

“Volunteers volunteering for organisations who employ paid staff have the same responsibility and accountability, under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*, as workers do. This means the organisation has a duty of care and is responsible for providing volunteers with a safe working environment. It also means you have a responsibility to work safely, and observe any safety measures or organisational policies that are in place, including WHS policies and procedures.”¹

Employer responsibilities

“Organisations can meet their responsibilities by:

- implementing a risk management plan
- making sure that supervisors and managers are adequately skilled to show volunteers how to perform their work safely and without injury
- ensuring that officers responsible for management (including volunteers) act within a certain standard of care by:
 - learning about work health and safety
 - identifying the organisation's particular safety challenges
 - ensuring that work health and safety policies are put in place for the organisation.”¹

The Genealogy Society

- has a written Work Health & Safety Policy
- undertakes periodic audits and inspections by experienced people to find any hazards that may be present
- displays emergency procedures and evacuation diagrams in all rooms of the building
- provides a smoke-free environment
- responds appropriately to issues reported on Hazard ID forms
- provides induction and WH&S training.

Volunteer responsibilities

“You as a volunteer also have responsibilities in relation to work health and safety and it is important that you make yourself aware of what your responsibilities are. For instance, you must:

- look after your own health and safety at work
- not do anything that will harm yourself or your work-mates
- use any safety equipment that you are given
- obey your employer's safety rules
- make sure that you do not take drugs or drink alcohol at work
- participate in an induction and sign off to show that you understand what is expected of you.”¹

In the Society's building

- follow WH & S policy and procedures
- sign in and out of the building
- keep chairs neat and not obstructing walkways
- do not try and lift heavy loads yourself – ask for help
- keep the workplace free of clutter and rubbish
- don't take risks with electricity
- consider your own health and wellbeing – get up and stretch, or move about, at regular intervals; give your eyes a rest from screens
- report something you think could be a hazard using the yellow Hazard ID form.

Emergency Procedure

The emergencies we are most likely to face are fire, electrical failure, injury resulting from an accident, or personal distress due to a medical condition.

If you become aware of an emergency you must tell the “person in charge” immediately. The person in charge will either be a staff member or responsible volunteer (usually the person who has the key to access the building).

The person in charge will decide what to do, which may involve evacuating the building. Your responsibility is to listen to the person in charge and do what you are told to quickly, calmly and without hesitation.

Bullying and Harassment

In any organisation healthy discussion and disagreement is desirable and probably inevitable – we want to be able to express differing views. However, when conflict descends into personal attacks that could be classed as bullying and harassment, this is not only unwanted and unacceptable, but it can be illegal.

Workplace bullying and harassment means any behaviour that is repeated, systematic and directed towards an individual or group of employees, volunteers or members that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten, and that creates a risk to health and safety.

Bullying excludes reasonable management or administrative action taken in a reasonable manner by the Society.

The Society will not tolerate workplace bullying and harassment.

The Society is committed as far as is reasonably practicable to identify and prevent unlawful direct, indirect or covert workplace bullying and harassment from its structures, practices and operations.

In the event of any complaint regarding bullying and/or harassment the Business Manager will implement the following procedure:

- first try to resolve any reported incident quickly using an informal process if practicable
- initiate any formal complaint using the Society Incident and Accident reporting procedure
- conduct a full, immediate and confidential investigation into any formal complaint insofar as is practicable
- ensure an impartial person carries out any such investigation, and that the principles of natural justice are followed in the interests of fairness to all
- apply the Society Grievance Procedure if possible to resolve proven complaints.

A substantiated complaint will be treated as a disciplinary offence that could lead to dismissal.

Complaints and Grievances

The Society’s Complaints Policy applies to issues between “customers” of the Society and the Society, and/or its officers, and/or its employees (including volunteers).

The Society’s Grievances Procedure applies to issues between those (officers, employees or volunteers) who carry out the work of the Society.

Volunteer protection

Volunteering Strategy for SA (VASS) has developed a new Work Health and Safety flow chart to assist with understanding how WHS laws may apply to volunteering activities.¹

“The *Volunteer Protection Act 2001* encourages people to volunteer for community organisations by addressing concerns that they could be held legally responsible for their actions while doing voluntary work on behalf of an organisation.

A volunteer is not protected under the Act if they:

- act illegally
- are affected by alcohol or illicit drugs
- defame someone
- act outside or contrary to activities authorised by the organisation.”²

¹<http://www.savolunteeringstrategy.org.au/resources/VSSA/dataManagerFiles/567370825.pdf>

² <http://www.sa.gov.au/topics/community-support/volunteering>