

# NATIONAL MEALS ON WHEELS DAY 2021



**WE NEED YOUR HELP TO THANK  
OUR INCREDIBLE VOLUNTEERS!**



# About Meals on Wheels

For over 60 years, Meals on Wheels has been supporting the health and wellbeing of older and vulnerable people within the community.

We do this through the delivery of a tasty and nutritious meal to the home, as well as a social and wellbeing check by our dedicated volunteers.

Our meals are prepared according to National Meal Guidelines, designed to meet the specific daily nutritional needs of older Australians and therefore, reducing the risk of malnutrition faced by 1.2 million older Australians.

We also know human connection is more important than ever and for some older Australians, a Meals on Wheels volunteer is the only person they see all day... sometimes all week. In fact, many Meals on Wheels customers say they find the smiley face and friendly conversation they have with the volunteers at each delivery, more important than the meal itself.

Through the social and wellbeing checks performed at each delivery, Meals on Wheels keeps older Australians connected to their community and living independently and well in the comfort of their home.

With over 590 services across the country, Meals on Wheels plays an important role in improving the health and wellbeing of over 200,000 older Australians every year.

You can find more information on our website at <https://mealsonwheels.org.au/>





# National Meals on Wheels Day

National Meals on Wheels Day is celebrated every year on the last Wednesday in August. This year, the theme for the day is volunteers.

The day provides an opportunity to recognise the dedication, commitment and resilience of the 45,000 Meals on Wheels volunteers, who tirelessly support vulnerable members of the Australian community, across over 590 service locations.

This theme allows Meals on Wheels to build awareness about the essential role of our organisation which has been supporting people to live and age well, for over 60 years.

Over the last 18 months, Meals on Wheels has faced a number of challenges. From devastating bushfires, to floods and the COVID-19 pandemic, our volunteers continued to roll up their sleeves to make sure no one went hungry.

Having noticed a decline in volunteers over the last 12 months, we are also focusing on the urgent need for volunteer delivery drivers this National Meals on Wheels Day. Essentially, Meals on Wheels needs more wheels!

National Meals on Wheels Day falls on Wednesday the 25th of August this year.





# We need your help!

This year, while celebrating and thanking the wonderful work of our Meals on Wheels volunteers across the country, we are also looking to inspire 'the next generation' of volunteers by collaborating with Australian primary schools.

In the lead up to, or during the week of National Meals on Wheels Day on Wednesday the 25th of August, primary school students are encouraged to create 'thank you' cards, for volunteers at their local Meals on Wheels service.

Our volunteers tell us that they don't need formal recognition but we know that they would be absolutely delighted to receive a handmade thank you card from a young student.

We have provided some information on Meals on Wheels to help guide the potential illustrations, however, students are encouraged to get as creative as they like. Some suggested designs could include a Meals on Wheels vehicle, a delicious meal, an older person receiving their food or eating their meal in their home, or a delivery volunteer.

This activity also presents an opportunity for educators to teach the students about volunteering and the importance of looking after the vulnerable, offering discussions about kindness and social responsibility. Additional information to support this has been included on pages 6, 7 and 8.

Once the cards are completed, teachers are encouraged to deliver them to their local Meals on Wheels service. You can find the location of your closest service at <https://mealsonwheels.org.au/get-support/find-your-local-service> or by contacting the Meals on Wheels peak body within your state (for example, Meals on Wheels NSW). NOTE: Not all of our member services trade as Meals on Wheels.

Meals on Wheels would LOVE to see your students' creations. Any photos of the children with their cards and written reflections on the activity can be sent to our Communications Officer at [media@mealsonwheels.org.au](mailto:media@mealsonwheels.org.au) for sharing on Meals on Wheels Australia's social media platforms.

**We thank you in advance for your participation and appreciate you raising awareness for National Meals on Wheels Day and our essential service. We hope you and your students enjoy the activity and thank you on behalf of our volunteers as well.**

# Volunteering

Volunteering is when you do work for a cause or organisation without being paid.

You can volunteer for a number of causes, including supporting people in need, caring for animals, helping out at the local library, cleaning up rubbish at local beaches or parks, offering a hand at the school canteen, umpiring a local sporting match, looking after children or supporting young people through education and mentoring.

There are almost six million volunteers in Australia who dedicate over 600 million hours to helping others, every year.

It would be difficult to find someone who has not put up their hand as a volunteer, at some point in their life.

Studies show volunteering is proven to reduce feelings of loneliness and improve mental wellbeing.

However, there are also a number of other benefits to volunteering including:

- Meeting people from all walks of life and making new friends
- Improved health and wellbeing
- Learning valuable new skills
- An increase in self-confidence
- Reduced feelings of stress, anxiety and depression
- Feeling a sense of purpose by giving back to your community
- Increased paid employment opportunities.

One of the most popular and well-known volunteering opportunities within Australia is with Meals on Wheels.

Meals on Wheels volunteers help out with a range of tasks including:

- Preparing and cooking food in the kitchen
- Serving the food into individual containers
- Packing hot, cold or frozen food ready for delivery
- Sharing a cup of tea and chat with a customer
- Taking a customer to a local cafe to meet others and supporting other social activities
- Contacting family or health professionals if the customer is unwell or not answering their door.

Volunteering is perfect for secondary students, those working casual or part-time hours or retirees.

Many people who volunteer find it very rewarding and feel more connected to their local community.

For more information on volunteering visit Volunteering Australia's website at [https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org\\_](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org_)



# Looking after vulnerable members of our community

As we get older, we rely on our family members, friends and other loved ones a little more to look out for us.

Research shows over 80 percent of older Australians would prefer to live and age in their homes, instead of moving into residential aged care (nursing homes). To support this desire, the Australian Government funds a number of in-home and community care programs which help older people with things like accessing meal support, gardening, house cleaning and attending social activities.

Older Australians living at home often do not eat well. This can be due to illness, other health conditions and being unable to shop and cook for themselves. Making sure older people eat a nutritious and balanced diet is important for maintaining good health and wellbeing, helping reduce the risk of falls or hospitalisations.

Research also suggests older Australians living at home are more at risk of social isolation. For those living alone, one in four will experience social isolation. Many older people report feelings of loneliness, especially if their friend circles get smaller, loved ones don't visit as often, or they are widowed.

For many Meals on Wheels customers, the volunteer delivering their meal is the first person they've seen or spoken to all day and sometimes all week.

Therefore, the social and wellbeing check performed at every Meals on Wheels delivery helps reduce feelings of loneliness, promotes connection to community and also keeps the customer safe.

For example, on some occasions when a customer has had a fall inside their home, the Meals on Wheels volunteer has seen the customer is in trouble, alerted emergency services and ensured that person gets the medical attention they need before it is too late. Meals on Wheels provides valuable peace of mind for family members as they know someone is always looking out for their loved one.

## DISCUSSION IDEA

Ask the students whether they have an elderly neighbour and if their family 'look out' for them. This could include dropping over food, noticing a change in the neighbour's routine and checking in on them, or taking the bins out for them.

Additionally, ask the students if they ever talk to or wave to this neighbour. This helps the students become aware of how their engagement with an elderly neighbour or person can make that person feel happier and less lonely.

### ACTIVITY 1

In early 2021, Meals on Wheels SA collaborated with Snap's Kakadu Club TV, a family and kids community television show to share the valuable role Meals on Wheels plays in the local community. The segment is a short clip and uses puppets, which we are sure your students will find engaging.

You will find a link to this video on the National Meals on Wheels Day page on our website -

<https://mealsonwheels.org.au/news/national-meals-on-wheels-day-2021/>

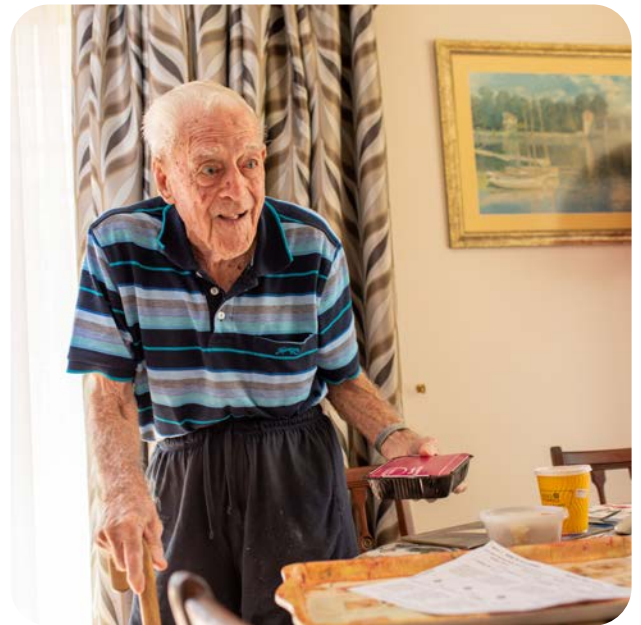


### ACTIVITY 2

Why not invite a volunteer from your local Meals on Wheels service to visit your class, talk about Meals on Wheels and answer any questions your students have?

You can approach your local service at

<https://mealsonwheels.org.au/get-support/find-your-local-service>



As the younger generation, is it up to us to look after and protect the most vulnerable people in our community.





Meals on Wheels  
Australia

#NMOWD2021