

REDUCING REOFFENDING

it's in our hands



COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

JANUARY 2019

WHAT DO THE TERMS COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK, COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PLACEMENTS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PARTNERSHIPS MEAN?

The term **community service work** encompasses a wide range of work that is completed by an offender undertaking a **community service work placement**.

Offenders who participate in community service work are offenders who are serving a sentence of the court in the community.

Community service work placements are managed by Community Corrections NSW.

Community service work placements enable the offender to complete work to repay the community.

This is work that would not otherwise have been done.

Work can range from maintenance of parks and gardens through to preparing meals for community events. Work can take place at your facilities or at a work site on any day of the week.

Community service work partnerships are mutually beneficial, not for profit agreements between organisations and Community Corrections.

“We appreciate the effort the participants and their supervisor have injected into our community and town, as our committees and volunteers struggle to keep up with the demands required to keep organisations afloat. The participants have mowed lawns, whipper snipped, planted trees, painted toilet blocks, and [undertaken] general cleaning up, etc.”

- Local councillor

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PARTNERSHIPS?

Flexible placements

Community Corrections can provide offenders for ongoing placements, and in some cases, seasonal work. There are no minimum number of hours that need to be worked. We can provide individuals or groups depending on the type of placement and the number of hours available.

Motivated workers

Offenders are often motivated by the opportunity to learn new skills, become more employable, and create a new life for themselves.

For some offenders, being given an opportunity in the community gives them a sense of belonging and pride in their achievements.

Social benefit

Being a community service work partner allows your organisation to help offenders give back to the community.

HOW DO I WORK WITH OFFENDERS?

Community Corrections explains how to work with offenders by providing a handbook to guide you through your responsibilities.

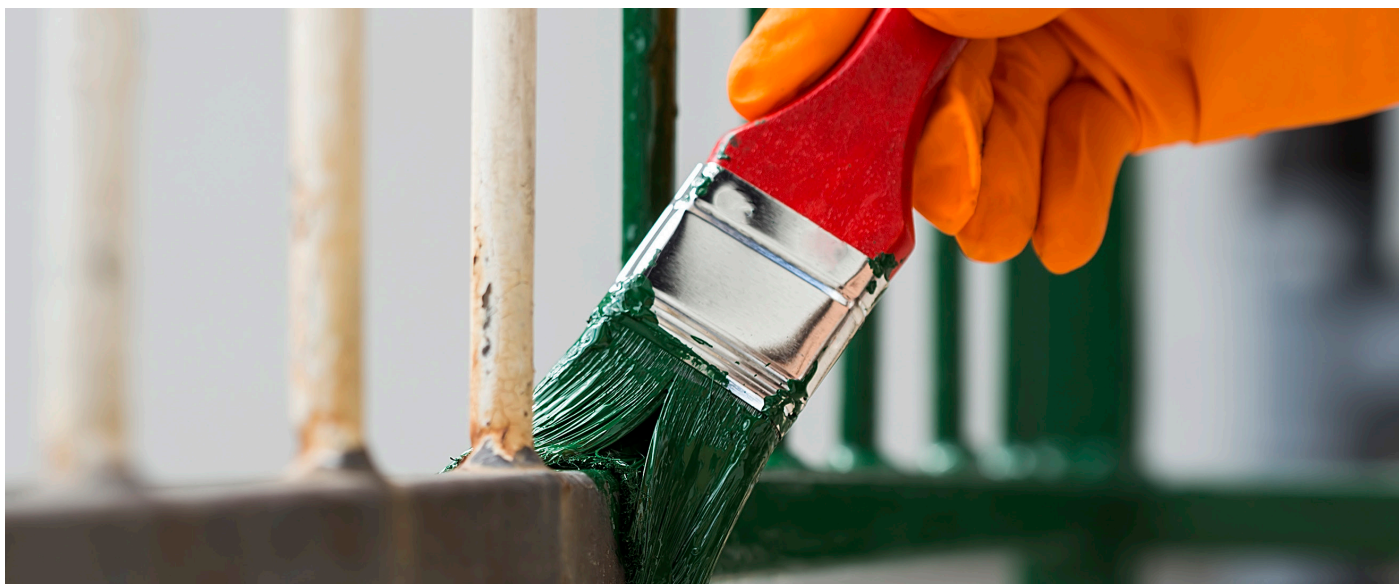
Your key responsibilities include:

- modelling positive social attitudes and behaviours such as social inclusion, fairness, leading a law-abiding lifestyle and reliability

- maintaining attendance sheets for each offender
- notifying your Community Corrections officer if an offender does not turn up for work, is not performing work to an acceptable standard, or you suspect they are under the influence of drugs and alcohol
- accepting visits from Community Corrections officers
- ensuring offenders do not perform any task which is not outlined in the work instruction, unless they have permission from Community Corrections
- ensuring offenders abide by work, health and safety requirements and Community Corrections procedures
- meeting work, health and safety standards e.g. offenders must have access to personal protective equipment required to complete the work, first aid kit, drinking water, breaks after certain hours of continuous work, and toilet facilities
- notifying your Community Corrections officer of any significant changes to your organisation.

The main difference between working with an offender and other employees/volunteers is that offenders are more closely supervised. Supervisors are responsible for verifying the times and dates that an offender has completed the work. This ensures Community Corrections complies with legal requirements as community service work is a sanction from the court.





HOW DO YOU MATCH AN OFFENDER TO MY ORGANISATION?

Your organisation will be allocated a Community Corrections officer. These officers are experts at working with offenders and will ensure offenders are carefully screened and suitable for the type of opportunities your organisation has available.

Community Corrections will work with you to assess your needs, available hours and location of work. The officers assess the suitability of available offenders based on their characteristics and your agency's needs.

Community Corrections will not place someone who has been assessed as unsuitable for the type of work you have available at your agency.

Case study: achieving a shared future

"[We]... have a fantastic working relationship with the NSW Department of Justice which we developed through participating in the community service work program over the last decade or so. We are proud to be able to support a social community program, and give offenders the opportunity to give back to the community by working with us...and helping us to achieve a shared future for wildlife and people."

- Local wildlife park

HOW DO I APPLY TO BECOME A COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PARTNER?

How do I know if my organisation is eligible to apply?

Any organisation is eligible to apply to become a community service work partner. Current community service work providers include schools, local councils, parks, hospitals, sporting clubs, charity organisations, church groups and more.

Contact your nearest Community Corrections office (a list of offices is available on the back page) to discuss the work opportunities you have available. Community Corrections will guide you through the application process to see if community service work is the right fit for your organisation.

How long does the application process take?

On average, it takes 6 to 12 weeks for an organisation to be accredited as a community service work partner.

There are three main steps involved in the process. Your Community Corrections officer will guide you through the process and answer any questions you may have.

- **Step 1:** A Community Corrections officer will visit your organisation. The officer will explain the scheme and responsibilities of partners, record the work you have available, and conduct work, health and safety checks to determine the suitability of the work site.

- **Step 2:** You will need to read, complete and sign some paperwork. You will provide details about your agency, the work and types of offenders suitable for your organisation.
- **Step 3:** Once you are accredited, Community Corrections will carefully screen and match offenders to the work you have available and the needs of your organisation.



“We love the relationship we have with the Community Corrections officer that comes to visit us. She keeps us informed on how some of the offenders go after they leave our care. I find this program both rewarding and encouraging and feel that both agencies work together for the good of the offenders”.

- Grafton Community service work partner

OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK PARTNERSHIPS

Does the work have to be ongoing?

Not always. Ongoing work opportunities are preferred, but Community Corrections can also provide workers for one-off work projects (e.g. labour for annual events). There may also be seasonal work, such as grounds setup and cooking barbecues for sporting clubs.

Do offenders need to be supervised?

Yes, supervision must be provided.

In some cases, Community Corrections can provide supervision of work teams. For example, Community Corrections employs field officers to supervise groups of up to 15 offenders at outdoor work sites, such as at railway stations or national parks.

Community Corrections will provide guidance to new agencies on how to be a supervisor. Supervisors can be paid employees or volunteers.

Are there exclusions on the types of work offenders can do?

Offenders are issued with a work instruction that outlines the work they have been approved to perform. The type of work is agreed between Community Corrections and your agency. Offenders are not permitted to perform any task that is not outlined in their work instruction, unless they have permission from Community Corrections.

Offenders are not permitted to operate a vehicle while undertaking community service work. Vehicles include golf carts and forklifts.

Offenders cannot take the place of paid employees or contractors.

What types of offenders receive community service work?

There is no particular offence that restricts an offender from receiving community service work. However, Community Corrections must assess an offender as suitable for community service work before they can be sentenced to undertake community service work. See Figure 1 on page 6 for further information.

Can I control what type of offenders my organisation receives?

Yes. Organisations can specify any offence types that an offender may have that they do not wish to accept. Community Corrections will discuss this with you when you apply to become a community service work partner.

When Community Corrections is assessing the suitability of an offender for community work placements, we review the offender's criminal history. If their criminal history shows any offence that you have specified that you do not wish to receive, then the offender will not be placed at your agency. If available, an alternative worker will be provided.

Can I have a copy of the offender’s criminal history or sentencing assessment report?

No. Privacy legislation prohibits Community Corrections from sharing the offender’s criminal history with an organisation.

If the offender’s criminal history includes any offence that you have specified that you do not wish to accept, then the offender will not be placed at your agency.

Do I have to provide transport for workers if the work is off-site?

This is negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Generally, offenders will be responsible for organising their own transportation; however, offenders may travel in a supervisor’s vehicle between work sites if required (with permission from Community Corrections).

For work groups undertaking community service work, Community Corrections may provide group transportation to and from the work site.

Do I have to provide equipment and tools for workers?

In most cases, organisations will need to provide the equipment to be used by community service workers. However, Community Corrections may provide equipment for outdoor work if offenders are being supervised by a field officer employed by Community Corrections.



Is workplace insurance provided and what does it cover?

Yes, workplace insurance is provided, but for offenders only. The policy covers insurance costs if an offender is injured while performing approved community service work.

Organisations will need to ensure appropriate insurance coverage for their paid workers, volunteers, property etc.

Community service workers are not entitled to workers’ compensation. Insurance covers their medical expenses and rehabilitation in relation to the injury only.

Are there any financial incentives to becoming a community service work partner?

No, community service work partners do not receive any financial incentives.

Does Community Corrections contribute to the wages of a supervisor?

No, Community Corrections does not contribute to the wages of supervisors.

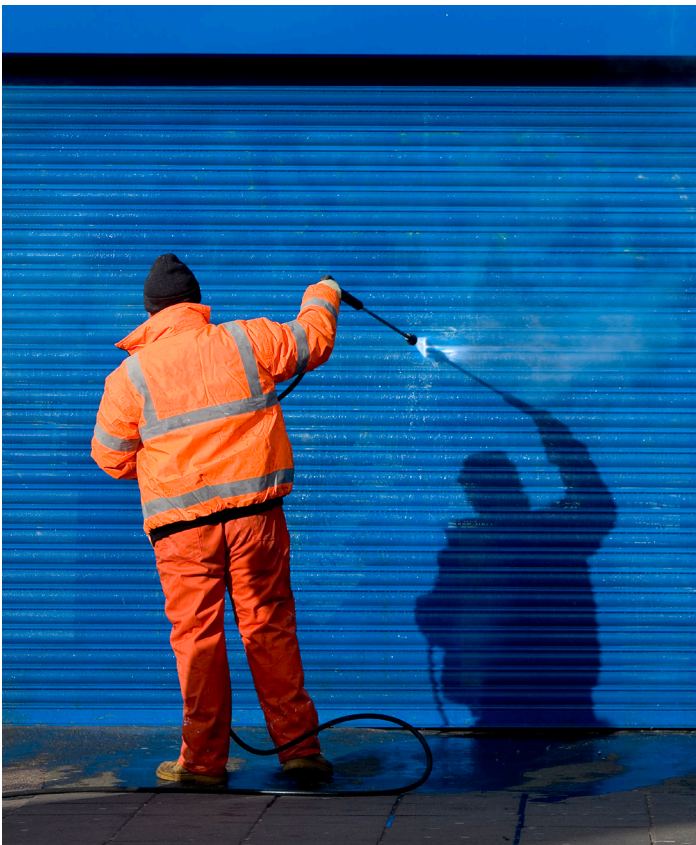


FIGURE 1: AN OFFENDER'S PROGRESSION TO COMMUNITY SERVICE WORK

An offender appears before a court charged with an offence.



The offender either pleads guilty or is found guilty.



Before the offender receives their sentence, the court can request that Community Corrections interviews the offender and assesses whether they are eligible for community service work or not with the following criteria in mind:

- Previous inability to complete community service work
- The offender's willingness to comply
- The offender's availability
- Medical conditions and mental health issues
- Drug and/or alcohol dependence
- Language barriers
- Availability of work



If assessed as suitable, the offender may be sentenced to a Community Correction Order or Intensive Correction Order with a community service work condition with a specified number of hours included.



The offender attends a general induction at their local Community Corrections office, where they receive information about community service work, Work Health and Safety (WHS) requirements, etc.'



Based on the offender's circumstances, e.g. days and times of availability, skills, current offence type and criminal history, they will then be placed at an appropriate agency that suits both the offender and the agency. Where there are no suitable work placements, an offender will be kept on a waiting list until an appropriate placement becomes available.

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS OFFICES

Community Corrections offices are at the following locations:

Albury	Inverell
Armidale	Kempsey
Bankstown	Lake Macquarie
Batemans Bay	Leichhardt
Bathurst	Lismore
Bega	Lithgow
Blacktown	Liverpool
Bourke	Maitland
Bowral	Moree
Broken Hill	Mt Druitt
Burwood	Muswellbrook
Campbelltown	Newcastle
Casino	Nowra
City	Orange
Coffs Harbour	Parramatta
Cooma	Penrith
Coonamble	Port Macquarie
Dubbo	Queanbeyan
Fairfield	St Leonards
Forbes	Sutherland
Glen Innes	Tamworth
Gosford	Taree
Goulburn	Tumut
Grafton	Wagga Wagga
Griffith	Windsor
Gunnedah	Wollongong
Hornsby	Wyong
Hurstville	Young

Where to next?

Contact your local Community Corrections office about how to become a community service work partner.

Your local office contact is: