



2021–2024
**Central Goldfields
Volunteer Strategy
and Action Plan**



Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Central Goldfields Shire Council acknowledges and extends appreciation for the Dja Dja Wurrung people, the traditional owners of the land that we are standing on today.

We pay our respects to leaders and elder's past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of all Dja Dja Wurrung people.

We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorry for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and our hope that we may walk forward together in harmony and in the spirit of healing.



Message from the Mayor

Volunteers are integral to the Central Goldfields Shire community. Central Goldfields volunteers work in many settings and under a variety of conditions, they are there in disasters, they run events, they enable vital services, and often work in our communities unnoticed. Our community would be unrecognisable without the dedication of volunteers.

The current informal approach creates a risk that future volunteering needs may not be met if volunteer organisations do not look at new opportunities to work together to improve volunteering opportunities, training, and partnerships.

Council values the growing need for a coordinated approach to volunteering across the shire, the *Central Goldfields Shire Council Plan 2017-2021* states the council will “*Support and encourage volunteerism in the community*”.

The community also recognises the need to support volunteering in the shire with the newly established Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre (MVRC). The MVRC will provide support for the Central Goldfields with the aim to bring the desire to help and the community need together.

It is vital for council and the community to work together to provide a safe, fun, encouraging and welcoming environment for volunteers and promote the benefits of a volunteer organisation.

The Volunteer Strategy provides a framework for the promotion, recruitment, support, recognition, and celebration of Council’s volunteers as well as encouraging a respected, supportive, and sustainable environment for all volunteers through the MVRC.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Meddows-Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Chris Meddows-Taylor
Mayor, Central Goldfields Shire

Message from the Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre

This Volunteer Strategy ushers in a new era of volunteerism in the Central Goldfields Shire. It is a holistic and coordinated approach that recognises volunteers and highlights how essential they are to a healthy and caring community.

The strategy also emphasises the sense of fulfilment and social connections that volunteerism offers.

We look forward to working with council and the community to deliver this strategy.

Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre

Tony Macer and Jeff Hooper
Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre

Defining volunteering

Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes and play a critical role in shaping a community.

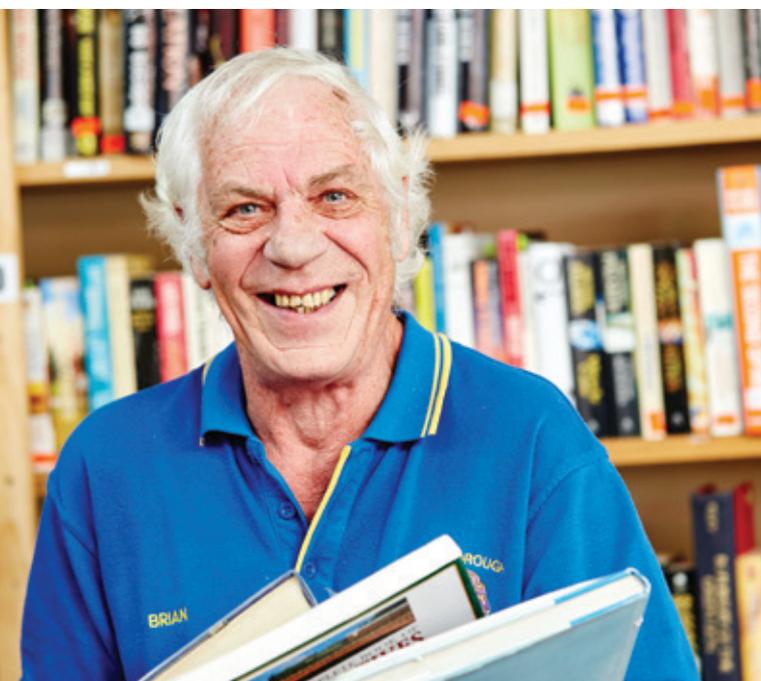
Volunteering Australia, Australia's peak body, adopted the following definition in 2015:

"Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain."

The new definition of 'volunteering' covers a wide range of activities, including:

- Formal volunteering that takes place within an organisation (including institutions and agencies); and
- Informal volunteering (volunteering that takes place outside an organisational setting).

Source – © 2015 Volunteering Australia



Principles of Volunteering

The principles of volunteering are the result of a national consultation undertaken in 1996 with a wide range of stakeholders;

- 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; and
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

Source – © 2018 Volunteering Australia

Current Situation

In the 2016 Census, there were 12,995 people in Central Goldfields, of these, 22.6% volunteered with an organisation. This is above the state average of 19.2% and the Australian average of 19% recorded for the same period.

In mid-2020 the Central Goldfields Pandemic Relief and Recovery sub-Committee conducted a community survey to identify the impact of COVID-19. From the 96 participants 31% of participants reported that they currently volunteer, and 23% indicated they would like to volunteer to pick up food (18%), deliver food (36%), prepare meals (32%), pack food boxes (27%), help with transport (14%) and contact people who are lonely (45%). If a Volunteer Resource Centre were available to these people, it would be easier for them to find volunteer work. Anecdotal reports suggest many people had to stop volunteering during this period because they were in the COVID-19 high-risk categories, specifically age and health.

While volunteerism appears to be valued within the local community there has never been a strong overarching direction to define the best way to maximise the volunteer effort locally.

Currently various organisations, including the Council, take a role in providing information to people looking for volunteering opportunities. This usually takes the form of lists of organisations who enlist volunteers. Additionally, people hear of opportunities through friends, family, word of mouth or through some type of audio, visual or social media.

Anecdotal reports suggest that there are people in the community who want to volunteer however they do not know how to start the process. As a result, volunteering in Central Goldfields has relied on individual effort to identify and secure volunteer positions, and the ability of organisations requiring volunteers to be able to promote and recruit adequate numbers of volunteers. Council has on an ad hoc basis been able to provide some direction to the community as to organisations that might require their volunteer services and the Community Activation and Social Isolation (CASI) initiative has been able to connect with those who are socially isolated.

While many people have successfully engaged in volunteering, it is fragmented, and does not maximise the rate of volunteering. People can become frustrated at not being able to locate the exact role they are looking for; the information becomes out of date with many organisations being missed from the list, there is not enough information or contact details are incorrect, and the process to sign up as a volunteer can be discouraging. Additionally, there are people in the community who do not have the confidence or sense of self-worth that enables them to make connections without assistance.

Similarly, organisations looking for volunteers also struggle to find suitable applicants. Many organisations currently have ageing volunteers who are wanting to scale back their commitment with no one to take over their position. These organisations need expertise in identifying prospective volunteers.

The Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre (MVRC) established in late 2020 by a working group of community volunteers and under the auspice of the Maryborough Community House aims to engage and link potential volunteers with relevant services. It will provide a central hub to connect residents and newcomers wishing to volunteer with community organisations.

During the focus group session in May 2021, participants emphasised the benefits of volunteering and the sense of belonging and purpose it can provide to the volunteer. However, they agreed that more needs to be done to recognise, celebrate and support volunteers. They would also like to see a centralised system where volunteers and organisations can connect.

The recent pandemic has changed the way the community interacts with others. If we can not meet or host activities in person, people have been quick to move online and connect digitally. Volunteers need to be supported to alter their way of thinking and encourage them to participate with organisations online, and community organisations need to be encouraged and supported to leverage technology advancements and engage volunteers under a new model of volunteering.



Community Based Volunteer Roles

There is an abundance of volunteer roles that are fulfilled within the Central Goldfields Shire including but not limited to:

- In education settings
- Preparing and serving food
- Fighting fires
- Coaching junior sport
- Providing first aid at events
- Fundraising
- Sewing costumes for plays and dance recitals
- Picking up rubbish
- Running clubs, groups and organisations
- Conducting heritage walks
- Visiting the sick
- Making school lunches in the canteen
- Mentoring young people finding learning at school difficult
- Caring for homeless animals
- Walking animals
- Delivering meals to the elderly
- Assisting with community events
- Community Transport
- Community Managed Facilities

Council Managed Volunteer Programs

Council has over 70 volunteers that regularly volunteer across the organisation, each of whom plays a key role in delivering services and programs every day. An estimated 1000 volunteers assist with the delivery of the Energy Breakthrough event which occurs annually in November.

Without volunteers, the delivery of these services and programs would not be possible.

Council's volunteer duties include:

Aged and Community Care: Our volunteers are critical to the delivery of our Meals on Wheels service and are also involved in our valuable Social Support team who take clients on regular outings in the region.

Central Goldfields Art Gallery: Front of house and administration duties, events, and education programs.

Community Bus Driver: Transporting residents to shopping centres and local market.

Community Asset Committees: Directly manage daily operational activities at nominated halls and recreation reserves on behalf of Central Goldfields Shire Council.

Energy Breakthrough: An impressive 1,000 volunteers who provide set up and pack up, judging, marshalling, stage support, media, and administration support to this hallmark event.

Goldfields Family Centre: Assisting with experiences and excursions and community visits.

Library: Book deliveries to households once a month for those who have an ongoing or temporary inability to visit the Maryborough Regional Library.

Pound: Dog walking, general care, and companionship of animals during their stay.

TAC L2P program: Helping learner drivers gain their 120 hours of driving to undertake their probationary driving test.

Visitor Information Centre: Distributing visitor information and directing visitors to points of interest and conducting short visitor surveys. Volunteers also provide lunch time cover for staff.

Youth: Delivery of the Engage! Youth Program, Victorian Youth Week events, Teenage Holiday Program and FReeZA events.





The Strategy

To best support the benefits of volunteering and to provide a safe, fun, encouraging and welcoming environment for volunteers, the following themes have been identified.

1

Promotion

Promote and inform the community about the benefits of volunteering.

2

Recruitment

Implement leading practice and high-quality standards.

3

Support & Retention

Ongoing commitment to volunteer participation, support, and development.

4

Engage, Celebrate & Recognise

Volunteers are appreciated, acknowledged, and celebrated.

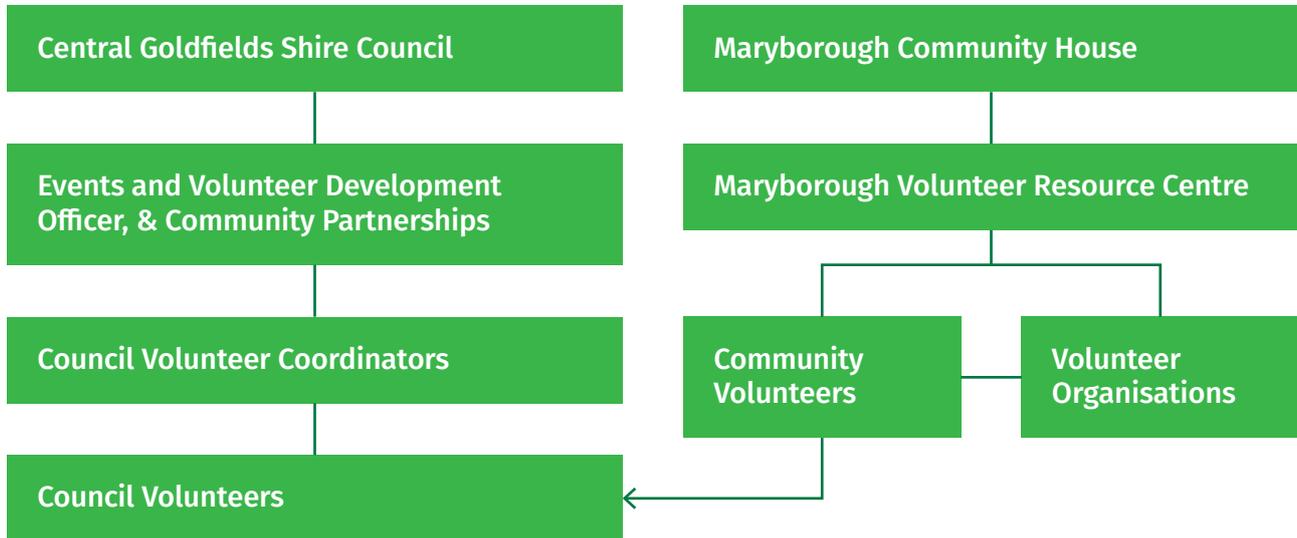
Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation of the Central Goldfields Volunteer Strategy and Action plan will be monitored and reviewed annually.

The internal Central Goldfields Shire Volunteer Coordinators together with the external Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre will be responsible for carrying out the actions of the strategy. The strategy will be updated and reported against annually by Council Officers. The attached Action Plan identifies a lead agency for each action. Where Council has been identified as the lead, they will be responsible for co-ordinating the planning and implementation of the action, as well as reporting on same. Some actions will be led by the Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre and in these instances, Council will only report on actions taken. The following evaluation method's will be undertaken to ensure the strategy achieves its target.

1. Annual reviews with internal Central Goldfields Volunteer Coordinators to review measurements, ensure timelines are being adhered to; and to adjust the process where necessary.
2. Ongoing attendance at the Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre meetings.
3. Annual report provided to Council outlining achievements and the status of implementation of actions.

Structure



Action Plan Definitions

Year 1: July 2021 – June 2022

Year 2: July 2022 – June 2023

Year 3: July 2023 – June 2024

Lead Agency: This column reflects either the Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre or Central Goldfields Shire Council as the responsible party for coordinating the planning and delivery of the action.

Partnership: The first party listed in this column is the officer or team responsible for coordinating the planning and delivery of the action.

CGSC: Central Goldfields Shire Council

MVRC: Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre

Key Strategic Direction 1: Promotion

Promote and inform on the benefits of volunteering.

Action	Lead	Partnership	Measurement	Year
1.1 Develop a campaign to promote volunteering opportunities and volunteer profiles in the community. Including print, radio, website, and social media.	MVRC	MVRC CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer	Development of a campaign	Year 1 / ongoing
1.2 Develop a Quick Reference Information Pack for council volunteers.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC –Volunteer Coordinators	Development of a Quick Reference Information Pack. Include WWCC and Police check requirements, what is required physically, the number of hours per week, times, days. How flexible it is	Year 1 / ongoing
1.3 Introduce a Business Mentor Program for L2P Program	L2P Coordinator	L2P Coordinator	Development of a Business Mentor Program for L2P Program.	Year 1 / ongoing
1.4 To promote and raise awareness of volunteering within council	CGSC	CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Monthly updates on Workplace for Facebook	Year 1 / ongoing
1.5 Actively promote the benefits of volunteering in educational settings such as career expos; secondary schools; community services;	MVRC	MVRC CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Attend a minimum of two events per year	Year 2 / ongoing
1.6 Promote and support volunteer opportunities for young people to volunteer in the community to develop their skills and provide assistance to individuals, groups and initiatives.	CGSC	CGSC – Youth Engage Officer	Provide young people with volunteer resources as required	Year 2 / ongoing
1.7 Hold an open day and invite community members to come and find out more about volunteering	MVRC	MVRC CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Deliver an open day twice a year	Year 2 / ongoing

Key Strategic Direction 2: Recruitment

Implement leading practice and high-quality standards.

Action	Lead	Partnership	Measurement	Year
2.1 Develop a council volunteer policy and procedures manual.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Council adoption of a Volunteer Policy and a Volunteer Procedures Manual	Year 1
2.2 Develop a Volunteer Registration Form (online and hard copy) for council volunteers that can be used as a template for external organisations.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Development of a Volunteer Registration Form that is easily accessible for CGSC Volunteer Coordinators and customer service	Year 1
2.3 Create a centralised system for the registration of Council volunteers	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators CGSC – People and Culture	All current volunteers registered on a central system. New volunteers added on sign up.	Year 1
2.4 Develop in partnership a Shire wide database of volunteers and their skills sets along with volunteering opportunities available through external agencies	MVRC	MVRC	Development of an online portal	Year 1
2.5 Update Council Volunteer Position Descriptions	CGSC	CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Position descriptions completed for all volunteer positions with council.	Year 2
2.6 Review and simplify the council volunteer recruitment processes and consider checklists and templates.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Clear guidelines for recruitment of CGSC Volunteers and distributed to CGSC Volunteer Coordinators	Year 2
2.7 Review and update the council Volunteer Induction Process.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Updated Induction Process/ Kit distributed to CGSC Volunteer Coordinators. Including mandatory training in OHS, Code of Conduct and COVID Safe Practices and opportunities for people with a disability.	Year 2
2.8 Explore professional development opportunities for volunteers including links with council and volunteer sector training programs.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – People and Culture	Identify Volunteer Coordinator and Volunteer specific training needs and assist to deliver	Year 3

Key Strategic Direction 3: Support and Retention

Ongoing commitment to volunteer participation, support, and development.

Action	Lead	Partnership	Measurement	Year
3.1 Support the Maryborough Volunteer Resource Centre to strengthen volunteering with the municipality	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Attend MVRC meetings.	Year 1 / ongoing
3.2 Support Internal Volunteer Coordinators to strengthen volunteering within council	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Conduct a minimum of 3 meetings per year to discuss actions of the strategy and concerns / issues that may arise.	Year 1 / ongoing
3.3 Recognise and measure volunteer services as income at fair value as per the Australian Accounting Standards.	CGSC	CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators CGSC – Finance Manager	Annual report for Council's Special Purpose Financial Statements	Year 1 / ongoing
3.4 As identified in the Recreation and Open Space Strategy; Develop and implement volunteer support initiatives	CGSC	CGSC – Recreation Officer	Enable links to Sports Focus and other local training providers to ensure local or online training and development opportunities are available and promoted locally.	Year 1 / ongoing
3.5 Develop an exit survey for council volunteers that can be used as a template for external organisations.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Development of a survey for volunteers who leave the organisation.	Year 2 / ongoing
3.6 Introduce a platform for CGSC Volunteer Coordinators and volunteers to communicate and share information.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Internal Volunteer Coordinators	Development of a communication platform.	Year 2 / ongoing
3.7 As identified in the Central Goldfields Shire Integrated Transport Strategy; Engage all community transport providers (including courtesy bus providers) to increase the pool of volunteer drivers and share resources to increase service levels	CGSC	CGSC – Community Wellbeing Team CGSC – Community Engagement & Communications Team, CGSC community transport providers, other community transport providers	Appointment of a Council community planner to be responsible for partnerships with external community transport providers	Year 2

Action	Lead	Partnership	Measurement	Year
3.8 Equip volunteers with resources and training to enhance skills in preparation for the volunteering experience.	MVRC	MVRC Registered Training Organisations.	Identify appropriate training opportunities. Develop a “Get Ready to Volunteer” information session, to prepare people to volunteer.	Year 3
3.9 Ensure actions in the Positive Ageing Strategy are addressed.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer	Volunteer actions from the Positive Ageing Strategy completed	Year 3
3.10 Ensure actions in the Disability Action Plan are addressed.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer	Volunteer actions from Disability Action Plan completed	Year 3

Key Strategic Direction 4: Engagement, Celebrate and Recognise

Volunteers are appreciated, acknowledged, and celebrated.

Action	Lead	Partnership	Measurement	Year
4.1 Develop a policy to recognise council volunteer milestones.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Volunteer Coordinators	Development of a Volunteer Policy	Year 1
4.2 Council will advocate for recognition of the municipality's volunteers by profiling local volunteers in the media	CGSC	CGSC – Volunteer Coordinators CGSC – Community Engagement	Quarterly – 4 media releases per year to celebrate and recognise volunteers. Time one release around volunteer week	Year 1 / ongoing
4.3 Acknowledge the birthdays of council's volunteers.	CGSC	CGSC – Volunteer Coordinators	Identify a consistent way for CGSC Volunteer Coordinators to acknowledge a volunteer's birthday.	Year 1 / ongoing
4.4 Introduce an annual volunteer presentation event to recognise council volunteer milestones.	CGSC	CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer CGSC – Volunteer Coordinators CGSC – People and Culture	One event per year	Year 2 – annually
4.5 Acknowledge all volunteers during key national celebratory days.	MVRC	MVRC CGSC – Events and Volunteer Development Officer	Develop a plan to recognise volunteers during the key national days.	Year 2 / ongoing

