

# biennale of sydney

## VOLUNTEER POLICY

Revision date: 20 January 2022

Date of next review: October 2024

## INTRODUCTION

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This policy sets out the standards to which the Biennale of Sydney will adhere in offering volunteer opportunities. It is intended to ensure that:

- **All volunteer opportunities are offered in an accessible, open and inclusive way**
- **The Biennale of Sydney offers volunteer opportunities that are mutually beneficial to both the Biennale and to volunteers**
- **Volunteer roles extend and support, but are not the same as, staff roles**
- **Biennale volunteer opportunities follow best practice standards, as outlined in the [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#)**

A copy of this policy will be made available to all volunteers and staff when they commence with the Biennale of Sydney. A copy will be made available online and within the Operations Handbook.

All volunteers and staff must agree that they have read, understood and will adhere to the principles set out in this policy. Volunteer Managers and Coordinators agree to adhere to all related procedures for the recruitment and management of volunteers.

The Biennale of Sydney will monitor and review this policy every four years and will particularly focus on whether the policy is successful in supporting the Biennale to meet its wider diversity and inclusion objectives.

## BACKGROUND

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Volunteering, as defined by [Volunteering Australia](#), is “**time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.**” Volunteering is an excellent way for people to contribute existing skills, gain new skills and experience, and connect to people and art.

This policy applies only to volunteer opportunities offered by the Biennale of Sydney and is not intended to apply to work experience, internships or professional placements.

### Outlined in this policy:

1. Administrative procedures
2. Volunteer Recruitment and Selection
3. Volunteer Training & Development, Support and Recognition
4. Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation

# POLICY

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## 1. Administrative procedures

### 1.1. Role of the Volunteer management within Program & Partnerships Department

The successful involvement of volunteers requires a planned and organised effort. The Biennale of Sydney will appoint dedicated Volunteer staff member within the Programs & Partnership department to provide a central coordinating point for effective communication and administration of volunteer engagement.

The department is responsible for maintaining liaison with other volunteer programs in the community and assisting with community-wide efforts to recognise and promote volunteering; effective planning and involvement of volunteers; reviewing policies and procedures in-line with current best practice; reviewing and identifying creative and mutually beneficial volunteer opportunities, through consultation and feedback; implementing and ensuring accessible and inclusive recruitment processes; and tracking and evaluating the contribution of volunteers to the Biennale of Sydney.

### 1.2. Maintenance of Volunteer records

Volunteer personnel records will be treated with the same confidentiality as staff personnel records, and stored securely with the Biennale databases, Salesforce and Volunteer Management Platform. Data stored will include Volunteer's name, contact details, information relating to access requirements, volunteer role undertaken, and total hours volunteered.

The Biennale is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment for all volunteers. As such, the Biennale will also collect and review diversity monitoring information on applicants for voluntary roles. Protected characteristics of volunteers will be collected anonymously and confidentially and stored securely, separate to applications and not associated to individuals.

### 1.3. Insurance

All volunteers will be covered under the Biennale of Sydney Personal Accident Insurance for Voluntary Workers. To ensure volunteers are covered by this insurance, they must be between the age of 16 and 75. The Biennale does not insure volunteers' personal belongings while carrying out their role, however volunteers will have access to cloakrooms or lockers where they may choose to store their personal belongings.

We aim to ensure that volunteers can carry out their roles without risk of harm at all times. We carry out risk assessments for all of our volunteer roles, and individual assessments for anyone with particular requirements.

This data will be monitored by Volunteer staff member only after shortlisting and will only be used for reporting purposes, and to improve diversity within the volunteer program.

### 1.4. Representing the Biennale of Sydney

Volunteers are representatives of the Biennale of Sydney within the scope of their role descriptions. Without prior consultation and approval from appropriate staff, Volunteers must not take any action which might significantly affect or obligate the Biennale of Sydney. This includes making public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organisations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations.

### **1.5. Confidentiality**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they may encounter while volunteering with the Biennale. This includes information involving staff, other volunteers, artist project details and overall Biennale business. If confidentiality is not maintained, the volunteer may be asked to leave.

### **1.6. Social Media**

It is important to remember that volunteers, as well as staff, represent the Biennale at all times, including on Social Media channels. As such, it is suggested that reasonable consideration is taken when engaging in social media for personal use. Please use the following points as a reference, and for further details, refer to the Biennale's [Social Media Policy](#)

- Be aware that a Facebook post, tweet or Instagram image can be visible to the entire world.
- Include a disclaimer if the content of your post or comment can in any way be linked to the Biennale.
- Avoid negativity and maintain a professional approach.
- Be sensitive about the Biennale's confidential information. For example, posting images online during the installation period.
- Be open, truthful and accountable.

A private Facebook group will be set up for each Exhibition, with the primary purpose of social communications between volunteers, and between staff and volunteers. Volunteers will only be added to this group once they have been accepted as a volunteer, and are encouraged to use this platform to organise informal social events, get to know each other, advertise other volunteer or paid opportunities and as a noticeboard for other events happening in Sydney.

All communications on social media will be in-line with the Biennale's *Social Media Policy* and *Dignity and Respect Policy*. Communication through any platform that is disrespectful to others will not be tolerated.

### **1.7. Venues and Volunteer facilities**

Appropriate venues and volunteer facilities will be established prior to volunteer recruitment and involvement. The venues will be safe, secure and contain necessary facilities (including a kitchenette, tea & coffee facilities and lockers), necessary equipment and space to enable volunteers to effectively and comfortably undertake their roles.

### **1.8. Reimbursement of expenses**

To help limit barriers to volunteering, the Biennale will reimburse volunteers with reasonable out-of-pocket expenses during the exhibition, related to volunteering with the Biennale. Prior approval from the dedicated Volunteer staff member must be sought for all expenditures, and expenses paid will be at the discretion of the Finance and Administration Department.

### **1.9. Dress code**

Volunteers will be provided with a uniform (normally a t-shirt) to wear during the Exhibition, to be easily identified by visitors. As a representative of the Biennale, volunteers are responsible for dressing appropriately for the venue conditions and role that they are carrying out. Volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes while undertaking any activities with the Biennale.

### **1.10. Access to Biennale property and materials**

As appropriate, Volunteers will have access to Biennale property and materials necessary to fulfil their voluntary role. Volunteers will receive relevant training in the operation of any equipment if required, however will not utilise power tools or undertake any work at height. Volunteers are

responsible for only carrying out activities that they believe is within their personal capacity, and will advise their supervisor should they feel uncomfortable with any tasks set or requested of them. Property and materials will be utilised only when directly required for Biennale purposes. This policy does not include access to and use of Biennale vehicles, however will be considered on a case-by-case basis dependant on necessity to effectively fulfil their volunteer role.

#### **1.11. Volunteer Management software**

To assist with managing and rostering volunteers, the Biennale uses a web-based Database system called VolunTier. Once accepted as a volunteer, individuals are responsible for maintaining and updating their personal records to ensure that these are current; signing up to and attending the minimum number of shift requirements as outlined in role descriptions; notifying the Volunteer staff team if unavailable to attend a shift; staying up-to-date with volunteer news by regularly checking the homepage; signing up to and attending regular training sessions and ensuring the time clock has been completed for each shift attended.

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## **2. Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**

### **2.1. Scope of Volunteer Involvement**

Volunteers may be involved in all programs and activities of the Biennale, so long as the involvement is mutually beneficial and enjoyable. Volunteer roles extend and support, but are not the same as, staff roles and volunteers will not, under any circumstance, be used to displace paid employees from their positions.

### **2.2. Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities**

Volunteers are a valuable support to the Biennale and its staff. Volunteers will be provided with meaningful opportunities, supportive and effective supervision, the right to be treated with dignity and respect, the right to full involvement and participation, and regular thanks and recognition for the donation of their time. In return, volunteers will agree to the values and responsibilities as outlined in the [Volunteer Agreement](#). The Biennale will consult with volunteers about matters that may have a major impact on how they are able to carry out their role.

### **2.3. Volunteer Role Descriptions**

Prior to volunteer recruitment, role descriptions will be reviewed and developed for each volunteer position. All volunteer role descriptions will outline the purpose and responsibilities of the role, minimum time commitment involved, and the training and development opportunities offered by the Biennale to support the volunteer. Role descriptions will be provided to volunteers at application stage, and once accepted will be referred to through ongoing volunteer management and evaluation.

Volunteer role descriptions will be reviewed and updated at least every two years, to help the program evolve and to stay current across the sector, responding to community engagement needs and the requirements of the Biennale.

### **2.4. Distinction between staff and volunteers**

Requests from an existing volunteer to continue volunteering should they also become a Biennale employee, or conversely for a current Biennale employee to commence a volunteer role, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Requests will be approved so long as the roles are considered to be distinctly different (ie. Visitor-facing and Office-based tasks), or if continuing to volunteer or taking on a volunteer role would not conflict with the individual's ability to carry out their paid role at the Biennale effectively.

Volunteers may undertake freelance work for the Biennale with agreement of the Volunteer staff member and via the Biennale's usual recruitment channels.

## **2.5. Staff Requests for Volunteers**

Requests for volunteer support will be submitted in writing to the Volunteer staff member with advance notice by the interested department, along with a draft role description and a requested time commitment. All staff understand that the recruitment and involvement of volunteers is enhanced by creative, interesting and mutually beneficial roles.

The Volunteer staff member reserves the right to refuse to recruit or involve volunteers if the role is not distinct from a staff role, or considered to be a worthwhile and valuable opportunity for the volunteer, as well as the Biennale.

## **2.6. Volunteer Recruitment**

The Biennale of Sydney values volunteering as a way to encourage and broaden participation in the arts and to involve communities, and therefore actively recruits volunteers through consultation with community networks. As a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation, it is right that the Biennale involves volunteers to help us achieve our aims and make the best use of our resources.

The Biennale is committed to diversity and inclusion, and involving volunteers is one way that we encourage people from a range of backgrounds to get involved with the exhibition. Volunteers are a link between the public and the exhibition, and it is important that they represent the diversity of the Sydney community. The Biennale gains immensely from volunteers' input and insights, and volunteers themselves benefit from their involvement with the Biennale. Benefits include but are not limited to; meeting others, being part of a team, learning about art or sharing a love of art, gaining or contributing skills, supporting others or being supported. The Biennale recognises that people volunteer for a variety of reasons, and in recruiting volunteers we take into account what volunteers may gain from specific roles.

All volunteer applications will be considered on an equal opportunities basis without regard to age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion or belief, sex, gender identity or gender expression, sexual orientation or any other equality characteristic.

The only requirements for volunteer recruitment is that the volunteer is between the age of 16 and 75, and is deemed by referees provided to be suitable to undertake the specific role assigned, on behalf of the Biennale. Volunteers who are under the age of 18 must have parental or guardian permission prior to volunteering.

## **2.7. Application process and Information sessions**

All volunteers, regardless of whether they have been involved with the Biennale as a volunteer previously, are required to complete an online application form outlining their motivations to volunteer and their area of interest. The Volunteer staff member will read all applications and contact a minimum of one referee, prior to the volunteer being accepted. The Biennale will make reasonable adjustments to the application process (including large-print or Easy Read versions, over-the-phone applications, and make hard-copy versions available) to ensure that our opportunities are accessible to all.

Additionally, the Biennale will host Information sessions for individuals who are interested in volunteering, to find out more about the organisation, meet the team and learn about the upcoming exhibition.

## **2.8. Volunteer Acceptance**

Following a sufficient application and reference check, successful volunteers will receive written acceptance confirmation. No volunteer will commence volunteering until they have been officially accepted for a specified role, read and understood the volunteer agreement and have completed all necessary paperwork and training relevant to that role.

## **2.9. Volunteer trial period**

All volunteers will be initially accepted on a trial period of 14 days, after which point either the volunteer or Volunteer staff member may suggest a different or more suitable role, or may determine the unsuitability of the volunteer within the Biennale, through a fair process, as outlined in the [Volunteers and Interns Problem-Solving Guidance](#).

## **2.10. Problem Solving procedures**

The Biennale accepts the involvement of volunteers with the understanding that such involvement is at the discretion of the Biennale. The Biennale hopes that volunteers will experience problem-free volunteering while involved with the Biennale. If problems do arise, the Biennale will follow its *Volunteers and Interns Problem-Solving Guidance* so that all volunteers are treated fairly and consistently. These procedures are different from those for employees as the relationship between the Biennale and volunteers is non-contractual and thus not defined as employment.

## **2.11. Professional services**

Volunteers will not perform professional services on behalf of the Biennale for which certification or licensing is required, even if currently certified or licensed to do so.

## **2.12. Length of service**

All volunteer roles will have a defined minimum time commitment as outlined in the role description, however volunteers are welcome to do more within reason, at the discretion of the Volunteer staff member. The overall duration of volunteering will be no longer than the exhibition period, including installation and de-installation. All volunteer roles will end at the conclusion of the exhibition, without expectation or requirement of reallocation of that volunteer.

Volunteers are neither expected nor required to accept further involvement with volunteering at the end of the exhibition, although are welcomed and encouraged to reapply as a volunteer for future Biennales. The Biennale accepts that volunteers may instead choose to seek employment or not to return to volunteering.

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# **3. Volunteer Training & Development, Support and Recognition**

## **3.1. Orientation and Induction**

All volunteers will receive a general Induction prior to commencing, which includes an introduction to the Biennale, Work Health and Safety (WHS) information and Visitor Care training. The Biennale will provide volunteers with the tools they need to carry out their role successfully, including any additional training as required, that is relevant to the role.

If a Volunteer commences post-induction, they will receive a condensed version of the Induction delivered by the Volunteer staff member, and where requested, supplemented by 'on-the-job' learning with an experienced volunteer.

The Biennale will provide a handbook for volunteers, which welcomes volunteers to the Biennale and contains the Volunteer Agreement, organisational overview, Exhibition overview, role

descriptions, venues and meeting points, transport information, FAQ's and day-to-day information about their role.

### **3.2. Ongoing Training and Development**

To support Volunteers continued learning and development, the Biennale will provide additional (optional) training and learning opportunities in the lead up to and throughout the exhibition. These will help to best prepare volunteers for their specific roles, gain new skills, share existing skills with each other, familiarise themselves with Biennale venues, and act as a social opportunity to build new relationships with each other and with Biennale staff.

### **3.3. Volunteer Supervisor**

All accepted Biennale volunteers must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the volunteer. The named supervisor will be regularly available to meet volunteers individually to provide support and discuss any issues or concerns.

Another volunteer may not act as a supervisor of other volunteers, unless under the direct supervision of a paid staff member.

### **3.4. Volunteer Recognition**

It is important for volunteers to feel appreciated and valued, and the Biennale will ensure that we provide our volunteers with regular, appropriate thanks and acknowledgement. Formally, this will take the format of an 'End of Exhibition' Volunteer celebration to recognise and reward the contribution of volunteers to the Biennale, and will be attended by all staff including the Director and CEO and Artistic Director. Volunteers will be consulted and involved with the organisation in order to develop an appropriate format for this event.

Throughout the Exhibition, all staff are responsible for providing ongoing thanks, and supporting creative methods of volunteer recognition on a regular basis. These methods of informal recognition may range from a simple 'Thank You' to a concerted effort to include volunteers as full participants in programs and making them feel part of the wider Biennale team.

In addition, when the Biennale Exhibition falls during 'National Volunteers Week', the Biennale will endeavour to celebrate it by hosting a special event, and/or through acts of additional recognition, including through Social Media platforms and the Biennale website.

### **3.5. Volunteer References and Career progression**

The Biennale recognises that some volunteers join the Biennale to gain valuable skills and experience to help with job prospects and career progression. While volunteering with the Biennale of Sydney does not follow a direct line into employment with the Biennale, we encourage and support volunteers to apply for jobs through the regular channels, if desired. The Biennale is happy to provide references on request, outlining experience and hours involved, providing the individual has met the minimum commitment as a volunteer.

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## **4. Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation**

### **4.1. Volunteer and staff relationships**

Biennale volunteers and staff are considered to be partners and will work collaboratively in implementing the mission and programs of the Biennale, with each having an equal but complementary role to play. It is important that volunteers and staff both understand and respect the needs and abilities of the other.

#### **4.2. Feedback mechanisms**

The Biennale will provide opportunities for volunteers to meet regularly as a group with staff to receive information updates, to exchange information and to offer feedback. Volunteers can offer feedback to Biennale staff at any time either verbally or written, and are actively encouraged to do so, to allow us to continually improve and evolve.

#### **4.3. Volunteer Care training for Biennale staff**

A presentation on best practice when working with volunteers will be provided to all staff prior to Exhibition opening. In addition to this, staff are encouraged to attend volunteer training, networking and social opportunities to get to know volunteers, welcoming them to the organisation.

#### **4.4. Communication**

Volunteers are entitled to all necessary information relevant to successfully carry out their volunteer role. As such, volunteers will be included in and have access to all appropriate email communications, training notes and other material necessary to their role. In the lead up to, and throughout the exhibition, most of this information will be updated on or sent out via Volunter volunteer software.

The Volunteer staff member is responsible for ensuring that the volunteer receives all news and information updates about their volunteering. The Volunteer is responsible for ensuring that their contact information is up-to-date, and will inform the Volunteer staff member if they require an alternative method of communication to phone or email.

#### **4.5. Volunteer absence and finding a replacement**

Volunteers are expected to carry out their role on a regular, scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled shift, volunteers will inform the Volunteer staff member with as much advance notice as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. Continual absenteeism, without valid reason or communication, will result in a review of the volunteer's involvement with the Biennale.

Through the volunteer software system Volunter, volunteers are able to self-schedule shifts based on their availability, and similarly are able to amend these up until 48 hours before the shift. If shorter notice than 48 hours is needed to change or cancel a shift, the volunteer will have to call the Volunteer staff member. Where cancelling a shift is unavoidable, volunteers will be encouraged to select a different shift in exchange.

Volunteers are encouraged to find a substitute for any upcoming absences. The substitute should be another volunteer with the same qualification as the volunteer that they are substituting. This process can be facilitated by the volunteer through the private Facebook group. Such substitution will only be accepted following consultation with the Volunteer staff member. Volunteer substitutes may only be recruited through people who are currently enrolled as volunteers with the Biennale.

#### **4.6. Volunteer Sabbatical or Leave**

At any time, the volunteer may decide to take a sabbatical or period of leave from their volunteering. Prior to doing so, the volunteer must notify the Volunteer staff member with as much notice as possible, to ensure that there is suitable cover available.

#### **4.7. Volunteer Evaluation**

Volunteers have the opportunity to seek review from the Volunteer staff member at any time regarding their involvement and performance in their role. Evaluations are optional, and largely dependent on the individual's interest and desire to self-improve or provide feedback about their



role. Evaluations may be undertaken informally via conversation with the Volunteer staff member, or if preferred a time may be set up to sit down to discuss in more depth.

Evaluations will include both a review of the volunteer's performance within their current role, and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the role or project with which they are involved. The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the volunteer and the Biennale to review and improve their relationship. Evaluations will be scheduled for a time that is suitable to both the volunteer and the Volunteer staff member.

In addition, at the end of the exhibition, all volunteers will be asked to complete an annual volunteer survey, which will help the Biennale to identify what is working well, and where changes may be implemented for the future.

#### **4.8. Volunteer Resignation and Exit Interviews**

Volunteers may resign from their volunteer role with the Biennale at any time, however where possible advance notice is always helpful to ensure that the volunteer role will be covered. In the case of a volunteer leaving before the end of the Exhibition, the Biennale will offer them an exit interview which may be carried out in person, or via email. The Exit interview will include; reason for leaving, suggestions and feedback about how to improve the volunteer role, and the option to involve the volunteer within a different capacity at the Biennale.

#### **4.9. Volunteer Management Report**

The Volunteer staff member will compile a final report at the end of each Exhibition, outlining all details relating to the involvement of volunteers. This will also include feedback collected from the annual volunteer survey, with recommendations for the following Exhibition as well as volunteer recognition and positive messaging about the Volunteer program for inclusion in the Annual Report. It will also include anonymous demographic statistics drawn from the Diversity monitoring survey, which will help to improve diversity within the volunteer program for future Biennales.