



## Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc.

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Volunteering for the Environment

It's official. Volunteering makes you *happy*. Research has shown that just a few hours of volunteering can make a difference to mood and happiness. Better still, sustained volunteering is associated with improved mental health. Volunteers sleep better, are healthier, and have a greater sense of well-being than those who don't volunteer. In fact, the altruistic emotions and behaviours associated with volunteering can even help you live longer.

**Environmental volunteering** benefits the whole community and is a great way to get outdoors and experience our unique natural environment. Volunteers are rewarded with the knowledge they are making a meaningful contribution to preserving our unique natural surroundings while learning new skills and meeting like-minded people.

Before you start looking for a volunteering opportunity, have a think about what you would like to achieve. Groups such as Householders' Options to Protect the Environment ([www.hopeaustralia.org.au](http://www.hopeaustralia.org.au)), Landcare Australia (<http://www.landcareonline.com.au/>), Queensland Water and Land Carers (<http://qwalc.org.au/>), Toowoomba Landcare Group (<http://toowoomba.ddrlandcare.org/>) and Friends of the Escarpment Parks (<http://www.fep.org.au/>) offer various environmental volunteering opportunities from planting programs and weed eradication to clean-up days and fundraising.

The next step is finding an opportunity. Do some research, sites like GoVolunteer (<http://govolunteer.com.au/>) and VolunteeringAustralia (<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/>) allow you to search for volunteer positions nationally, and to find local contacts. Alternately, just get out there and talk to people, visit your community centre or post a message on a community noticeboard. Anyone can volunteer, age is no barrier. Visit the Junior Landcare website <http://www.juniorlandcare.com.au/> for youth groups.

The important thing is getting out there and getting involved. Gather all your good intentions and find a cause you can relate to, meet new people, get some exercise and contribute to preserving a cherished resource. Your body and soul will thank you for it.

*Frank Ondrus*

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