

# Volunteering at Counterpart



## A little a bit about Counterpart ...

Counterpart connects, supports and informs women in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment to live well. Counterpart means peer and emphasises the special connection that is created between women who share an experience of a gynaecological or breast cancer. All our services are free and confidential.

Counterpart is a not-for-profit service of Women's Health Victoria and is funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

## About our volunteers

Our volunteers are the backbone of Counterpart and vital to the work we do. They are from diverse backgrounds and bring many skills and qualities. They range in age and experience of breast or gynaecological cancers. To ensure continued diversity, we aim to recruit volunteers from a range of backgrounds; this might include younger women, lesbian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and bilingual women.

Most of our volunteers provide peer support, however we recognise that people may want to contribute to the service in different ways, so we also have volunteers who assist with other aspects of the service. Counterpart encourages the participation of volunteers in the development and operation of the service.

## VOLUNTEER ROLES

### Peer Support Volunteer

Our well-trained Peer Support Volunteers give emotional support, understanding, hope and comfort. Peer support is the cornerstone of our service. These volunteers share their experiences in a helpful and meaningful way to support others affected by breast or a gynaecological cancer. The exchange of knowledge between women who have had a similar experience helps to affirm and normalise what they are going through, in a way others cannot.

Peer Support Volunteers are rostered to work in the Counterpart Resource Centre in the City to provide face-to-face and telephone support and information to individuals and in a group setting. When our Peer Support Volunteers have gained experience, they can also volunteer in the Bridge of Support programs which are offered onsite at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, The Women's Hospital, Peter Mac and Sunshine Hospital.

## Counterpart's values ...

- **Acknowledge Difference** – We recognise that every person's experience of breast or gynaecological cancer is different and must be seen in the broader context of their lives.
- **No Advice** – We will share experiences and give support, we will not give medical, legal or financial advice or counselling.
- **Welcoming Environment** – We will provide a welcoming, accessible and safe environment.
- **Encourage Participation** – We will actively encourage people to participate in the development and operation of our service.
- **Empower People** – We are committed to enhancing people's skills and capacity to make their own informed choices.
- **Respect Privacy** – We respect the privacy of people using our service.
- **Non-Judgemental** – We will provide information and support in a non-judgemental way.
- **High Standards** – We maintain high standards in all aspects of the service and regularly evaluate the service's relevance to consumers, its sustainability, and effectiveness.

Training to become a Peer Support Volunteer is extensive: 40 hours over a six-week period. We recruit for one intake a year.

### Program Support: Library Volunteer

Library Volunteers assist with the maintenance of our resource collection; the process of lending books, journals, CDs and DVDs. Training to become a Library Volunteer is a half-day session including orientation to the Centre.

### Mail Out and other Program Support roles

Often, we seek volunteers to help with mail outs, admin or one-off events. If this is something you are interested in please contact us. Training is offered as required.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

All volunteers receive training to support them in their roles. Those interested in being Peer Support Volunteers can apply online or register their interest by contacting us. If a Program Support Volunteer role is more to your liking we will send you an application form on request.

### What if I haven't experienced cancer?

Our volunteer workforce is primarily women with a personal experience of breast or gynaecological cancer. However, women who have had a close association with the disease are also welcome to apply to be a Program Support Volunteer. This may be a woman who has been a carer, sibling, partner, daughter or close friend of someone who has experienced breast or gynaecological cancer.

### What about age?

Due to legal requirements and insurance considerations, volunteers must be over 18 years and under 80 years.

### What about health?

We would like our volunteers to be in reasonably good physical, mental and emotional health. We understand, from time to time volunteers may experience ill health and be unable to work. It is important for us to be aware of any health issues that may require attention whilst volunteering or that may impact upon your ability to volunteer.

### English is not my first language, is this an issue?

Counterpart welcomes volunteers who speak languages other than English. You may come from a non-English speaking background and be bilingual. However, a good understanding of written and spoken English is necessary.

### What is the time commitment?

This will depend on the volunteer role. As a general rule a commitment of at least 1 x 5 hour shift per month once trained is expected – although once per fortnight is more desirable.

## STILL INTERESTED?

Ring Counterpart on **1300 781 500** or email [info@counterpart.org.au](mailto:info@counterpart.org.au) to tell us you are interested in volunteering. Let us know your name, address and phone number, so we can contact you.

Or, fill out an online application form at [counterpart.org.au/get-involved/volunteer/](http://counterpart.org.au/get-involved/volunteer/)