

## Maroondah Winter Shelter: Our Policies and Procedures

### What is Maroondah Winter Shelter?

Maroondah Winter Shelter is a collaborative effort by churches in the Maroondah area to provide crisis accommodation to males experiencing homelessness during the winter season. Maroondah Winter Shelter aims to provide a bias-free and safe environment where our guests have access to basic needs such as food, water, and shelter as well as the opportunity to socialise with the community. Maroondah Winter Shelter is run predominantly by participating churches of the Maroondah area. However, the program would like to acknowledge the efforts of the volunteer members of the local churches, referring agencies, Maroondah community figures, and volunteers from the wider community. To achieve and maintain our goals of safe accommodation and non-judgmental environment, Maroondah Winter Shelter incorporates policies and procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both our guests and volunteers. These policies and procedures outline the expectations, as well as the non-acceptable behaviours, for both our guests and volunteers.

*The Maroondah Winter Shelter Acknowledges that our program is run on the lands of the Wurundjeri People. We wish to acknowledge them as Traditional Owners of the land. We, as a community, would like to pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.*

## Index

### Guest Policy

Guest requirements	2
Guest Admission into Maroondah Winter Shelter	2
Returning Guests	3
Inappropriate Behaviour	3
Consequences of Inappropriate Behaviour	6
Agreements, Basic Procedures and Expectations	6
Guest Vehicles	7
Covid Related Health and Safety	7

### Volunteer Policy

Recruitment	8
Training	8
Agreements, Basic Procedure and Expectations	9
Safety Rules	10
Respecting Guest's Privacy	11
LGBTIQA+ Inclusivity	11

### General Health and Safety

Emergency Procedures	12
Other Remarks	12

## **Guest Policy**

### **Guest Requirements**

To uphold our values of wellbeing and safety, the Maroondah Winter Shelter has set a limit of availabilities, and specific requirements guests must meet. At the current time, Maroondah Winter Shelter can accommodate up to 12 male guests at any given time.

The current criteria for guests are as follows:

1. Guests must be male.
2. Guests must be 18 years old or older.
3. Guests must be experiencing Homelessness.
4. Guests must not be under the influence of any alcohol or drugs. (With exceptions to medication)
5. To be included in the program, guests must undergo a suitability assessment by the referring agency.

Maroondah Winter Shelter acknowledges that the issue of homelessness affects those of all ages and genders; however, mixing the groups can pose a significant risk to the wellbeing and safety of guests. As such, Maroondah Winter Shelter has decided to limit its program to the above criteria.

### **Guest Admission into Maroondah Winter Shelter**

People looking to partake in Maroondah Winter Shelter must first attend the referring agency to be interviewed by a staff member there. The referring agency will perform an assessment of suitability for Maroondah Winter Shelter, which includes asking about the guest's health, background and assessment of their current situation. This information is confidential and only specific members of Maroondah Winter Shelter will have access to this information under a confidentiality agreement. If the referring agency finds the client is suitable for the Maroondah Winter Shelter, the client will sign

an agreement form and their necessary information will be passed on to a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator.

For those looking to apply to be a guest with Maroondah Winter Shelter, Uniting is located at 291A Maroondah Hwy, Ringwood and is staffed from 9 a.m. till 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. No guest will be accepted until the referring agency has assessed their suitability.

In a guest's first meeting with a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator, a coordinator will explain the basic rules, procedures, and expectations to them. The guest will then sign the Winter Shelter Agreement form and have the choice to sign the photo permission form.

## **Returning Guests**

Guests may book in for the following night by advising the Coordinator that evening or the following morning. Guests may also book in via a referring agency. Guests who have not used a Winter Shelter venue for more than 5 days will need to register again through a referring agency. Guests who have not followed the rules of a shelter will need to present at the referring agency to be re assessed for suitability to be able to return to Winter Shelter and with approval of the Winter Shelter Coordinator.

## **Inappropriate Behaviour**

Maroondah Winter Shelter aims to provide a safe and secure environment. As such, there is a strict set of rules and guidelines that all guests are expected to follow.

### **1: Substance Use**

Substance use refers to the use and possession of alcohol or any drugs not needed for medication. We understand that many guests have complicated histories with alcohol and substance abuse. As such, we train volunteers to be respectful and unbiased towards these issues, while also dealing with any safety problems that may arise from substance use.

- Guests who are substance affected are not permitted to use Maroondah Winter Shelter facilities and will be turned away. This will be in consultation with the Program Coordinator and Venue Coordinator. Guests sometimes arrive with the smell of alcohol on them. This is not a reason to refuse them to stay unless it affects their Behaviour.
- Individuals attending Maroondah Winter Shelter facilities are not to be in possession of alcohol, illicit substance or unprescribed medication. Random bag and pocket checks will be conducted.
- Prescribed medication is the responsibility of the guest. Volunteers are not to administer, remove, or advise on these or any other medication, whether it is prescribed or over the counter, like Panadol. Winter Shelter takes no responsibility for a guest's medication or use.
- No consumption of alcohol or any illicit substances is permitted on Maroondah Winter Shelter facilities.
- While tobacco is not a banned substance by Maroondah Winter Shelter, the smoking of tobacco must be done within the parameters outlined by the Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator. These usually include a designated time frame and locations for smoking.

## 2: Weapons

Weapons are strictly prohibited in Maroondah Winter Shelter facilities. Anyone found to be in possession of a weapon will be given the choice to leave the shelter or to give the item to the staff. The item will not be returned to the guest. Police and the referring agency will be informed. Guests who are found with the item and who do not comply will be asked to leave and police will be informed. Any incidents involving a weapon must have an incident report recorded.

Examples of weapons include, but are not limited to:

- Knives
- Guns
- Blades

- Blunt objects intended to harm
- Improvised weapons

### 3: Other Inappropriate Behaviour

Maroondah Winter Shelter views inappropriate behaviour as any that makes someone feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Inappropriate behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Loud and disruptive behaviour
- Verbal abuse
- Rudeness towards others
- Sexual Misconduct, including harassment
- Aggressive behaviours
- Violent behaviours
- Bullying
- Disrespecting others property
- Not following the directions of a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator

Any individual found to be committing or participating in this behaviour may be asked to leave the shelter or receive a warning from a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator.

### 4: Bringing people into the shelter

The only people who have access to the Winter Shelter facilities are those who have been either assessed by the referring agency or have undergone the Winter Shelter training (volunteers). This is done to maintain Maroondah Winter Shelter's high safety standards and ensure that a secure and positive environment is able to be upheld. As such, those who have not undergone assessment or training will be asked to leave the shelter immediately.

## **Consequences of Inappropriate Behaviour**

The Consequences of inappropriate behaviour can vary depending on the severity of the action and will be determined by a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator. Consequences can range from:

- A warning from a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator
- Being asked to leave the shelter
- Future participation in Maroondah Winter Shelter being impacted

## **Agreements, Basic Procedures and Expectations**

Before participating in Maroondah Winter Shelter as a guest, a Guest Agreement sheet must be signed. The Guest Agreement includes a condensed version of inappropriate behaviours, as well as the expectations of the guests. This agreement also notes that guests give Maroondah Winter Shelter the rights to take and publish pictures they take upon verbal request.

- Guests are required to book their stay at Maroondah Winter Shelter each night and to attend the shelter at the designated times.
- Each evening or morning, guests are required to book a place at the next shelter so that the respective coordinator can advise the Program Coordinator. Guests may also choose to book through the referring agency.
- Guests must arrive at the venue at no later than 7 p.m. unless other arrangements have been made with the coordinator.
- Guests are required to stay inside the shelter from 11 p.m. until 6 a.m. during the lock-up. Throughout this time, no one will be allowed in or out of the building unless there is an emergency.

At Maroondah Winter Shelter, we expect all guests to treat volunteers and other guests with respect. We expect that guests commit to ensuring and maintaining Maroondah Winter Shelter as a safe and non-judgmental environment. We expect that guests follow the necessary procedures regarding signing in/out, smoking in designated areas, and stay in the facility during the lock-up period.

## **Guest Vehicles**

Guests can bring their vehicles to the shelter. However, Maroondah Winter Shelter takes no responsibility for the safety or security of the vehicle. Guests are required to register their vehicles with Maroondah Winter Shelter by providing their registration and make. Guests may be required to park their vehicles in specific spaces at the direction of a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator. Guests are not permitted to access their vehicles during the lock-up period unless with permission of the venue coordinator or shift leader is given. Guests are not permitted to sleep in their vehicles if they chose to attend the shelter. However, in the past some guests have found sleeping in the shelter difficult for various reasons. In these instances, we have allowed a guest to sleep in his car. This is only with permission of the Program Coordinator, Venue Coordinator or Shift Leader and only for special cases. We will not advocate for this to be allowed regularly and the referring agency will be informed.

## **Covid Related Health and Safety**

- All Covid protocols will be followed when official guidelines are in place, at all other times health and hygiene routines to be followed.
- If any volunteer is experiencing Covid symptoms during their shift they need to make arrangements to leave the venue.
- A Rapid Antigen Test will be available to guests or volunteers if required.
- If a guest is experiencing Covid like symptoms, before 8pm and doesn't want to leave the venue, the shift leader will find a suitable room for the guest to isolate in until the morning when a follow up referral to an appropriate service will be made. The guest's health will be monitored, and an ambulance will be called if warranted.
- A volunteer is not expected to transport an unwell guest.



## **Volunteer Policy**

### **Recruitment**

Maroondah Winter Shelter volunteer base consists largely of members from different churches throughout the Maroondah Area. We want to acknowledge the churches and their member's contributions as the program would not be possible without them.

While the different church groups make up the bulk of our volunteers, Maroondah Winter Shelter will include anyone from the public over the age of 18 who is interested in participating. In a recent development, Maroondah Winter Shelter now takes university students doing placements in fields of justice, welfare, psychology and social studies.

If an individual shows interest in becoming a volunteer, they will be required to attend a formal training session that covers volunteer expectations and safety producers. Once an individual has completed their training session, they will then have to sign a volunteer agreement before they can begin working in the program.

Volunteers must provide a current working with children's check and referee details.

### **Training**

The formal training sessions volunteers are required to attend covers the projects values, goals, procedures, safety practices and communication skills. The purpose of this training is to prepare volunteers for any situation they may encounter at Maroondah Winter Shelter. Training includes necessary communication skills and how to defuse a potentially hostile situation. The training will be conducted by several Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinators along with professionals who have experience with drugs and conflict diffusion. The safety component of the training will consist of teaching volunteers how to identify a potentially dangerous situation and how to proceed.

Access to a Volunteer Handbook explaining rules, roles and other information will be provided to all volunteers.

## **Agreements, Basic Procedures, and Expectations**

Before participating in Maroondah Winter Shelter as a volunteer, volunteers must first sign an agreement sheet. This agreement also notes that volunteers give Maroondah Winter Shelter the rights to take and publish pictures they take upon verbal request.

When volunteers work at a shelter, they are required to sign in at the beginning and end of their shift. Depending on the shift and position, volunteers will have different tasks that they are required to complete. The tasks involve ensuring that the guests are comfortable, along with other tasks such as food preparation and preparing the venue. Coordinators will advise volunteers on what tasks need to be completed. If a volunteer disagrees with the decision of the Coordinator or shift leader they should discuss this with them away from other people.

At Maroondah Winter Shelter, we expect all volunteers to treat guests and other volunteers with respect. We expect that volunteers commit to ensuring and maintaining Maroondah Winter Shelter safe and non-judgmental environment. We expect that volunteers follow the necessary procedures regarding signing in/out. Volunteers are not to probe guests with personal questions and are not to force their own religious beliefs or opinions on guests or other volunteers. Volunteers must be mindful that guests meet many different volunteers each night. It is important to give guests their privacy and space.

Volunteers must not be alcohol or substance abuse affected. No consumption of alcohol, illicit substances or unprescribed medication is permitted on Maroondah Winter Shelter facilities.

Volunteers need to arrive for their shift on time.

If a volunteer is unavailable for a shift they must contact the Venue Coordinator at least the day before or as soon as possible.

## Safety Rules

Maroondah Winter Shelter has implemented this set of rules to ensure that volunteer safety is not compromised at any time. These rules include:

- Shelters should be safe for volunteers and guests.
- Venue Coordinator/shift leaders should check the Occupational Health and Safety list at the beginning of the shift.
- Personal information should not be given out to guests (e.g. address, contact details). Guests should not use a volunteer's mobile phone.
- Valuables should be locked in a safe place or left at home.
- A second volunteer should always be present when around guests.
- Do not touch guests to wake them.
- If at any point, a volunteer feels intimidated or uncomfortable in a shelter, they are to inform the coordinator on duty.
- Do not give any guests financial support. If they require additional help or support address the issue with a coordinator.
- Do not drive a guest in your personal vehicle unless a second volunteer is present. You are not expected to drive an unwell guest in your own car.
- Maroondah Winter Shelter takes no responsibility for the use of your personal vehicle if you choose to use your own to transport a guest/s.
- If there is a complaint of lost property, never put your hand into a guest's bag or pocket. Ask the guest to empty the contents onto a surface to check.
- Kitchen knives should be stored in a safe place and not be accessible to guests.

### **Respecting Guest's Privacy**

Unfortunately, it is common for Maroondah Winter Shelter guests to have troubled histories that impact them in various ways. While some guests feel comfortable sharing their stories, others may find it difficult or uncomfortable. As such, volunteers must always keep in mind that Maroondah Winter Shelter guests are entitled to the same respect and privacy as everyone else. If a guest feels comfortable sharing their story, volunteers are welcome to listen and talk to them. However, the guest should be initiating the conversation, not the volunteer. Furthermore, volunteers should not repeat or share the stories guests tell. If a volunteer is unsure about something a guest discloses then they should discuss this with the Program Coordinator.

### **LGBTIQA+ Inclusivity**

Winter shelter volunteers please note that Uniting work with people from the LGBTIQA+ community and on occasions people from the community may be referred to Maroondah Winter Shelter. While winter shelter referrals will be for people identifying as male, members of the LGBTIQA+ community may for example be gay, or transgender. Guests may or may not disclose this information, it is up to them.

In the Guest agreement that is completed by all guests it is stated:

***The Maroondah winter shelter is a welcoming space for all community members, including those participating as LGBTIQA+, those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, and those who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander.***

The expectation is that guests as well as volunteers will be inclusive and welcoming to all.

## General Health and Safety

### Emergency Procedures

- Volunteers working in new shelters will have a venue coordinator /shift leader show them all the emergency exits and evacuation meeting places in the event of an emergency.
- Volunteers must be aware of where exits, fire extinguishers, and first aid kit are located.
- Volunteers must know the evacuation process in the event of an emergency exit, such as fire.

### Other Remarks

- The venue coordinators of the Maroondah Winter Shelter program ensure that each of the shelters meets the health and safety regulations relevant to the program. If participants have concerns regarding general health and safety, they are advised to forward them to a Maroondah Winter Shelter coordinator.
- The venue coordinator/shift leader must use the health and safety checklist at the beginning of every shift.
- No one is allowed to enter a shelter unless they are an approved guest or approved volunteer.
- Overnight volunteers will have the opportunity to sleep at designated times. The area provided to do so will be within the shelter, separate to where the guests sleep. Beds will be provided but bedding should be brought in by the volunteer.