

TOP PROFESSIONAL VOICES IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



Leadership & Volunteering Monash Student Association

Stefanie Maccar is a highly experienced student services professional with over 15 years in higher education, currently serving as a Director for the Student Experience Network (SEN). She specialises in leadership training, logistics management, with a proven ability to create effective strategies that enhance team performance. Stefanie is also a licensed Mental Health First Aid Instructor, dedicated to supporting student wellbeing and helping them thrive academically and personally.



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How did your personal and professional journey lead you to your current role in student engagement?

In high school, I dreamed of becoming a film and TV director. But during my first week at university, I tagged along with a friend to the student radio station — and everything changed. What started as a fun show with friends became a passion. I became President for two years, overhauled the station, and learned early lessons about leadership, commitment, and community.

That experience led me to Swinburne Student Amenities Association (SSAA), where I ran events every week and discovered what I really loved: supporting students through events and training. Eventually, I joined Monash Student Association (MSA) as Volunteer Coordinator, building the department from the ground up.

I love developing programs, seeing students take opportunities with both hands, and helping them along in this journey. There is no other time in your life quite like your university years and I want everyone to make the most of these years, the way I did.

Over 15 years, my role has expanded to Orientation festivals, food relief, wellbeing programs, and student leader conferences. I've also been actively involved in SEN — as a SEN CON presenter, a member of the working group, and a mentor through the SEN Mentor Program. Since May 2024, I've had the privilege of serving on the SEN Board of Directors, and in the same year I was honoured to receive the **Georgeson Torney Industry Leader's Award**.



Stefanie at the 2023 Monash Volunteer Awards with student volunteers and Maddy Bell (Former Volunteer Officer)

“THERE IS NO OTHER TIME IN YOUR LIFE QUITE LIKE YOUR UNIVERSITY YEARS AND I WANT EVERYONE TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE YEARS, THE WAY I DID.”

What are the key responsibilities and goals in your role for boosting student engagement and retention at your university?

Becoming an MSA Volunteer is simple: just an induction video and a WWCC. Training depends on the program, but we aim to make volunteering accessible and welcoming, without unnecessary hurdles. The hurdles are the main reason why students won't even give it a go – let's remove this hurdle.

From there, we focus on empowering those who show passion, responsibility, and reliability. Many of our programs have a point where I step back and let volunteer leaders take the reins. It's our way of showing trust — this is their project to shape — but with the reassurance that we'll always be there to support them if things don't go to plan.

We also recognise and reward volunteers for their contribution through merchandise, apparel, e-gift cards, certificates, and our annual Volunteer of the Year award.



A Note from the Founder

Stef Maccar is a passionate advocate for student leadership at the Monash Student Association, empowering student leaders with both vision and care. In November 2025, I'm excited to join Stef in driving forward training initiatives that will strengthen volunteer leaders and leave a lasting impact on the Monash community.

What achievement in your role are you most proud of, and why does it stand out?

The achievement I'm proudest of is the success of our department, built on the dedication of staff who started their journey with us as volunteers. All of our staff in my department began their journey as volunteers. Recently, two of our staff were required to step into new roles without a proper handover, and within just two weeks they had already mastered the responsibilities. The success of our department is a direct result of our people.

One of the standout initiatives has been the MSA Pantry, which grew from a small program held four times a semester into a weekly food relief service, complemented by a welfare fridge stocked three times a week. Another highlight is the Language Classes program, where student volunteers transformed casual beginner sessions into structured, engaging lessons with slides, worksheets, and games. Their passion has made the program a huge success, consistently attracting close over 400 student registrations each semester.

To learn more about Leadership and Volunteering at Monash, visit the [MSA Volunteers hub](#)

Is there a student success story that stands out to you as a highlight of your work?

The program I'm most proud of is our Welfare Warriors leadership program. Here, students can step up to lead one of our established initiatives or propose a brand-new program. Some ideas work brilliantly, while others don't — and that's completely fine. We see volunteering as a safe space to test, experiment, and grow, with us providing the safety net. Over the years, this team has created some truly outstanding programs, many of which we've continued to run because of their success.

What motivates you to continue working in student engagement?

The trust from my manager, Lowan Sist, has been a big reason I've stayed in this role. He has allowed me to try new things and encouraged me to get involved with SEN.

I'm also motivated by my volunteers. Seeing their growth and development is incredibly rewarding, and witnessing the impact of our programs on students' mental, social, and financial wellbeing keeps me inspired. Our SEN community brings me so much joy; it's a constant reminder of why I love this work.



Stefanie receiving the Georgeson Torney Industry Leader's Award at the 2024 SEN Awards at the Melbourne Arts Centre.