

Case study: Leading change towards inclusive practice

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)

Located in metropolitan Melbourne, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) delivers programs to support and empower people seeking asylum to maximise their physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Proudly supported by a community of committed volunteers, the ASRC was officially recognised as an 'Inclusive Volunteering Workplace' at the 2024 Inclusive Volunteering Awards.



How does the ASRC reduce barriers for volunteers?

The ASRC offers flexible volunteering opportunities, including remote positions and varied time commitments. Volunteer roles are diverse and can be matched to an individual's interests, skills, and life experience.

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To ensure volunteers feel confident in their roles, the ASRC provides comprehensive training and support. All volunteer positions have clear position descriptions, allowing volunteers to understand their responsibilities before accepting a role. Furthermore, duties can be reasonably modified to accommodate individual needs.

Support and resources are available to volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including job-readiness coaching for those with no Australian work experience or who have been out of the workforce for an extended period. Upon joining the ASRC, volunteers are offered pronoun and ally badges as a visible sign of support for the LGBTQI+ community. Financial barriers are also addressed by reimbursing reasonable out-of-pocket expenses associated with volunteering.

How does the ASRC include volunteers with diverse lived experiences?

The volunteer program at the ASRC reflects the diversity of the communities it serves, creating opportunities that align with the skills and interests of a broad volunteer base. The organisation actively recruits volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, modifying roles and tailoring responsibilities to enable participation from people of all abilities. Diversity is also celebrated through volunteer recognition programs and cultural competency initiatives.

What has the ASRC changed to ensure inclusivity?

The ASRC conducts regular volunteer briefings to identify areas for improvement in inclusivity. Additionally, a disability access audit was undertaken, leading to necessary adjustments to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. Multilingual volunteers are prioritised to meet the diverse language needs of ASRC's members and clients, and to increase the availability of translated resources and information materials. The ASRC has also implemented a diversity and inclusion policy for all staff and volunteers.

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The ASRC has embedded inclusivity into its strategic plan and volunteer recruitment strategy, underpinned by a comprehensive volunteer policy that outlines a strong commitment to inclusion. Budget resources are allocated for ongoing training and support for staff who manage volunteers. All volunteers receive equal opportunity and anti-discrimination training, and the ASRC has implemented a clear process for reporting and addressing any discrimination or harassment concerns.

A lived experience advisory group, consisting of staff from diverse backgrounds, guides senior decision-making to ensure inclusivity. The ASRC fosters a culture of continuous improvement, regularly reviewing practices and seeking feedback from volunteers. Partnerships with other organisations further enable the ASRC to share and adopt best practices in inclusive volunteering.

How is the leadership team at ASRC actioning inclusive volunteering?

The senior management team at the ASRC is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion for staff and volunteers. In practice, this is executed by allocating a staff member to oversee volunteer engagement and inclusion initiatives, ensuring these priorities remain central to the organisation. Volunteers are also actively included in strategic discussions about the ASRC's future.

The ASRC has a strategic goal for 40% of its workforce to have lived experience. All roles state a preference for candidates with lived experience, reinforcing their commitment to meaningful representation and inclusion.

How are volunteers involved in decision-making?

The ASRC has a Volunteer Engagement Team that provides feedback on volunteer programs and policies. Additionally, volunteers are encouraged to participate in surveys and briefing

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sessions to share their insights and ideas. They are also assigned to projects where they can apply their skills and expertise to influence decision-making.

The ASRC conducts monthly volunteer briefings, providing an opportunity for volunteers to engage with senior management, including the CEO. These briefings are scheduled across different days of the week so volunteers can attend on their preferred day, with one session per month held online to connect remote volunteers. These sessions allow volunteers to ask questions, provide feedback on programs, and raise any concerns directly with senior leadership.

What are the shared learning opportunities?

The ASRC has a core belief that inclusive volunteering strengthens the organisation and enhances its ability to serve the community. The team regularly presents at conferences and workshops to share experiences and best practices in inclusive volunteering. The organisation welcomes opportunities to collaborate with other like-minded groups to further develop and promote best practices in inclusive volunteering.

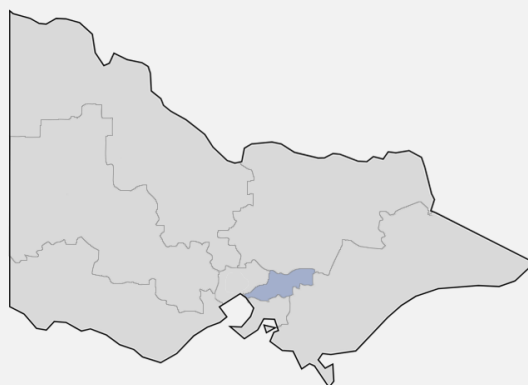
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Author: EV Strengthening Communities

Consortium region: Eastern Metro

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<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



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Volunteering Victoria acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.