

# Position Statement on **Volunteers in Health Services**

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Re-endorsed by Annual Conference 2008

For the purposes of this position statement, a volunteer is defined as:

*An individual who chooses to participate in specified, unpaid activities within a health service organisation for the benefit of the community, the organisation and themselves*

## **It is the position of the NSW Nurses' Association that:**

1. The contributions of volunteers bring significant benefits to the community and enhance the delivery of health services by complementing the work of paid professional staff and, when managed appropriately, may positively affect the efficiency of health service organisations.
2. Volunteering is a personally enriching experience which allows individuals to use their existing skills and knowledge and to develop new skills and knowledge through community participation.
3. Volunteers in health services work across a range of areas, for example transport services, canteen/kiosk assistance, gardening, personal and cosmetic care, musical events, general office assistance and operating mobile library services, to support professional staff in providing and promoting high quality and holistically focused health care.
4. The use of volunteers within health services must not displace or adversely affect the career opportunities of paid staff or replace the work of paid staff. Nor should voluntary service ever be used as a pre-condition for paid employment.
5. Not all health service organisations can or need to use volunteers; however, those organisations using or considering using volunteers should:
  - Evaluate the role of prospective volunteer activities within the overall strategic plan of the organisation;
  - Carefully assess the specific tasks to be performed by volunteers;
  - Evaluate the skills and/or knowledge volunteers can provide;
  - Consider costs and benefits involved in using volunteers, including potential impacts on the organisation's insurance arrangements;
  - Consult extensively with paid staff, relevant unions and volunteers;
  - Assess potential impacts of the use of volunteers on paid employment opportunities;
  - Ensure that appropriate resources are committed to the training, implementation and ongoing maintenance of volunteer services;
  - Ensure workplace safety for volunteers by appropriately applying the principles of risk management;



- Ensure that volunteers have appropriate identification, including a uniform if required;
  - Ensure that legislative requirements for volunteer services are met, for example criminal record checks for those working with children; and
  - In consultation with unions develop comprehensive policies and guidelines, which include a *Code of Conduct for Volunteers* and address issues such as recruitment and selection processes, accountabilities, and resourcing, to provide a framework for the effective evaluation and management of volunteer services.
6. Volunteers in health services have a right to:
- Job satisfaction and appropriate recognition;
  - A job description and job contract;
  - Fair and equitable treatment and a safe place of work;
  - Effective orientation and training;
  - Understand their rights and responsibilities, legislative and otherwise, including their accountabilities in the workplace; and
  - Information regarding the organisation's activities and developments.

**NB. This policy should be read in conjunction with NSWNA's policies on *Nursing and Nursing Care, Occupational Health and Safety and Role Boundaries in the Provision of Personal Care.***

