

## Know Your Volunteers

Best Practice requires Rotary Clubs, District Committees and District itself to be satisfied that the volunteers who assist us with our endeavours – whether Rotarians, family members, friends or community members – be properly assessed as to their suitability to participate as volunteers.

In particular you need to assess volunteers involved in activities where people under the age of 18 will be involved as participants or as the users of our services or as receivers of our programmes.

### **Why?**

The short answer is that community expectations have changed. The communities in which we live and of which we are part expect that our volunteers involved in Youth Activities have been assessed by us and effectively carry our endorsement.

If you drop off your child or your grandchild at a school, a pre-school or a child-minding centre you expect that the people who will be looking after your child:

- a. Are fully known to and identified by the organisation for which they are carrying on work;
- b. Have a Working With Children Check;
- c. Have been referenced checked.

There is no logical reason why the same expectations should not apply to volunteers.

The long answer is found in the interaction between those expectations, the law, insurance and the rules of Rotary International. In particular:

1. The Working with Children Act imposes obligations on people who have direct contact with children, and the organisations that engage them.
2. The Child Safe standards under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act require us to *'develop screening, supervision, training and other human resources practises that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel'*.
3. The insurance that has been designed to protect us and those we interact with require that we comply with guidelines imposed by Rotary International or District for the continuation of cover.
4. Rotary International guidelines impose the standards we ask you to adopt for those who deal with exchange students. There is no logical reason why non-exchange students should not be given the same degree of protection.

### **How?**

Rotary International and the National Insurance Committee here in Australia (which has a form of delegated authority from each District in Australia) have developed a form which is intended to capture all of the information required.

That form – called the Form 3 – has been recently updated and is attached.

It is expected that each Club and each District Committee will move methodically (and fairly quickly) to have each relevant volunteer complete and provide a Form 3, and that the referees be checked and notes be taken of the response of the referees.

Copies of the documents should be maintained by the Club or the District Committee, and a copy provided to [governance@rotarydistrict9800.org.au](mailto:governance@rotarydistrict9800.org.au), as it is a requirement that District maintain a copy of these documents as well.

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## **The Guide**

You have been asked to complete a Rotary Youth Volunteer Information and Declaration Form (Form 3) so that you can participate in youth activities conducted by Rotary Districts and Rotary Clubs in Victoria.

The Form has been around for a long time, and until now has been mandatory for some youth programs, but not others.

As a result of changes in state laws, the requirements of our insurers (whose policies are also intended to protect you) and our desire to insure that children who participate in our activities are as safe as they possibly can be.

A Working with Children Check may establish your eligibility to be involved in such a program as a volunteer, the Form 3 is to help us determine your suitability. The expectation is that every volunteer, Rotarian, family member or friend involved in a Youth Program will have completed the Form 3 and been reference checked.

This guide is intended to assist you as the volunteer, and also people dealing with the information.

The following may assist you:

Why is it called a Form 3?

We don't actually know, but it's been a Form 3 for a long time. It's based on a document modelled in the United States that originally started as an Appendix C titled Rotary Youth Volunteer Application and we think it's just stuck.

What will we do with it?

The original of the document will be kept by the Rotary program for which you initially volunteer. If that's a Rotary Club, it will be used should you volunteer for any of the other youth activities of that club. If provided to a Rotary District it will be used for any other District projects for which you might apply.

A copy of the Form 3 will be provided to District to keep securely.

If you were to volunteer for other youth programs conducted by other clubs or other districts, it will be possible for you to ask us to forward your Form 3 to that organisation, which they could either accept or reject. They may simply ask you to do it again.

How long does it last?

It lasts for a period of five years, but ceases to be valid in circumstances where your Working with Children Check lapses, so it's important that any Working with Children Check that you have remains current.

What's youth?

In Victoria the law distinguishes between children and adults.

An adult is a person who is 18 years of age or older. A child is a person who has not yet obtained the age of 18 years, and clearly includes infants, children and youth.

It's also important that you notify the Working with Children Registry that you are volunteering for us, because we will then be kept advised of any change in your Working with Children Check status. Our legal name will be provided to you.

## **Filling out the Form**

### **Personal details**

We need to know who you are and how we contact you. Most volunteers would provide at least two telephone numbers.

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### **Past involvement with youth**

What have you done with children before? It might be as a parent with school activities or scouting or guides. Most people don't spontaneously decide that it's time to become involved with working with children and in part it just helps us to know a little bit more about you and how you might assist us.

### **Referees**

The Rotarian who deals with your Form 3 once submitted will contact each of the referees by phone or in person and will ask them questions along the following lines:

- a. How long have you known this individual?
- b. In what capacity did you know them?
- c. Do you think it's reasonable and appropriate that this person work with youth?
- d. Would you have any reservations about this person assisting in a Rotary Youth Program?

We've asked a little more in the questions than we've put to you because in part we need to determine whether the referees are the right persons to provide the assistance.

And you will see that we don't want family members, and we don't want more than one Rotarian. It's an attempt to get a broader view of who you are.

And remember, we ask you to call them first.

### **Working with Children Check and related matters**

At an absolute bare minimum you need to have a Working with Children Check.

But we also need just that extra level of assurance, hence the questions that we put to you.