

Information for Prospective Out & About Volunteers



Community Visitors Scheme



Switchboard (Victoria) Incorporated
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Switchboard

Since 1991, Switchboard Victoria has provided peer based telephone counselling service to Victoria & Tasmania's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community. This service was founded, run & staffed by volunteers.

Twenty-six years on, Switchboard remains a volunteer organisation providing a range of services for the LGBTI communities, the family and friends of LGBTI individuals as well as health and welfare professionals with LGBTI clients.

Out & About

Out & About is part of the national Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) program, funded by the Federal Government. The program provides companionship to socially or culturally isolated people living in Government-subsidised aged care homes or receiving a home care package in their own home. The service is provided by several community organisations or 'auspices', each receiving government funding.

In 2014 Switchboard Victoria secured funding to provide an LGBTI specific CVS program. Switchboard is the only program in Victoria which provides CVS visitors specifically for LGBTI people. Throughout Australia, similar LGBTI programs are provided by ACON (NSW), QuAC (QLD) and Umbrella (WA).

Why LGBTI?

LGBTI people are one of nine special needs groups identified by the federal government¹. They are considered special needs due to historic and ongoing discrimination, poorer health and wellbeing outcomes, and invisibility within the aged care system.

Stigma and Discrimination

Many older LGBTI Australians have lived through a time in the nation's history when they suffered stigma, discrimination, criminalisation, family rejection and social isolation. As a consequence of these negative views, many went to extraordinary lengths to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity to feel safe.

The ongoing impact of this discrimination includes²:

- not feeling safe disclosing their sexuality or gender identity
- current discrimination becomes a reminder of historical discrimination
- learning to be assertive to prevent discrimination
- feeling the need to straighten up or risk experiencing discrimination or a diminished standard of care

Poorer health, wellbeing

¹ *Aged Care Act 1997* s 11-3

² Barrett, C (2008). *My people: A project exploring the experiences of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex seniors in aged-care services*. Matrix Guild Victoria Incorporated.

A comparison of older LGB & heterosexual people in the UK³ found that LGB people were; more likely to be single, more likely to live alone, less likely to have children, and less likely to see biological family than their heterosexual peers. LGB people also drink alcohol more often, were more likely to take drugs and more likely to have a history of mental ill health or concerns about future mental health. This combination of increased isolation & more health risk factors means that older LGBTI people are very likely to need access to aged care services.

Invisibility

A study of attitudes and current practices of retirement accommodation organisations found that 86% of facilities were unaware of any LGBTI residents⁴. When you consider that the LGBTI population make up 11% of the Australian population⁵, and aged care providers frequently have over 50 residential beds, it's not plausible that so many providers would not have any LGBTI residents.

In the same study, 28% of providers believe their facility promotes a welcoming and accepting atmosphere for LGBTI people, however only 5% said they used any means to indicate an inclusive environment to their residents. This means that older LGBTI people may choose to remain invisible because they are unaware they would be accepted, and do not wish to risk discrimination.

Further information on this can be found here:

Further Research: <http://valsigbti.org.au/index.php/resources/resource-articles/research>

Videos of older LGBTI people's experiences: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyuAJPYk4w>

Who is out there?

The National LGBTI Health Alliance states "The estimated number of older LGBTI Australians over the age of 65 is expected to rise to approximately 500,000 people by the year 2051."⁶ However, it is currently unknown how many LGBTI people are accessing Aged care in Victoria. This is because many people choose not to come out to their aged care provider.

³ Guasp, A. (2010). *Lesbian, gay & bisexual people in later life*. Stonewall.

⁴ GRAI (GLBTI Retirement Association Inc) and Curtin Health Innovation Research Institute, Curtin University. 2010. *We Don't Have Any of Those People Here: Retirement accommodation and aged care issues for non-heterosexual populations*. Perth, Western Australia.

⁵ Department of Health, Australian Government, National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Ageing and Aged Care Strategy (2012), p 4.

⁶ National LGBTI Health Alliance. *LGBTI Health 2013: people, profiles and perspectives* (2013), p4. Retrieved from . <http://www.lgbtihealth.org.au/sites/default/files/LGBTIHealthUpdate-OCTOBER2013f.pdf>



What a visit might look like?

Your visits are what you make them. The primary aim is to build community connections and reduce isolation through social activities that are mutually enjoyable. You might like to sit and chat about current affairs, walk to the local café, watch a movie together, tell each other stories from your life, or participate in a hobby, game or other activity.

Volunteer visitors are there for social activities only and should not engage in any other care activities such as shopping, cleaning or personal care. If the visit recipient needs additional assistance, they should speak to their aged care provider.

Benefits of volunteering

Some of the benefits of volunteering are:

- Developing friendships with older people
- Giving back to and supporting LGBTI community
- Enhancing a person's quality of life
- Gaining experience working with older people & aged care services
- Building connections with other volunteers
- Learning about LGBTI ageing through professional development & support sessions

Challenges of volunteering

Some of the challenges of volunteering are:

- Learning to communicate with someone who may have a different communication style
- Finding activities that are enjoyable for you both
- Managing boundaries – being able to say no when the visit recipient asks you to undertake activities that are outside your role
- Making time for regular visits

Limitations of the program

Due to the invisibility of LGBTI people in the aged care system, **requests for visitors have been slow**. At present Switchboard visit less than 20 people across Victoria. However, requests can come in at any time, and we are putting significant effort into promoting the service.

As such, **we may not be able to match you up with someone immediately**. We will keep your details for 12 months and contact you when we receive a visit request in your area. After 12 months, we'll check in to see if you are still available to volunteer with us. You may also be contacted from time to time about other volunteering opportunities, or with an update on the Out & About program.

Out & About's Funding and Obligations

Our federal funding requires us to meet several obligations. If these obligations are not met, we risk losing our funding and the program may cease to exist. Our main obligations are:

- To visit 65 older LGBTI people annually
- Provide a minimum of 20 visits per person annually
- Only visit people who are receiving a Home Care Package (coordinated package of in-home services), or living in government funded residential care.
- Police check all our staff and volunteers

As a volunteers with us, it's important that you help us meet these obligations



Applications

You will have received an application form with this information. Please answer each question honestly and with care. Your application will be assessed by the Out & About Coordinator and you may be invited to attend an interview.

Interview

Interviews are informal and aimed at getting to know your personality, interests, experience and suitability in order to match you up with someone who has requested a visitor. Interviews are an opportunity for you to ask questions and to determine whether Switchboard is the right organisation for you. Interviews can be conducted in person or over the phone.

In person interviews will occur in Melbourne CBD and more information will be provided should your application be accepted. Those located in regional areas can request an interview via Skype.

Matching Process

Volunteers are matched with visit recipients based on location, interests and preferences. Although we always attempt to match those with similar interests, we're often restricted by location. Therefore you may be matched up with someone with unlikely interests. Part of the fun is discovering something new you both enjoy!

Training

Training for Volunteer visitors comes in three parts

1. General online training
2. Specific LGBTI & Switchboard training
3. Ongoing professional development

Online Training

The online training takes approx. 1-1.5 hours and includes everything you need to know about the CVS, your responsibilities and some basic information on ageing, grief and loss, your safety and much more. You are able to log in and out of the training as often as you like, so you do not need to complete it all in one session.

LGBTI & Switchboard training

This will be approx. 1-1.5hrs of face-to-face training. It will be completed one-on-one or in small groups with the Out & About Coordinator. These sessions will be held evenings and weekends on a regular basis. This will usually take place in Melbourne CBD. Regional and rural volunteers can have this training in their area before their first visit.

On-going Professional Development

Switchboard provides ongoing professional development sessions for all our active volunteers. These usually take the form of group seminars on topics of interest. We may also hold group discussion sessions where volunteer visitors can get together to discuss their experiences with other volunteer visitors. These sessions are largely held in Melbourne CBD.

Police Check

All Volunteers will need to complete an online police check BEFORE commencing visits. Details will be emailed to you after you have been matched. You will need to provide 100 points of ID

First Meeting

Your first meeting with your visit recipient will be attended by the Out & About Coordinator at a time mutually convenient for all. You will have a chance to chat with the visit recipient & get to know them for approximately one hour. After this meeting, the Coordinator will confirm with you and the visit recipient that you are both willing to proceed with ongoing visits. Once confirmed, it is your responsibility to contact the visit recipient to arrange regular meetings

Monthly Reports

Each month, all active visitors will be sent a link to the monthly report. It should take approximately 5 minutes to complete the dates, and any other important information about your visits. **It is important that this is completed punctually & accurately each month as our continued funding relies on these reports.**



As a Switchboard volunteer, you have the right to expect certain things from the organisation – just as the organisation has the right to expect certain things from you. Many of these below expectations are based upon key principles we try to enact in everything we do at Switchboard: personal and professional integrity, respect, confidentiality and trust.

What you can expect from Switchboard as a volunteer:

- To be valued as a team member.
- A full induction, orientation and any training necessary for your volunteer role
- Respect for your privacy, including keeping your private information confidential
- Support when reconsidering your contribution to the organisation (e.g. changing roles);
- Insurance to cover you for the volunteer duties you are authorised to perform.
- A safe environment in which to perform your role
- Clear and accessible mechanisms for the lodging of grievances and complaints;

What Switchboard expects from you as a volunteer:

- Support Switchboard's aim to connect and support the LGBTI communities, and abide by Switchboard values and policies.
- Respect the rights and confidentiality of all staff, volunteers and contractors of Switchboard Victoria
- Not participate in volunteer activities while under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs
- To undergo a National Police Check every three years.
- Comply with the law at all times.
- Be open and honest in your dealings with us and let us know if we can improve our volunteer program and the support that you receive.
- That you are familiar with and adhere to organisational policies and procedures.



Telephone counselling & QLife

In November 2011, Switchboard joined the five existing gay and lesbian telephone counselling services around Australia to form the national network now known as QLife. QLife operates from 3.00pm to 12 midnight, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Volunteer telephone counsellors are available by calling the national telephone number: 1800 184 527, and online counsellors and an email response service are available via the website: www qlife.org.au

If you would like more information on volunteering for our telephone counselling service, please contact Delsi at volunteering@switchboard.org.au

Switchboard Committee of Management

Switchboard is governed by a Committee of Management (CoM) elected by Switchboard's membership each year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The elected officers are:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Executive Member
- General Members

The CoM sets the strategic direction for Switchboard and takes responsibility for ensuring the organisation fulfils its legal, contractual, ethical and financial obligation.

CoM members are telephone counselling, Out & About and other volunteers who have been part of Switchboard for at least 12 months. New CoM members are elected by Switchboard volunteers at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) usually held in September or October.

Other Roles

There are many other ways to volunteer with Switchboard. Switchboard is always looking for ways to expand the service's activities and reach. Other ongoing roles include:

- Fundraising
- Events
- Research
- Policy development
- Administration
- Training and resource development
- Special projects

Once you have completed the training course you will receive regular communication from Switchboard staff detailing available opportunities. If you have any specific skills or experience in these areas, please let us know.

Switchboard Staff

Switchboard has four staff members who support our volunteers, evaluate switchboards profile & ensure switchboard's financial future.

- General Manager (full-time)
- Volunteer Coordinator, Counselling (part-time)
- Out & About Coordinator (part-time)
- Queer and Trans Indigenous and/or People of Colour Project Coordinator (part-time)

Switchboard also uses the services of an external Counselling Supervisor who is responsible for the delivery of a comprehensive group supervision program for volunteer telephone counsellors.



Volunteer role:	Out & About Volunteer Visitor
Purpose:	To provide friendship and social support to older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender people, or people with Intersex variations (LGBTI), throughout Victoria.
Supervision:	Out & About volunteers report to Switchboard's Out & About Coordinator, Ada Castle
Commitment:	At least 2 visits per calendar month for a period of at least 12 months (minimum of 20 visits annually). Visits can be of any length, and should take place at the visit recipient's home or at a public location agreed by both parties

Duties and responsibilities:

- Visit your designated visit recipient regularly, usually weekly or fortnightly.
- Provide the dates of your visits to the Out & About Coordinator each month.
- Ensure the visit recipient and yourself have mutually enjoyable visits.
- Respect the rights of the visit recipient including confidentiality, privacy and dignity.
- Immediately report any concerns to the Out & About Coordinator.
- To contribute towards Switchboard's aims of connecting and supporting the LGBTI communities, and foster a community that is inclusive of all people regardless of gender, sexuality, race, religion or ability.

Key Attributes Required:

- A commitment to building and sustaining a friendship with an older LGBTI person
- A demonstrated empathy, understanding and enjoyment of the company of older LGBTI people and/or people with disabilities.
- Strong communication skills including listening skills.
- Awareness and respect the recipient's beliefs, background and culture
- Demonstrated reliability and flexibility.
- Ability to work independently and travel to the visit recipient's home
- Ability to support people who may be sick or dying, while understanding the value of providing support.
- Willing to seek advice, as appropriate.

Appendix B: Volunteer Visitor Agreement

This document is not intended to be a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party.

1. You are a volunteer

- 1.1. The Out & About Visitor role with Switchboard is a volunteer position. This means that you perform all duties on a voluntary basis, of your own free will, and you will not receive payment for your work. You are not an employee of Switchboard and are not entitled to a salary or any other entitlements associated with employment. No employment relationship is intended now or at any time in the future

2. What you can expect when volunteering at Switchboard

- 2.1. A written position description so you understand your role and the tasks you are authorised to perform
- 2.2. A full induction, orientation and any training necessary for your volunteer role
- 2.3. A safe environment in which to perform your role
- 2.4. Respect for your privacy, including keeping your private information confidential
- 2.5. A supervisor, so that you have the opportunity to ask questions and get feedback (see para. 6 below)
- 2.6. Insurance to cover you for the volunteer duties you are authorised to perform.

3. As a Switchboard Volunteer you will (Organisation Level):

- 3.1. Support Switchboard's aim to connect and support the LGBTI communities, and abide by Switchboard values and policies.
- 3.2. Respect the rights and confidentiality of all staff, volunteers and contractors of Switchboard Victoria
- 3.3. Keep the identities of Switchboard's telephone and web based counselling volunteers STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.**
- 3.4. Not participate in volunteer activities while under the influence of alcohol or non-prescribed drugs
- 3.5. In the event of an emergency, follow procedures as outlined during training or as provided in the handbook.
- 3.6. To undergo a National Police Check every three years.
- 3.7. Transfer all intellectual property rights and interests (including copyright) in any ideas or materials I create relating to the provision of voluntary services at Switchboard to Switchboard. Switchboard may use these creations in any reasonable manner to aid in providing our services, or promoting our services.
- 3.8. Comply with the law at all times.
- 3.9. Be open and honest in your dealings with us and let us know if we can improve our volunteer program and the support that you receive.

4. As an Out & About Visitor you will (Program Level):

- 4.1. Visit a designated visit recipient at **least once a fortnight and for a minimum of 12 months**, for the purposes of friendship and companionship.
- 4.2. Respect the rights of the recipient including confidentiality, privacy and dignity.
- 4.3. Exercise a duty of care at all times - this means using common sense and exercising reasonable caution in any activities undertaken with the recipient.
- 4.4. If you use your vehicle to transport recipients, you will take responsibility for ensuring your comprehensive car insurance, vehicle registration and driver's licence are current and up to date. **You will provide evidence of this and seek approval from the Out & About Coordinator before transporting a recipient.**

5. Out & About Visitor I WILL NOT (Program Level):

- 5.1. Monitor standards, interfere with, or involve myself in the Home Care Package or Residential Aged Care Provider's services;
- 5.2. Advocate on behalf of the recipient eg. investigating or following up complaints;
- 5.3. Displace the roles and relationships of the visit recipient's friends, family or staff. This includes nursing or personal care which is the responsibility of the aged care provider.
- 5.4. Accept gifts valued over \$10, or become involved in their financial affairs;
- 5.5. Engage in a physical or sexual relationship with your visit recipient.
- 5.6. Visit other residents without the approval of the Out & About Coordinator.
- 5.7. Share information or photos about the LGBTI elder including on any social media platform, without their explicit permission.

6. Contact

Your contact person for the Out & About program is:

Ada Castle, Out & About Coordinator

Office: 03 9663 2474, Mobile: 0432 905 712, Email: outandabout@switchboard.org.au

Please contact Ada as soon as possible if:

- 6.1. you wish to withdraw or change the nature of your contribution (e.g. hours, role) to Out & About
- 6.2. You witness any hazard, accident or near miss related to your Out & About duties.
- 6.3. You are having any difficulties or need any support related to your Out & About role.

In signing this Agreement I agree to abide by the conditions outlined and understand that my role as an Out & About Visitor may be revoked if I am unable to meet these conditions.

Volunteer name _____ **Date** _____

Volunteer signature _____