



Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing



Proposed minimum training for volunteers in aged care

Consultation Summary Report

2025

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Acknowledgement of Feedback

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the Department) extends its sincere appreciation to all individuals and organisations who contributed feedback to the proposed Mandatory Training for Volunteers in Aged Care consultation. Your engagement has provided valuable insights into the practical training needs and preferences of volunteers, Volunteer Managers, and aged care providers.

This feedback has been instrumental to inform the development of a nationally consistent and inclusive training framework supporting volunteers to deliver safe, respectful, and person-centred care in alignment with the *Aged Care Act 2024* (the Act), Statement of Rights and the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards (Quality Standards).

The Department acknowledges the time and expertise shared by respondents and stakeholders and remains committed to ensuring the final training manual reflects the diverse experiences and expectations of the aged care volunteering sector.

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Executive summary



Background

Between July and September 2025, the Department conducted a national consultation to inform the development of a training framework for aged care volunteers. The aim was to ensure training is consistent, inclusive, and practical, respecting the diverse experiences, motivations, and skills of volunteers. This initiative aligns with the new Act, statement of rights and Quality Standards.

Who we heard from

The consultation received 1,486 online survey responses, including volunteers (38%), Volunteer Managers (20%), and aged care providers (16%). Respondents were primarily involved in residential aged care, respite, Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), and home care, with many also engaged in community roles. Almost half had volunteered for over five years, and most were older adults, 58% aged 60+ and 20% aged 50–59. Responses were strongest from New South Wales (NSW) (32%) and Victoria (24%).

Additional input came from workshops held with peak bodies such as Volunteering Australia and Meals on Wheels and written submissions from individuals and organisations including Dementia Australia, Ageing Australia, Meals on Wheels, and Council on the Ageing (COTA).

Overview of findings

The consultation revealed strong sector-wide support for the proposed mandatory volunteer training reforms, with nearly 90% of respondents rating the modules as important, ranging from moderate to extreme importance. Most respondents (76.8%) agreed all proposed topics were appropriate, and a further 17.8% endorsed some topics, reflecting broad confidence in the relevance and value of the training content.

Stakeholders supported a nationally consistent framework to enhance safety, quality, and dignity in aged care, while emphasising training must remain empowering, inclusive, and respectful of volunteers' time and life experience. Many believed the training would help providers ensure volunteers have the right knowledge, though fewer felt it would directly improve recruitment or retention outcomes.

Key barriers identified included time constraints, complexity, and limited digital access, reinforcing the need for low-tech, adaptable formats. Respondents preferred minimal training frequency, favouring one-off or biennial sessions with updates only when policies change.

Almost 80% of Volunteer Managers expressed strong support, recommending flexible delivery formats, scenario-based content, and practical support tools such as facilitation



guides, checklists, and templates. They also stressed the importance of clear communication about the purpose of training to build trust, particularly among older volunteers. There was strong support for portable recognition, phased rollout, and concise content tailored to specific roles. Only a small percentage of Volunteer Managers (5%) indicated concerns or negative sentiment particularly around implementation challenges.

Concerns about applying mandatory training to CHSP volunteers in low-risk roles, with strong opposition to this approach and a preference for the training to be optional. Under the new Act, providers registered in categories 1, 2 and 3 are not audited against the Quality Standards, and the proposed model does not include these categories for mandatory training. Minimum training is considered best practice for all volunteers, highlighting the need for greater awareness of registration categories and clarity around which volunteers require training and why.

Top ten findings

Strong support for well supported consistent training

90% of stakeholders broadly supported a nationally consistent training framework to improve safety, confidence, and care quality. They emphasised the need for training to be practical, proportionate to volunteer roles, and respectful of volunteers' time, motivations, identities, and prior experience. Most respondents preferred minimal or flexible training frequency, based on legislation or sector changes.



Flexible and inclusive delivery formats

Respondents strongly preferred flexible and accessible training options accommodating diverse access needs and learning preferences. Face-to-face sessions, printed materials, and multilingual resources were especially valued to address digital exclusion, particularly for older volunteers, people living with a disability, and those in regional or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities

Volunteer retention risks

While training was widely recognised as valuable, many respondents cautioned overly complex, time-consuming, or bureaucratic requirements could discourage participation, particularly among older volunteers or those with limited time. To maintain engagement, training must be simple, relevant, respectful of volunteers' time, motivations, and capacity.



Volunteer Manager support

Almost 80% of Volunteer Managers broadly welcomed the training many highlighted the need for practical implementation support or it to be successful. They requested facilitator-friendly tools, clear guidance, and resources to deliver training in diverse settings with limited time and funding.

Language matters

The term “mandatory” was seen as discouraging by many respondents. Alternatives like “minimum requirements” or “best practice” were preferred, highlighting the importance of using inclusive, encouraging language to support volunteer engagement and retention.

Training portability and recognition of experience

Stakeholders strongly supported making training portable across aged care providers to reduce duplication and support volunteer mobility. Recognising prior learning and experience was seen as essential to honour volunteers’ contributions, streamline onboarding, and ensure continuity of care, particularly for those volunteering across multiple settings.

Training content to reflect evolving needs

Volunteers and Volunteer Managers identified several priority topics for inclusion, including dementia awareness, boundaries and privacy, communication and empathy, and rights of older people. These reflect the growing complexity of aged care and the need for well-informed, and appropriately supported volunteer engagement.

Preserving volunteer identity

Respondents emphasised training should affirm and respect the unique identity, motivations, and lived experience of volunteers. Rather than feeling like compliance or assessment, training should empower volunteers by recognising their contributions, building on their strengths, and supporting their compassionate, relational roles in aged care.

Embedding diversity and inclusion

There was strong support for embedding access disability inclusion, cultural safety, and inclusive communication into volunteer training. Stakeholders emphasised the need for co-design with diverse communities to ensure training is relevant, accessible, and respectful of volunteers’ varied learning needs, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences.

Clarity of purpose and expectations

Respondents identified a need for clear, consistent communication about the intent and purpose of training, its benefits for older people, and what is expected of volunteers was seen as essential to building trust and engagement. There was some confusion around who the training applies to, why it is required, and how it supports volunteer roles most notably reported by long-serving or low-contact volunteers particularly CHSP volunteers.



Key recommendations



Flexible and Inclusive Delivery

Design flexible training materials deliverable in multiple accessible formats, online, print, Easy Read, multilingual, audio-visual, and face-to-face to support various learning styles, literacy levels, and digital access.

Co-Design with Stakeholders

Involve relevant stakeholders in shaping content, testing and delivery of training manual to foster cultural safety and inclusion. Include relatable real-life scenarios in training materials.

Support Volunteer Managers

Provide practical implementation support by developing clear guidance and ready-to-use resources such as facilitator guides, checklists, visual aids, templates, communication tools and FAQs to help Volunteer Managers deliver training effectively across diverse settings.

Recognise and Transfer Training

Introduce a centralised certificate system to support training portability across providers and reduce duplication for volunteers with multiple roles.

Communicate Purpose Clearly

Clearly communicate intent and purpose of training. Acknowledge the training builds on volunteers' lived experience, motivations, and strengths. Use empowering, non-punitive language and ensure training enhances confidence and connection so volunteers feel valued

Clarify Applicability

Provide clear, accessible guidance in the training manual outlining which provider registration categories are subject to minimum training requirements, and where training is considered best practice

Empowering Language

Use terms like “minimum requirements” or “core knowledge” instead of “mandatory”, and “best practice” instead of “strongly recommended” to help foster engagement.

Minimise Burden

Keep training concise, short, role-specific modules (10-15 mins), scenario-based, and relevant. Avoid formal testing and unnecessary repetition. Respect volunteers' time and life commitments. Flexible training frequency, with refresher training only required when policy or legislation changes.



Equity and Accessibility

Provide translated, Easy Read, and audio/visual resources. Design training to accommodate different literacy levels, learning styles, and cognitive abilities.

Implementation Support

Allow a phase-in period (up to 12 months for existing volunteers). Provide orientation materials, frequently asked questions, and templates to support rollout.

Monitor and Adapt

Establish feedback loops to monitor volunteer experience, recruitment, and retention. Use insights to refine training content and delivery over time.

Key Takeaways

The consultation revealed strong support across the aged care sector for consistent, inclusive volunteer training enhancing safety, respect, and quality of care, with conditions. Stakeholders emphasised the need for flexible, role-specific training delivered in accessible formats, such as print, face-to-face, and multilingual options, and called for empowering language to reflect the spirit of volunteering. While concerns were raised about digital exclusion, time constraints, and potential impacts on volunteer participation, feedback was overwhelmingly constructive.

Volunteers and Volunteer Managers expressed a clear willingness to engage with practical, respectful, and supportive training. Key recommendations include co-designing content with relevant stakeholders, recognising prior learning, introducing portable certification, and providing implementation support. The next phase will focus on finalising the training manual, developing practical resources, and rolling out training to be inclusive, achievable, and aligned with the values of aged care volunteering.





1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This report presents the feedback from the proposed mandatory training for volunteers in aged care consultation conducted between 21 July and 12 September 2025 and as detailed in the [Consultation Paper – Aged Care Volunteers Mandatory Training](#).

The initiative responds to key legislative and policy developments, including:

- **Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety – Recommendation 44.b:** Volunteers should receive appropriate training to support safe and respectful care.
- **The Aged Care Act 2024:** Training is now a legal requirement for all aged care workers, including volunteers, under the new regulatory model.
- **Aged Care Quality Standards – Outcome 2.9:** Providers must ensure volunteers are trained, supervised, and supported to deliver quality care.
- **Statement of Rights:** Older people have the right to receive care from qualified and skilled individuals, including volunteers.

The proposed training manual aims to equip volunteers with the knowledge and skills necessary to:

- Understand and comply with safety protocols and legal responsibilities.
- Deliver person-centred, rights-based support.
- Respond to the diverse needs and preferences of older people.
- Contribute confidently and safely within aged care environments.

1.2 Purpose of the Manual

The proposed Mandatory Training Manual will establish clear, minimum training requirements for volunteers engaged with registered aged care providers. It will:

- Promote consistent training across the sector
- Support volunteer managers and providers in delivering accessible and inclusive training
- Provide guidance on minimum core training modules, including the Code of Conduct, Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS), complaints handling, elder abuse awareness and advocacy pathways, and understanding diversity and inclusion.

Training will be mandatory for volunteers engaged with providers registered in categories 4, 5, and 6, and considered best practice for volunteers in registration categories 1-3.



2. Consultation Approach Method

This consultation aimed to assist the department design the mandatory training manual and meet the needs of the sector. The survey sought feedback from volunteers, Volunteer Managers, funded aged care providers who engage volunteers, community members, stakeholders and interested parties.

The consultation was designed to capture the perspectives of the sector across a variety of settings, including residential aged care, respite care, and support provided in the home and community.

While the proposed mandatory training manual referenced in the survey will not apply to volunteers participating in the CHSP (categories 1-3) or the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS), feedback and insights from individuals involved in these programs were invited and their insights valued.

2.1 Communications

Information about the consultation was widely distributed to stakeholders via email. We sincerely thank all those who supported the process by sharing consultation details through their newsletters and networks.

To maximise accessibility, a link to the survey was prominently featured on the Department's website homepage. Additionally, an article about the consultation was published in department aged care newsletters, reaching a broad audience.

The Department also developed a promotional poster featuring a QR code link to the survey. This poster was made available on the Volunteering in Aged Care webpage and could be downloaded in both Word and PDF formats.

2.2 Consultation Discussion Paper

A consultation discussion paper was prepared by the Department to provide background and context for the consultation process. The paper outlined the proposed training initiative, including its background, aims and objectives, details of the training manual, and an overview of the proposed training module suite. It was made accessible via a link on the survey landing page, the Department's homepage, and was also available upon request.

2.3 Stakeholder engagement

The Department was invited to present at various stakeholder meetings and workshops about the new Act and the proposed mandatory training consultation. These engagements were welcomed by the Department, and we appreciate the discussions and the opportunity to answer questions directly to the sector.



Workshops

A total of six engagements occurred with peak Volunteering Australia organisations, CHSP sector support, and Meals on Wheels.

Written Submissions

Several emails and written submissions were received from Peak organisations, individuals and interested parties including Volunteering Australia, Dementia Australia, Meals on Wheels, Ageing Australia, COTA, multicultural and disability organisations.

2.4 Online Survey

An online survey was developed using Qualtrics and hosted on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's Citizen Space consultation hub. The survey was open for eight weeks from 21 July 2025 to 12 September 2025 a total of 1,486 responses were received

The survey featured a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions

- To gauge overall sentiment and support for the proposed training manual
- Invited feedback, suggestions, and additional comments through free-text responses from volunteers, Volunteer Managers, providers, and community members and interested parties
- Participants were not required to answer all questions and could opt out at any time, resulting in discrepancy of responses to each question, versus overall responses received.





3. Survey Respondents

The survey respondents show Australia's aged care volunteer sector is not only experienced and committed, but also ageing. Nearly 60% of respondents were aged 60 or older, and only a small proportion were under 40. This suggests while the sector benefits from the wisdom and dedication of older volunteers, it may face challenges in attracting younger people. The findings highlight the importance of supporting current volunteers with targeted training to maintain their confidence and capability, while also considering strategies to engage a broader age range for the future sustainability of the sector.

3.1 Who responded?

Respondents included a broad mix of stakeholders: n=523 (38.5%) were volunteers in aged care settings, n=282 (20.8%) were volunteer managers, and n=226 (16.7%) were funded aged care providers who engage volunteers. Others identified as community members n=123 (9.1%), or selected 'other' roles n=183 (13.5%), with a small group (1.5%) interested in becoming volunteers.

This diversity ensures the survey reflects a wide range of perspectives from across the aged care sector. This breakdown also shows the consultation was primarily shaped by those directly involved in volunteering, with volunteers and Volunteer Managers making up nearly 60% of respondents. This lends strong credibility to the feedback regarding training needs, barriers, and preferences.

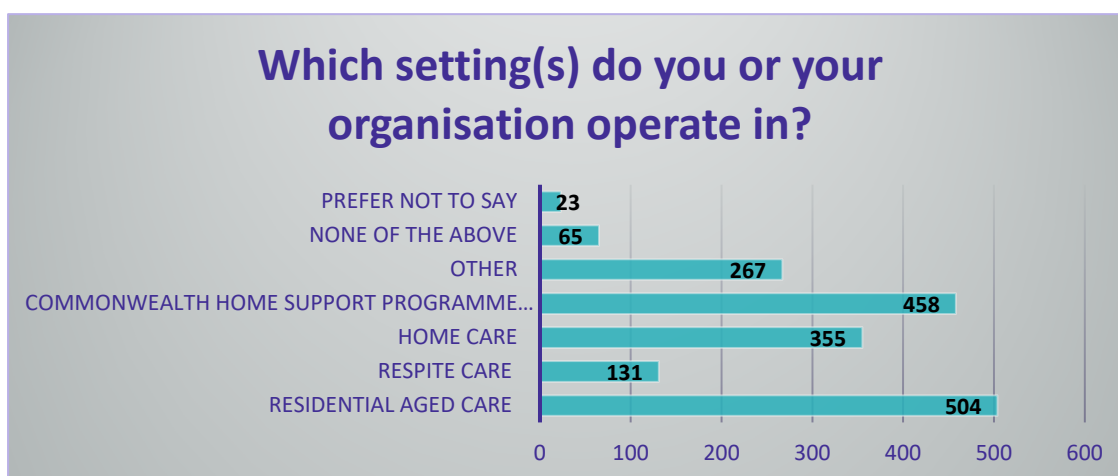




3.2 Which aged care settings were respondents from?

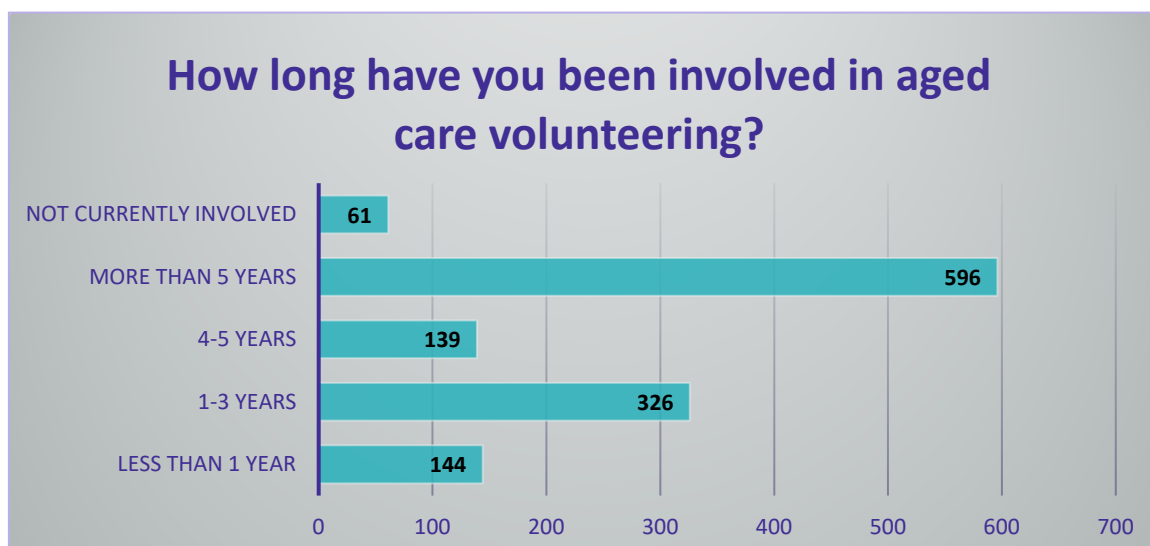
Respondents represented a wide range of aged care settings, with the largest numbers involved in residential aged care (29.2%, n=530) and the CHSP (27.3%, n=494). Others participated in home care (20.3%, n=367), respite care (7.5%, n=135), and a variety of other services such as meal delivery, transport, palliative care, dementia support, hospitals, church groups, disability services, day care centres, and retirement villages (15.8%, n=286).

The data shows respondent experience across both facility-based and community-based aged care settings, bringing diversity in volunteer roles and enriching the consultation with insights from a wide range.



3.3 How long have respondents been volunteering?

Nearly half of respondents (47.4%) had more than five years' experience volunteering in aged care, indicating a highly experienced cohort. A further 11.2% had volunteered for 4–5 years, 25.9% for 1–3 years, and 11.0% for less than a year, reflecting a mix of long-term commitment and newer involvement across the sector.



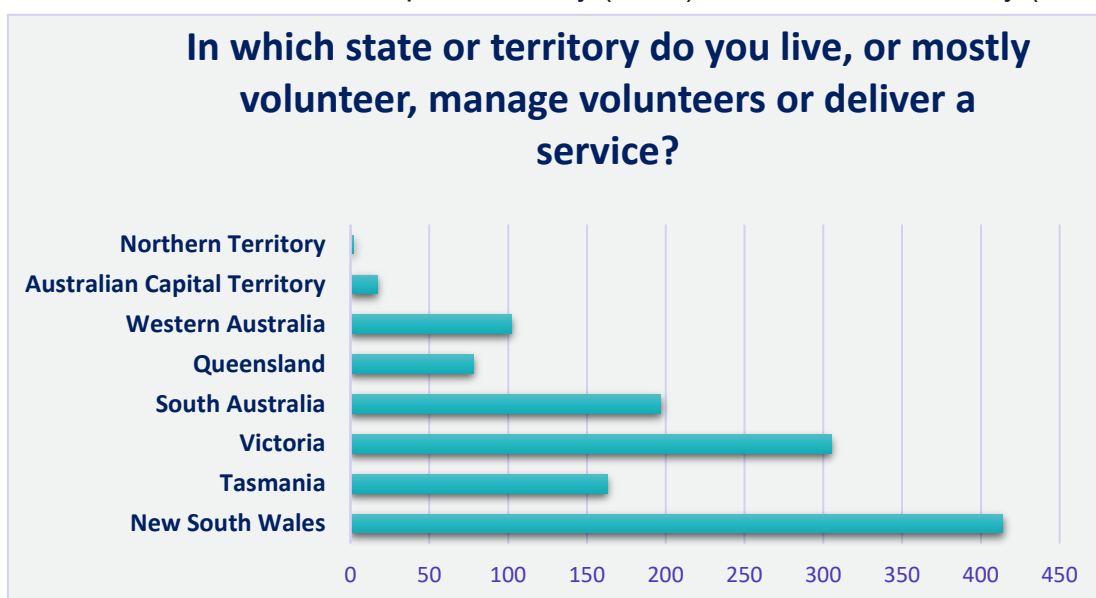


3.4 Diversity of respondents

The respondent group was culturally diverse, with 17.6% speaking a language other than English. 1.1% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

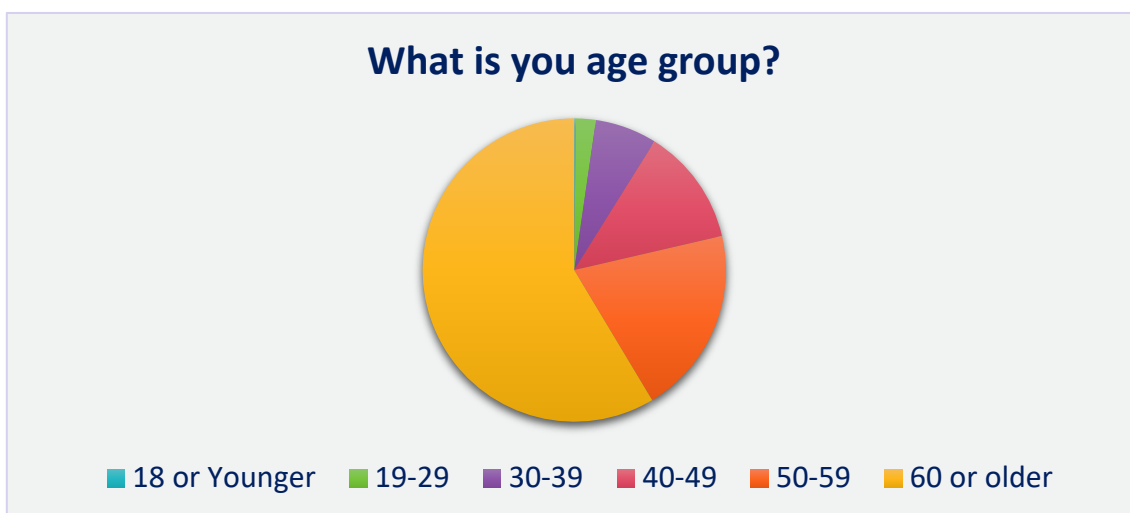
3.5 Where did respondents come from?

Respondents were drawn from across Australia, with the largest groups from New South Wales (31.8%), Victoria (23.7%), and South Australia (16.9%). Smaller proportions came from Tasmania (12.0%), Western Australia (7.7%), and Queensland (6.3%), with only a handful from the Australian Capital Territory (1.3%) and Northern Territory (0.1%).



3.6 Age demographics

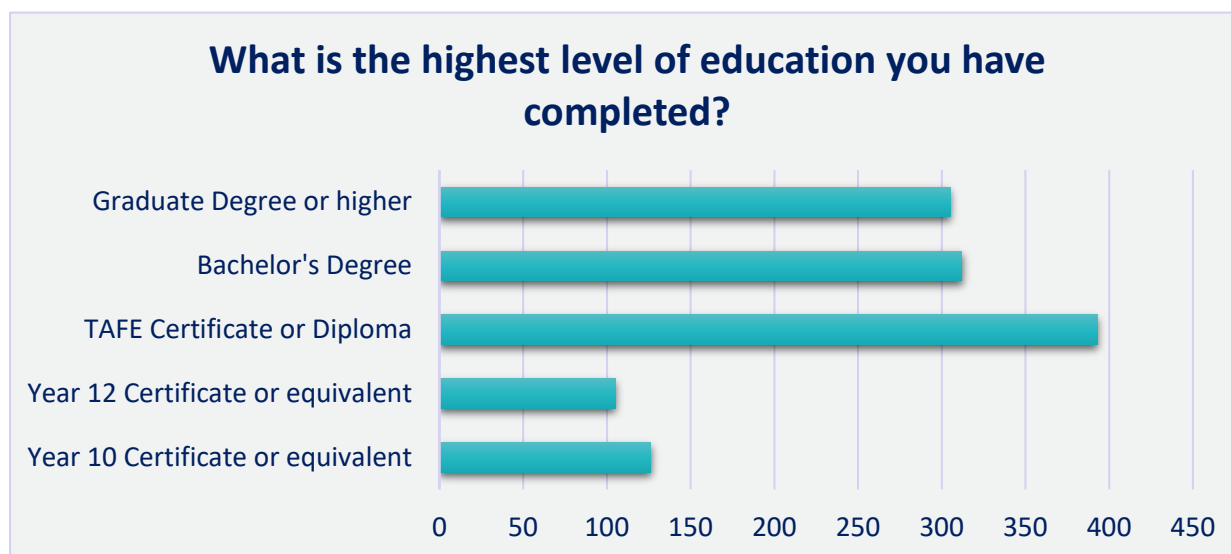
The age profile of respondents points to an ageing volunteer sector, with 57.8% aged 60 or older and a further 20.1% aged 50–59. Only 18.6% were under 50, and very few were under 30.





3.7 Education

Respondents had varied educational backgrounds, with nearly one-third holding a TAFE certificate or diploma (31.0%). A further 47.7% had completed a bachelor's degree or higher, while 18.5% held secondary school qualifications. This mix reflects a well-educated volunteer sector cohort, bringing a range of skills and experiences to the aged care sector.





4. What we heard

4.1 Overview of feedback themes

This section presents a thematic analysis of feedback collected through the consultation process on the proposed mandatory training for aged care volunteers. The consultation drew on survey responses, written submissions, and workshop discussions, capturing a wide range of perspectives from volunteers, Volunteer Managers, aged care providers, and community members.

We collated and organised the survey results, written submissions and feedback from workshops and looked for common themes, and for specific ideas about how to improve the training manual to meet the needs of the sector. We also looked for specific helpful ideas and suggestions about how to improve the training manual and modules.

The consultation process revealed strong support for structured and standardised training for aged care volunteers, with respondents valuing its potential to improve consistency, safety, and quality. There was widespread endorsement for a national approach to reduce duplication, create consistency and enhance portability across organisations.

"Volunteers are a vital part of aged care they bring companionship, social connection, and humanity that complement the work of paid staff. Introducing mandatory training is an important step to ensure their contribution is safe, respectful, and aligned with the rights of older people."

Strong Support for Structured Training – With Conditions

Consultation feedback revealed strong support for a nationally consistent volunteer training framework. Respondents value its potential to improve safety, confidence, and care quality. Training is seen as empowering volunteers and enhancing the overall volunteering experience. It was also seen as a practical tool to help providers meet their obligations under the new Act, particularly around safety, dignity, and rights, without creating unnecessary administrative burden. However, success depends on thoughtful implementation, balancing a light touch regulation with training being flexible, accessible, and proportionate to the volunteer's role.

"The more we can equip volunteers the better for all. Volunteers are also the eyes and ears for clients, families and organisations. The more we equip and empower volunteers in these areas the better care and services our older people will receive."

"Supports safer, more respectful and consistent volunteer engagement across the aged care sector."



Concerns about accessibility

A recurring theme in the consultation was concern about accessibility, particularly for older volunteers with limited digital literacy or no access to computers or smartphones. Many respondents warned mandatory training, if overly complex, lengthy, or delivered exclusively online, could deter participation and lead to a decline in volunteer numbers. Respondents prefer face-to-face or paper-based formats. Training must accommodate volunteers' unique needs and learning styles to avoid deterring participation.

"The majority of volunteers are retired, and some have very limited technological skills, so online training would be inappropriate for many."

Over-regulation concerns

Respondents warned mandatory training could undermine the spirit of volunteering if it becomes overly bureaucratic or compliance driven. They stressed the need for training to be practical, role-specific, and supportive rather than punitive, using plain language and avoiding unnecessary complexity. A flexible, volunteer-centred approach was seen as essential to maintain engagement and uphold the values of volunteering.

"The more regulation, the more people are scared away. Volunteering should be made easy, not harder."

Retention of volunteer identity

Many volunteer respondents expressed a strong emotional connection to their volunteer roles and felt mandatory training risked undermining the intrinsic motivations driving volunteerism. Preserving the spirit of volunteering was seen as critical to maintaining engagement and ensuring aged care services continue to benefit from community support. It is key volunteers understand the reasons why they need to undergo training, whilst recognising and valuing their unique role.

"The whole concept of requiring mandatory training for volunteers runs completely against the spirit of asking for individuals to give up their time and resources in order to tick some bureaucrat's boxes."

Impact on Volunteer Numbers

Most respondents expressed concern mandatory training could reduce volunteer participation, particularly among older volunteers and those with limited digital access. However, some saw potential benefits if the training is designed to be short, relevant, and flexible, noting accessible and well-structured modules could enhance confidence and quality of care without creating unnecessary barriers.

"Mandatory training may be a barrier for some, but it will go a long way to ensuring only those who are committed to the role engage."



Diversity and inclusion considerations

The consultation strongly supported embedding diversity, dementia, and disability considerations into volunteer training. Respondents emphasised culturally safe, multilingual, and Easy Read resources, along with flexible, offline delivery to address language, literacy, and digital barriers. Feedback suggested training should include culturally adapted scenarios, cultural perspectives, and trauma-informed approaches, while promoting dementia awareness and inclusive communication. Stakeholders also called for co-design with diversity stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and accessibility, supported by plain language, visual aids, and short, self-paced modules.

“Training must be respectful of cultural values, accessible across language and literacy levels, and adaptable to different lived experiences.”

What Volunteer Managers are seeking

Feedback from Volunteer Managers across all settings revealed strong support for the proposed training reforms. They welcomed standardising training to help manage volunteer expectations, improve care quality, and reduce the burden on managers, especially those working in isolation. Volunteer Managers emphasised the need for flexible delivery, inclusive content, and practical support tools to ensure training is accessible and effective for all volunteers, regardless of age, background, or digital literacy.

Key suggestions included offering multiple formats (online, paper-based, face-to-face), scenario-based micro-trainings, and step-by-step facilitation guides. Volunteer Managers also highlighted challenges such as digital access limitations, time constraints, and resistance to mandatory requirements, recommending solutions like printed materials, visual aids, culturally sensitive resources, and funding support.

“I think this is an incredible idea that me and our organisation fully support... It will also support many volunteer managers who are in most cases working on their own to create trainings without expert knowledge.”

Portability and recognition of prior learning

Consultation feedback highlighted strong support for a centralised training passport or certificate system to make training portable across organisations and reduce duplication for volunteers who serve in multiple roles. Stakeholders stressed existing training programs should be recognised where they meet core standards, ensuring efficiency and avoiding unnecessary burden. This approach was seen as critical to maintaining volunteer engagement and supporting sector sustainability.

“Mandatory training presents an opportunity to allow portability of training between aged care providers to ensure volunteers do not have to repeat the same training when they move locations and change providers or if they volunteer for multiple providers.”



Tone and Language Sensitivity

The consultation process highlighted the importance of using empowering, supportive language in volunteer training. Respondents advised avoiding bureaucratic terms like “mandatory” and “compliance”, which can feel punitive, and instead using phrases such as “minimum training requirements”, “best practice”, or “supportive”. Suggestions also included renaming modules for clarity and relevance, ensuring the tone promotes engagement rather than resistance.

“Some volunteers don't like to hear the term "mandatory" ...through Covid lockdowns, so some may still feel negative towards that terminology. - Best practice, Required, necessary may be better alternatives.”

Other Feedback

The consultation process generated a range of practical suggestions to support successful implementation. Respondents recommended introducing a 12-month phase-in period for existing volunteers (and two months for new volunteers) to allow time for adjustment, particularly for those with language or digital literacy barriers. Many called for optional refresher training rather than rigid requirements, and for a feedback loop to monitor impacts on recruitment and retention and improve the training manual.

Stakeholders also emphasised clear guidance for special volunteer roles, such as corporate or one-off groups, to clarify whether different requirements should apply. Finally, respondents stressed the need for clearer information on registration categories and compliance obligations, to avoid confusion and unnecessary administrative burden.

“Ultimately, the success of this initiative will depend on thoughtful delivery, practical support, and ongoing engagement with volunteers themselves.”



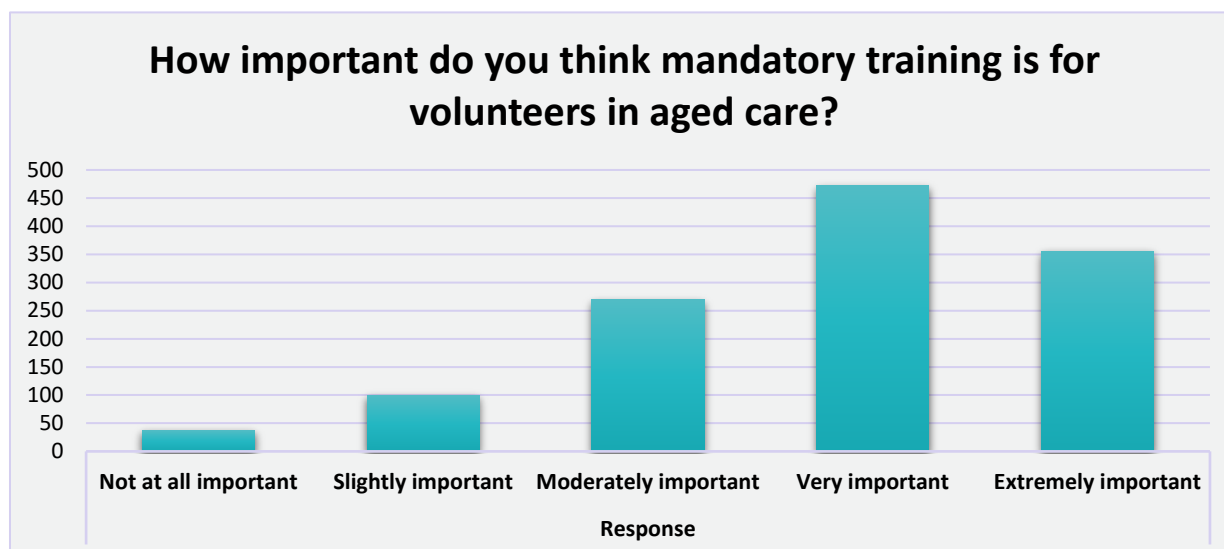


4.2 Feedback on Proposed Training

How important is mandatory training in aged care?

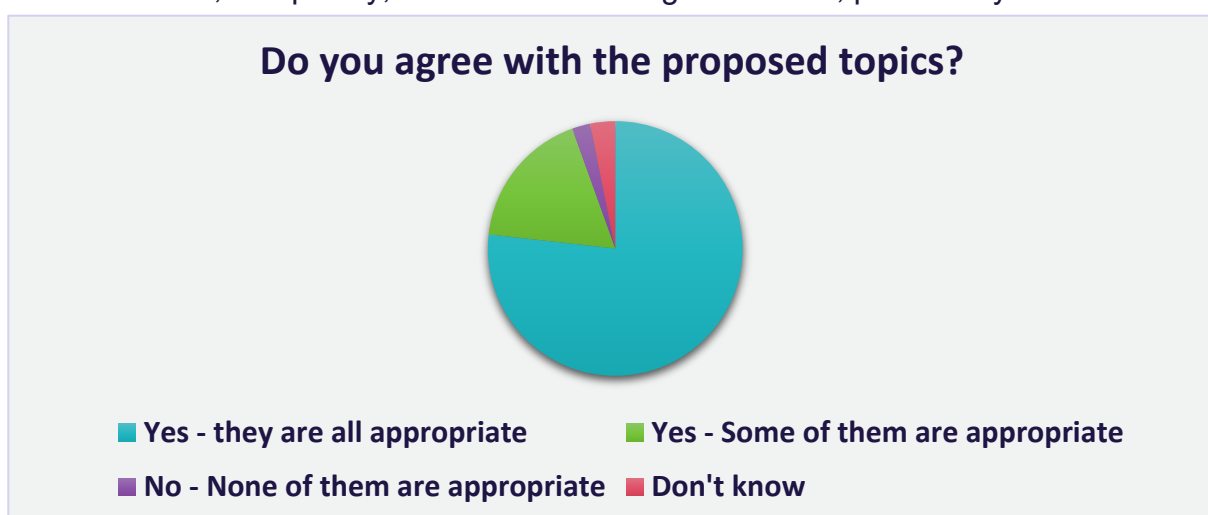


The consultation revealed overwhelming support for mandatory training among aged care volunteers, with nearly 90% of survey respondents rating it as moderately to extremely important. A majority (472) considered it "Very important" and 356 rated it "Extremely important", underscoring strong sector-wide consensus.



Agreement about proposed topics

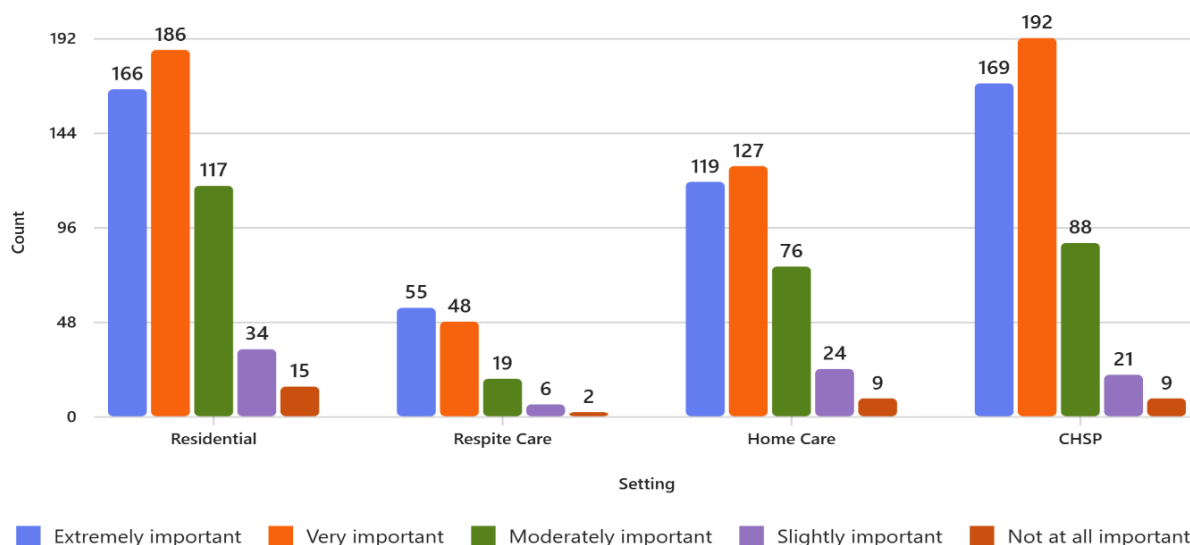
Most respondents (76.8%, n=1,028) agreed all proposed topics were appropriate. A further 17.8% (n=238) felt only some topics were appropriate, while 2.4% (n=32) believed none were appropriate, and 3.0% (n=40) were unsure. Among those who expressed concerns, the most frequently questioned topics were the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS), mentioned negatively in 22.4% of comments (n=92), followed by Understanding Diversity and Inclusion (18.9%, n=78), and Elder Abuse Awareness and Advocacy Pathways (10.4%, n=43). These concerns were typically related to perceived role relevance, complexity, or fears of deterring volunteers, particularly CHSP volunteers.



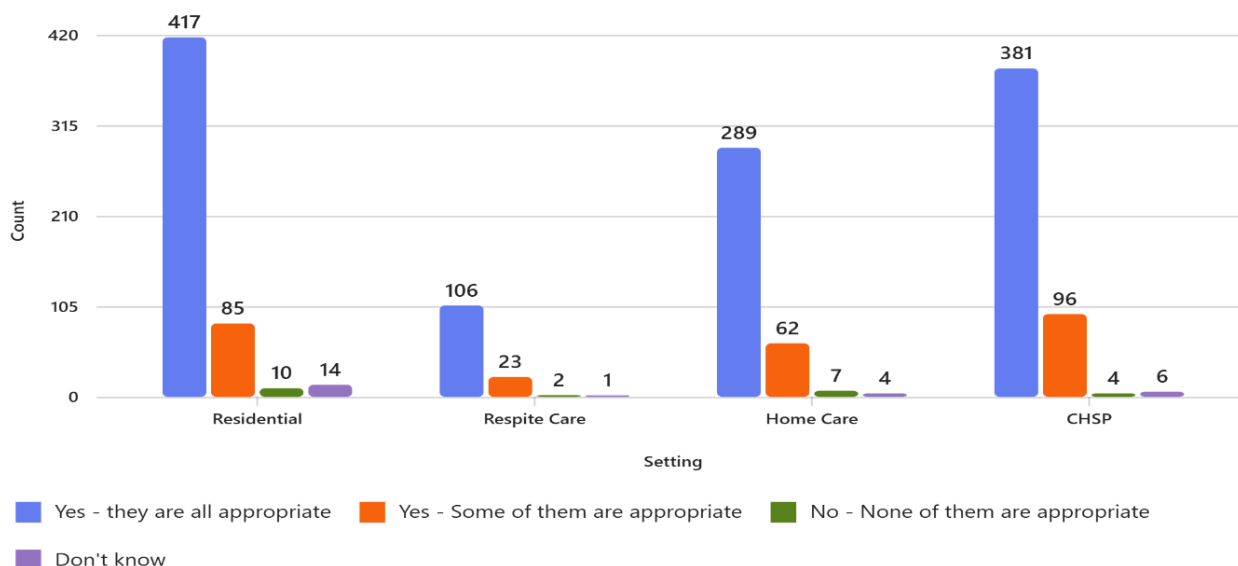


Agreement of proposed training and topics by service type

Analysis across Residential, Respite Care, Home Care, and CHSP settings reveals a strong consensus on the importance of proposed training. Most respondents rated the training as “Extremely important” or “Very important,” with CHSP and Residential settings showing the highest levels of agreement. In contrast, Respite Care consistently received lower importance ratings, indicating some variation in perceived training needs across service types.



Respondents overwhelmingly agreed the proposed training topics were appropriate, particularly in Residential (n=417) and CHSP (n=381) settings. Home Care also demonstrated high levels of agreement, while Respite Care had the lowest overall endorsement. These results suggest broad support for the relevance of the proposed topics, though the degree of agreement varies by service setting.





Agreement about the proposed training – all respondents

Most respondents expressed strong support for the training content and intent, with:

- 81.5% agreeing it covers appropriate topics
- 76.6% believing it will help providers ensure volunteers have the right knowledge
- 68.3% expecting it to improve support for older people
- 62.7% saying it is achievable for volunteers

However, views were mixed on its potential impact on volunteer recruitment and retention:

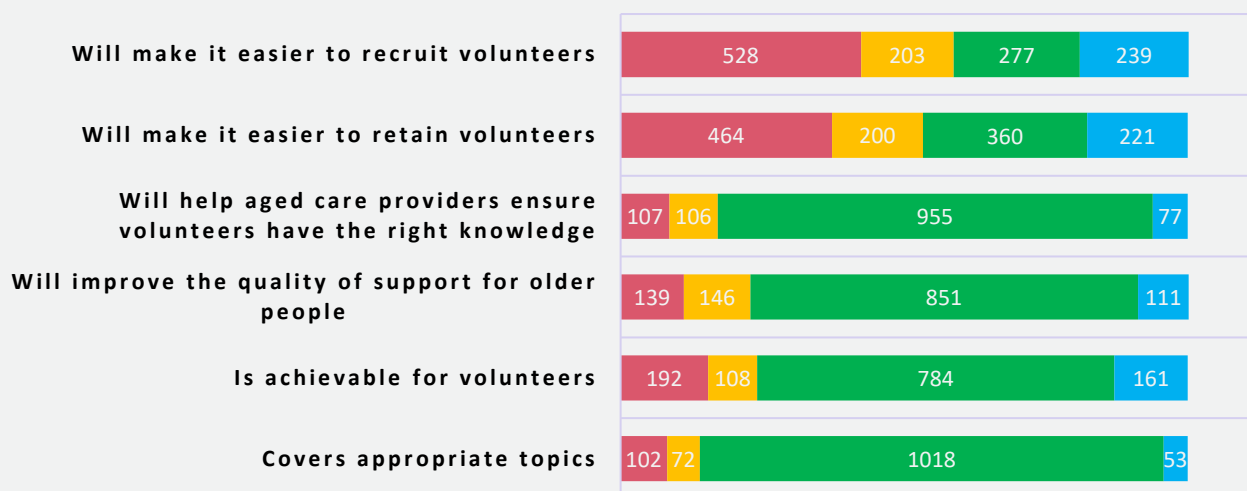
- only 28.5% felt it would help retain volunteers
- just 22.1% believed it would aid recruitment
- the remaining 49.4% were either unsure or disagreed, indicating significant concern about potential barriers to volunteer engagement.

The results demonstrate broad endorsement of the training's relevance and value, particularly in enhancing volunteer knowledge and improving care outcomes. However, concerns remain about its practical impact on volunteer engagement, with many respondents unsure or concerned whether mandatory training will adversely impact volunteer recruitment or retention.

These findings suggest while the training framework is well-received, its implementation must be flexible, inclusive, and sensitive to volunteer capacity to avoid unintended consequences.

Please highlight your level of agreement with the following statements about the proposed training. The training:

Disagree Neither Agree Not sure



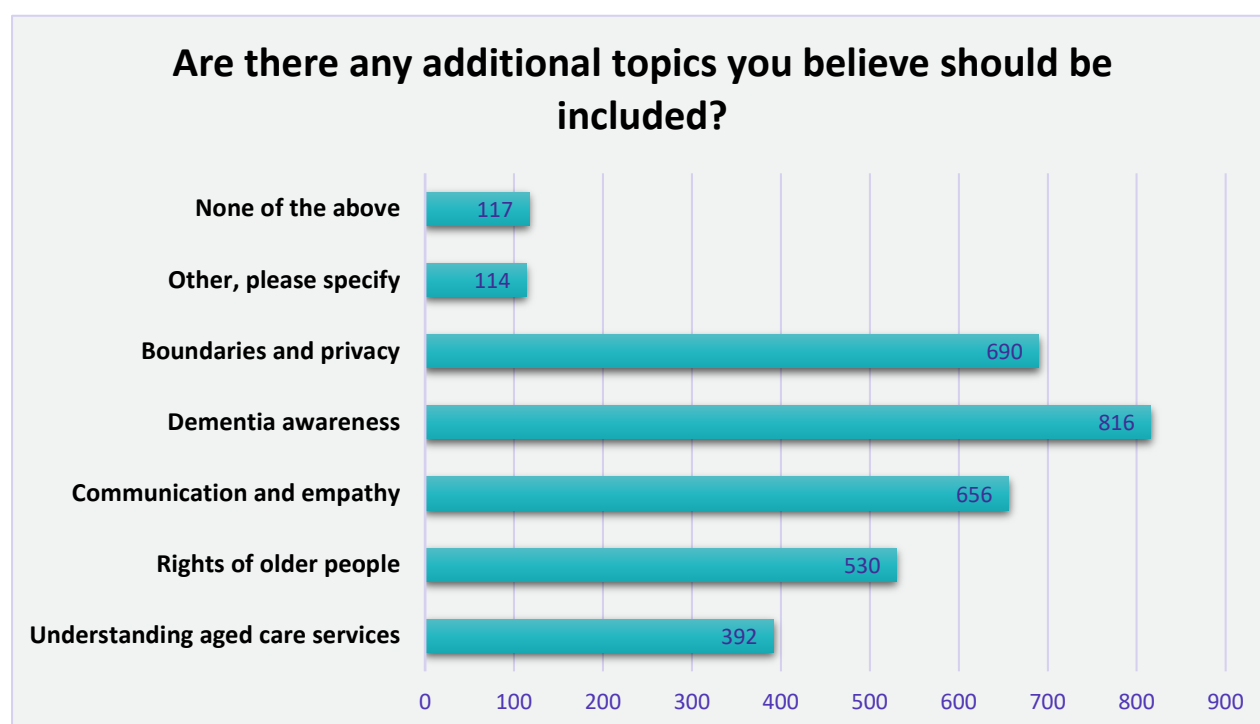


4.3 Additional topics suggested for inclusion



The most frequently suggested additional topics were dementia awareness (24.5%, n=868), boundaries and privacy (21.0%, n=745), communication and empathy (19.7%, n=698), rights of older people (16.0%, n=567), and understanding aged care services (11.8%, n=420). A smaller proportion of respondents suggested other topics (3.5%, n=123), while 3.6% (n=127) did not consider any of the suggested topics should be included.

The strong support for additional training across a variety of topics underscores the importance of equipping volunteers with the training and support they need in their role. When volunteers feel confident in their knowledge and abilities, they are better prepared to understand and respond to the diverse and sometimes complex needs of older people.





Respondents proposed a wide range of topics to enhance volunteer training, grouped into the following themes:

Theme	Topics	Quotes
Ageing Process Awareness	Palliative care (end-of-life, grief and loss)	“Palliative care in aged care setting is crucial, so volunteers can feel comfortable sitting with someone that is dying”
	Dementia awareness	
	Trauma-informed care	“Dementia awareness is very important for volunteers to know about. It’s usually in all residential homes”
	Mental health (older persons mental health first aid, emotional intelligence, confusion/delirium)	
	Infection control and malnutrition awareness	
	Swallowing difficulties at mealtimes	“We should have Dementia training so they can understand the progression and communicate with residents when they are confused”.
	Voluntary assisted dying (how to talk about it)	
	Cognitive, creative, and spiritual enrichment	
Safety & Risk Management	Understanding health issues (e.g., hearing/vision loss, mobility decline)	
	Health and Safety (WHS)	“... I feel it is important for volunteers to have at least some training in wheelchair use & safety (and reporting those in disrepair).”
	Duty of Care	
	First aid training (including online options)	
	Food safety and handling	
	Hoarding and squalor awareness	“I do believe volunteers also need to understand how to spot things in the home to see if the person needs further help, a basic welfare check.”
	Wheelchair etiquette	
	Basic welfare checks and recognising signs of poor care	
	Manual handling	
	Deterioration protocols	



Theme	Topics	Quotes
Volunteer Wellbeing & Support	Self-care and stress awareness Accidental/incidental counselling Volunteer safety and wellbeing Motivation and emotional resilience Boundaries, privacy, and confidentiality Understanding role limitations and responsibilities Emotional intelligence & compassionate presence	“Volunteers have a right to work in a safe environment and need to feel supported to ensure their wellbeing is a priority as well as that of the supported older person”
Person-centred & Inclusive Care	Person-centred active support Respect and dignity Understanding ageism Christian principles and spiritual aspects Disability inclusion, Cultural awareness Hospitality vs clinical care in aged care facilities	“It is important for volunteers to communicate empathically... being culturally sensitive helps build cohesive connections”
Elder Abuse Awareness	Elder abuse awareness (repeated emphasis)	“...suggest including being aware of signs of malnutrition (nutrition 'red flags').”
Understanding Aged Care	Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Standards Overview of Aged Care services	“Understanding Aged Care Services would provide a general awareness of the context of the volunteering.”

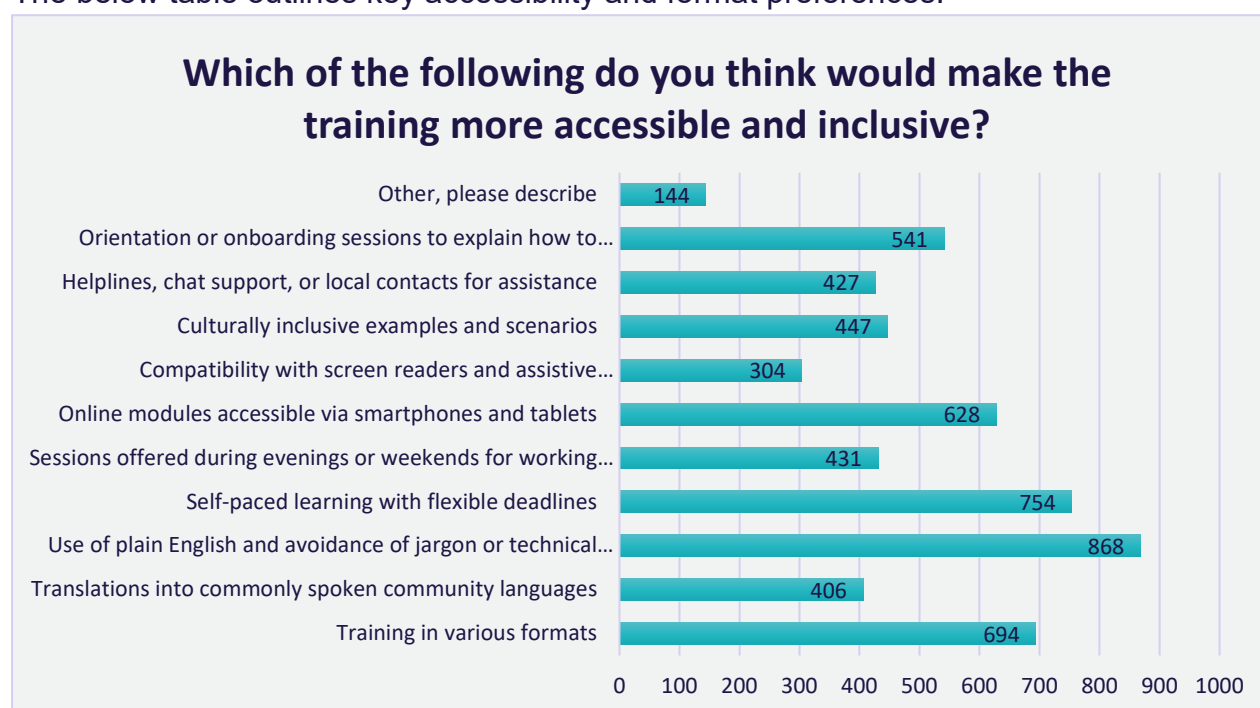


4.4 Preferred Training Formats and Accessibility Considerations



Respondents expressed a strong preference for self-paced, modular learning, ideally delivered in short segments (e.g. 15 minutes). Flexibility in format was key, with support for online, printable, and face-to-face options to suit diverse needs and contexts. Volunteers, particularly older individuals, those in regional areas, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, emphasised the importance of plain English, visual aids, and translated materials to support understanding and engagement.

The below table outlines key accessibility and format preferences:



These findings highlight the need for inclusive, flexible, and accessible training design respecting the diversity of the volunteer workforce and supports equitable participation.



Other suggestions from respondents

Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
In-person and Socially Connected Training	Older volunteers emphasise the importance of face-to-face training to foster connection, support, and engagement.	Group sessions at local facilities One-on-one or small group support Training during volunteer shifts Onsite workshops; Local contacts to conduct training Phone call Buddy and peer supports	“Face-to-face training to enable volunteers to engage with others. “One to one, or small group sessions at that particular facility” “Do training in-person so volunteers meet their peers, become a cohesive team, and feel like they are a valued member of their local team/service”	
	Highly value social interaction.			
Printed and Offline Materials	Strong preference for easy-to-read paper-based resources due to limited digital access or skills, especially among older volunteers.	Hardcopy manuals and fact sheets Reply-paid paper assessments Materials for volunteer managers to deliver in-person training	“Need to have them in paper form as some people do NOT have access to computers. “Paper material version for elderly volunteers and the materials for the Volunteer managers to deliver the in-person training”	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Technology Support and Accessibility	Digital limitations for older or regional volunteers.	IT support during training	"Please do not assume all have computer knowledge"	
	Many find digital platforms challenging	Simple, short modules (10–30 minutes) Access to devices or Microsoft 365 Online modules that are easy to complete and available ongoing In-person opportunities to learn or get help with devices.	"In person IT support at the organisation. Make a time to complete the modules with staff available for IT help" "Keep it simple. Relatable visuals, online peer group training via Zoom or the like as part of the training delivery. Makes the training personal and provides opportunity to clarify and encourage"	
Flexibility and Optionality	Volunteers want choice in how and whether they complete training.	Make training optional or role-specific	"Customise, Flexible, Choice"	
	Avoid a one-size fits all approach	Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Allow self-paced learning Tailor training to specific roles Avoid charging for training. Short videos	"Email toolbox talks or fact sheets, volunteer newsletters with articles and fact sheets, volunteer catchups and afternoon teas for team discussion sessions" "...Please include VIDEOS - too much reading is boring and not RELATIONAL - volunteers want to ENGAGE with people"	

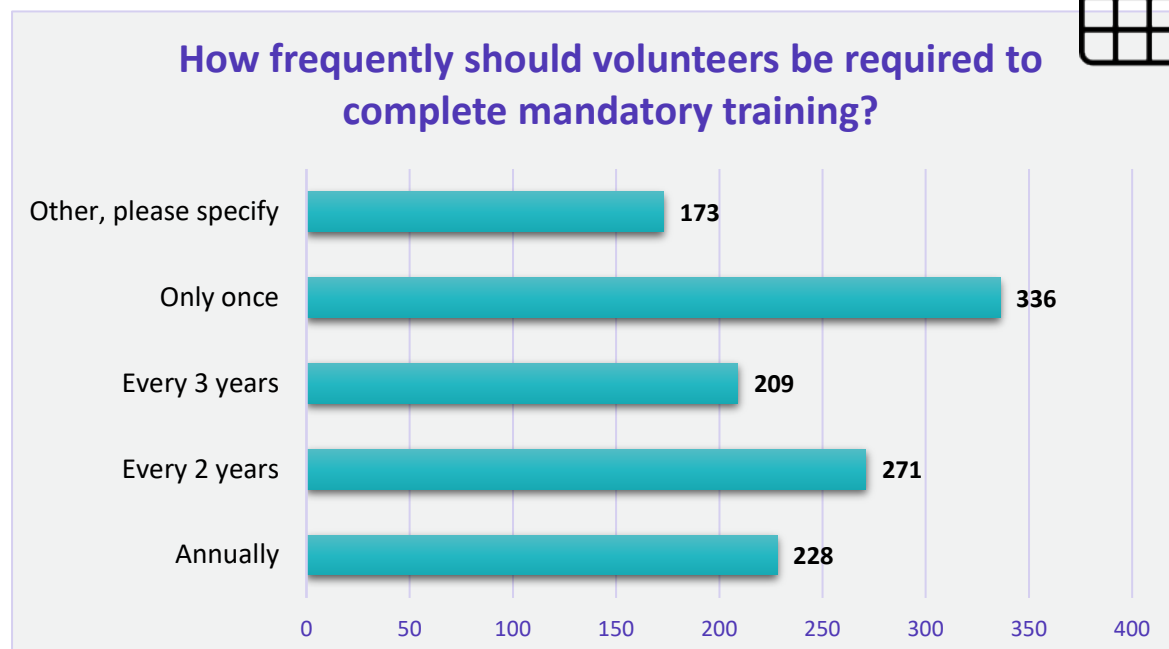


Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Respect for Experience and Time	Volunteers feel their life experience and time commitment should be respected.	Keep content relevant and concise	“Older people have lived full lives... the training is a waste of time. I resent giving more of my time to do training when it is pretty covered by my life experience”	
	Overly formal or irrelevant training can feel patronising or burdensome.	Acknowledge existing skills and life experience Contextualise training for specific tasks or programs Complete during volunteering time Explain the reasoning for the training i.e., the “why” Avoid formal testing		
Supportive Environment and Recognition	Volunteers want to feel valued, not burdened.	Mentoring or buddy systems	“Peer support, buddy systems and lived experience input. Orientation and onboarding to explain reasoning for the need for volunteers to undertake training”. “...ask volunteers what worked well & could be improved”.	
	Training should enhance the volunteer experience, not diminish it. Needs to be achievable	Support from volunteer managers Recognition or incentives (e.g., thank-you gestures, tax breaks); Orientation to explain the purpose of training. Feedback opportunities		
Relatable	Volunteers want relatable scenarios and situations	Tailored scenarios based on real life	“...Present different scenarios and discuss what to do.”	



4.5 Training Frequency

Preferences around training frequency were varied, though the overall trend leaned toward minimal intervention:



While some respondents supported structured refresher training, the majority expressed a preference for minimal or non-mandatory approaches, particularly when no significant changes in policy or legislation have occurred.

There was a strong call for flexibility, with many suggesting training frequency should be tailored to Volunteer role, training topic, and sector changes, such as updates to policy or legislation

A recurring concern was the potential for over-regulation to negatively impact volunteer engagement. Many feared excessive or rigid training requirements could discourage participation, particularly among experienced volunteers.



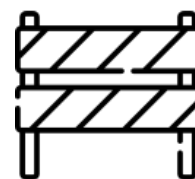
Summary of respondents' comments and suggestions

Theme	Key Issue or Insight	Suggested Approach	Quotes	
Role-Specific Frequency	Training needs vary by volunteer role and context	Initial training + refreshers tailored to role relevance	"Some topics only need to be once, others an annual refresher would be helpful"	
Every Few Years	Align with other mandatory checks	Refresh every 2–3 years or with police checks	"Consider lining it up with police checks every three years" "every 2–3 years with the option to take modules upon demand if they feel they need a refresher."	
One-off / Induction Only	Some training best delivered at onboarding	No refreshers unless role changes	"Training should be done once, usually at induction."	
Updates Only	Avoid unnecessary repetition	Notify volunteers of changes via newsletters or gatherings	"Only when there are changes to legislation and/or policy."	
Volunteer Manager Discretion	Training triggered by performance or issues	Include in volunteer check-ins	"Only if issues arise."	
5-year Intervals	Longer refresh cycle preferred by some	Align with Working With Children Check intervals	"Suggest 5 yrs, similar to Working With Children check."	

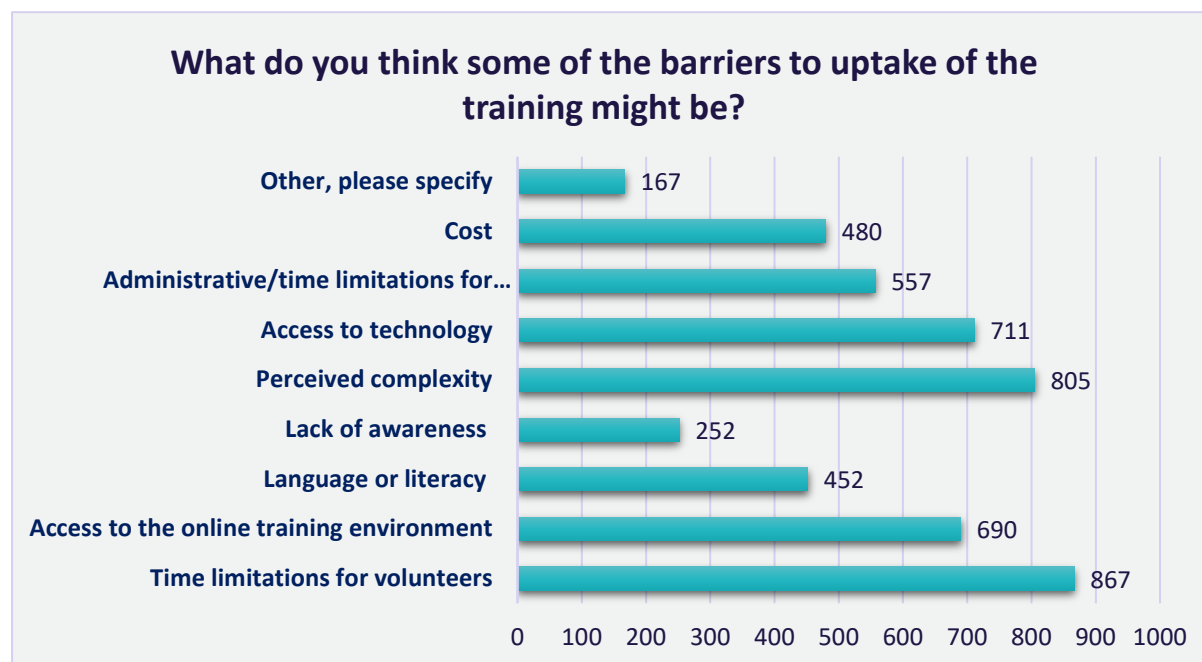


4.6 Identified barriers and challenges

Respondents identified a wide range of potential barriers may impact the uptake of mandatory training among volunteers.



The below graph references the most frequently cited challenges:



Feedback consistently emphasised the need for training to be:

- Flexible in delivery and timing
- Relevant to volunteer roles and contexts
- Accessible across diverse cohorts
- Minimally burdensome, with a preference for light-touch regulation

These findings reinforce the importance of designing training to be easy to understand, inclusive, streamlined, and supportive, particularly for volunteers who may face structural or personal barriers to participation.



Theme	Issue	Quotes	
Training Overload and Burden	Volunteers feel overwhelmed by the amount of training required.	"Adding these requirements will make volunteering almost inaccessible"	
	Training is perceived as excessive, bureaucratic, and time-consuming.	"Our organisation already mandates hours and hours of training for volunteers, adding these requirements as well will make volunteering almost inaccessible."	
	Some feel it turns volunteering into a job rather than a community service.	"They just want to give back they don't want hours and hours of training."	
	Concerns about red tape and administrative load		
Digital Literacy & Accessibility	Concerns about training frequency		
	Older volunteers struggle with online platforms and technology	"Limited digital competency."	
	Limited digital competency and fear of tech are common barriers.	"Volunteer who are older and not in touch with technology, it's a bit difficult for them to navigate and have the training if it's online or in a tech module."	
Volunteer Identity & Motivation	Preference for in-person or hands-on training is frequently mentioned	"We have volunteers who don't have computers or smart phones so need an in-person or paper-based format."	
	Volunteering is driven by deep respect and a sense of privilege in serving others, especially older people.	"Volunteers are often older people looking to give back or find a sense of purpose, often do not want to learn..."	
	There's a strong desire to keep volunteering simple and meaningful and avoid bureaucracy.	"We volunteer because we have so much respect for our elders and we are the lucky ones for being in their presence."	



Theme	Issue	Quotes	
Bureaucracy & Compliance Fatigue	Red tape and formalities deter participation.	“Volunteers already complain about all the red tape involved in volunteering”.	
	Mandatory conditions and compliance requirements are seen as deterrents.	“Volunteers across the board find it challenging and sometimes annoying to have to continually 'jump through hoops' to 'give back' to their community...”	
	Volunteers feel undervalued and often treated like paid staff.		
Time Constraints and competing priorities	Volunteers and managers lack time for training.	“Time taken to administer this may be time away from providing care.”	
	Training is often not seen as a priority compared to direct service.	“Volunteers give their time freely and work to their capacity and interests to contribute to their community in a positive manner”.	
	Concerns about time taken away from actual volunteering duties.	“If volunteers are required to spend time in training, they will be disillusioned and stop volunteering.”	
	Long or rigid training requirements may discourage participation.		
Relevance of Training	Training perceived as irrelevant to volunteer roles.	“Some volunteers may already be knowledgeable in this space and feel that the training is unnecessary.”	
	Many respondents question the relevance of training to their roles.	“Understanding how the training may be relevant to their role. If volunteers are older, they will likely do better with in-person training rather than online.”	
	Some feel they already possess the necessary skills or experience.		
	Resistance to training perceived as unnecessary or redundant.		

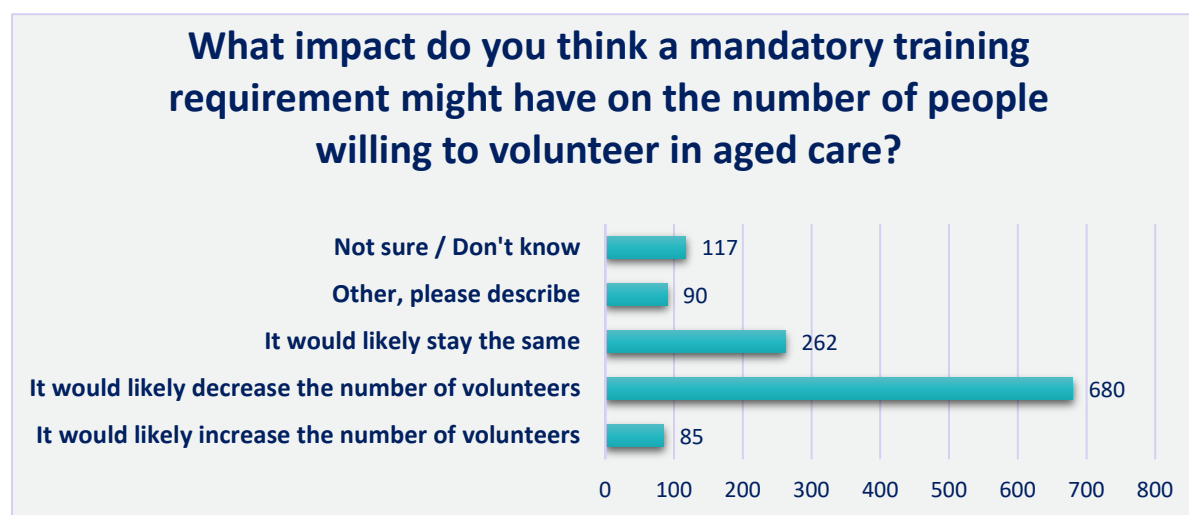


Theme	Issue	Quotes	
Cultural & Disability Inclusion	Training may unintentionally exclude volunteers from CALD backgrounds and those with disabilities.	“Participants with mild to moderate intellectual disability may not be able to complete or retain the training content.” “This is a challenging area to get the mix just right more complicated in CALD communities where the concept of training for volunteering may not be understood.”	
	Volunteers fear being treated like paid staff.	“Volunteers just want to help people without all the ‘required’ or mandated training.”	
Role Clarity & Risk Proportion	Volunteers may feel overburdened by compliance expectations.	“Volunteers are volunteers. They provide their time freely and without reward. They are not interested in getting involved in public service driven box ticking.”	
	Confusion whether volunteers are considered “aged care workers” under the Act.		
Funding & Resourcing	Volunteer managers lack resources to coordinate training, especially in regional or small organisations.	“Mandatory training and other aspects of the aged care reforms add to the Volunteer Manager’s role and place further barriers for recruitment and engagement of volunteers.”	
	Training delivery (e.g., face-to-face, tech support) requires time and staff	“Volunteer managers will have a bigger job recruiting new volunteers while also ensuring new and current volunteers are trained... Further support for this work would be necessary.”	
	Volunteer engagement is costly and often unfunded		



4.7 Impact on Volunteer Numbers

Feedback revealed a mix of views regarding the potential impact of mandatory training on volunteer numbers. The majority expressed concern it may reduce participation, particularly among older volunteers or those with limited time or digital access. Many felt the training could be too demanding, time-consuming, or misaligned with the nature of volunteer roles, risking disengagement.



Some respondents saw potential benefits, especially if the training is relevant, concise, and accessible. They noted well-designed training could:

- Improve volunteer quality and confidence
- Attract younger individuals seeking experience or employment pathways

“The actual impact will depend on how the training is delivered and presented.”

“While mandatory training may be a barrier for some, it will go a long way to ensuring only those who are committed to the role engage. They will be a better quality volunteer with proper training, will be more invested, better able to support their clients, and more likely to stay in their role for longer.”



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Negative Impacts on Volunteer Numbers	May deter older or time-poor volunteers	Avoid overwhelming requirements and offer flexible formats	“Volunteering is at an all-time low now, with many being in their 70s. Mandatory training will see numbers of volunteers decline even more.”	
	Training seen as overwhelming or bureaucratic	Keep training short, relevant, and accessible	“Mandatory training will diminish the few volunteers you already have.”	
Conditional Acceptance	Acceptance depends on relevance, brevity, and delivery	Tailored, role-specific modules preferred Respect for age, culture, and tech literacy	“If it’s relevant and seen to be, then it will have a greater impact.” “Multilingual and culturally adapted resources.”	
Positive Impacts and Opportunities	Better quality and commitment Good for recognition of the important roles of volunteers Supports Volunteer Managers and improves standards	Use training to enhance volunteer preparedness Provide certificates of completion Use training to ease burden on staff	“Training gives weight to the volunteer role.” “May attract young people seeking employment pathways.”	



4.8 What Volunteer Managers are seeking

Nearly 80% of Volunteer Managers across the aged care sector expressed strong support for the proposed training reforms. Their feedback highlighted the reforms' potential to:

- Standardise volunteer expectations
- Improve the quality of care
- Reduce the burden on managers, particularly those working in isolation

Volunteer managers emphasised the need for flexibility, inclusion, and practical support to ensure training is accessible and effective for all volunteers regardless of age, background, or digital literacy.

Key recommendations and supports included:

- Flexible delivery formats: Online, paper-based, face-to-face, and self-paced options to accommodate diverse learning preferences.
- Engaging and relevant content: Scenario-based modules, micro-trainings, and mentorship programs to support onboarding and retention.
- Administrative support tools: Step-by-step facilitation guides, FAQs, checklists, and templates for tracking attendance, issuing certificates, and collecting feedback.

Challenges identified:

- Digital access limitations, especially for older or rural volunteers
- Time constraints for managers to implement and support training
- Resistance to change, particularly around mandatory police checks and training requirements

To address these, managers suggested:

- Providing printed materials and group learning options
- Using clear, simple language and visual aids (e.g. videos, diagrams)
- Offering culturally sensitive resources for CALD communities
- Supplying a letter from the Department to help explain the changes to volunteers
- Ensuring funding support to enable implementation

Overall, Volunteer Managers called for a practical, inclusive, and well-resourced rollout supporting both volunteers and those who manage them.





4.6.1 Volunteer Managers concerns

Volunteer Managers across the sector have shared valuable insights on what would help them successfully implement and support volunteer training under the *Aged Care Act 2024*. Their suggestions reflect a strong focus on flexibility, inclusion, and practical support. The following list captures the key tools, resources, and delivery options they recommended to ensure training is accessible, engaging, and effective for all volunteers.

“We don’t have the time, resources, or support to roll this out properly, and I worry it will discourage volunteers rather than empower them.”

Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Digital Access Limitations	Many volunteers lack email, internet, or confidence using technology.	Provide printed materials and simple digital formats, group sessions	The volunteers ...are very resistant to undertaking online training (many don't even have an email) and so it will be time consuming and require a multi-pronged approach to ensure that the volunteers are able to undertake mandatory training. My biggest concern will be that many will say it's just too hard.”	
Time Constraints	Volunteer managers have limited time to support training.	Provide facilitator-friendly resources and reduce administrative burden.	“The responsibility of the training module should not be placed on the volunteer coordinators or managers as we are often very limited with time.”	
Funding	Volunteer Managers under-resourced to deliver training	Allocate funding to support Volunteer Managers	“Specified funding should be allocated to volunteer management to implement reforms such as mandatory training”	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Resistance to Change	Volunteers hesitant about police clearance and mandatory training.	Simplify requirements and provide clear rationale for training.	"...many are already not happy about having to apply for a police clearance and this will be the next hurdle for them to pass through."	

What volunteer managers are seeking

Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Diversity	Multicultural and rural communities face challenges in delivering training.	Use simple, culturally sensitive materials and multilingual formats. Scenario-based examples of common challenges for volunteers from diverse backgrounds, or unique needs	"Having very simple, easy to understand for all cultures to access and understand is important."	
Accessibility and Simplicity	Training must be easy to understand and accessible to all volunteers.	Use clear language, visual aids, and concise formats.	"Make it as simple and to the point as possible." "Interesting, clear, brief. Not too much on a page. Well presented."	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
FAQs and Support Tools	Volunteer managers need tools to reduce facilitation burden.	Provide guidance handbook, FAQs, troubleshooting tips, checklists, and contact support.	“FAQ's easily accessible.” “FAQs, troubleshooting tips, checklists, facilitation guides would all be helpful. Someone to contact if we need help.”	
Clear Instructions	Facilitators and volunteers need step-by-step guidance.	Create guides, checklists, and templates in multiple languages.	“Step-by-step guides, simple language, in different languages, checklists.” “Step-by-step facilitation guides, checklists, FAQs, troubleshooting tips, templates.”	
Checklists and Templates	Tracking progress and compliance is challenging.	Provide printable resources like attendance sheets and certificates.	“Templates and printable resources – such as attendance sheets, feedback forms, certificates of completion, and reminder notices.”	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Videos and Visual Aids	Volunteers prefer engaging and easy-to-navigate formats.	Use short videos, scenarios, and audio options. Include diagrams and pictures to help understanding	“Use the principle of ‘less is more’. Keep it succinct. Use videos if possible.” “Videos with scenarios are helpful, rather than a lot of required reading. Or audio option alongside of text.”	
Training Materials	Group learning needs support materials.	Provide downloadable workbooks and visual slides.	“Workbook style downloadable used in a group setting.” “Visual aids or slides to support delivery and keep sessions engaging.”	
Preferred Delivery Methods	Volunteers have diverse access needs and preferences.	Offer online, group, centralised, and offline formats. Pairing new volunteers with experienced ones to ease onboarding.	“Very few of our current volunteers are able to do online training modules, or have a preference for in group sessions that also provide an element of social connection for them.”	
Department Communication	Need to explain changes clearly to volunteers.	Provide a drafted letter from the Department.	“... a drafted letter from the Department to explain to volunteers why the change is happening and the impact it will have on them.”	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Volunteer Role Clarity	Volunteers may not fully understand their responsibilities under the new Act.	Include a clear overview of volunteer roles and responsibilities under the Aged Care Act.	"Volunteers need to know exactly what's expected of them under the new Act. Without a clear outline, it's hard to explain why the training matters."	
Centralised Information Access	Inconsistent access to updates and training materials.	Create a centralised hub for training resources, updates, and FAQs.	"It's hard to keep up when updates and training materials are scattered. A central hub would make everything easier to find."	
Portable Training	Volunteers may work across multiple organisations.	Provide transferable training certificates recognised sector wide.	"...having a training certificate that's recognised everywhere would save so much time."	
Train-the-Trainer Support	Managers need help preparing to deliver training.	Offer train-the-trainer resources and helplines for support.	"I need more support to deliver training confidently. Access to resources and a helpline would really help"	

5. Diversity and inclusion considerations



The consultation process highlighted the importance of designing mandatory training inclusive of CALD communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers. Respondents emphasised training must be respectful of cultural values, accessible across language and literacy levels, and adaptable to different lived experiences.

Training must be accessible and flexible, recognising the diversity of volunteers including older people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and those in rural or remote communities.

There was a strong preference for offline formats to accommodate diverse needs and reduce tech-related barriers.

“Multilingual and culturally adapted resources—especially for CALD volunteers.”

“Clear, concise language that is easy to understand. Not too much irrelevant information as it may appear overwhelming.”

Language Accessibility

Many CALD volunteers experience language barriers.

Respondents called for:

- Plain English materials
- Translations into key community languages
- Visual aids and infographics to support comprehension
- Easy Read formats to support volunteers with intellectual or cognitive disabilities
- Multilingual resources to support dementia awareness and inclusive communication

Cultural Relevance

Training should reflect diverse cultural norms and values.

Suggestions included:

- Culturally adapted scenarios and examples
- Modules on cultural safety and respectful communication
- Inclusion of First Nations perspectives and practices
- Recognition of culturally specific manifestations of dementia and disability
- Trauma-informed and culturally safe care approaches, especially for volunteers supporting people with dementia or disability



Literacy and Learning Styles

Some volunteers may have limited formal education or prefer oral and visual learning. Respondents recommended:

- Audio options alongside written content
- Group-based learning and peer support
- Avoiding jargon and overly technical language
- Short, self-paced modules (e.g., 15–30 minutes)
- Scenario-based learning for dementia and disability contexts
- Supported learning models for volunteers with cognitive or intellectual disability

Trust and Engagement

Building trust is essential, especially in communities with historical or systemic barriers to participation. Respondents suggested:

- Co-designing content with diverse stakeholders and representatives
- Using community leaders or bilingual facilitators
- Offering orientation sessions to explain the purpose and benefits of training
- Involving disability advocates and dementia organisations in co-design
- Providing flexible onboarding pathways for volunteers with disability or limited digital access





6. General comments and considerations



Overarching comments show a generally constructive and engaged tone, with many contributors expressing support for the initiative while raising practical concerns and offering thoughtful suggestions.

Many contributors expressed appreciation for the initiative, while others voiced frustration over perceived bureaucracy and complexity. Some comments are philosophical and heartfelt, reflecting deep respect for the elderly and the value of volunteering. Others are blunt and critical, warning of volunteer attrition, bureaucratic overreach, and loss of community spirit.

“Training for volunteers is very much needed and a great lead into the workforce for people looking to be employed. Also regulates volunteer understanding on how best to support older people with their aged care needs”

“This is something the sector does require but can’t be too onerous at an organisational level”

Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Concerns about mandatory requirements	Many volunteers support the idea of training but are concerned about the term “mandatory” and its impact on volunteer motivation.	Reframe language (e.g., “core knowledge” or “essential training” instead of “mandatory”); offer optional modules.	“MANDATORY and VOLUNTEER. Volunteers simply walk away when something becomes Compulsory/Mandatory” “I very much welcome the proposal of mandatory training in aged care, though the term ‘mandatory’ often causes upset, particularly amongst our older volunteers.”	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Risk of volunteer attrition	Many fear it will deter new volunteers and cause existing ones to leave. Training is perceived as burdensome, especially for older or long-serving volunteers.	Keep training short, relevant, and role-specific Allow flexibility in delivery and timing.	"Long-time volunteers may feel insulted by being asked to do basic training again."	
Technology and accessibility concerns	A significant number of volunteers are older and digital literacy and issue or lack of access to devices. Online-only training is seen as exclusionary Preference for Offline or Face-to-Face Formats	Provide paper-based options Use large fonts and simple language Peer support, and social interaction Group training options Simple easy guide booklets or leaflets	"Most volunteers are older and retired or semi-retired... make it simple and accessible." "Not everyone has a computer or knows how to use one. Training must be inclusive." "Some volunteers are overwhelmed by technology..." "a booklet form of training, with the questions and answers, then they can have it with them all the time"	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Volunteer managers are under-resourced	Increased training requirements add to administrative burden.	Provide funding templates, and implementation support integrate with existing systems.	"With only 0.42 EFT, I don't know how we'd manage the admin side of this." "We need support to roll this out. It can't just be another task dumped on us."	
Volunteer identity and motivation	Volunteers feel they are being treated like paid staff, undermining the spirit of volunteering.	Offer certificates of appreciation, host events, and social learning opportunities. Include a subsection in manual on importance of preserving volunteer identity, with quotes and examples of how training can be empowering rather than burdensome	"Volunteers should feel embraced, valued, and actively involved." "Recognition goes a long way. A simple thank you can make a big difference." "Make it fun, and a method of connection between volunteers" "When volunteers are supported and appreciated, it strengthens their commitment. it also inspires others to become volunteers."	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Equity and inclusion	CALD volunteers and those with disabilities face additional barriers.	Co-design training with diverse communities.	"Investing in culturally relevant training is not just a capacity issue—it's a matter of equity and safety."	
		provide translated materials and trauma-informed content.	"Some volunteers need materials in their own language or with visual support."	
Training Duration and Frequency	Keeping training concise and considerate of volunteers' time and capacity	Need for thoughtful design and implementation of the manual to meet volunteers needs	"Minimise the overall time volunteers need for training—many hours will turn people away, but 1–1.5 hours every few years should be manageable and needed." "Training should take no longer than 15 minutes."	
Training as a support, not surveillance	Volunteers fear being treated like staff or being micromanaged.	Emphasise training as empowerment and safety, not compliance.	"Training should feel like support, not surveillance." "We're here to help, not to be monitored like employees."	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Special Volunteer Roles	How will mandatory training apply to non-traditional or occasional volunteer groups.	Clarify if these volunteers need to undertake the training	“What about corporate volunteer groups who only attend as a group and as a one-off? Should there be different mandatory requirements for regular engagement as opposed to these one-off situations?”	
Portability of training	Frustrations from volunteers who volunteer across multiple providers or change providers needing to do training again	Training certificates upon completion that are recognised and accepted across other aged care providers	“Mandatory training presents an opportunity to allow portability of training between aged care providers to ensure volunteers do not have to repeat the same training when they move locations and change providers or if they volunteer for multiple providers”	
Clarify Registration Categories	Confusion around categories 1–6 and their implications for mandatory training	Include a clear definition or table explaining registration categories and their relevance to training requirements. Adding a visual aid or link to a simplified explainer.	“Clarify how this training applies to CHSP providers, especially those outside registration categories 4 to 6”	



Theme	Issue	Suggestions	Quotes	
Phase in period	Providers will need to allocate additional time and resources to complete mandatory training for existing volunteers. Some volunteers require additional support	Phase in period of up to 12 months for existing volunteers, and two months for new volunteers	“It is preferable for training to be completed prior to volunteer commencement, for volunteers with greater training barriers e.g. First Language Other Than English, lack of digital literacy, this is not always possible”	





7. Recommendations and next steps

The success of mandatory training for aged care volunteers depends on balancing regulatory requirements with the spirit of volunteering. Training must empower rather than alienate, enhancing the volunteer experience while safeguarding the wellbeing of older people in Australia.

This section outlines the key recommendations and proposed next steps, based on insights gathered through the national consultation process.

Key Recommendations

- **Flexible, Accessible Delivery:** Offer training in multiple formats—printed, in-person, online, and multilingual and compatible with assistive technologies.
- **Stakeholder Co-Design:** Involve volunteers, managers, and diverse community representatives in shaping content reflecting their motivations, identities, and prior experience.
- **Support for Volunteer Managers:** Develop facilitator-friendly resources including handbooks, templates, checklists, and offline tools to ease implementation.
- **Training Portability:** Introduce a centralised certificate system to recognise and transfer training across organisations, reducing duplication.
- **Clear Communication of Purpose:** Explain the rationale and benefits of training in plain language, reassuring volunteers it is simple, relevant, and respectful of their time.
- **Empowering Language:** Use terms like “minimum requirements” or “core knowledge” instead of “mandatory” and “best practice” not “Strongly Recommended” to foster engagement.
- **Minimise Burden:** Keep training concise, scenario-based, and avoid unnecessary repetition or formal testing.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Co-design with CALD, First Nations, and disability advocates. Provide translated, Easy Read, and audio/visual resources.
- **Implementation Support:** Allow a phase-in period (up to 12 months for existing volunteers) and provide clear orientation and communication.
- **Ongoing Monitoring:** Establish feedback loops to track recruitment, retention, and volunteer experience, informing continuous improvement.

“The proposed training manual is a strong step toward improving safety, quality, and consistency in volunteer involvement across aged care services. Its flexibility, focus on legal compliance, and emphasis on diversity are all positive.”



What is next?

The next phase will focus on co-designing practical resources and rolling out training to be accessible, empowering, as well as easy to understand and implement.

- Finalise the training manual using feedback and suggestions from consultation.
- Co-design content with peak bodies and diversity stakeholders to reflect accessibility, diverse needs and experiences.
- Develop practical resources for Volunteer Managers, including templates, guides, and checklists.
- Create clear communications to explain the purpose and benefits of training in plain, inclusive language.
- Launch a centralised certificate system to support training recognition across providers.
- Roll out training in multiple formats—print, online, face-to-face, multilingual, and accessible.
- Support phased implementation, allowing time for volunteers and managers to adjust.
- Monitor volunteer experience and participation to guide future improvements



The consultation process has illuminated a nuanced and deeply considered perspective from stakeholders across the aged care sector regarding the implementation of mandatory training for volunteers. While there is broad support for structured, nationally consistent training to enhance safety, quality, and confidence in aged care volunteering, this support is conditional and tempered by significant concerns.

Concerns about digital exclusion, bureaucratic burden, and volunteer attrition are prominent. Many fear overly complex or frequent training requirements could deter participation, especially in rural and culturally diverse communities. Volunteer Managers also express the need for practical tools, clear guidance, and government support to implement training effectively without overwhelming limited resources.

Despite these challenges, the tone of the feedback is largely constructive. Volunteers and Volunteer Managers alike are committed to improving aged care outcomes and are willing to engage with training respectful of their time, experience, and motivations. There is a clear call for co-designed solutions, recognition of prior learning, and portable certification to support mobility and reduce duplication.

Ultimately, the success of the mandatory training initiative will depend on its ability to balance regulatory requirements with the spirit of volunteering, ensuring training empowers rather than alienates, and enhancing volunteer experience while safeguarding the wellbeing of older people in Australia.

