

VOLUNTEERING & THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Volunteer drivers Johan and Kris - about to head off on another food rescue and delivery run (FareShare)

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted volunteerism in Victoria during 2020.

There was a sharp drop in volunteering rates in the early pandemic period of research (April - May 2020). The volunteering participation rate was cut in half (50.2% decline) and there was a net decline in volunteering hours of almost two thirds (64.1%).

At the same time, VIOs in the sector described a lot of adaptation and transition to new models of service delivery and engaging volunteers.

How has your volunteering changed in the last month (at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic)?

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“I’m more interested in increasing my volunteering for my local community and communities I care about.”

“With COVID-19 my previous contributions like catering, etc are considered to be too dangerous. I am not keen on remote volunteering without human contact.”

“My local sporting club is not currently operating which has ceased my volunteering opportunities, and ability/need to support others who are part of the community.”



Gershon delivering sandwiches, fritatas, compote and fruit to Golden Age Club members at St. Kilda, as he does every Tuesday (National Council of Jewish Women Victoria (NCJWA Vic))

How has the make-up of your volunteers changed (due to COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic)?

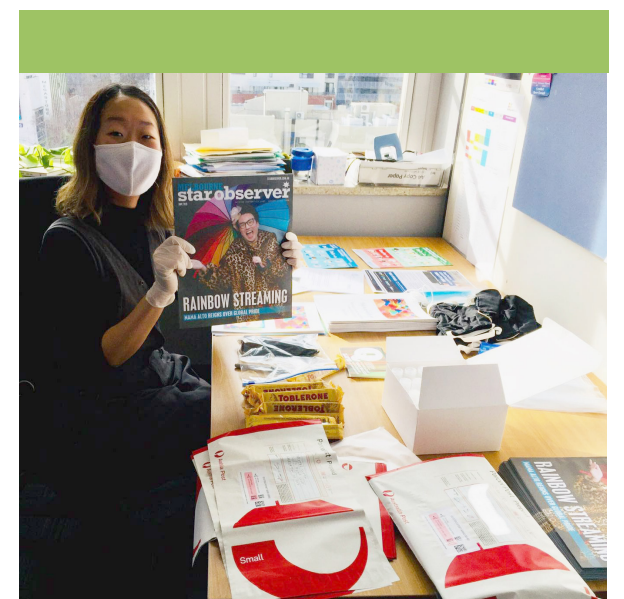
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“All corporate, school and community groups have stopped coming, most older individuals chose to self-isolate quite early on due to the risk factors, most middle aged volunteers had to look after their children or parents and were no longer able to volunteer.”

“More professionals volunteering since their work hours have been reduced.”

“We have gone from 300 volunteers to 5. Our volunteer transport is hugely impacted; therefore patients are needing to find alternate transport methods. We have not had university students as volunteers but now we have 2 university students & the other 3 are younger Ambassadors.”

“Older people not allowed to volunteer. Parents tied up with children home from school. I would say 90% of our usual cohort are unable to volunteer.”



Switchboard volunteer assembling care packages for LGBTQI seniors.