

MEDIA RELEASE

Publication date: Tuesday 4 May 2021

Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect partnership strengthened by MOU

Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect are pleased to strengthen their partnership with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The MOU formalises the cooperation between Justice Connect and Volunteering Australia and will enhance their ability to support the volunteering sector and advocate for volunteers.

Volunteering Australia CEO Mark Pearce said it was an important time to formalise the relationship between the two organisations. “The laws surrounding volunteers and volunteer involving organisations are complex to navigate and the COVID-19 Pandemic has added even more complexity. With Justice Connect’s expertise we’ve been able to work together to highlight the pandemic insurance gap for volunteers and ensure volunteers undertaking essential frontline work are included in the early stages (Phase 1b) of the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out.”

Justice Connect’s CEO Chris Povey agreed and added “Working closely with Volunteering Australia lets us test resources, hear the concerns and hot issues for volunteer involving groups and integrate the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement into our resources and training. Importantly, Volunteering Australia helps get the word out that we can offer free help to groups no matter where they are in Australia.”

Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect have worked together campaigning for stronger, nationally consistent protections for volunteers and unpaid workers facing sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Australian Human Rights Commission incorporated the key recommendation from a Volunteering Australia and Justice Connect submission into its Respect@work Report. The joint Submission highlighted the inadequacy of the current legal framework to prevent and address sexual harassment against volunteers and other unpaid workers.

Chris Povey, Justice Connect’s CEO, said “We’re thrilled to see the government confirm in their Roadmap for Respect that everyone has a right to be safe at work. When it comes to implementation, we urge the government to make sure volunteers and other unpaid workers are not forgotten as part of that ‘everyone’ – and that volunteer involving organisations that have no employees are not forgotten as ‘workplaces’.”

“This roadmap is an opportunity for inclusion: to truly simplify the law and make it clear that every worker, paid or unpaid, has a right to be safe from sexual harassment. To start, we should drop the language of ‘employer’ and talk about all workplaces.”

Justice Connect and Volunteering Australia will continue their efforts to ensure that volunteers and other unpaid workers across Australia are protected from sexual harassment – and that volunteer involving organisations have a positive duty to prevent, identify and respond to sexual harassment.

Justice Connect has a suite of resources available focused on volunteering. A key resource is the National Volunteer Guide created in consultation with Volunteering Australia, for use by volunteer involving organisations across Australia. The Guide provides an overview of the key legal obligations organisations owe volunteers and practical examples, template documents and tips to assist in their understanding. It also steps out the corresponding Standard as stated in the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement. Justice Connect and Volunteering Australia

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have also worked together on the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Program for Professional Leaders of Volunteers, ensuring that Justice Connect webinars and training can accrue CPD points.

“This commitment to strengthen our collaboration with Justice Connect will increase the support we can both provide to the volunteering and community sectors through sharing information and expertise, working together on advocacy and building the capacity of volunteers and community groups,” Mr Pearce said.

ENDS

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About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. Volunteering Australia’s vision is to promote strong, connected communities through volunteering. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia.

About Justice Connect

Justice Connect is a legal services organisation and charity that designs and delivers high impact interventions to increase access to legal support and progress social justice.

Not-for-profit Law (NFP Law) is a national, specialised legal program by Justice Connect. It provides free and low-cost legal assistance to not-for-profit community organisations across Australia, runs a certified social enterprise and advocates for better laws and regulation on behalf of the Australian community sector.