

# Volunteer & Student Handbook



**GOONAWARRA**  
**NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE**

## Welcome!

Volunteers are vitally important to the successful running of the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House programs and the organisation itself. We welcome volunteers and students from a diverse range of backgrounds and skills. Goonawarra Neighbourhood House welcomes your vital contribution, and we look forward to working with you!

## Purpose of this handbook

This handbook is designed to give an overview of volunteering and student placement at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House.

## Table of Contents

Volunteering with Goonawarra Neighbourhood House .....	3
Student Placements at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House .....	4
What is a Neighbourhood House? .....	5
About Goonawarra Neighbourhood House .....	6
Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities .....	7
Volunteer Rights .....	7
Volunteer Responsibilities .....	7
Getting started as a Volunteer or Student .....	8
Compliance Checks .....	8
Supervision, Support & Development .....	8
Volunteer Rewards Program .....	9
Our Policies .....	9
Child Safety .....	10
Workplace Safety and Wellbeing.....	10
Insurance .....	11
Dispute Resolution.....	12
Volunteer Dismissal .....	12
Volunteer Resignation .....	12
Early departure of Students from Placement.....	12
Discontinuation of Student Placements .....	12
Making a complaint .....	13
Reimbursement .....	13
Volunteer & Student Checklist .....	14

## Volunteering with Goonawarra Neighbourhood House

We aim to provide meaningful connections for our volunteers to utilise their unique skills and attributes, and contribute to and connect with their local community

Volunteering with Goonawarra Neighbourhood House provides you with the opportunity to:

- Connect with others and be part of a welcoming and vibrant community
- Practice skills being learned at TAFE or university
- Contribute skills you already have
- Learn new skills and experience new things
- Support our programs and assist program participants to build their capacity
- Improving your understanding of community development
- Have fun and be involved in something meaningful



*Goonawarra Neighbourhood House's Volunteer program is aligned with the Australian National Standards for Volunteering.*

## Student Placements at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is firmly centred in community development principles and practices, so we'd love to support you on your journey if you're studying community services or other fields with a community development focus.



## What is a Neighbourhood House?

### Neighbourhood Houses are the heart of our communities.

*They bring people together to connect, learn and contribute to their local community through social, educational, recreational and support activities.*

*Also commonly known as community centres, learning centres, community houses or neighbourhood centres, these inclusive community-based organisations welcome people of all ages, abilities and walks of life, creating opportunities for people to enrich their lives through connections they might not otherwise make. No two Neighbourhood Houses are ever the same.*

*Guided by a community development approach, Neighbourhood Houses engage and respond to the needs and priorities of the communities they serve.*

*Often they will advocate to their local council, MPs and other relevant bodies on issues of importance to their local communities. They also play a key role assisting in emergency management and building community resilience during and in the aftermath of local emergencies such as bushfires, floods etc.*

<https://www.nhvic.org.au/whats-a-neighbourhood-house>



## About Goonawarra Neighbourhood House

<https://youtu.be/mfKc4iXHHao>



Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is a place-based community development organisation that provides inclusive programs to the local community and surrounds. Current programs include playgroups, social activities, recreational courses, engagement programs for at-risk children and teenagers, and well-being programs.

Our programs are developed in response to community needs, based on direct feedback and community needs assessments.

Goonawarra has historically been socially isolated with community members consisting of first-home buyers, young families, long-term residents and retirees. Goonawarra has a mixture of private and public housing, with community members coming from low and middle socio-economic backgrounds. However, the surrounding region is on the verge of a population boom with several new housing estates emerging at present. In response to the growth and resulting change in demographics, we are adapting and changing our programs to reflect emerging needs. This includes providing programs to families that will improve the trajectory of their children's life outcomes.



# Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

## Volunteer Rights

In undertaking your responsibilities as a volunteer, you have a right to:

- a) Undertake tasks which best suit your skills, interests and capabilities.
- b) Clarification around your volunteer role, through discussions with the House Manager or a position description.
- c) Adequate orientation, training, supervision and support to enable the successful completion of your role.
- d) Information about Goonawarra Neighbourhood House's principles, objectives, functions, policy & procedures, including our Complaints process.
- e) Be treated with respect at all times, and to be recognised as a valued team member.
- f) Insurance, and to be provided with information about the arranged cover.
- g) Voice queries, concerns and complaints directly to the House Managers.
- h) Negotiate assistance with out-of-pocket expenses for authorised volunteer tasks.
- i) Participate in the evaluation of the volunteer program and the quality of individual work.
- j) Participate in the governance of Goonawarra Neighbourhood House by membership
- k) Say 'no' to requests you feel are inappropriate or outside of your role or capabilities.
- l) Holiday breaks
- m) A healthy and safe work environment

## Volunteer Responsibilities

As a volunteer with us, you have the responsibility to:

- a) Undertake voluntary work according to training, and the policies and practices of Goonawarra Neighbourhood House
- b) Participate in the co-operative team effort to achieve the goals of Goonawarra Neighbourhood House
- c) Commit to your volunteer position and be punctual and reliable.
- d) Be willing to accept direction from the relevant supervisor, and ask for help when required.

- e) Accept the privacy and dignity of clients and fellow volunteers and follow our Confidentiality policy.
- f) Advise the House Manager, supervisor or relevant staff as soon as possible with respect to any change in availability.
- g) Maintain a positive, optimistic and non-judgemental attitude.
- h) Undertake training, evaluation, and participation in support groups as required
- i) Notify the House Manager of any potential hazards or dangerous situations you come across during your volunteer activities

## Getting started as a Volunteer or Student

Before you get started as a volunteer with us, or commence placement as a student, there are a few things you'll need to do:

- Join our House Manager for an **informal interview**
- Join our **online Volunteer & Student Hub**, where you'll be guided through the induction training
- Apply for and send to us a **Police Check** and **Working with Children Check**
- Send us 2 **referees** (volunteers only)
- Fill out some **forms**  
*(Yes, we know - paperwork! But these forms are important to make sure you're aware of all the things we can do to keep our House safe and welcoming for everyone. These forms also provide us with important information about you, such as emergency contact details).*

We are always happy to chat, so if you're unsure about something throughout the induction process, please reach out!

### Compliance Checks

All of our students and volunteers are required to have a valid Working with Children Check and a recent Police Check. We ask this of you because it is one of the best ways we can protect those we work *for*, and those we work *with*, and make sure the Neighbourhood House is a safe space for everyone who participates in our programs.

If you have any issues with the application process for either of these checks, we can support you.

### Supervision, Support & Development

Once you've started as a volunteer/student, the Manager will provide you with supervision and support and be your primary contact person.

Throughout your time with us, there will be opportunities for further training and capacity building through the Volunteer & Student Hub.

If you have any questions or concerns about your role, your health and safety or if there is any assistance you need, please contact the Manager as soon as possible.



The volunteer program will be constantly monitored and evaluated by the House Manager to ensure consistently high standards.

## Volunteer Rewards Program

**As a way of saying thank you to our volunteer team we have created a rewards program!**

Once you've been an active volunteer with us for a minimum of six months, you'll have access to the program. For every year you are with us you have access to:

- ★ Free registration for a House program of your choosing for a term **OR** 50% off Neighbourhood House venue hire
- AND**
- ★ A rewards voucher from a local community partners!

Students are not eligible for our rewards program – sorry!



## Our Policies

Don't worry we're not going to get you to read them all! But it's good to know they are there, and you can refer to them as needed.

- *Confidentiality Policy*
- *Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy*
- *Sexual Harassment Policy*
- *Misconduct Policy*
- *Bullying Policy*
- *Anti-Discrimination Policy*
- *Equal Opportunity Policy*
- *Reimbursement Policy*
- *Injury and Incident Reporting Policy*
- *Complaint and Compliment Management Policy*

You'll have access to these on the Volunteer & Student Hub.

## Child Safety

**Everyone at Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is committed to the safety of the children who visit, play and learn with us.**

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is committed to promoting and protecting the interests and safety of children. We have zero tolerance for child abuse, do not tolerate any discriminatory practices and welcome families and children from all backgrounds and with all abilities to our programs.

We are committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, the cultural safety of children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the safety of children with a disability. Goonawarra Neighbourhood House takes all concerns and allegations seriously and will respond in line with the organisation's policies and procedures.

During your induction, you will read our *Code of Conduct* – this provides guidance to volunteers and students around expectations of behaviour and our commitment to child safety.

## Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House considers the occupational health and safety of all persons employed, contractors and volunteers to be of the utmost importance. Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will make resources available to comply with the relevant Acts and Regulations associated with occupational health and safety and to ensure that this association is safe and without risk to health.

- The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (the Act) is the cornerstone of legislative and administrative measures to improve occupational health and safety in Victoria. The Act sets out the key principles, duties and rights in relation to occupational health and safety.
- The *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007* are made under the Act. They specify the ways duties imposed by the Act must be performed or prescribe procedural or administrative matters to support the Act, such as requiring licenses for specific activities, keeping records, or notifying certain matters.

Regulations specific to the Goonawarra Neighbourhood House work environment are:

- First aid in the workplace - Compliance Code (PDF 1063kb)
- Workplace amenities and work environment - Compliance Code (PDF 966kb)
- Communicating occupational health and safety across languages - Compliance Code (PDF 1053kb)

In meeting its obligations Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will ensure:

- All contractors to the organisation have current insurances and all relevant coverage and registration to undertake the work. The organisation will keep a record of current insurance coverage for all its contractors and update these annually.
- Its staff are fully familiar and implementing its OH&S procedures.

- All team meetings incorporate OH&S as a standard agenda item.
- Quarterly OH&S Committee meetings are held which review all OH&S risk identification and management reports and provide an audit of satisfactory mitigation.
- An OH&S noticeboard is in the workplace and updated with current Workcover and other OH&S documentation.
- Manual Handling and Fire training as a minimum are conducted for all staff.
- That at least one of its staff always has current training in OH&S.
- All purchases of goods and equipment meet Australian and other relevant standards.
- Essential services equipment such as fire extinguishers, fire hoses, fire blankets, sprinklers, emergency lights, emergency exit doors, thermostatic mixing valves and backflow valves will always be regularly inspected and maintained and available for use.
- Extinguishers, hoses and blankets will be used only in an emergency and only in accordance with instructions.



## Insurance

We are committed to providing adequate insurance cover for volunteers and students while they carry out the roles that have been approved and authorised by us.

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House has the following insurance coverage for volunteers and students:

- *Personal Accident – VMIA*

To ensure this insurance covers you for any incidents that occur while you are volunteering with us, you need to:

- Make sure you Sign in each time you volunteer/start placement, and Sign out when you finish for the day
- Report an incident as soon as it has occurred

We want to let you know that the following events are unlikely to be covered by our insurance:

- actions that are beyond the scope of your role, or that occur without appropriate authority or permission from us
- criminal activity (including criminal charges arising out of driving incidents)
- dishonest or reckless activities

## Dispute Resolution

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will ensure fair and just procedures are in place to resolve disputes involving volunteers. These disputes include:

- Complaints by a volunteer
- Complaints about a volunteer
- Complaints or conflicts between volunteers and/or staff

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will ensure that volunteers are aware of the dispute resolution procedures and of their rights of appeal.

## Volunteer Dismissal

In rare cases the organisation may need to ask a volunteer to leave. This might be if the volunteer poses a risk to others, or if disputes are not able to be resolved.

In the event of volunteer dismissal, consideration will be given to processes that could occur before dismissal, such as the issuing of warnings, further training or role reassignment, and options for the volunteer to appeal the decision.

## Volunteer Resignation

Volunteers are an invaluable resource to Goonawarra Neighbourhood House, but it is recognised that due to changing circumstances the volunteer may need to end their voluntary position. Goonawarra Neighbourhood House asks all volunteers to give as much notice as possible to the Manager before leaving.

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House is committed to constantly improving the Volunteer Program, so we may ask you to fill out an Exit Survey for you to share your experiences with us.

## Early departure of Students from Placement

We understand that circumstances can change, however we do ask that students give as much notice as possible to the Manager before leaving.

Before finishing, all students are asked to provide the Manager with an update on the progress of their placement work and to return any property, books, materials or files (electronic or otherwise) belonging to Goonawarra Neighbourhood House before they leave.

## Discontinuation of Student Placements

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House reserves the right to cease placement if:

- The student is deemed a risk to the families, children, or other members of staff.
- If they are not meeting the conditions agreed upon, for example not presenting themselves to the placement on time or dressing inappropriately.
- If the placement is preventing regular operations from taking place.

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House will make every effort to work with the student to resolve any problems, however, we reserve the right to cease the placement when necessary.

All discontinuation of placements by either Goonawarra Neighbourhood House or the volunteer must be in writing and be provided to the relevant groups at least 2 hours before a placement commences.

## Making a complaint

Your feedback, either positive or negative, is greatly valued by our organization. It provides us with further opportunities to continuously improve our services so please take the time to tell us about your experiences. You can find our Compliments and Complaints process via the link below.

<https://goonawarranh.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Compliments-and-Complaints-Process-attachment.pdf>

## Reimbursement

Goonawarra Neighbourhood House recognises that volunteers can incur expenses while volunteering. Such reasonable expenses will be reimbursed by prior agreement with the Manager. We can also cover the cost of a Police Check if you need to apply for one.

## Volunteer & Student Checklist

You don't need to send this table back to us or anything like that - it's just a way for you to check for yourself what you need to do and if you've done it :)

Task	Date submitted/Actioned
Applied for a Police Check OR Sent through a recent Police Check to our House Manager (if applicable)	
Applied for a Working With Children Check OR Send through current WWCC to our House Manager ( <i>Make sure you've listed us as one of the Organisations linked to your Check</i> )	
Sent the names and contact details of 2 Referees (personal & professional) to our House Manager (volunteers only)	
<b>Volunteer Agreement form</b> - Signed and returned to the House Manager	
<b>Volunteer Information Form</b> - Completed and returned to the House Manager	
<b>Code of Conduct form</b> - Signed and returned to the House Manager	
<b>Confidentiality Agreement form</b> - Signed and returned to the House Manager	
Completed the Induction Training on the Volunteer & Student Hub	



## Have questions or need support?

Phone | (03) 9740 6627

Email | [admin@goonawarranh.com.au](mailto:admin@goonawarranh.com.au)

## Get connected

Our website | <https://www.goonawarranh.com.au/>

Our Facebook | <https://www.facebook.com/goonawarranh>

Our Instagram | [https://www.instagram.com/Goonawarra\\_NH/](https://www.instagram.com/Goonawarra_NH/)

