



ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS POLICY

Policy Number:	03	Version:	3
Updated by:	Paul Taylor	Approved by Board on:	3 June 2026
Reason of Review:	Scheduled Review	Scheduled review date:	As per schedule

INTRODUCTION

Established in 2000, Mercy Works Limited (MWL) is the development arm of the Sisters of Mercy in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

We work in partnership with vulnerable communities and local organisations domestically and in the Asia Pacific region. We work with the people of these communities and organisations to build capacity, dignity and self-reliance.

1. SCOPE

This policy provides guidance to MWL Board Directors, committee members, employees contractors, volunteers, (defined as workers) in relation to their work with/for MWL.

2. PURPOSE

MWL welcomes, encourages and supports the participation and involvement of the community to contribute to and enhance the programs of the organisation through volunteering. MWL recognises and values the contribution of its volunteers.

The purpose of this policy is to explain what it means to be a volunteer, how to engage volunteers, and how to manage risks associated with engaging volunteers.

Any exemption to this policy must be applied for, in writing, for approval by the Executive Director. Any exemption granted by the Executive Director must be in writing.

3. DEFINITIONS & ACRONYMS

Terms used in this policy are:

Volunteer – see section 4.1 below

WWCC - Working With Children Check

Worker - MWL Board Directors, committee members, employees, contractors, volunteers

4. APPLICATION

4.1 What is a volunteer?

A volunteer is a person who freely and without coercion contributes their time and services to an organisation without remuneration (for no financial payment). Volunteering is not 'unpaid work experience', an 'unpaid internship' or an 'unpaid trial period'.

Volunteers are not employees. There is no employment relationship between an organisation and a volunteer. For a voluntary arrangement to be genuine, there must be no intention between the parties to create an employment relationship. To ensure any volunteer you engage is fully aware of the nature of the volunteer relationship, Volunteers must be provided with a Volunteer Engagement Letter.

Volunteers are not guaranteed any work, and there is no obligation to provide work for a volunteer.

4.2 Volunteers Entitlements

Volunteers are not employees and are therefore not covered by awards, enterprise agreements or the Fair Work Act. Volunteers are therefore not entitled to wages, paid leave, superannuation or any of the other entitlements generally provided to employees.

4.3 Meals and Breaks

Volunteers are not entitled to meals or set breaks. It is good workplace health and safety practice, however, to ensure that volunteers do not work excessive hours and have an opportunity to have something to eat.

4.4 Ending the Volunteer Arrangement

Either party can end the volunteer arrangement at any time with a reasonable period of notice required.

4.5 Engaging an Employee as a Volunteer

Employees can be engaged as volunteers providing the work that is performed is separate and distinct from the paid role the employee performs. Volunteer work must not be performed during the employee's normal working hours, and the employee must be provided with a Volunteer Engagement Letter and a copy of that letter filed on their personnel file.

4.6 Work Health & Safety (WHS) for Volunteers

MWL volunteers are defined as workers under Work, Health & Safety (WHS) legislation and MWL has a duty to consult with volunteers on some WHS issues and to provide information, training and instruction to volunteers about WHS matters. Volunteers must receive WHS training including WHS induction, training in any applicable safe work method statements (for example if they will be manual handling or using any equipment or chemicals that are potentially harmful) and emergency/first aid procedures. Volunteers should also be aware of how to identify and report hazards.

4.6.1 Volunteer WHS Obligations

MWL volunteers are obliged to:

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety
- take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons
- carry out their tasks in a safe way
- comply with any reasonable instruction that is given by the person conducting a business or undertaking to allow the person to comply with their WHS obligations
- co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the person conducting a business or undertaking relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to workers.

4.6.2 Volunteers and Workers Compensation

Volunteers are not entitled to receive worker's compensation if injured during the course of voluntary work. However, MWL holds other types of insurance which may provide some cover to a volunteer who is injured.

4.7 Volunteers Working With Children and Adults at Risk

MWL volunteers are required to undergo a Working With Children Check (WWCC) if they are involved in child-related work or working with adults at risk. This means supervisors must ensure, before engaging a volunteer in child-related work or working with adults at risk, that the individual has a valid and verified WWCC. Volunteers can obtain a WWCC, free of charge, through the Office of the Children's Guardian. MWL must verify the WWCC before the person is allowed to commence any work with children and adults at risk. Volunteers involved in such work are required to comply with MWL Child Safeguarding Policy. Volunteers involved in work with children and adults at risk must be provided with access to MWL Child Safeguarding Policy prior to engagement or during induction. A volunteer under the age of 18 does not need to undergo WWCC.

4.8 National Police History Check Policy (NPHC)

Certain volunteer roles in some states require a National Police History Check to be conducted prior to commencing as a volunteer.

A NPHC is at the cost of MWL and must be completed prior to engaging the volunteer should it be deemed necessary.

4.9 Volunteers and the Code of Conduct

Volunteers are required to comply with MWL Code of Conduct Policy. Volunteers must be provided with access to MWL Code of Conduct Policy and the Privacy Policy prior to engagement or during induction. Volunteers are required to sign that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct Policy and agree to comply unconditionally with all its directives.

5 BREACH

A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action that may involve severance from the organisation.

6 AUTHORITY

This policy is approved and reviewed by the Board.

7 RELATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS

Other organisational policies, legislation, and codes etc. that should be read in conjunction with this policy and with MWL's ethical value principles include:

- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)
- Child Safeguarding Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- One to One Interactions with Children Policy
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy Policy
- Risk Management Framework
- Transparency and Accountability Policy

8 CONTACTS

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9 REVIEW

Review of this policy, related forms and resources will be undertaken every two years by the Executive Director and approved by MWL Board.

10 REVISION/MODIFICATION HISTORY

Date	Version	Current Title	Summary of Changes	Approval Date	Commencement Date
26 October 2022	1	Engaging Volunteers Policy	New	26 October 2022	26 October 2022
4 June 2024	2	Engaging Volunteers Policy	Standardisation, new introduction, typographical corrections	6 November 2024	6 November 2024
6 May 2026	3	Engaging Volunteers Policy	Standardisation, new logo	3 June 2026	3 June 2026

11 APPROVAL DATE/REVISION SCHEDULE

Approved by: Board, Mercy Works Limited
 Date: 3 June 2026

To be Revised: As per schedule

Board Chair Signature:	<i>Joseph Babar</i>
Date:	22 June 2026