

# Volunteer along the track JULY 2026

## Transport Working Group – Action outcomes

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the recent Transport Working Group discussion. Below are the agreed actions and next steps to support smoother communication, safer transport, and clearer processes for all volunteers.

### Clear Volunteer Identification

Volunteers highlighted the importance of being easily recognised by clients and community members. **Outcome:**

- Polo tops will now be offered to all volunteer drivers to support clear identification, professionalism, and client confidence.

### Improved Communication Processes

Volunteers requested clearer communication about daily runs, last-minute changes, and client needs. **Outcome:**

- Coordinators will continue sending morning confirmation texts.
- Additional reminders using the formatted template will be sent for regional transports

### Safety and Comfort for Clients

Discussions focused on supporting clients with mobility challenges and ensuring safe entry/exit from vehicles. **Outcome:**

- The Coordinator will provide details if a mobility aid or additional support is required as part of the initial request to the volunteer. This ensures volunteers have the right information to prepare safely and confidently for each transport.
- A refresher on safe mobility assistance will be offered in the next few months
- Volunteers reminded to stay within their role and avoid lifting clients

## Pool Car – Additional Training

Volunteers requested more confidence and clarity when using pool vehicles.

- Additional 1:1 training sessions will be provided for drivers.
- A pool-car handout will be included as part of the training

Your feedback directly shapes how we improve our service. The Transport Discussion Group will continue to meet tri-monthly to ensure volunteer voices remain central to decision-making.



## Training Opportunities

### First Aid Course / Update

 **Wednesday 4 August**

 **Ouyen Golf Club**

### Course Options:

- Full First Aid Course – 6 hours
- CPR Update – 4 hours
- Delivered by *Mallee First Aid*

### Bookings: •

Email Abbey: [arowlands@mthcs.vic.gov.au](mailto:arowlands@mthcs.vic.gov.au)

• Phone: 0419 371 445

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### Quick Tips for Volunteers

#### 1. Be early, not rushed

Arriving a few minutes early helps clients feel safe and supported.

#### 2. Check in with yourself

If you're tired, unwell, or overwhelmed, it's okay to step back.

#### 3. Small talk matters

A simple conversation can be the highlight of someone's week.

#### 4. Ask, don't assume

Preferences, mobility needs, and comfort levels vary.

#### 5. Celebrate the wins

### Volunteer Story

Eight years ago, a friend made a simple suggestion that changed the course of my life: *"You should try volunteering at Mallee Track."* I didn't know then how deeply that choice would shape me. From the moment I started, I never looked back. My volunteering portfolio grew, and so did my understanding of what community really means.

My inspiration came from my dad. In his final years, I watched him navigate life in care — still proud, still wanting choice, still deserving dignity. Seeing the difference that compassionate support made for him lit a spark in me. I knew I wanted to help others live the best life they could, with independence, respect, and no unnecessary barriers.

**The Bakery Run:** Every Monday begins with a text from our transport coordinator confirming the day's run. It's a small message, but it means something big: someone is waiting for me.

My Monday passenger lives on a rural property and no longer drives. Our weekly trip to town is his social lifeline — breakfast with the locals, a catch-up with his mates, and a chance to stay connected to the community he loves. The drive home is always full of stories, laughter, and the latest news. Those moments remind me why I volunteer.

**Supporting Pride and Independence:** This Tuesday, I support an 80-year-old retiree travelling to Mildura for medical appointments. He still drives — and he's proud of that — but he chooses to use the service because it's safer.

He often says, "Better to use the service than *need* the service," with a half-smile that reveals both humour and vulnerability.

He wants reassurance. He wants dignity. He wants to know he's not a burden. I can give families peace of mind, knowing someone reliable is there to help — someone who treats their loved one with respect, patience, and genuine care. I've had family members tell me how relieved they feel knowing their mum or dad is not only getting where they need to go, but also enjoying the social connection that comes with the trip.

The community gives back to me too — in stories, in laughter, in trust, and in the deep sense of purpose that comes from knowing you're part of something bigger than yourself.

**The Big Shopping Bus Day:** Fridays are the busiest. Five clients, each with different needs, pile onto the people mover for a day of essential errands — medical appointments, banking, chemist, hairdresser visits, and the weekly supermarket shop.

The bus becomes a little community on wheels. There's chatter, laughter, teasing, and gratitude. People who might otherwise feel isolated suddenly feel connected and supported.

Their appreciation is genuine and constant. It shows up in smiles, in stories saved just for

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the drive, in the way they say thank you without needing to use the word at all.

**Why I Volunteer — And Who I Carry With Me:** Every kilometre I drive, every person I support, every story shared on the road brings me back to the same place: helping others

My Dad taught me what dignity looks like. He taught me what compassion feels like. He taught me that helping someone isn't about grand gestures — it's about showing up, listening, and making sure people still feel like themselves.

One of the greatest gifts of volunteering has been discovering just how much wisdom lives in the people I support. Every time I help someone stay connected, stay independent, or simply feel valued, I feel like I'm giving back to a generation that has given so much to all of us

## VOLUNTEERS MAKE OUR COMMUNITY STRONGER

Every act of kindness counts — and our volunteers have been busy creating real impact across MTHCS.

- **130 transports** helping clients get to essential appointments
- **532 meals** delivered with care and connection
- **68 hours in aged care** Supporting dignity, reducing loneliness, and creating meaningful moments for residents

Your time, energy, and compassion make a difference every single day.



Please join us for the  
**STAFF & VOLUNTEERS  
BBQ**



Sea Lake  
17 June  
11:30am to 1:00pm  
PAG Courtyard

Ouyen  
15 July  
11:30am to 1:00pm  
Courtyard

## Did You Know?

- Social isolation increases health risks as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.
- Volunteers contribute over **\$290 billion** to the Australian economy each year.
- A 10-minute chat can significantly reduce loneliness and anxiety in older adults.
- MTHCS volunteers collectively travel thousands of kilometres each month supporting our community.

DIETITIAN SERVICES  
NOW AVAILABLE AT  
MALLEE TRACK



Seeing a dietitian will help you improve your health and wellbeing. You'll learn how to eat better and manage health conditions through good nutrition.



Referrals can be made through your GP or you can self-refer by calling our intake team at Ouyen on (03) 5092 1111 & Sea Lake on (03) 5070 2155



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### Health Topic of the Month – Winter Respiratory Illness Prevention

As we move through the colder months, respiratory illnesses such as influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 become more common in our community. Volunteers play an important role in keeping clients — especially older adults — safe and well.

#### What Volunteers Can Do

- **Stay home if unwell** — even mild symptoms can spread easily.
- **Practice good hand hygiene** — clean hands before and after every client interaction.
- **Wear a mask if requested or if you prefer extra protection.**
- **Keep distance where possible**, especially in vehicles or small rooms.
- **Encourage fresh air** — open windows in vehicles or indoor spaces when safe to do so.
- **Follow all MTHCS infection control guidance.**

#### Why It Matters

Older adults and people with chronic conditions are more likely to experience serious illness from respiratory infections. Your actions help protect the people who rely on us most.

#### If You're Unsure

Speak with your coordinator — they can guide you on safe practices for your role.


### Safety Reminders – Volunteer Hand Hygiene Guide

#### Why Hand Hygiene Matters

- Prevents the spread of germs
- Protects vulnerable clients
- Keeps volunteers healthy

#### Clean Your Hands:

- Before/after helping a client
- Before handling food
- After touching shared surfaces
- After coughing/sneezing
- After using the toilet
- After removing gloves

 **How to Clean Your Hands Soap & Water:** Scrub 20 seconds **Sanitiser:** Rub until dry

#### Hygiene Essentials

- Avoid touching your face
- Stay home if unwell
- Use tissues or elbow when coughing
- Carry personal sanitiser





# GREAT News!

OUR NEW LABELLING SYSTEM

✓ is Complete!

Thank you for your patience and support while we developed this important improvement.



**IMPROVED ACCURACY**  
Clear, consistent labels help ensure the right meal gets to the right person, every time.



**ENHANCED SAFETY**  
Better information supports food safety and peace of mind for our clients and volunteers.



**STRONGER TOGETHER**  
Your dedication helps us deliver more than meals - it delivers connection, care and kindness.



THANK YOU FOR MAKING A *Difference* EVERY DAY!



**WE'D LOVE YOUR FEEDBACK!**  
We welcome your thoughts on our new labelling system.

- ✓ What's working well?
- ✓ What could be even better?
- ✓ Any suggestions to help?



Please share feedback by completing a slip and dropping into our feedback box!

♥ Thank you for all you do. Together, we're making a difference - one meal at a time. ♥