# Audio Interview Transcript

**November 2022**

**Volunteering WA interviewing the Muslim Women’s Support Center (MWSC)**

**Interview topic:** Volunteer management: a journey of continuous improvement using the Nationals Standards for Volunteer Involvement

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Simon Order, Volunteering WA

Welcome to the Volunteering WA Capacity Building podcast bringing you interviews ideas strategies and case studies everything that will help you build your volunteer capacity and operations. I’m your host Dr. Simon Order. I’m the Volunteer Management coordinator at Volunteering WA. If you’re a volunteer manager and your organisation relies on volunteer talent, I made this podcast to help you.

Well, hello everybody, I want to welcome you to this inaugural episode of the Volunteering WA Capacity Building podcast. I’m looking forward to talking with many of you about your challenges and your experiences as volunteer managers. I don’t have all the answers and that’s why I’ll be inviting you to come and chat with me on this podcast, share your stories, your voices your expertise, about volunteer management. That’s why we’re here today.

In Australia, we love our national standards and Volunteering is no different. Our work is guided by the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and some organisations will use them as a continuous improvement framework. I thought it was great way to start this podcast series to talk with someone who had undertaken that journey, engaging with the National Standards in a rigorous way, challenging themselves to improve their organisation.

I’d like to welcome Abir Roz the Vice President of the Muslim Women’s Support Centre.

Abir Roz, Vice President of the Muslim Women’s Support Centre

Good morning, Simon, and thank you for giving me this opportunity to meet with you today. MWC is an organization that really thrives on its volunteers. Really, we won't be able to run without our volunteers. You know, we've been running for over 30 years now.

So, when the opportunity arose and we were allocated some funding and you know, we decided to engage in the standards to ensure that, you know, we're working towards best practice, you know, to be able to improve on how we attract and retain volunteers. That's what we're aiming for.

Simon

So, one of the things that I think is a challenge for volunteer managers, is where do you start, and why do you make that decision?

Abir

Where did we start? OK, that's a good question. So, I was new to the role of a volunteer coordinator, and I think by signing up to be a member with Volunteering WA that was probably the first step, you know, reading on your website or the resources have been kind of helped us to direct us where to go. And I read about the national standards on your website and also, I think talking with you Simon and with other members, staff members at Volunteering WA, they suggested to work through the workbook. With the standards and also there is an option of using the online toolkit as well.

Simon

How did you prioritize which standard you work through; did you start at number 1 and work through?

Abir

Yes, I initially what we did, we worked through the workbook, and we ticked what policy and procedures we had already in place and then we looked at what we needed to develop or change. So, we worked with the workbook first and then gradually we uploaded all the documents that we needed onto the online toolkit.

Simon

Did you find it administratively quite a straightforward process? How did you go with that?

Abir

When I first looked at the standards. It was overwhelming. Yeah, there was a lot of stuff to look at and to read, but what we did, we broke it down into small steps, so there were eight standards, so we kind of just slowly went through each standard or sub standards.

Simon

Did you find any standards harder than others?

Abir

Yes, some standards were harder than others, maybe because we hadn't developed a policy around one of the standards, or maybe it required a lot more detailed. So, we went back and revisited what we had, and changed that or if it was a brand-new policy or procedure that we had to start from scratch. Also, some of the difficulties that we found is that some standards, they kind of overlapped with another standard. So, I felt that we were doubling up. So, at times it was confusing, yeah.

Simon

So just for people that are listening and who might want to follow your journey, how long did it take from who to go?

Abir

We allowed two days a week to work on that and it wasn't just myself, it was a team of volunteers, and it took us about four to five and half weeks.

Simon

What would you say, to others, other volunteer managers if they were thinking of following your journey?

Abir

I would definitely encourage any organization that has a good number of volunteers to engage in the standards. I think it's a good framework to work towards. I think it helps you gauge where your organization is at in terms of policies and procedures. And I think it's definitely a good benchmark and guide for volunteer managers.

Simon

I suppose the big question is always what benefit do you see for your organization now? How have you managed to implement that work in your day-to-day operations.

Abir

I think by having worked towards these standards, I think we've ensured that there's policies and procedures that cover all aspects of our volunteering, you know, from recruitment to retraining to engagement to safety, and I think working towards their standards, it has made us more mindful. To always striving to that best practice, that's actually ensures the safety and well-being of volunteers as well, yeah.

Simon

I suppose now you're thinking about maintaining your learnings. Has it been a process that is sort of driven you into a process of continuous improvement through awareness or how does that work with your organization?

Abir

Yeah, there is that awareness now. I mean, it's always been there, but obviously now there's more structure in place. I mean one of the policies is constantly reviewing, reviewing what we've put in place and stuff. So definitely, I think we're better equipped to plan and strategize, and I think that benefits our volunteer program, definitely.

Simon

OK and I have to ask this question, what did you discover about your organization in the process?

Abir

MWC had already many policies and procedures in place, so that was something that, you know, I realized that actually we were doing quite well in terms of those governances, but I think we took it to the next level, we improved it a lot. It also made us recognize what we didn't have. We were able to kind of develop within the framework.

Simon

Just one final thing. How do you think VWA has helped you?

Abir

I actually don't really know where to start. I would like to say, a big thank you to yourself, Simon as well.

You've been a great sounding board and a mentor. It's been invaluable. I think when you're new to the role of a volunteer coordinator you need a lot of support and guidance and I feel that I've received exactly that from our volunteering WA. You know, whenever I've needed support, it's always been there. There's always been a prompt response, whether it's via e-mail or phone calls. It's been great. I also think the free workshops that you've offered us are extremely useful. For the two-day conference, the Volunteer Conference that I attended, that was as well very beneficial. Yeah, it's been, it's been wonderful.

Simon

That all sounds fantastic. Thank you so much for talking to me today. I'm sure your words are going to echo around other volunteer managers officers.

Simon

That's it for this episode of the Volunteering WA capacity a building podcasts. Thanks for listening and I hope to see you next time for another episode. Please feel free to share this episode with friends and your colleagues. There is also a transcript below for quick reading. This podcast is produced by Volunteering WA. Be sure to check out our volunteer management resources and training pages at volunteeringwa.org. au. Bye for now, have an awesome week.