



Highlands Community Hospice Service: Volunteer Position Description

Position Description

The primary role of a hospice service volunteer is to provide direct support to clients living with a life limiting illness or condition, and their caring community. Volunteers provide care that encompasses emotional, psychological, social and practical support to the client and carers. Generally, this care is provided in the client's residence.

Volunteer services are flexible, trauma-informed and person-centred, and tailored to meet the unique needs of each client and their caregivers. While 'companionship and connection' is the primary focus, volunteers may also assist in a variety of areas such as with home help, appointments, respite care, legacy projects, and grief and loss support.

This role reports to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer Duties

Companionship and Connection

Volunteers visit regularly, offering companionship and connection. This emotional and psychosocial support might include, for example:

- casual chats, meaningful conversations and storytelling
- sitting while the person rests or sleeps
- going for outings
- time in nature
- listening to music together
- reading, engaging in art or other hobbies.

In alignment with their training, previous experience, WHS and trauma-informed practices – volunteers may offer non-medical holistic touch such as hand and foot massage, and may be able to assist with other non-medical personal care.

Home Help

Volunteers may assist with tasks like:

- food preparation
- light housework
- shopping
- gardening
- pet care.

Appointments

Volunteers may accompany clients to medical appointments, providing assistance at the appointment. Transport is provided by the client such as a taxi, or with pre-arrangement, volunteers may use their vehicles for transport.

Respite Care

While not a replacement for professional respite care, volunteers offer respite – providing much-needed breaks and relief for the carer.

Legacy Projects

Volunteers may assist clients to create lasting memories through projects like:

- biography writing
- letter writing or other legacy projects, for example sorting photos or memorabilia
- assisting with unfinished tasks such as art or craft projects.

Biography writing requires additional training for the volunteer.

Grief and Loss

While a volunteer is not a counsellor, through active listening, volunteers may support clients and carers with 'anticipatory grief' and other pre-death emotional experiences. After a client's death, where appropriate, volunteers may continue to offer companionship to carers, providing informal bereavement support. Carers may also be referred to professional mental health services, if needed.

Highlands Community Hospice Service Volunteer Position Scope



Other Roles

It is anticipated that there may be volunteers who may not volunteer as a companion but have specific skill sets and interests such as gardening, pet care or professional support including legal assistance or counselling. While these volunteers would still undergo the full training, they would not be matched 1:1 with a client as a companion, they might volunteer with one client or between multiple clients to provide support in their specialised area.

Highlands may also have other volunteer roles in the organisation such as help with funding and grant writing, social media, resource development and events management, or be on a committee or sub-committee.

Time Commitment

The regular time commitment from a hospice volunteer will vary, depending on the needs of the client and availability of the volunteer. For example, volunteers may offer 1-3 hours per week, and it is recommended that when working with a client, where possible, visits are weekly. The expected length of time supporting a specific client is unknown and may vary between a week or two, to more than a year; where appropriate and mutually agreed, volunteers may also continue to support the primary caregiver after the death of the client.

Key Qualities and Characteristics

A Highlands Community Hospice Service volunteer has:

- a commitment to supporting palliative care clients
- excellent communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to deeply listen and 'be' with people
- warmth, empathy and compassion
- a strong understanding of confidentiality and personal and professional boundaries
- emotional intelligence and maturity –
 - self-awareness and self-reflection
 - personal practices to be able to healthily manage emotions and wellbeing
 - personal work around death, grief and bereavement
- respect for others' beliefs, faith, values and ideology, and a commitment to not impose their personal view on clients or carers
- a willingness to work as part of a team and accept supervision and direction from the Volunteer Coordinator, and the ability to work under limited supervision.

It is important that volunteers are reliable, responsible and flexible, and are able to exercise tact, discretion and judgement to work in sensitive situations.

Key Responsibilities and Requirements

Key responsibilities and requirements of volunteers include:

- ensuring personal and professional ethical boundaries are set and maintained
- maintaining confidentiality and privacy of clients and their carers
- completing documentation after visits and as required
- participating in training and ongoing educational activities relevant to the role, 1:1 meetings and group debriefing sessions
- adhering to safe practices including hygiene and infection protocols, for example wearing any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) if required
- being responsible for personal health and safety and taking reasonable care of the health and safety of others
- not administering any medicines, or providing medical advice to clients and their carers
- being responsible for their own emotional and physical wellbeing, seeking support and guidance when needed, and ensuring that self-care practices are in place
- reporting concerns, injuries, hazards, and hazardous incidents to the Volunteer Coordinator
- having a current NSW driver's licence, Working with Children's Check (WWCC), national Police Check
- abiding by all organisational and program policies, procedures and guidelines.