

Recreation and community activities: volunteering

This Fact Sheet outlines various volunteering options that may be of interest. There is a huge range of ways to contribute your time and skills. Some volunteering roles are highly structured and require a regular commitment. Others will give you greater flexibility, and can be fitted around your existing interests and commitments.

What is a volunteer?

A volunteer willingly gives unpaid help in the form of time, service and/or skills – through informal groups or not-for-profit organisations.

Who can become a volunteer?

Anyone who is willing to work on an unpaid basis, and who has appropriate skills or is able to learn them, is able to volunteer.

People decide to volunteer for many reasons: a volunteer may be someone who is recently retired, working part time, wanting to upgrade their skills or meet new friends, or someone who – for any reason – has some spare time and wants to be active in their community.

What skills are needed?

A diverse range of organisations require volunteers, since many community groups depend on volunteer help. Skills you may need can include being good with people, practical skills around the home and garden and/or skills from your work life such as organisational, administration or accounting skills. Volunteering programs are so varied, there is sure to be a niche to suit your interests and abilities. Both you and your community will benefit from your decision to volunteer.

How do I become a volunteer?

There are many ways you can offer your services. Here are some good contacts in NSW.

Seniors Information Service is an initiative of the NSW Government and is funded by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.



Seniors Information Service PO Box 1332, Crows Nest NSW 1585



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Centre for Volunteering

Do you want to acquire new skills? Meet new people? Put your talents to good use? Or try out new career options? By contacting Volunteering NSW, you will find volunteer opportunities that match your interests, skills and values.

For further information phone **9261 3600** or visit the website:

www.volunteering.com.au.

Technical Aid for the Disabled (TAD)

Volunteer engineers and technicians make custom-designed aids to assist older people and people with a disability to make practical use of household equipment (like using a computer, operating a TV or sound system or making phone calls). Volunteers also modify existing commercially available items to suit people's individual needs.

Contact details:

Phone: **9808 2022** or **1300 885 886** (rural callers)

Fax: **9809 7670**

Government departments

Contrary to common belief, many government departments and related services rely on volunteers. Examples include the Department of Veterans Affairs (phone: **13 32 54**), NSW Health (phone: **9391 9000**) the Historic Houses Trust (phone: **8239 2441**), the Botanic Gardens (phone: **9231 8182**), the State Library (phone: **9273 1500**) and there are many others. If you have a particular interest and/or skills, phone the relevant government department and ask what volunteering opportunities are available.

Museums, art galleries, local libraries

Museums, art galleries, and local council libraries all need volunteers to help with activities such as ushers for groups, assisting with displays, special expos and promotions. Ring any gallery, museum or your local library to find out how you can volunteer.

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Community Visitors Scheme

This scheme is funded by the Commonwealth government, and provided by community organisations. Volunteers visit people who live in residential aged care facilities (nursing homes or hostels), or who are isolated and would like a visitor.

Community visitors are asked to visit “their” resident at least once a fortnight to provide ongoing companionship on a one-to-one basis.

To find out more about the scheme in your local area, call the Community Visitors Liaison Officer on **9263 3781** or **1800 048 998** (rural callers).

Toy repair

There are many toy repair workshops across NSW where volunteers recondition old or damaged toys, and then distribute them to disadvantaged children’s groups. Two of these centres are:

Cnr Mary St & Jannali Ave, Jannali	9528 4024
Narrabeen Peninsula Senior Citizens	9913 8182

Landcare Australia

‘Landcare’ is a network of people in Australia who are committed to more sustainable management and use of our natural resources. It is led by community members, and usually involves people working together as a Landcare Group in partnership with government, community organisations or business. Landcare Groups undertake a range of activities and often form a good social network in their communities.

To find out more about existing groups, or how to set up your own, call **9228 6506** or visit www.landcare.nsw.gov.au.

Bush Regeneration Groups

Some local councils coordinate Bush Regeneration Groups to clear weeds, replant areas and/or construct conservation pathways in environmentally sensitive areas. Groups often take “ownership” or responsibility for particular areas of bush over the longer term, so it’s possible to see the results of your volunteering work. Contact your local council and ask to speak to an Environmental Officer.



University of the Third Age (U3A)

U3A is a worldwide educational movement for older people which offers a range of interesting courses. Each U3A is a fully independent educational organisation providing extended learning opportunities through volunteer tutors. Tutors may be retired academics, technical experts or keen hobbyists.

If you are interested in volunteering as a tutor for a course, call the Sydney head office on **9252 2033** where you will be given the contact details for your local U3A.

Other volunteer contacts

Bathurst Information & Neighbourhood Centre	6332 4866
Central Coast Volunteer Referral Agency, Niagara Park	4329 7122
Hunter Volunteer Centre, Hamilton	4969 4577
Lismore Volunteer Referral Service	6621 7397
Liverpool Volunteer Resource Centre	9601 6825
Nepean Volunteer Services, Penrith	4731 6523
New School of Arts Neighbourhood Centre, South Grafton	6642 6843
Port Macquarie Neighbourhood Centre	6584 1914
Sydney Wildlife volunteering program (across NSW)	9413 4300
Volunteer Link, St George and Sutherland Shires	9580 9055
Volunteer Recruitment & Training Services, Northern Beaches	9982 3044
Volunteering Coffs Harbour	6651 1289
Volunteering Illawara, South Coast	4225 7812
Wagga Wagga Volunteer Centre	6921 1441

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The Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care suggests that professional advice be sought wherever necessary.

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