



## YMCA COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERS

*“Honesty, Caring, Respect and Responsibility”*

The YMCA Movement in Australia is committed to fostering a spirit of volunteering in our communities, through developing partnerships and community strengthening opportunities.

Our commitment is to communicate, connect and provide opportunities for individuals to grow, by conducting professional quality volunteering programs.

The YMCA Movement in Australia values the uniqueness and diversity of every individual and acknowledges the significant contribution volunteers make to our Movement and our community.

Our commitment to volunteers will be achieved by our Member Associations through:

- **Recognising volunteer contributions**  
*We recognise the work of our volunteers locally and nationally. The YMCA equally values short-term project based volunteering, and long-term volunteer commitment.*
- **Adopting a consistent approach**  
*We are committed to embracing the Volunteering Australia “National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations”, including the “Principles of Volunteering”.*
- **Ensuring adherence to social inclusion principles**  
*We seek to remove barriers to volunteering by adopting best practice in volunteering policies, procedures, systems and inclusive practices.*
- **The sharing of resources**  
*We actively encourage Associations to share with, and benefit from, others showing leadership in volunteering.*

## BACKGROUND

The YMCA started as a volunteer-only Movement. From its start in Australia in 1851, paid staff were not a function of the Movement until much later that century.

Since then, the changing needs of our communities has seen a shift in the volunteer/ staff balance such that now, for the first time in its history, the YMCA is staff dominated.

With this shift has come the need to restate our commitment to the YMCA being a Movement of, and for, volunteers.

Volunteering trends in Australia have indicated a pattern of growth to this point in time, where 34% of Australia's population reportedly volunteer. This represented 713 million hours in 2006.

The most commonly reported reasons for volunteering are 'Helping others' or 'for the community', followed by 'personal satisfaction', and 'to do something worthwhile'.

Two of the most common types of organisation for which people volunteer are:

- Sport and physical recreation
- Community/welfare.

The four most common volunteering activities are:

1. Fundraising: 48%
2. Preparing and serving food: 31%
3. Teaching/providing information: 28%; and
4. Administration: 26%

With an increase in volunteering and a change in volunteering trends toward more short-term volunteering opportunities, it is paramount that the YMCA adapts to meet the changing needs of today's volunteer.

Volunteering across Australia in the YMCA is at a healthy level with 131,000 volunteering hours according to the YMCA census for 2007. This was achieved through 333 Governance Volunteers, and 3091 Program Volunteers.

## **AGREED ACTION**

The YMCA endorses the statements on Standards, Principles and Best Practice in Volunteering, as developed by Volunteering Australia:

### ***Standards***

The National Standards focus on:

- Policies and procedures
- Management responsibilities
- Recruitment
- Work and the workplace
- Training and development
- Service delivery
- Documentation
- Continuous improvement.

### ***Principles***

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.
- Volunteer work is unpaid.
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice.
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community.
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit sector only.
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work.
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

### ***Best Practice***

- A collaborative approach to resource sharing and consolidation.
- Feedback from key stake holders.
- Review and continuous improvement.

The Volunteering Working Group recommends that all Associations adopt a volunteer recognition system that regularly recognises the contribution of individual volunteers. This local recognition is augmented by National recognition, as detailed in the National Volunteers Recognition System.