

How to part ways with a volunteer

March 2017

Why Dismiss a Volunteer?

Ending a volunteer's service with an organisation can be a hard process for both the Manager of Volunteers and the volunteer. Despite the best of intentions sometimes the volunteer may not be a good match for your organisation. This could be because:

- a) Your organisational priorities and objectives have changed
- b) You have created new and different volunteer positions
- c) The volunteer fails to meet a standard of behaviour
- d) The volunteer lacks, or has failed to gain, the skills needed in the position
- e) The volunteer has consistently breached safety and/or confidentiality protocols
- f) The volunteer breaks a law that makes their continued service unworkable

Before parting ways with your volunteer try to resolve any issues. Visit Volunteering Tasmania's [Conflict Resolution](#) Tip Sheet for guidance on managing conflict.

A Fair Process for Volunteers and the Organisation

When dismissing a volunteer, it is important that you make the process as fair as possible. Make sure the volunteer is treated lawfully and with respect. This will help protect you and your organisation. It will also help give the volunteer a feeling of dignity in this difficult time.

Tips for Having a Difficult Conversation

Telling a volunteer you don't need their services anymore is a hard conversation to have. It can be upsetting for both the volunteer and the Manager of Volunteers – both parties need support. The key to handling this kind of situation is to follow a structured, documented process that is transparent and fair.

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Once you have decided to end the volunteer's service, schedule a meeting as soon as possible with your volunteer. You can make the meeting as smooth as possible by:

- a) Holding the meeting a time chosen by the volunteer
- b) Letting the volunteer know they can bring a support person with them
- c) Holding the meeting in a private place
- d) Having a second, independent person with you – you can ask them to take notes in case there are further disputes
- e) Be specific about why you don't need the volunteer's services anymore. You may want to refer to their position description or performance agreement as needed
- f) Avoid negotiating and focus on informing the volunteer that their services are not needed at this time
- g) Give the volunteer an opportunity to provide feedback
- h) Collect any keys, name tags and other resources from the volunteer