

# Podcast 85 – Volunteering in Australia

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,  
with Rob McCormack

*Podcast Number 85 – Volunteering in Australia*

<http://traffic.libsyn.com/slowenglish/podcast85.mp3>

Hi,

Volunteers are people who willingly give some of their time in order to help others, without getting paid for it. In Australia, like in other countries around the world, volunteering is very important because, without it, some very important things would not get done at all. In this podcast, I would like to tell you a little about volunteering in Australia.



Volunteers from Rotary International in NSW raise money for charity by running a sausage sizzle at the local Bunnings hardware store.

(Photo by Henk Tobbe (vk2gwk) –  
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Formal volunteering is when your volunteer work is done through an organization. For example, it might be the Red Cross, or your local church or mosque, or for a local sporting club, or for some other type of charity organization. Informal volunteering is when you help out or care for somebody in your family, or a friend or a neighbour. They might be sick, or have a disability or be very old. In Australia however, by far the most common type of volunteering is the former, through an organization. In fact, a recent survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS for short) found that around 31% of Australians over 15 years of age took

part in some formal volunteering in 2014. That's a lot higher than I expected. The most popular areas for volunteering in 2014, according to the ABS survey, were sport and recreation organizations (31%) and education and training organizations (24%). This tells us that most formal volunteering in Australia is probably in sporting clubs, where parents volunteer as coaches, judges, referees, in fundraising and in organizing and administering the club. Many volunteers in education and training are most likely volunteering in the schools where their children attend, helping out in the classroom, in the school's canteen or in fundraising for the school. One common way that schools raise money is by having a school fete, which is usually run by volunteer parents. I will talk about school fetes in another podcast, as this is quite a common fund raising activity in Australia.

It is also interesting to look at how much time Australians are spending on volunteering. The 2014 ABS survey shows that, on average, people volunteer for around 56 hours per year, or about 1 hour per week. For example, in my state of Victoria in 2014, those aged between 35 and 44 years and those aged between 65 and 74 years do the most volunteering. The former are typically those people with young children and the latter are those who are nearly always retired. The figures also show that the largest number of volunteer hours are given by those aged 65 to 84 years. This makes sense, as these people are generally retired and have the most time available, just like me.

During my working life, I was always very busy with either my work, or my family life. I didn't have a lot of time to do volunteer work. Nonetheless, I did help out with the sporting clubs in which my children were involved. For example, I used to love doing the scoring during the cricket matches my children were involved in. Now that I am retired and my children have left home, I have more time to do the things that I enjoy, and that includes some volunteer work. For example, writing and recording my Slow English podcast is volunteer work, which I am happy to do without payment. I also volunteer for about 2 hours a week at an aged care home

near where I live. I organize and lead a game of Scrabble for about 6 – 8 of the residents. I must admit it is a lot of fun, both for me and for them. It helps them keep their minds active, as all of these residents are over 85 years of age. I also try to make it fun and enjoyable. I have been volunteering at the same aged care home since I retired in 2011.

Doing volunteer work makes me feel good. I'm not sure how to explain that. I guess it's a bit like giving a present. It is said that the person who gives the present enjoys it more than the person receiving the present. This is especially the case as we get older. This is also the case with volunteers. According to the ABS 2014 survey on volunteering, 64% of people said that they do it in order to help others and the community, while 57% said it gave them personal satisfaction. That is certainly true in my case. It gives you a good feeling to know that you are giving back to your community and helping others. That's why I love it so much when my Slow English listeners write to me to tell me that they enjoy and value my podcasts. I also love it when my Scrabble players in the aged care home thank me for coming and say how much they enjoyed it. Every week they thank me and I will never tire of that.

### [For Volunteers](#)

I think the health of a community can be measured by how much volunteering is happening. Volunteering is good for everybody, both for those who are doing the volunteering, and for those lucky enough to have volunteers helping them out. I hope that continues in Australia.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at [rob@slowenglish.info](mailto:rob@slowenglish.info). I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about

yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

## Podcast 85 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

[Start quiz](#)

### Vocabulary

a bit like = a little like

according to = when someone else says something

activity = things people do

administering = helping an organization to run correctly. For example, writing down information, collecting fees

aged care home = a place where very old people live when they can't live at home any more

attend = to go to

Australian Bureau of Statistics = a part of Australia's government which collects and reports useful information about Australia's people

available = when there is a lot of something

canteen = a place in a school where you can buy food for lunch

charity = an organization which helps people in need

church = a place where Christians go to worship

coaches = people who teach you how to play sport

common = something you see very often

community = the people you live with, in your town or city

disability = when you are not able to do some things because of a problem with your body or mind

education = when you are learning things in a school, college or university

expected = what you or others think will happen in the future

fete = a market where you sell things in order to raise money, usually for an organization like a school

formal = something that is organized

former = (here) when two things are talked about – the former is the first one

fundraising = asking people for money for your organization

giving back = to do something for someone, after they have done something for you

in order to = so that (you can do something)

informal = the opposite of formal, not organized by a group

involved = when you are part of an activity

judges = (in sport) people who decide how well you have played a sport

latter = when two things are talked about – the latter is the

second one

measured = to find out how heavy, or tall, or long, or good, or bad something is

mosque = a place where Muslims go to worship

neighbour = someone who lives near you

nonetheless = even though there are things against this

organization = a group of people who work together in an organized way

paid = when someone has given you money for doing work

present = something a person gives you, a gift

receiving = to be given something

recent = just a short time ago

recording = to make a copy of music or a voice so that it can be played again and again

recreation = when you are doing things just for fun or to relax

referees = (in sport) people who make you play according to the rules

residents = people who live in the same place. For example, a home

retired = when you are no longer working, usually because you are 65 years or older

satisfaction = the feeling when you like something and it makes you feel good

scoring = to write down the points which each player has got, usually in a sports game

Scrabble = a word game played by a group of people

sense = when something is a good idea

spending = giving your money to someone because you are buying something

survey = when the same questions are asked of many people

tire = to become tired, when you need a rest

training = when you are learning things about how to do a job

type = a group of things or people that are the same in some ways

typically = an example of something that you see many times

value = (here) when you think something is good and you want to keep it or get some more

willingly = happily, when you chose to do something without being told that you must do it