c. not trade while insolvent
- d. not misuse information or their position.

Warehouse Coordinator (Supervisor)

The Coordinator's role is to manage the day-to-day operation of the warehouse providing for the collection and distribution of goods for people seeking assistance through member welfare agencies, by

- a. allocating duties
- b. maintaining the volunteer roster
- c. maintaining equipment.

Office Assistant

The main task of the Office Assistant is to respond to telephone enquiries from the public. Usually this is an offer of furniture and/or other household goods that requires a collection to be organised.

Truck Drivers/Jockeys

As the name suggests, the role of this team is to collect donations of furniture etc, donated by the public and deliver them to the warehouse.

Sorting Crew

This important team of volunteers has the task of sorting, placing on shelves, or recycling the great variety of goods received each day (apart from furniture, and electrical items). In addition, they have a role to play in assisting clients select their necessary items of linen, blankets, clothing and kitchenware.

Warehouse Assistant

The Warehouse Assistant role is to help with loading and unloading of goods, maintaining the tidiness of the warehouse, minor repairs, supervision of visiting agency workers and their clients and generally acting as the Warehouse Coordinator's offsider in ensuring the smooth running of the warehouse.

Electrical Goods Testers & Washing Machine Service Staff

These services, we believe, are probably unique to our organisation, but requiring volunteers with appropriate level of technical skills.

2. Principles of Volunteering

WERN identifies with the principles of volunteering as defined by Volunteering Australia

- volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- volunteer work is unpaid
- volunteering is always a matter of choice
- volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances
- 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, environmental and social needs
- formal volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

3. Volunteer Responsibilities

As a volunteer with WERN you have a responsibility to

- uphold our mission and our shared objective to help those in need
- conduct yourself in a professional, ethical and lawful manner
- enhance and maintain a harmonious working environment with other volunteers, agency members and their clients
- refrain from gossiping or other divisive behaviours
- be punctual and reliable
- work as part of a team
- carry out tasks as stated in your position description and as specified by the Management Committee or Warehouse Coordinator, from time to time to assist in the smooth operations of the warehouse
- adhere to WERN policies and procedures including Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) and Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO)
- be open minded to other people's views and not impose your personal values and beliefs on others
- discuss with your supervisor or Management Committee member any problems that may arise and seek guidance if and when required
- enhance and respect the dignity of all people

- be accountable for your own actions
- avoid becoming over-involved with clients and customers
- maintain the confidentiality of clients and customers
- notify the warehouse as soon as possible if you are unable to attend on a rostered day
- where possible, give advance notice of your intention to resign/retire go on holidays.

4. Volunteer Rights

As a volunteer you have the right to

- work in a healthy and safe environment (refer Occupational Health and Safety Act[s])
- be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti- discrimination legislation
- be adequately covered by insurance
- be given accurate and truthful information about the organisation for which you are working
- to be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses
- be given access to the organisation’s volunteer policy and any other policy that affects your work
- not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker
- not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes
- have a job description and agreed working hours
- have access to a grievance procedure
- be provided with orientation to the organisation
- have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the *Privacy Act (1988)*
- be provided with sufficient training for you to do your work.

5. Police Checks

We take the safety and security of our volunteers, clients and customers seriously. It is the policy of WERN that all new warehouse volunteers with specific responsibilities to enter homes of donors, undergo a police check (*“Consent to Check and Release National Police Record”*) before commencing as a volunteer. There is no cost to the volunteer.

If a police check contains disclosable court outcomes, this information will remain confidential and be discussed with the prospective volunteer to determine its relevance to the inherent requirement of the role.

Records disclosing offences without conviction will be disregarded.

5a Working with Children Check

At WERN, there are times that Volunteers will be subject to working with children. The Working with Children Check assists in protecting children from sexual or physical harm by ensuring that people who work with, or care for, them are subject to a screening process.

A working with Children’s check is required as part of the organisation’s responsibilities in creating and maintaining a child-safe environment. It screens a person’s criminal records and any reports about professional conduct by the bodies listed in

The Check does not assess a person's suitability to work with or care for children in a particular role. It is the responsibility of organisations to assess if a person is suitable to work with children and to continue monitoring their workers' behaviour around children.

6. Probationary Period

Your volunteer appointment will be subject to a three month probationary period.

Just prior to the three month anniversary of your start date, your supervisor will arrange an informal meeting. This is an ideal opportunity for you both to discuss your suitability and satisfaction with the role and/or raise any concerns, as well as to determine if you wish to make an ongoing commitment to your role.

7. Support and Supervision

As a valued member of WERN team, you have the right to access appropriate levels of support and guidance through a suitably experienced supervisor and this is your first point of contact.

The Management Committee has overarching responsibility for the management and support of all volunteers.

8. Record Keeping and Your Privacy

As required by Federal and State legislation, WERN is committed to protecting the privacy rights of our volunteers. It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to ensure that your privacy and confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Accurate record keeping is a vital part of managing our warehouses volunteer program and allows us to consider our program and plan for the future. Upon becoming a volunteer, you will be required to complete an application form with your personal details (date of birth, address, emergency contact etc), and other relevant details. The original is held by the Management Committee at the warehouse and is securely stored. Your details as they appear on the application form will be entered onto a database which is managed and only accessible by the Management Committee

9. Insurance

All WERN volunteers are covered by Personal Accident Insurance. WERN's Personal Accident policy provides lump sum benefits in response to claims for personal injury including total and permanent disablement, as well as loss of earnings (where applicable). Special conditions include

- The volunteer is a 'registered volunteer' and has completed the appropriate documentation
- At the time of the accident, the volunteer was on authorised WERN business
- Medical expenses are only payable for costs not recoverable (in full or part) from Medicare; the shortfall in private health insurance covering non-Medicare items is claimable (excess \$25)
- Full benefits apply to volunteers between 17 and 79 years
- There is no loss of earnings cover for volunteers aged under 12 or over 79 years of age, and reduced capital benefits apply for those aged 12 to 17, and over 80 years of age,
- The minimum age for WERN volunteers is 15.

Volunteers are also indemnified under WERN's general Public Liability insurance. The scope of cover includes the legal liability in relation to personal injury and/or property

damage claims made by third parties as a result of an accident or incident occurring within the authorised activities of WERN.

All volunteers share responsibility for taking prompt action to eliminate and reduce the risk of injury. Any incident that results in an injury to yourself, other volunteers and clients or customers, (including hazards that have the potential to cause injury) should be reported immediately to your supervisor. If you are involved in an accident at work that results in personal injury requiring medical attention, you must report the incident to your supervisor and complete the necessary claim form.

For insurance purposes, all volunteers must sign on and off in the register found at the front desk.

10. Access to Confidential Information

As a volunteer, you may have access to privileged information relating to our clients, other volunteers and members of the public. Please ensure that you treat all such information as confidential, and do not disclose it to any person including other volunteers, friends or family, except in the course of your official duties. For example, a client may tell you about their past. If this causes you concern, please discuss this with your supervisor or Management Committee member. It is inappropriate to discuss this with other volunteers over the morning tea break.

11. Attendance and Punctuality

The warehouse is officially open for business from 9 am to 1pm on weekdays, excluding public holidays. The actual hours of work are very flexible with volunteers being able to negotiate times to suit personal needs.

However, if unable to attend on a scheduled day it would be helpful if the warehouse could be notified in advance. This is particularly important in the case of drivers and jockeys as alternative arrangements have to be made to meet commitments made to donors.

To enable the warehouse to open on time and to minimise inconvenience to other volunteers, we ask that you arrive for work at the agreed times.

Your co-operation in providing advance notice of absences would be appreciated.

12. Dress Code

It is important that you are clearly identifiable to our clients and customers, so your name badge and WERN shirt/apron should always be worn whilst on duty. Appropriate footwear must also be worn — sandals and open shoes are not acceptable.

13. Training and Personal Development

The provision of appropriate training is essential to inform, prepare and protect volunteers and our clients and customers. Training allows you to carry out your work to the best of your abilities and ensures that our warehouse and services remain of the highest quality.

Your training will include orientation by your supervisor (including mandatory OH&S) and you may also be invited to attend other training from time to time. WERN endorses the personal growth and development of our volunteers, and encourages volunteers to actively embrace opportunities for training.

14. Reward and Recognition

WERN aims to recognise the vast wealth of skills, knowledge and support that our volunteers contribute. Examples include

- Where appropriate, inviting volunteer participation in meetings, discussions and celebrations
- Recognising the potential and/or expertise of volunteers and using their skills as appropriate
- Seeking the opinion of volunteers
- Wherever possible, encouraging volunteers to make decisions
- Social events, including morning tea and barbeques.

15. Resignation and/or Retirement

To ensure that the resignation process occurs with minimal disruption to the warehouse, we would appreciate your assistance in the following ways

- Give as much notice as possible
- Provide your supervisor with an update on the progress of your work
- Return any WERN property including shirts/aprons and name badges.

Our commitment to the continuous improvement of our volunteer program requires the identification of the reasons why volunteers leave. Therefore, we would be grateful if you would provide feedback to your supervisor on the reason for your departure.

16. Discipline and Dismissal

Disciplinary Policies and Procedures are in place to enable WERN to discipline volunteers in cases of misconduct or unsatisfactory work performance, and to ensure fairness to our volunteers, should such situations occur. These procedures will apply where WERN considers a volunteer is not satisfactorily performing his/her duties or for reasons of alleged misconduct.

WERN will make every effort to ensure that dismissal of a volunteer occurs only as a last resort once the disciplinary process has been followed. It is expected that the immediate supervisor will resolve most minor breaches requiring disciplinary action. When no agreement can be reached or when complex situations arise, the responsibility for implementing disciplinary procedures lies with the Management Committee President in consultation with key stakeholders (which may include the supervisor of the volunteer, agency members or other Management Committee members).

Instances that may result in the termination of your involvement as a volunteer include (but are not limited to)

- Conduct that threatens the safety or wellbeing of WERN's member representatives or their clients, customers and volunteers including physical or verbal assault or abuse
- Breaches of WERN's OH&S Policies and Procedures, or Sexual Harassment and Workplace Bullying Policies and Procedures
- Neglect of duty
- Breaches of confidentiality

- Dishonesty
- Divisive behaviour including malicious and/or repeated gossiping.

17. Equal Opportunity

WERN is committed to the principles of access and equity, and supports the right of every individual to participate in our volunteer program. Discrimination occurs when a person is denied fair and equal treatment on grounds other than those relevant to the job requirements.

The purpose of an interview is to ensure that WERN volunteers are engaged for their capacity to fulfil the inherent requirements of the role. Access to a volunteer position is unaffected by the volunteer's religion, race, age, gender, marital status, pregnancy, family responsibilities, political beliefs or affiliation, physical features, impairment, sexual preference or socio-economic background.

As a volunteer, you have the right to make a complaint in instances of discrimination and are entitled to have the matter dealt with in a prompt, confidential and impartial manner by the Management Committee.

18. Harassment and Bullying in the Workplace

Harassment and workplace bullying are forms of discrimination that have the purpose or effect of interfering with a person's work performance whilst creating a workplace that is intimidating and/or hostile. Harassment and bullying in all their forms are unacceptable and unlawful.

WERN is committed to the elimination of such conduct from the work environment and supports a "zero tolerance" work environment.

Harassment is defined as behaviour or conduct

- That is unwelcome or unsolicited
- That may reasonably be said to offend, humiliate, intimidate or distress the person who is the target of the behaviour

Harassment may include

- Practical and/or mocking jokes
- Comments or stereotyping in reference to religion, race, gender, physical appearance or disability
- Inappropriate sexual comments or innuendo
- Acts of physical intimacy
- Campaigns of hate, silence, vilification or isolation.

Above all, we expect you to complete your daily work in a manner that is respectful of the rights and dignity of others.

The Management Committee will deal with all complaints of harassment in a prompt, sensitive and confidential manner.

19. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that could be reasonably expected to make someone feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.

This may include (but is not restricted to)

- an unwelcome sexual advance

- a request for sexual favours
- unwelcome comments about someone's sex life or physical appearance
- leering and ogling
- sexually offensive comments, stories or jokes
- displaying sexually offensive photos, pinups or calendars, reading matter or objects
- sexual propositions or continued requests for dates
- physical contact such as touching or fondling, or unnecessary brushing up against someone
- indecent assault or rape (these are criminal offences).
- Sexual harassment may occur between one volunteer and another, between volunteers and staff members, or between volunteers and clients, suppliers or visitors. It may occur wherever volunteers and paid staff are interacting with others in the context of their position in the organisation, including field trips, work off site and social functions.

20. Dispute Resolution

Volunteers have the right to fair and equitable treatment of grievances and complaints in a timely and professional manner. It is our aim to resolve disputes amicably through conciliation and negotiation.

In the first instance, please raise any concerns or complaints with your supervisor. In the event that clarification is required at a later date, it is recommended that either or both parties document the details associated with the grievance and the outcome of the meeting and place this on record.

If you are not satisfied with your supervisor's response or feel it is inappropriate to discuss the issue with this person, you are entitled to request that the complaint be referred to the Management Committee for investigation.

21. Client/Customer Satisfaction

Our clients (i.e, WERN members and/or their clients) and customers (i.e, donors or other visitors)

- are the most important part of our business - every one of them deserves to receive the very best that we are able to provide
- are not an interruption to our work — they are the very purpose of our work
- deserve to be treated with respect, warmth and sincerity
- deserve to receive non-judgmental, quality and caring service at all times.

22. Signing In and Out of the Warehouse

For your safety, and to satisfy our insurer's requirements, it is essential that you sign in when you commence work for the day and sign out when you leave.

23. Occupational Health and Safety

The health, safety and welfare of our volunteers are of paramount importance. Accordingly, WERN takes an uncompromising approach to workplace Occupational Health and Safety. The three step formula is

- **Identify** all hazards (A hazard is any danger that has the potential to harm anyone interacting with the operations of the warehouse)
- **Assess** all hazards to understand the risks. (Risks are the likely consequences of exposure to a hazard)
- **Control** the risks by eliminating the risks where possible and reducing the risk to others
The warehouse and all operations will be maintained according to Occupational Health and Safety requirements including
- Keeping the workplace safe and without risks
- Providing and maintaining suitable plant and equipment
- Implementing and observing safe systems of work
- The provision of adequate information, training and supervision
- Identifying hazards to safety and health and implementing appropriate controls.

It is the responsibility of all volunteers to take prompt action to eliminate and reduce the risk of injury. Any incident that results in a near miss or an injury to yourself, other volunteers, clients and customers, (including hazards that have the potential to cause injury) should be reported immediately to your supervisor without delay.

INCIDENT REPORTING IS GOOD!

Examples of unacceptable unsafe working conditions are

- Slippery floors and walkways
- Blocked fire doors, aisles or corridors
- Poorly lit areas and/or burnt out globes
- Dangerously stacked supplies/stock
- Hazards which could cause a person to trip
- Blocked or missing fire extinguishers
- Equipment that is being incorrectly used
- Frayed or exposed electrical wires
- Leaking water, oil or other liquids.
- Carpet wear

You must take reasonable care of your own safety and the safety of others affected by what you do. You must cooperate with any actions taken by WERN in the interests of workplace health, safety and welfare.

Some principles to apply include

- Walk — don't run
- No heroes — get someone to help you if you can't do it **easily** on your own or use a trolley
- When lifting goods, lift with your legs and not your back
- Use and store equipment properly
- Follow instructions when using chemicals and equipment
- Don't operate equipment you are not trained to use

It is mandatory for all volunteers to attend any Occupational Health and Safety Training provided by WERN.

24. Medical Emergencies

If a customer, client or fellow volunteer is involved in a medical emergency, please follow these steps

- Remain calm
- Ensure your safety and that of others
- Give basic first aid if qualified or locate the help of a qualified person
- Provide reassurance to the injured person
- Contact your supervisor
- Do not move the person unless they are in immediate danger
- Remain with the injured person.

Your supervisor or Management Committee member will organise medical attention.

25. Fire Safety

Fire safety and evacuation training is to be run annually at the warehouse. You will learn about the prevention of fires, location of fire exits and extinguishers, and how to use them, and your role in case of fire. All volunteers should be familiar with the locations of fire alarms and fire fighting equipment at the warehouse and in vehicles.

26. Fire Emergency Procedures

Management Committee members and Daily Coordinators are Fire Wardens. They will take control and give directions.

- Do not put yourself at risk
- Before attempting to put out the fire, raise the alarm
- Fire wardens are responsible for assembling those in the warehouse at specific points
- Follow any directions given to you by the Fire warden.

If there is a fire, you should follow these procedures

- Dial 000 and ask for the fire service
- Assist others to exit the affected area and assemble in the designated areas
- Account for all persons from the affected area by reference to the sign in book
- If safe to do so, try to extinguish the fire
- Life is more important than property, so your first priority is always a safe evacuation.

27. First Aid

First aid kits are available in the office area, and obtained by speaking to your supervisor.

28. Alcohol and Drugs

With the exception of Christmas functions or special celebrations which have been approved by the Management Committee, volunteers are not permitted to bring intoxicating liquor onto WERN premises.

No drugs are permitted on WERN premises except for medication which has been prescribed by an authorised medical practitioner or drugs which may be legally purchased without a doctor's prescription e.g. aspirin or panadol.

Volunteers suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be asked to leave the warehouse and disciplinary action may occur.

29. Smoking

Smoking is only permitted during your break times and only in designated smoking areas. All designated workplaces owned and/or managed by WERN are smoke-free environments. This includes all vehicles.

30. Lost Property

All items found or lost at the warehouse should be reported to your supervisor who will note exactly where and when the item was found, what was found and the name of the person who found the item. Valuable property will be reported to the local police station. Any other items not claimed after three months, and any returned by the Police, will be distributed through the warehouse in the normal manner.

31. Your Property

WERN is committed to protect the safety and security of personal property from misuse and theft. Please adhere to the following guidelines

- Do not bring large sums of money or valuables to work
- Secure personal property and ensure that it is locked away
- If you observe any person demonstrating strange or unusual behaviour, advise your supervisor without delay

32. Fraud and Theft

Volunteers must not knowingly participate in or allow WERN to become involved directly or indirectly in any illegal activity

You should be alert to activities or requests that may be aimed at defrauding WERN. Any suspicion of fraud or any suspected illegal activity must be immediately reported to your supervisor and if appropriate, Management Committee.

Volunteers found to have undertaken illegal activities (e.g. fraud or theft) will be subject to summary dismissal and potential legal action.

33. Donated Goods

No volunteer is authorised to consume (on or off the warehouse premises) or remove, donated goods of any kind without the prior permission of their supervisor, or a member of the Management Committee.

34. Purchasing Goods from the Warehouse

All donated furniture and household effects are not for sale. Other than in special cases, only goods that would be re-distributed to Charity shops may be sold to volunteers or clients.

All requests must go through a member of the Management Committee for approval.

35. Assisting our Clients

Clients attending the warehouse to seek assistance should be handled sensitively and warmly. It is our mission to help those in need and not to be judgmental.

36. Media

Volunteers are not permitted to make public statements or provide information that relates to WERN or any of its facilities, to the media or a journalist. Please refer any approaches from the media, in the first instance, to a Management Committee member.

37. Using WERN Property

As a not-for-profit organisation, we are accountable for our responsible use of resources and property. Please be mindful of the following

- Avoid damaging property, materials and equipment — where necessary, report any damage to your supervisor
- Do your best to ensure that WERN resources are used effectively and economically
- No volunteer is authorised to use, borrow or loan (out) WERN property, including vehicles, equipment, facilities or goods without prior approval from the Management Committee.

38. Parking

Volunteers are asked to park in bays marked in the eastern car park.

When leaving the warehouse please exit via the Office area. This is an important safety issue.

*Volunteers are unpaid
not because they are worthless
but because
they are priceless*