

Welcome to WHS: WHS and Volunteer organisations - transcript

Everyone deserves a healthy and safe workplace, including those who choose to support their community through volunteering. Volunteers play a vital role in communities across Australia and make significant contributions by carrying out work for a variety of organisations. Let's look at how the Work Health and Safety Act applies to volunteer organisation and how everyone can meet their health and safety duties.

Part 1: When does the WHS Act apply to volunteer organisations?

Volunteers are people who work for an organisation without payment or financial reward.

The key questions to ask is whether the volunteer organisation employs at least one person for paid work. If that is the case, the volunteer organisation is considered to be a person conducting a business or undertaking or PCBU.

This means that the organisation has WHS duties.

A volunteer organisation that is a PCBU must provide the same health and safety protections to its volunteers as it does to its paid workers. A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all of its workers, including volunteers.

Those volunteers may have worker duties under the WHS laws.

To learn more about the roles and duties of PCBUs, officers and their due diligence duties as well as workers duties, we have a video in this series called "What Is A PCBU?" [What is a PCBU? - YouTube](#)

If you want to learn more about what reasonably practicable is and how it's defined, there's also a video on this topic. [What is the meaning of 'reasonably practicable'? - YouTube](#)

Voluntary organisations without paid workers have no duties under the WHS Act. However, common law recognises that volunteers are owed a general duty of care by fellow volunteers and the organisations they support. So it's a good idea for volunteer organisations to follow work, health and safety principles, regardless of the organisation's status.

And, don't forget, volunteers also have a role to play in keeping everyone healthy and safe during activities.

Part 2: Summary

In summary, the WHS Act only applies to volunteer organisations that employ one or more paid workers to carry out work on their behalf.

If the volunteer organisation pays workers, it is a PCBU, and owes health and safety duties to all its workers and volunteers.

For more information on work health and safety visit the DMIRS website, at www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/whs

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Workplace health and safety is everybody's business and we all have a role to play in keeping our workplaces healthy and safe.