Mernda

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

Volunteer

ONBOARDING GUIDE

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 Aboard!

Congratulations and Welcome to the Mernda Neighbourhood House (MNH) volunteer team! We are thrilled to have you on board and excited about the impact you'll make in our community. As a new or returning volunteer, we ask that you complete the checklist of required documents and review our policies to ensure you're fully equipped for your role.

- ☐ **Read through the Onboarding Guide.**
  This is your reference to all things volunteering with Mernda Neighbourhood House (MNH). Keep it handy for future reference.
- ☐ **Read through the MNH Policies & Procedures**
  A link is provided to each policy and procedure in this Guide.
  We know they are long documents, but it contains essential information about your role, your responsibilities, and the values that guide our work at MNH.
- ☐ **Complete the online quiz**
  This step confirms your understanding of our organisational guidelines.
- ☐ Successfully completing the quiz activates your **"green light"** to begin volunteering with MNH**.**

If you have any questions or need assistance along the way, don't hesitate to reach out to our Volunteer Coordinator—we're here to support you every step of the way!



MNH Policies and procedures

As part of your volunteer journey at Mernda Neighbourhood House, we ask that you review the required policies and procedures. These documents are designed to ensure a safe, respectful, and efficient environment for both volunteers and the people we serve.

Familiarizing yourself with these policies will help you understand our expectations, guidelines, and the standards we uphold in everything we do. Whether it's about workplace behaviour, health and safety, or communication, these policies are essential for creating a positive and inclusive community.

If anything is unclear or you have any questions while reviewing the materials, please feel free to reach out—we're here to help you every step of the way!

Read through the MNH Policy and Procedures listed and **complete the online quiz**. This step confirms your understanding of our organisational guidelines.

Click on each box to review and read the linked policy or procedure.

Ethics for Volunteers	Confidentially and Privacy	Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities
Grievance	Child Safety	Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)
Social Media Use		**Start QUIZ**

Successfully completing the quiz activates your **"green light" to begin volunteering with MNH.**

Administrative Guidelines for Our Volunteers

Office Hours

Mernda Neighbourhood House operates **Tuesday to Friday from 9am**. And Saturday 10:00 am – 2:00 pm for our monthly repair Café. Volunteer shifts are usually scheduled within these hours.

Rest Breaks

Volunteering can be busy and rewarding—but it's important to take care of yourself. We encourage you to take regular breaks. Tea and coffee facilities are available in the kitchen, and you're welcome to bring your own snacks or lunch.

Dress Code

Volunteers are asked to wear **neat, clean, and practical clothing** suited to their role. For safety reasons, **closed-toe shoes are required** when working in the garden or workshop, or other activity-based areas. Please speak with your supervisor if you're unsure about what's appropriate for your duties.

Absences

We understand that life happens—whether it's illness, unexpected appointments, or other commitments. If you can't attend a scheduled shift, **please notify** the Mernda Neighbourhood House Coordinator **as early as possible**, preferably via phone or email. This allows us to rearrange tasks and ensure program continuity. For ongoing changes in availability, we're happy to discuss alternative arrangements that better suit your schedule.

Ceasing to Volunteer

If you decide to take a break from volunteering or move on permanently, we kindly ask that you **provide** as much notice as possible. This helps us plan and transition your responsibilities smoothly. During the exit process, we'll collect any items belonging to the organisation (such as name badges, keys, or equipment) and may invite you to complete an exit feedback form or short conversation. Your insights help us improve the experience for future volunteers—and you're always welcome to stay connected with the House.

References and Statement of Service

We're proud of the contributions our volunteers make and are happy to **provide references or statements of service** upon request. These documents outline the type of work you've done, the time committed, and your impact. They're great for job applications, study, or future volunteering. Just let your supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator know if you'd like one.

Insurance

All volunteers engaged in official Mernda Neighbourhood House activities are covered by our Volunteer Personal Accident Insurance. This coverage provides basic protection in the event of accidents or injuries. It's important to follow safety procedures and report any incidents immediately.

Meetings

Volunteer meetings may be held periodically to discuss updates, share ideas, provide training, or plan upcoming events. These meetings are a great way to stay informed, raise concerns, and connect with fellow volunteers. We encourage all volunteers to attend when possible and contribute to the shared direction of our programs.

Recognition and Feedback

We believe in recognising the incredible value volunteers bring to our community. Recognition may take many forms—certificates, thank-you events, social media shout-outs, or simple expressions of appreciation. Your feedback is also highly valued. Whether it's a suggestion for improvement or a success story to share, we're always keen to hear from you. Speak with your supervisor or use a feedback form available.

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 at reception. Prompt reporting helps us identify risks and prevent future issues.

Quality Management

At Mernda Neighbourhood House, we are committed to delivering high-quality programs and services in a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment. We welcome feedback from our volunteers and community members as a vital part of improving what we do.

Grievance Process

At Mernda Neighbourhood House, we are committed to creating a respectful, inclusive, and harmonious environment for all staff, volunteers, and community members. We understand that from time to time, concerns or misunderstandings may arise. When they do, it's important that they are addressed fairly, promptly, and respectfully.

If you have a concern or issue during your time as a volunteer, whether it relates to another volunteer, a staff member, or a program, we encourage you to speak up. Wherever possible, try to resolve the matter directly and informally with the person involved. If you are uncomfortable doing so or if the issue remains unresolved, please speak with your supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator.

If the concern still cannot be resolved, it may be escalated to the Manager for further support. All grievances will be managed with *confidentiality**,** sensitivity*, and a commitment to fair and impartial resolution**.**

Mernda Neighbourhood House follows the *MNH Grievance Policy* which outlines a clear and fair process for managing grievances across our organisation. The policy ensures that all concerns are treated seriously, dealt with as close to the source as possible, and in accordance with principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

We ask that:

- Concerns are raised **as early as possible** after an incident has occurred.
- All parties engage in the process **in good faith** and with respect.
- Grievances are not made frivolously, maliciously, or to cause harm.
- Everyone involved respects the **confidential nature** of the process.

As a volunteer, you have the right to be heard and treated fairly throughout this process.
The principles of **natural justice** mean that before any decisions are made:

- You have the right to be informed of any concerns raised about you.
- You have the opportunity to respond and share your perspective.
- You can expect a fair and unbiased process.
- Able to have a witness present.

We are here to support you and are committed to resolving issues in a way that maintains trust and a positive working environment for everyone involved.

Feedback

Your feedback matters. Whether you have a suggestion, an idea for improvement, or want to share something that's working well, we encourage you to speak with your supervisor or complete a feedback form available from MNH staff. Open feedback helps us build a stronger, more responsive community hub—for volunteers and participants alike.

Complaint Management

Formal complaints are handled according to our Complaint Management Policy, which ensures all concerns are investigated fairly and promptly. You can submit a complaint in writing, in person, or by speaking with a staff member. All complaints are documented and reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement. We are committed to resolving issues constructively and respectfully, while ensuring the rights of everyone involved are upheld.

Workplace Responsibilities at Mernda Neighbourhood House

We want all volunteers to feel welcomed and supported in a positive environment where everyone can thrive. Here's a breakdown of important workplace responsibilities and how we can work together to maintain a respectful and inclusive space.

Bullying in the Workplace

At Mernda Neighbourhood House, we are committed to providing a work environment that is free from bullying, intimidation, and harassment. We want everyone to feel respected and valued.

What is considered bullying?

Bullying can be any repeated behaviour that intimidates, humiliates, or undermines someone's dignity. It includes, but is not limited to:

- **Verbal or written abuse:** This might include swearing, yelling, or using language meant to hurt or degrade someone.
- **Initiation pranks or harmful "jokes":** These can be uncomfortable and make someone feel excluded or belittled.
- **Spreading malicious rumours:** This includes gossip that harms someone's reputation.
- **Exclusion:** Deliberately leaving someone out or denying them important information or resources needed to do their role as volunteer.
- **Unfair tasks:** Giving someone the majority of unpleasant or overly difficult tasks that don't match their abilities.
- **Excessive scrutiny:** Constantly criticizing someone's work or focusing on small mistakes without offering constructive feedback.
- **Humiliation:** Using sarcasm or belittling someone's ideas or opinions.
- **Unrealistic deadlines or expectations:** Setting someone up for failure with impossible tasks.
- **Displaying inappropriate material:** Any material (posters, jokes, or images) that might offend or degrade another person.

How to handle bullying

If you feel you're being bullied, you can take the following approaches:

- **Direct approach:** Calmly ask the person to stop the behaviour. Sometimes a simple request can help resolve the issue.
- **Mediation/discussion:** If the behaviour continues, an independent third party may be needed to mediate and help both sides understand each other's perspectives. Speak to MNH Coordinator for assistance.
- **Formal investigation:** For more serious allegations, an investigation will be conducted following the principles of natural justice and confidentiality.

If you are experiencing bullying, it's important to reach out to your MNH Coordinator or a trusted staff member. We will listen, support you, and ensure the issue is handled appropriately. Any further inappropriate behaviour after reporting will be taken seriously and can lead to a formal investigation and possible disciplinary action.

Cultural Diversity

Mernda Neighbourhood House is proud to be a diverse and inclusive organisation. Our community is made up of people from all walks of life, and we celebrate that diversity every day. We're committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, feels welcomed and respected.

What we do to support diversity

Respect for everyone: We believe that everyone's background, identity, and experience matter. We value diversity across gender, race, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, age, and viewpoints.

Education and awareness: We offer opportunities to learn about the importance of inclusivity and the impact of challenging biases.

Empowerment: We work to enhance both volunteers' and clients' self-esteem and sense of worth by providing inclusive services and support.

Non-biased behaviours: We promote positive behaviours that encourage an open-minded and non-discriminatory approach to others.

Not tokenistic: We make sure that our efforts are genuine and not just symbolic. We want real, meaningful inclusion.

We ask all our volunteers to contribute to an environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and valued for who they are. Together, we can create an environment where diversity thrives.

Fairness and Equity

Fairness and equity are fundamental to how we work at Mernda Neighbourhood House. As a volunteer, it's essential that you work in a way that ensures fairness and equity for all.

What does fairness and equity look like?

- **Consistent decisions:** We make sure that all decisions and actions are carried out fairly and consistently, in line with our policies and procedures.
- **Impartiality:** We handle all matters impartially, which means no one is treated unfairly based on their background or personal characteristics.
- **Respect for others:** Fairness also means treating everyone with respect—listening to others, being considerate, and making sure everyone has the same opportunities to succeed.
- **Non-discrimination:** We expect all volunteers to engage with one another in an honest, respectful, and non-discriminatory manner.

By following these principles, we create a culture of fairness where everyone's contributions are valued, and no one is left out or treated unfairly.

Harassment and Sexual Harassment

Harassment of any kind is not tolerated at Mernda Neighbourhood House. We believe that everyone should feel safe and respected. Harassment can affect anyone and is harmful to both individuals and the community.

What is harassment?

Harassment is any repeated behaviour that creates a hostile or intimidating environment. It may include:

- **Offensive or threatening behaviour:** This includes anything that makes someone feel humiliated, threatened, or unsafe.
- **Unwanted attention or conduct:** Behaviour that is unsolicited or unwelcomed, and which makes someone feel uncomfortable.
- **Disruption to work or well-being:** Harassment impacts a person's ability to work or affects their health and safety in the workplace.

Harassment does not include reasonable management actions like performance feedback or changes in work responsibilities. However, if these actions are used in a way that is unfair, unreasonable, or degrading, they could be considered harassment.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of harassment and involves any unwelcome sexual advances or conduct. This could include:

- Inappropriate physical touch or gestures.
- Unwanted comments or jokes about someone's appearance.
- Sexual advances or requests for favours.
- Displaying offensive materials or messages.

Sexual harassment is never acceptable, and we expect all volunteers to respect the rights and dignity of others. If you experience or witness harassment, it should be reported immediately. We will take all complaints seriously and ensure that appropriate action is taken.

Reporting Inappropriate Behaviour or Making a Complaint

If you've experienced inappropriate behaviour, you have the right to report it. At Mernda Neighbourhood House, we aim to resolve all complaints fairly and efficiently.

How to report inappropriate behaviour

- **Grievance Form:** If you experience violent or abusive behaviour, or if something feels wrong, you can complete a Grievance Form. This helps us understand the issue and act.
- **Support:** You are entitled to have a support person with you during the process if you need assistance.
- **Confidentiality:** We will keep your complaint confidential, so there's no fear of victimisation. This helps protect everyone involved and ensures a fair process.

It's important to know that you can stop the process at any time, but some issues might require investigation to ensure everyone's safety and well-being.

Unlawful Conduct

Certain forms of inappropriate conduct, such as physical attacks, obscene phone calls, or criminal actions, are considered unlawful. If something like this happens, you may also want to involve the police in addition to our internal processes.

What should you do?

If unlawful conduct occurs, you have the option to report it to the authorities, and we'll provide support through this process.

Victimisation

Victimisation happens when someone is unfairly targeted because they've made a complaint or supported someone else in making one. It's a form of retaliation and is against the rules.

What might victimisation look like?

- Unfair treatment or exclusion
- Threats or bullying
- Changes in your work or responsibilities
- Refusal to provide training or opportunities

Victimisation will not be tolerated at Mernda Neighbourhood House. If you believe you're being victimised, speak up immediately.

Vilification

Vilification is any speech or action that insults, defames, or incites hatred against a person or group of people based on their identity or characteristics, like race, religion, or gender.

What does vilification include?

- Insulting or abusive comments
- Inciting others to hate or ridicule a group based on their race, religion, sexuality, etc.

This type of behaviour is not just harmful but also illegal under Australian human rights laws. It's essential that we always treat each other with respect and kindness.

By understanding and following these guidelines, we can ensure a safe and positive environment for everyone at Mernda Neighbourhood House. If you ever have concerns or questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. We are always here to help!

Thank you and Welcome Aboard!

Welcome to the Mernda Neighbourhood House volunteer team and thank you for getting started with us! We truly appreciate your willingness to give your time and make a positive difference in our community. We're excited to have you on board and look forward to supporting you in your volunteering journey.

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