

Providing safe workplaces and practices is vital for any organisation, including not-for-profit organisations and volunteer associations. Understanding your organisation's legal obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (the WHS Act)* can help ensure the safety of all volunteers and workers.

WHS for Queensland not-for-profit organisations

Not-for-profit organisations that employ workers are considered a 'Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking' (PCBU) under the WHS Act. As a PCBU, they have a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of their workers and others affected by their operations, as far as is reasonably practicable.

Volunteer associations

For the purposes of the WHS Act, a volunteer association is a group of volunteers working together for one or more community purposes, with no employees. These associations are not regarded as a PCBU under the WHS Act. However, if the association employs a person to carry out work, the WHS Act will apply to the organisation.

If your organisation employs even a single individual, it's considered a PCBU under the WHS Act. Remember: ALL volunteers are then regarded as workers. This means they're entitled to the same protections and rights as employees. Being a PCBU carries responsibilities - ensure you're familiar with them and provide a safe environment for everyone involved!

Volunteers

Volunteers are individuals who undertake work for an organisation without being paid a wage or salary. Under the WHS Act, volunteers are considered workers if they carry out work in any capacity for a PCBU. They are required to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and not to create risks to others.

Volunteer officers

Volunteer officers, that is, the members of the management committee, cannot be prosecuted for failing to comply with their 'officer duties' under the WHS Act. However, they can be prosecuted in their capacity as a worker if they fail to meet their duties as a worker. Essentially, management committee members are obliged to uphold the general standards and responsibilities of any worker within the organisation. This includes adhering to safety procedures, making sure workers are appropriately inducted and trained, reporting hazards and ensuring that workers don't compromise the safety of themselves or others.

Best practices for volunteers

While the WHS Act specifically applies to PCBUs, including volunteer organisations with paid employees, all volunteers should adhere to the principles of good workplace health and safety. Here are some best practices for volunteers, especially those in leadership or instructional positions, in sports organisations in Queensland:

- **Be aware of the potential risks and hazards** in your environment. This includes understanding the specific risks associated with the sport, as well as supporting activities such as mowing, line marking or building maintenance
- **Adhere to all safety procedures and protocols** set by the organisation. This includes using equipment correctly, following guidelines for safe conduct and adhering to any specific safety rules for the sport or activity
- If you identify a potential hazard or risk, **report it** to the appropriate person in the organisation immediately
- Ensure there is access to **first aid equipment** and that there is someone available who is trained in first aid
- **Participate in training and education** regarding health and safety. This will help you stay updated on best practices and understand your responsibilities
- **Understand the organisation's emergency procedures.** This includes knowing evacuation routes and procedures and understanding what to do in the event of an incident

Safety is everyone's responsibility. By following these best practices, you can help create a safe environment for everyone involved in your organisation.

Best practice for volunteer insurance

- **Ensure all volunteers have proper insurance coverage**, such as by admitting them to a designated membership category that provides comprehensive protection
- **Keep clear records** of when volunteers are working and the specific tasks they handle to ensure roles are within the scope of insurance coverage
- **Volunteers should complete an induction program** and participate in ongoing training and education regarding health and safety, child protection and any relevant policies
- **Highlight the importance of volunteers** familiarising themselves with and adhering to organisation policies, especially in sensitive areas like child protection. Conduct periodic checks to ensure volunteers are following all organisation policies, using feedback sessions or anonymous surveys as tools for both compliance and improvement