



Volunteer handbook

All you need to know to get started with Meals on Wheels



MEALS 
ON WHEELS
More than just a meal.

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1. Welcome

We are very pleased to welcome you to Meals on Wheels and hope that your time with us is positive and rewarding. The volunteer spirit drives our organisation and your contribution is highly valued. You are joining a team of almost 10,000 volunteers who enjoy helping their local community. Volunteers tend to stay with us for many years.

This handbook contains all you need to know to get started with Meals on Wheels. Please take the time to read it. And do not be afraid to ask questions!

Before commencing, volunteers are encouraged to attend an orientation session to become familiar with our procedures. Further practical training and support will be provided once you start at the branch.

You can find other useful material, including our regular newsletter, on our website, at www.mealsonwheelssa.org.au. We also produce a monthly E-newsletter for volunteers to keep you up to date with news so make sure you register your email address with us.

Your Staff Officer or Kitchen Supervisor in the branch where you will be working will be happy to discuss any queries you have as you go along. You can also contact the Volunteer Department of Meals on Wheels on 8271 8700 if you need further assistance. Country callers may use the toll free number 1800 854 453.

2. About Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels is a not-for-profit, community-based volunteer organisation working throughout South Australia. Since 1954, we have assisted many people in the community to live independently in their own homes by delivering meals on week-days. Clients may include older people in the community, frail, aged, younger people with a disability or those recovering from an illness or injury.

Around 10,000 volunteers deliver three-course meals to some 4,400 people – over a million meals a year. The majority of those who receive our meals are over 80 years of age.

Importantly, volunteers who deliver meals, also provide daily contact and a friendly face for many isolated people. Hence our slogan: *more than just a meal.*

Most of our meals are produced or prepared in our 39 kitchens located across Adelaide and in some country areas. The kitchens are staffed entirely by volunteers working as cooks, kitchen helpers, drivers, deliverers and branch officers. In the country, our meals may come from hospital kitchens. We also produce meals at our commercial kitchen at Kent Town, which is staffed by trained employees of Meals on Wheels.

Clients are usually directed to our service by a health professional, a family member or a neighbour. They can also refer themselves. The cost of meals to clients is great value and is debited direct from their bank account. This covers about 75% of our costs. The balance comes from Government grants and from donations and legacies.

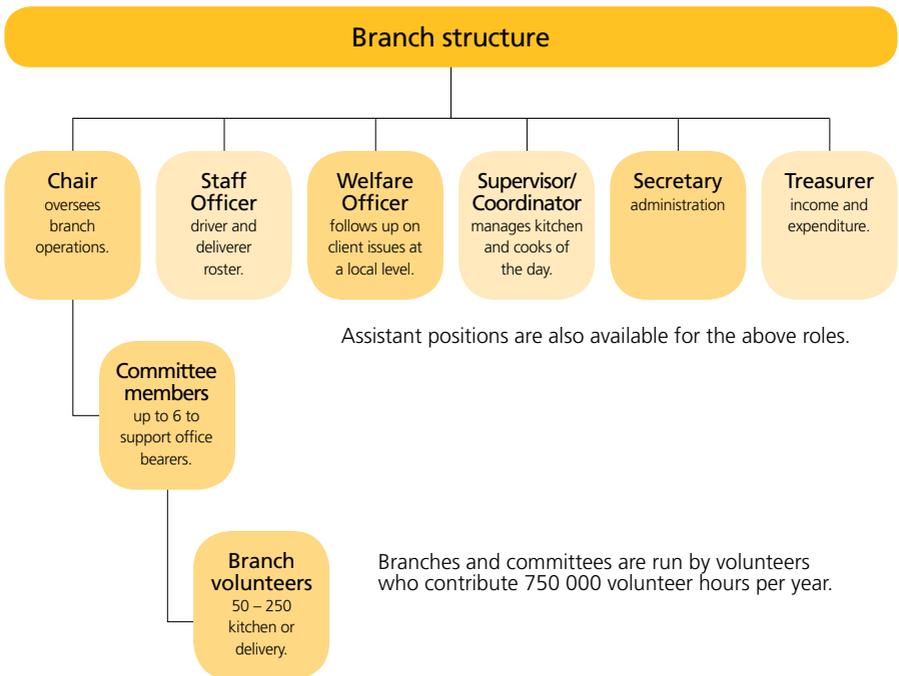
Meals on Wheels (SA) Inc. –Facts, Structure, Governance & Administration



There is no financial means test and clients are assessed on need – usually because they are unable to cook or shop for themselves. For confidentiality reasons, issues relating to a client’s health or situation are not revealed to the Meals on Wheels branch volunteers.

Meals on Wheels is governed by a voluntary board of 13 people from our branches and the broader community. We have branches all over South Australia. Branch committees are responsible for the overall operation of each branch.

A small group of paid staff at our Central Office on Greenhill Road provides administrative and policy support to our volunteers.



3. Purpose and values

Purpose

We're the people our clients count on for affordable, nutritious meals and friendly contact, so they can continue to live at home.

Values

- **Unity** – we have a valued team of volunteers and staff who care for our clients by working together
- **Development** – we're constantly looking for ways to improve and develop our services to meet our clients' current and future needs
- **Opportunities** – we give new and existing volunteers, office bearers and staff the means to develop new skills and reach their own personal goals
- **Cooperation** – we engage with other relevant agencies and service providers to fulfil our clients' needs
- **Responsibility** – we work to ensure we have the financial strength to sustain our purpose.

We act with integrity, fairness and honesty in all our dealings because we can never forget we're here to serve our community; it is to them we are accountable.

4. Your role as a volunteer

As a volunteer you may take on one or many of the following roles:

- cooks
- kitchen helpers
- drivers
- deliverers
- administration/branch officers.

Most volunteers offer their services on a regular basis. Meals on Wheels has its own kitchens in the metropolitan area and at some country locations, and uses meals prepared by local hospital kitchens in other country areas. From time to time volunteers can also enjoy a further opportunity to assist Meals on Wheels, by helping with promotional activities.

Volunteering with Meals on Wheels is a positive experience delivering:

- job satisfaction
- a positive and personal contribution to the community
- social interaction with new people
- the opportunity to mix with different age groups
- the chance to make new friends
- and simply, the chance of accomplishment.

5. What you can expect from Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels is committed to fair and supportive relationships with its volunteers.

As a volunteer you have the right to:

- work in a healthy and safe working environment
- be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation
- be adequately covered by insurance.

Meals on Wheels will provide:

- accurate information about the organisation
- an orientation and/or induction program
- training/support
- reimbursement of some out-of-pocket expenses where appropriate
- access to our Policy and Procedures Manual.

We deal with personal and confidential information in accordance with the National Privacy Principles under the *Privacy Act 1988*.

6. Recognition of service

Meals on Wheels SA values and wants to recognise the contributions made by volunteers. Each year volunteers are recognised through our Volunteer Service Awards Program and on other occasions held at your local branch, or at state level.

Your service history is calculated cumulatively from the time you commence. So if you have service breaks or need to transfer to another branch your previous service history will be continued when you resume service. Speak to your Staff Officer or contact the Volunteer Department if you have any queries about your service history.

7. What Meals on Wheels expects of you

We ask you to treat our clients with dignity and kindness and respect their rights and individuality. Specifically, your responsibility is to:

- be reliable and helpful
- carry out your specified duties
- be committed to the organisation
- undertake training as requested
- ask for support when you need it
- give sufficient notice when you are not able to volunteer on your rostered day
- give sufficient notice before you leave the organisation
- value and support other team members
- be trustworthy and respect client confidentiality
- carry out the work you have agreed to do responsibly, safely and ethically.

It is also important that you carry out your role in accordance with the requirements of Meals on Wheels policies and procedures, and follow instructions from your Supervisor. Any safety or hazard issues should be raised with your Supervisor or Staff Officer for action. As part of the selection process, all new volunteers must also consent to a Criminal History Check or provide documentation of any current check issued within the last three years.

Statements to the media are coordinated through Central Office, so if approached, volunteers are asked to refer any media queries through their Branch Chair to the Chief Executive Officer.

8. Kitchen Volunteers

Volunteers in Meals on Wheels kitchens work as cooks and kitchen helpers. Cooks prepare and cook meals between 7 am and 11 am every week day. Cooking is a team effort with one person, for example, doing the vegetables, another the main part of the meal, and another the dessert. Kitchen helpers work similar hours, assisting with preparation, serving, tidying and washing up.

Meals on Wheels three course midday meal makes up a little over a third of an older person's daily nutrition and energy requirements. Menus have been carefully worked out with the help of Nutritionists, Dieticians and Chefs.

The correct handling, storage, cooking and distribution of food are critical in providing safe cooked meals. Meals on Wheels kitchens are commercial food facilities and must comply with current food legislation, including the National Food Safety Standards. The organisation and its food handlers, both staff and volunteers, must take all practical measures to ensure that the food produced and delivered to our clients is safe to consume. The organisation has clear, written policies and procedures that must be followed.

We work hard to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene in our kitchens. Detailed information on all aspects of food safety, storage, cooking, plating, packaging, handling and hygiene is available in checklists in every Meals on Wheels kitchen and must be followed rigorously. More detailed information is available in the Policy and Procedure manual, see page 16.

If you have any sickness, or symptoms of vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain or fever, you must not handle food. Please let your Supervisor know as early as you can that you will not be coming in.

Supervisors will also provide further information and training for volunteers.

Kitchen procedures

By following these simple procedures, volunteers can assist in keeping kitchens running smoothly and efficiently.

- check the noticeboard on arrival to keep up with the latest information
- let the Supervisor or branch Staff Officer know as early as possible if you're unable to come in or if you are ill
- observe the hygiene and food safety standards checklists displayed in the kitchen
- wash your hands regularly and wear gloves as and when required
- wear an apron, disposable hat and (for those with facial hair) a beard cover
- make sure meals are cooked and packed in line with the Supervisor's or Cook of the Day's requirements
- clean and put away all utensils
- leave the kitchen clean and tidy
- write messages (signed and dated) in the kitchen message book
- report any problems to the Branch Supervisor or Cook of the Day.

9. Drivers and deliverers

Two people must deliver the meal to a client. **Both the driver and deliverer must go into each home to deliver meals**, although in some cases two deliverers may carry the meal while the driver stays in the car. Meals are carried in specially insulated boxes and containers.

Your visit provides valuable social contact for many isolated people in our community, so it is important that you are friendly and helpful, without getting too involved in their personal lives.

It is also important that you maintain confidentiality by not discussing any client's personal details with other people.

Delivering meals

Following these simple procedures will ensure a smooth delivery.

- dress neatly and appropriately
- be at the kitchen in time to ensure that meals can go out after 11.15 am and sign the attendance book on arrival
- stay outside the kitchen working area while food is being prepared/packed.
- before leaving the kitchen check to ensure you have the right number of meals/special meals required for your round. Speak to the Supervisor or Cook of the Day if you need assistance to fix any discrepancies before you leave
- for safety and security reasons, two people must deliver the meal. We prefer the meal to be taken into the client's home and placed where the meal is to be eaten, but clients are not obliged to allow you to enter their home. If a client prefers to meet you at the door they should bring something for you to safely place meals onto. For safety, do not place meals directly into a client's hands
- deliver meals in the sequence shown in the route book; tick off the names after each meal has been delivered
- for food safety and temperature control, keep lids on insulated containers between deliveries and do not remove food from insulated containers before arriving at each address

- leave a signed, dated report in the branch message book if there are any concerns or messages about the well-being of clients.
- contact the Welfare Officer or Central Office if complex or personal information is required.
- avoid discussing dietary issues with clients. This should only be done by Welfare Officer or Client Services staff at Central Office only.
- in an emergency please follow the instructions on page 11.

Visiting homes

When visiting clients' homes, volunteers should follow these guidelines:

- always wear the Meals on Wheels nametag or badge, supplied at each branch
- knock loudly on arrival and identify the service ('Good Morning, Meals on Wheels'). But, as a courtesy, do not enter the home until invited to do so by the client
- respect clients' privacy and personal circumstances and avoid making comments about their living conditions (which vary greatly)
- encourage clients to lock their doors on your departure
- refuse (tactfully) any gifts or gratuities offered to you by clients
- do not under any circumstances use your visit to pursue any personal or commercial interest (eg offering to value houses for sale or to buy furniture).

If the client does not answer

If no-one answers the door, check the premises and try to find out if anyone is home but just hasn't been able to hear you. For example, knock on the back door, check in the backyard etc.

Try the doors to see if they are unlocked and call out. If the client cannot be located then leave a 'sorry we missed you' card under the door with details of the attempted delivery. Return the meal to the kitchen and record that the client did not answer on your delivery sheet. But **most importantly** contact the Welfare Officer or Central Office **immediately** to ensure a follow up procedure is initiated to ensure the client is safe. As part of this process, the Welfare Officer may contact the next of kin or doctor as required. In the metropolitan area only, Central Office staff are authorised to contact the police to enter a home and conduct a welfare check if required.

Emergencies

If a client is found in an emergency situation eg heart attack, your **first** action is to call '000' so that medical aid can be provided. In these circumstances it is perfectly acceptable to use the client's phone.

If you find a client is unwell, or in distress it may be necessary to stay with them until help arrives. This is particularly necessary if someone has collapsed or is unconscious. One volunteer should remain with the client until help arrives eg ambulance. In this circumstance the driver can continue to deliver any remaining meals on that round alone. This is the only occasion when this is approved. The driver may need to collect the deliverer when the round is completed.

Some clients do not have insight into their condition so if you are concerned and do not know what to do please ring Central Office to ask advice.

Safety

The safety of our volunteers is paramount. Be very careful in lifting the hot box on and off the trolley into the car. Two people *always* need to do this, taking great care to avoid twisting or straining.

In wet weather you may wish to take an umbrella or rain jacket. Wear sensible shoes to help avoid slipping on wet footpaths. In summer, you will need to wear a hat and sunscreen and drink plenty of fluids. We suggest you take a water bottle with you.

Transport and insurance

Drivers use their own cars. You must have a current drivers licence and be prepared to present it for inspection if requested. You should carry your licence with you at all times.

All vehicles must be registered with comprehensive or third party property insurance. You should report accidents to the Branch Staff Officer and to Central Office (8271 8700). You will be sent an insurance claim form. The claim must be made against your insurance policy but Meals on Wheels will pay the excess, up to \$1,000 on comprehensive insurance. Meals on Wheels will not pay for traffic infringements such as parking or speeding fines incurred by drivers in the course of their duties.

If your vehicle breaks down while delivering meals, metropolitan drivers should contact the Branch or Central Office on 8271 8700 to make alternative arrangements for the round to be completed. In the country, the Staff Officer will give you a designated contact.

Valuables

Valuables, bags and similar items should not be left in the car in open view. They should be hidden in the boot of the car, carried with you, left at home or back at the branch in a safe and secure area.

Requests for help

If clients ask for help, these requests should be handled carefully and sensitively. Volunteers should discuss any issues that require follow up with the Branch Welfare Officer.

Tips for dealing with people who have dementia

Sometimes drivers and deliverers will visit people with dementia, who may be looked after in their homes by carers. The following tips will help.

- always identify yourself, say hello and that you are here with lunch
- be friendly and cheerful
- speak gently and clearly, but don't shout
- don't talk down to people
- explain what you are doing
- stand in front of people when you speak to them. As people may be alarmed if you stand behind them
- listen to what people are saying and pick up on past conversations
- don't ask personal questions
- don't talk about people with dementia as if they were not there
- don't invade the person's personal space
- don't argue with people with dementia.

10. Removing items from branches

No equipment, food, or meals can be taken from Meals on Wheels kitchens or offices by unauthorised persons (including volunteers) except in accordance with Meals on Wheels policies and at the discretion of the Supervisor or their delegate. If food is taken and then becomes contaminated, Meals on Wheels could be involved in a food safety incident.

11. Occupational health and safety

Meals on Wheels is responsible for the health and safety of all volunteers and employees in the workplace, in line with legislative requirements.

To assist in maintaining a healthy and safe environment we ask that you:

- act with common sense
- take reasonable care in protecting your own health and safety and not put others at risk by your actions or failure to act
- follow reasonable instructions on health and safety
- use equipment supplied eg gloves and trolleys to protect your health and safety
- report hazards, accidents and incidents to the Branch and Central Office
- not be affected by drugs and alcohol.

Meals on Wheels will provide information, familiarisation, training and supervision for all volunteers and staff in the correct use of plant, equipment, chemicals and other substances used in your work.

Smoking

Meals on Wheels provides a smoke-free environment for its volunteers and employees. Kitchen volunteers should always wash their hands after smoking outside during a break.

Lifting and carrying

Lifting and carrying are key tasks for volunteers. Following the right procedures will help avoid injury.

Heavy loads should be lifted by mechanical means whenever this is feasible. If you have to lift, only lift items you feel comfortable with or seek help from a colleague.

Break large loads into smaller loads where possible. Use a trolley to move heavy items around the kitchen.

Where manual handling is unavoidable:

- size up the load and seek help or use a lifting aid if necessary
- position your feet close to the object to be lifted
- bend your knees, keep your back straight, and grip the object securely
- take a deep breath, keep your head erect and lift by straightening your legs
- keep your back straight, your arms in and your elbows and knees slightly bent
- when you are carrying something, keep it close to your body and avoid twisting your back
- when lowering the load, reverse this procedure, keeping your back straight.

If you need more information about lifting and carrying please ask your Staff Officer.

Claims

If a volunteer is injured in the course of their work, they need to report the injury and fill out a Personal Accident Claim form. Contact the Central Office Finance Department for forms and advice on how to complete and submit a claim form.

12. Handling feedback

Meals on Wheels encourages compliments, complaints and general feedback to ensure that volunteers and clients receive the best possible service and support. The organisation has detailed policies to handle compliments, complaints, volunteer grievances and feedback. Your Branch Staff Officer or Supervisor can provide details or you can refer to our Policy and Procedures Manual. Alternatively, you may contact Central Office with any concerns.

13. Other matters

Dress code

Volunteers are expected to wear neat clean casual dress with shoes that do not slip. Kitchen staff should wear enclosed, comfortable footwear. Aprons, hats and beard covers should be worn at all times and are provided. Jewellery should be kept to a minimum and thongs, singlets and crop tops are not appropriate.

Volunteers who deliver meals should also wear neat casual clothing with appropriate footwear. Long pants are appropriate but if shorts are worn they should be dress shorts.

Computers

Many branches have computers for accounting, administration and record keeping. They are networked to Central Office and it is important for the integrity of the network that no changes are made to the settings or passwords. No unauthorised software is to be loaded. Computers are maintained by Central Office and if volunteers consider that any maintenance is required they should notify the IT Coordinator at Central Office.

Children

Children under 12 are not permitted in the working area of Meals on Wheels kitchens. Children accompanying volunteers on their delivery rounds are not covered by Meals on Wheels insurance. They should not take the place of an adult volunteer but can be an extra individual on the route.

Children should not be left unattended in the vehicle. If for any reason there is a complication during delivery such as a client in distress or deceased, the child must be protected and removed from the scene as soon as practical.

Animals and pets

No dogs, cats or other pets or animals are permitted in kitchens or in vehicles when deliveries are being made.

14. Policy and Procedures Manual

Meals on Wheels has a Policy and Procedures Manual which provides detailed information on all aspects of our operation and policies. Every branch has a copy which you are free to view at any time.

15. Communication

To keep up-to-date with news and important information check noticeboards and newsletters regularly. Online versions of newsletters can also be downloaded via the volunteer page on our website.

You can also register to receive newsletters electronically to your email address for convenience – just send an email to news@mealsonwheelssa.org.au to register your address.

Facebook users are also encouraged to join our Facebook page to keep in touch with announcements and information and may also like to help promote our organisation to others in the community. Go to:
www.facebook.com/mealsonwheelssa

16. Contact

More information can be obtained from:

Volunteer Manager

Meals on Wheels (SA) Inc. 70 Greenhill Road, WAYVILLE SA 5034

Phone: 8271 8700

Facsimile: 8271 8101

Email: volunteer@mealsonwheelssa.org.au

Country callers (toll free): 1800 854 453



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