



# Peer Support Volunteer position description

Position title	Peer Support Volunteer
Reports to	Team Leader Operations and Volunteer Coordinator
Location	<p>Counterpart Resource Centre            Level 2, Queen Victoria Women's Centre            210 Lonsdale Street            Melbourne</p> <p>Opportunities exist to attend forums across Victoria on occasion and once volunteers have finished their orientation period, there may be the option to occasionally volunteer from home.</p> <p>Volunteers with at least one year's experience can also choose to volunteer in the hospital-based Bridge of Support program at Sunshine, The Royal Melbourne, and The Royal Women's hospitals and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.</p>
Shifts	9.30am–2.30pm Monday, Wednesday and Thursday (in the Resource Centre)

## What is peer support?

Peer support happens when people, linked by a common experience, share empathy, understanding and support. At Counterpart, peer support is about listening in a way that is sensitive to the other individual's needs and experiences. It may involve talking about aspects of your personal experience, but only when it is helpful and meaningful to the woman you are supporting.

Counterpart's peer support complements the support and assistance offered by health professionals. We never provide medical, legal or financial advice. Rather we focus on providing the emotional, social and practical support that can help women to live as well as they can, however they define that, following cancer diagnosis.

It is important that Counterpart volunteers know when to suggest appropriate services and health professionals who are able to provide specialist advice on matters that Counterpart does not have either the capacity or expertise to respond to appropriately.

As a Peer Support Volunteer at Counterpart, you won't necessarily talk with women with the same type of cancer to your own.

## As a Peer Support Volunteer at Counterpart you will be supported to:

- provide support to individual people over the phone, in person or by email
- provide interpreter-assisted support over the phone or in person
- assist people seeking information related to a cancer diagnosis
- assist with group activities, including workshops or information sessions
- inform about available support services such as counselling, services or support groups
- record key data about your work and respect the privacy of service users
- assist in maintaining the information and resources available at Counterpart
- contribute to the on-going service improvement at Counterpart
- take advantage of opportunities to volunteer at a hospital-based Bridge of Support program.

## Counterpart Peer Support Volunteers are:

- willing to undertake 6 weeks training (one day a week for 6 weeks)
- willing to embrace the values and principles of Counterpart
- motivated by personal experience of cancer to give support and communicate with empathy
- willing to listen and show compassion
- willing to support women with a different type of cancer to your own cancer experience
- prepared to undertake a comprehensive training and orientation program
- able to work well in a team environment
- available to regularly attend rostered duty at the Resource Centre, usually on a fortnightly basis (unless negotiated differently)
- able to seek out relevant information to support a service user's enquiry and communicate with the service user about the information provided.

## How do I become a Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer?

### 1. Selection process

- Complete an application form online when Counterpart is recruiting volunteers (this usually happens once a year).
- Once applications close, a Counterpart staff member will contact you to invite you to an interview or to notify if you were unsuccessful.
- Interviews are conducted by a small panel of Counterpart staff and Peer Support Volunteers. Our aim is to make these interviews as friendly as possible and it is a chance for you to learn more about the program. Selection of women for participation in the training program will be based on suitability, available training spaces and on ensuring diversity in the volunteer workforce.



## 2. Training requirements

- Counterpart will provide volunteers with a training and orientation program that aims to ensure volunteers are skilled and equipped to undertake their volunteer job role.
- The training program will be for 40 hours spread over six weeks. The face-to-face component of the program will run one day a week from 10.00am–4.30pm in the CBD. Some training will be in your own time at home.
- Following the completion of training each trainee volunteer will be supported and mentored when rostered on in the Resource Centre. This orientation phase is for three months following training.
- During the training and orientation/mentoring period, Counterpart is actively assessing the trainee's suitability for the role of Peer Support Volunteer. This is to ensure the wellbeing of the trainee as well as service users.
- Having completed the orientation phase, the trainee volunteer and Counterpart discuss the volunteering arrangement, and if both parties are willing, the woman is appointed a Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer.
- Peer Support Volunteer work will not fully commence until each participant has successfully completed the training and orientation phase. Although you will continue to be fully supported and mentored as a Peer Support Volunteer, you will work more independently than a trainee.

## On-going training

- On-going in-service training sessions are held three times a year.
- Peer Support Volunteers are expected to attend a minimum of two in-service training sessions each year.
- On-going training involves educational components, 'housekeeping' issues and an opportunity to discuss volunteering experiences – sharing stories about how volunteers are managing in their job role. In-service days provide a good opportunity to connect with the other volunteers and get to know each other.

## Bridge of Support Peer Support Volunteer role

- Peer Support Volunteers who have volunteered at Counterpart for a minimum of 12 months are eligible to provide peer support through our Bridge of Support program (BOS) which runs at hospitals in Parkville and Sunshine.
- Candidates for BOS need to undergo hospital-specific induction training (approximately half a day on-site at the hospital and online modules) and Bridge of Support orientation (approximately one hour on-site at the hospital).
- Candidates will also need to comply with hospital-specific volunteer requirements e.g. having a Police Check or providing proof of certain vaccinations. Requirements vary between hospitals and are not determined by Counterpart.
- Volunteers working at BOS will also be expected to work shifts at the Resource Centre at least once per roster (usually 3 months).

## Support and debriefing

Counterpart works to ensure that all Peer Support Volunteers feel well supported and supervised. Counterpart staff give volunteers an opportunity to debrief and discuss at the end of each shift, particularly when difficult situations arise. In situations where a volunteer needs professional support to help her debrief this will be provided.

## Time commitment

Peer Support Volunteers are generally rostered to work in the Resource Centre five hours per fortnight: 9.30am–2.30pm. This includes a lunch break and time to prepare at the start and debrief at the end.

Volunteers working at the BOS program will be rostered for a four-hour shift at either the Sunshine Hospital or the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (The Royal Melbourne and Royal Women's hospitals and Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre). The day and times of the shift will vary depending on the hospital.

One rostered day per month is generally the minimum commitment, although once a fortnight is more desirable. The maximum commitment is once a week. However, to allow greater access to the Peer Support Volunteer program for women with unique experiences, i.e. women living with advanced / metastatic cancer and younger women, a different level of commitment to work in the Centre may be negotiated.

Given the intensity of the training program, it is hoped that Peer Support Volunteers will commit to Counterpart for a minimum of one year. Special circumstances may require a renegotiation of such a commitment.

***'I enjoy volunteering at Counterpart.  
The friendly supportive staff help me to  
give back in a meaningful way.'***

Counterpart Peer Support Volunteer