Mernda

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

NEW Volunteer HANDBOOK

SOCIAL JUSTICE • EQUALITY • INCLUSION

www.merndanh.org.au

Wednesday to Friday - 9am to 5pm

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The Mernda Neighbourhood House respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work, the Wurundjeri woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.



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Welcome to Mernda Neighbourhood House

A Message to New Volunteers

Thank you for interest in volunteering with us! At Mernda Neighbourhood House [MNH], we believe in the power of community, connection, and inclusion—and we're so glad you've decided to be part of it.

As a valued volunteer, you are joining a vibrant community centre that plays a vital role in supporting and strengthening our local area. Mernda Neighbourhood House is a place where people come together to learn, connect, and grow. We provide a wide range of programs and services that aim to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and families—whether it's through education and training, recreational and wellness activities, or direct support services.

Our centre is home to programs like the Repair Café**,** Community Shed**,** Community Lunches, and various workshops and classes. These initiatives not only offer valuable opportunities for learning and engagement, but also help to reduce isolation and build strong, supportive networks.

Volunteers like you are at the heart of everything we do. Your time, energy, and passion help create a warm, inclusive space where everyone feels welcome. Whether you're assisting with events, supporting programs, or helping behind the scenes, your contribution makes a real difference in people's lives.

Volunteering with us is also a great way to meet new people, develop new skills, and feel connected to your local community. We encourage you to get involved, ask questions, share your ideas, and most importantly—enjoy the experience.

We're here to support you on this journey and look forward to working together to continue making Mernda Neighbourhood House a safe, inclusive, and empowering space for all.

The Mernda Neighbourhood House Team

Mernda Neighbourhood House is a not-for-profit, community-driven organisation dedicated to fostering connection, learning, and inclusion. We provide a welcoming space where people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can come together to access programs, services, and support. As a volunteer, you are part of a team that contributes directly to the wellbeing and vibrancy of the Mernda community.

Our Values and Vision

Mernda Neighbourhood House is guided by community development principles and practices, which are founded on the values of:

Social Justice, Equality, and Inclusion

For us, this means fair treatment of all people in a society, including equal rights and opportunities to live a good life.

Community's Vision

The Community's Vision for Mernda Neighbourhood House was conceived by local community members early in 2019. This guides us in how and what we do at Mernda Neighbourhood House.

The Community's Vision for Mernda Neighbourhood House



Being Part of Mernda Neighbourhood House

Volunteers are at the heart of Mernda Neighbourhood House. You are not just helping — you're an essential and valued part of our team, working alongside staff to deliver programs, support community initiatives, and create a welcoming space for everyone who walks through our doors.

This is more than just a place—it's a hub where meaningful relationships are built, skills are shared, and support is always close by. The programs and services offered here are designed to enrich lives and strengthen our community, whether through education and training, recreational activities, health and wellbeing support, or services for individuals and families in need.

As someone giving your time and energy, you help create the welcoming, inclusive environment that makes all this possible. Your involvement ensures that everyone who walks through our doors feels seen, supported, and empowered to take part.

Volunteering here also gives *YOU* the chance to learn new skills, meet people, and feel connected to the local community. Whether you're helping at the Repair Café, lending a hand in the Community Shed, joining in at our Community Lunch, or supporting one of the many classes and events—we encourage you to explore what interests you and get involved in ways that are meaningful to you.

Every interaction, every contribution—big or small—helps build the strong, connected community we all want to be part of.

Thank you for your interest in becoming an active member of our community. Whether you're here to give back, learn something new, or simply connect with others, your contribution makes a real difference. We're excited to share this journey with you.



Volunteers at Mernda Neighbourhood House

Why Volunteer?

Volunteering offers many rewards—not only for the community, but for you as well. Here are just a few of the benefits:

- Act on your values, passions, and interests
- Make new friends and expand your professional network.
- Gain work experience and build new skills.
- Enjoy diverse social and cultural experiences.
- Grow personally and boost your confidence.
- Improve your physical and mental wellbeing.
- Challenge yourself in a supportive and inclusive environment.
- Feel good knowing you're giving back to your community.
- And most importantly—have fun!

"Volunteering at Mernda Neighbourhood House has helped me reconnect with my community in ways I never imagined.
I've learned new skills, met amazing people, and felt genuinely appreciated every step of the way."

Samantha, Volunteer since 2022

Volunteer Recruitment Process

At Mernda Neighbourhood House, we take care to ensure our volunteer recruitment process is welcoming, inclusive, and transparent. We advertise new volunteer opportunities through platforms our website, social media or through word of mouth. Once you express interest, we review your application and may invite you to an initial interview. Referee checks are part of this stage to ensure a good fit for both you and our programs.

If you're selected to proceed, we'll provide you with a position description and guide you through the required registration steps, including a Police Check and Working with Children Check. We support you through on boarding and training, followed by a three-month probation period with regular check-ins to ensure you feel confident and connected in your role. Your journey with us is about mutual growth—your contribution strengthens our community, and we're here to make your experience positive, rewarding, and well-supported.

Volunteer Induction

Once you're confirmed as a volunteer, you'll be invited to attend a thorough induction session. This is your opportunity to get familiar with our community centre, meet staff and fellow volunteers, and learn about our values, mission, and the important role you play. During the induction, we'll walk you through key policies, procedures, and your rights and responsibilities to ensure you feel confident and supported from day one. It's also a chance to ask questions, clarify expectations, and start building connections that will help you thrive in your volunteer role.

Volunteer Training

Training is an ongoing part of your volunteer journey with us. We provide all the necessary training to equip you with the skills and knowledge needed for your specific role. Whether it's learning how to safely run a program, engage with community members, or use our systems, our aim is to help you feel prepared and capable. We also encourage continuous learning and provide opportunities for personal and professional development throughout your time with us. Your growth as a volunteer benefit both you and the community you serve.

Our Obligations to You, as a Volunteer

At Mernda Neighbourhood House, we are committed to creating a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all our volunteers. We promise to provide you with clear information about your role, offer the necessary training and resources, and ensure your wellbeing is always a priority. We will listen to your feedback, recognize your contributions, and support your growth throughout your time with us. Your safety, satisfaction, and sense of belonging matter to us, and we strive to make volunteering here a positive and rewarding experience.

Principles of Volunteering

Volunteering at Mernda Neighbourhood House is guided by core principles that ensure a positive and respectful experience for everyone involved. We believe in inclusivity, valuing diversity and welcoming people from all backgrounds and abilities. Volunteers give their time freely, motivated by a shared commitment to support and strengthen the community. Mutual respect, honesty, and open communication are at the heart of everything we do. We encourage collaboration, responsibility, and a spirit of learning, so that both volunteers and the community can benefit and grow together.

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

At Mernda Neighbourhood House, we believe that volunteering is a mutually respectful partnership. As a volunteer, you have the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe environment.
- Be provided with sufficient training to do your job.
- 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 Mernda Neighbourhood House.
- Be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses.
- Be given a copy of the volunteer policy and procedures as well as any other policy that affects your work.
- Have a volunteer role 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.

Your Obligation as a Volunteer

What We Expect of You as a Volunteer

As a volunteer at Mernda Neighbourhood House, we ask that you commit to your role with reliability, enthusiasm, and respect for others. We expect you to communicate openly with staff and fellow volunteers, follow the guidelines provided, and act responsibly while representing our community. Your positive attitude and willingness to contribute help create a welcoming environment for everyone. We understand that life can be busy, so if you're ever unable to volunteer as planned, please let us know as soon as possible.

Code of Behaviour and Conduct

Our volunteers are ambassadors of Mernda Neighbourhood House and are expected to uphold high standards of behaviour. This means treating everyone with respect, kindness, and fairness, regardless of their background or beliefs. Volunteers should act ethically, follow safety protocols, and avoid any actions that could harm or disadvantage others. We encourage teamwork, patience, and a supportive attitude. If concerns arise, we have clear procedures to address them promptly and fairly.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Respecting privacy and confidentiality is essential when volunteering with us. You may come across sensitive information about individuals or the organisation, and it is your responsibility to keep this information secure and private. Sharing personal details without permission is not acceptable. We take confidentiality seriously to protect the trust placed in us by our community members and volunteers alike. If you're ever unsure about what can be shared, please ask a staff member for guidance.

Work Health and Safety (WHS)

Mernda Neighbourhood House is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers, staff, and community members. As a volunteer, you play an important role in helping maintain safety by following our procedures and speaking up if you see any risks or hazards.

First Aid

Basic first aid support is available on-site during all programs. First aid kits are clearly marked and accessible in designated areas. If someone is injured or unwell, please notify a staff member immediately. Only trained personnel should administer first aid, unless it is an emergency, and no other help is available.

Emergency Procedures

You will be guided through our emergency procedures during your induction. This includes what to do in case of fire, medical emergencies, lockdowns, or other critical situations. Regular drills may be conducted to ensure everyone is familiar with the procedures. Your cooperation in these situations is essential for everyone's safety.

In the event of an emergency—such as fire, medical emergency, or building evacuation—stay calm and follow the instructions of Mernda Neighbourhood House staff. Emergency exits are clearly marked, and evacuation maps are displayed throughout the building. Please familiarise yourself with these when you begin your volunteer role.

Accident and Incident Reporting

All accidents, injuries, or near misses—no matter how minor—must be reported as soon as possible. Report the incident to a staff member and complete an **Incident Report Form**, which is available through the Manger or relevant staff. Prompt reporting helps us identify risks and prevent future issues.

New Volunteer Checks

As part of the volunteer on boarding process at Mernda Neighbourhood House (MNH), certain roles may require a **Police Check** and **Working with Children Check** to ensure the safety of all participants, staff, and volunteers. These checks are vital to protect the people we work with and to maintain a safe and trustworthy environment.

1. Police Check

A **Police Check** helps ensure that volunteers do not have any criminal convictions or history that would make them unsuitable for certain roles. It is a standard procedure for specific positions where you will be working with vulnerable groups or in positions of trust.

1. Use this link to start the process. https://www.crimcheck.org.au/check/merndanh

How to complete the Police Check:

You will need to fill out a **Police Check Authorization Form** (link above), which gives us permission to run a background check through a registered provider.

Once submitted, the process typically takes a few days to a couple of weeks to complete, depending on the provider.

Complete the online form and upload the below mentioned documents. If you are unable to upload them, it's okay. Bring your IDs to the manager of MNH and we can process the police check for you.

You must supply four identity documents.

- 1 x Commencement of Identity document
- 1 x Primary use in the Community document
- 2 x Secondary use in the Community document.

Commencement of identity documents, you must supply one document from this category:

- Full Australian birth certificate (not an extract or birth card)
- Australian citizenship certificate
- Valid Australian Visa, supported by a foreign passport, which is needed for verification.

- ImmiCard issued by Department of Home Affairs that enables the cardholder to prove their visa and/or migration status and enrol in services.
- Current Australian passport not expired

Primary use in the community documents, you must supply one document from this category:

a) Current Australian passport not expired.
b) Current Australian drivers' licence, learner permit or provisional licence issued by a state or territory, showing a signature and/or photo and the same name as claimed.
c) ImmiCard issued by Department of Home Affairs that enables the cardholder to prove their visa and/or migration status and enrol in services.
d) Australian marriage certificate issued by a state or territory (church or celebrant-issued certificates are not accepted)
e) Current passport issued by a country other than Australia with a valid entry stamp or visa.
f) Current proof of age or photo identity card issued by an Australian Government agency in the name of the applicant,
g) Current shooter or firearms licence showing a signature and photo (not minor or junior permit or licence).
h) For persons under 18 years of age with no other Primary Use in Community Documents, a current student identification card with a signature or photo.

Secondary use in the community documents, you must supply two documents from this category:

(a) Certificate of identity issued by DFAT to refugees and non-Australian citizens for entry to Australia.
(b) Document of identity issued by DFAT to Australian citizens or persons who have the nationality of a Commonwealth country for travel purposes.
(c) Convention travel document secondary (United Nations) issued by DFAT.
(d) Foreign government issued documents (e.g., drivers' licence).
(e) Medicare card.
(f) A relationship certificate issued by a state or territory Births, Deaths and Marriages.
(g) Enrolment with the Australian Electoral Commission.

(h) Evidence of right to an Australian Government benefit (Centrelink or Veterans' Affairs)

(i) Security guard or crowd control photo licence

(j) Consular photo identity card issued by DFAT.

(k) Photo identity card issued to an officer by a Police Force or Australian Defence Force

(l) Aviation Security Identification Card (ASIC) or Maritime Security Identification Card (MSIC)

(m) Photo identity card issued by the Australian Government or a state or territory government (this may take the form of a Working with Children/Vulnerable People Card or a government occupational licence)

(n) Australia Post Keypass with photo

(o) Credit reference check

(p) Australian secondary or tertiary student photo identity document

(q) Certified academic transcript from an Australian university or a registered higher education provider

(r) Trusted referees report

(s) Bank card, credit card or bank statement (without recording the payment/card number/s)

(t) Additional bank card, credit card or bank statement (without recording the payment/card number/s)

(u) Australian tax file number (notice of assessment or issue)

(v) State/territory government rates assessment notice or Australian Taxation Office assessment notice (must not be issued more than 12 months prior to use)

(w) Australian utility bill showing name and address (must not be issued more than 3 months prior to use)

(x) Australian private health insurance card

(y) Australian trade association card

What if there's an issue with the Police Check?

If there are any concerns or discrepancies in your Police Check, we will have a conversation with you to understand the context. In some cases, depending on the nature of the check, we may not be able to offer you the volunteer position.

2. Working with Children Check (WWCC)

A **Working with Children Check** is a legal requirement for individuals who volunteer in roles that involve direct contact with children. This check helps us ensure that volunteers who interact with children are suitable and do not pose a risk. Because families and children are a big part of MNH, we require all volunteers to apply for the check.

When is a Working with Children Check Required?

If your volunteer role involves direct, unsupervised interaction with children under the age of 18. For roles such as tutoring, mentoring, event coordination, and any other positions where you might have responsibility for, or work closely with, children.

How to complete the Working with Children Check.

Apply for the check through the **Working with Children Check Victoria** website or the relevant authority in your state. The process requires you to provide personal details and identification documents. The check itself is free for volunteers. Once approved, you will receive a **Working with Children Check card** which you need to bring in to MNH.

To begin the process link here > https://www.vic.gov.au/how-apply-working-with-children-check

What if the Working with Children Check result is not clear?

If you have a prior conviction or some history that may affect your ability to work with children, we will assess the situation individually. In some cases, we may request additional documentation or clarification.

How to Submit and Keep Your Checks Current.

After you've completed both the **Police Check** and **WWCC**, please provide the official documents or clearance certificates to your Volunteer Coordinator. manager@merndanh.org.au

These checks are valid for a set period (usually 3-5 years) and will need to be renewed before expiration to continue volunteering in roles that require them.

MNH Policies & Procedures Overview

As part of your volunteer journey at Mernda Neighbourhood House, we ask that you review the following overviews of MNH policies and procedures. These policies and procedures are designed to ensure a safe, respectful, and efficient environment for both volunteers and the people we serve and help you understand our expectations, guidelines, and the standards we uphold in everything we do.

You will review these policies and procedures in more detail during the volunteer on boarding process, on acceptance of your volunteer application and confirmed checks.

1. Code of Ethics Policy

As a volunteer at Mernda Neighbourhood House, you are expected to act with integrity, professionalism, and respect always. This includes maintaining appropriate boundaries, being honest, fair, and reliable, and following all legal and ethical requirements. You must respect confidentiality, treat everyone impartially, support client self-determination, and never accept gifts or money from clients. Alcohol and drug use is strictly prohibited at work. You represent MNH when volunteering and on social media and must always follow Board policies and child safety obligations.

2. Code of Confidentiality and Privacy Policy

Mernda Neighbourhood House is legally required to protect personal information under the Privacy Act 1988, and volunteers play an important role in this. Any information about clients, staff, or the organisation must be kept confidential and only shared with proper consent or when legally required. Personal information is collected only for service delivery, stored securely, and accessed only when necessary. Individuals have the right to view and correct their information, and any privacy breach must be reported immediately as it may result in disciplinary action.

3. Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities Policy

Volunteers at Mernda Neighbourhood House are entitled to a safe, respectful, inclusive, and well-supported environment with proper training, supervision, insurance coverage, and access to grievance procedures. In return, volunteers are expected to be reliable, follow policies, maintain confidentiality, act ethically, complete training, communicate openly, and commit to their role for at least six months. MNH values volunteers as partners in service delivery and ensures fair recruitment, recognition, ongoing support, and opportunities for skill development in a safe and inclusive workplace.

4. Grievance Policy and Procedure

The Grievance Policy provides a fair and structured process for resolving work-related complaints involving volunteers, staff, or board members. Wherever possible, issues should first be resolved informally through respectful discussion. If this is unsuccessful, a formal grievance can be submitted to the Manager for investigation. All parties may have a support person present, confidentiality is respected, and outcomes are based on evidence and fairness. If either party is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal to the Board, whose decision is final.

More information can be found on our website.

5. Child Safety Policy

Mernda Neighbourhood House is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment for all children and young people, with zero tolerance for abuse. Volunteers must always act appropriately, follow child-safe behaviour guidelines, and report any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of abuse immediately. All volunteers must hold valid *Working With Children* and *police checks*, complete child safety training, and understand mandatory reporting laws. Cultural safety, inclusion, and the protection of children's rights are central to all MNH activities involving children.

6. Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Policy

Mernda Neighbourhood House is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all volunteers, staff, clients, and visitors. Volunteers must follow all OH&S policies, complete required safety training, work safely, and report any hazards, injuries, or incidents immediately. MNH actively identifies risks, conducts regular inspections, provides safety equipment and training, and ensures shared responsibility for wellbeing across the organisation, with the Board and management overseeing safety systems.

7. Social Media Use Policy

Mernda Neighbourhood House uses social media to connect with the community in a positive, respectful, and informative way. Only authorised staff may post on behalf of MNH, and all content must be accurate, respectful, and aligned with MNH's values. Volunteers must not share confidential information, post offensive or discriminatory content, or undermine Mernda Neighbourhood House's work online. Child safety standards always apply, and inappropriate or harmful content is strictly prohibited.

What's Next?

Once you've completed the require forms and actioned the necessary checks, please return them to our MNH Volunteer Coordinator.

MNH New Volunteer application Checklist

- ☐ Read through the MNH Volunteer Handbook
- ☐ Completed the MNH Volunteer Registration Form
- ☐ Read through the MNH Policy and Procedure Overviews
- ☐ Action the required Police Check.
- ☐ Action the required Working with Children Check
- ☐ Email all required paperwork to MNH Manager.

  Email: manager@merndanh.org.au

Thankyou

Once we have reviewed all your details and all your checks are approved, we will schedule for an induction session to go over everything you need to know in person.

Thank you for your interest and time to volunteer with us—we truly appreciate your support and look forward to working with you! We hope your volunteering journey here is both meaningful and rewarding. If you have questions, concerns, or ideas, please reach out—we're always here to support you. We look forward to working alongside you and celebrating the impact we can make together.