



Governance

Policy 9.20

Volunteer Policy

Version 1

1. Governance

OBJECTIVE:

Lithgow City Council (Council) recognises the significant contribution of volunteers within our community.

Council's volunteers forge a strong bond between the Council, the community, the business sector and relevant stakeholders it serves by, encouraging and increasing:

- Community participation and social connection;
- The delivery and augmentation of existing programs;
- Access to resources and information;
- The development of links between Council and the community; and
- Responsiveness to community needs.

This document is designed to provide guidance on how volunteers should be engaged, inducted and managed.

Scope

The policy applies to people who volunteer their services to Council.

This policy does not apply to:

- Students or interns on formal vocational placements
- Community members participating in Council events and/or activities
- Volunteers working for other organisations that are donating their time
- Members of Council Committees or Advisory Panels or people who provide expert advice to Council on specific matters.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Volunteer	A person who gives their time in service of the community of the Lithgow Local Government Area (LGA), without financial remuneration and at the direction of Council employees.
Conflict of Interest	A conflict of interests exists where a reasonable and informed person would perceive that a volunteer could be influenced by a private interest when carrying out their volunteering, as outlined in Council's Code of Conduct.

POLICY:

Principles

Volunteering Australia is the peak body which advocates for the rights of volunteers and seeks to measure the value of volunteering in Australia. The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement produced by Volunteering Australia are a key reference which informs the principles of this policy. The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement can be found here <https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/nationalstandards/>

The principles of volunteering at Council are:

- Volunteering is undertaken freely, by choice
- Volunteering is an inclusive activity open to all who are able and suitable
- Volunteers freely contribute their time, effort, knowledge and skills and develop formal and informal networks, while gaining experience and social inclusion.
- Volunteers are provided with appropriate induction, training, instruction and supervision to undertake volunteer activity.
- Volunteers are provided with a healthy and safe working environment.
- Volunteers have their contribution to the community recognised.
- Not place volunteers in roles that were previously held by paid employees or have been identified as paid jobs.
- Ensure volunteers are not required to take up additional work during industrial disputes or employment shortages.
- Ensure volunteers are not used in positions of responsibility for security issues, and/or health and safety issues.

Volunteer Rights

Council understands and supports the rights of volunteers.

Council volunteers have the following rights:

- to work in a healthy and safe environment (refer various Occupational
- Health and Safety Act[s]);
- to be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity
- and anti-discrimination legislation;

- to be adequately covered by insurance;
- to be given accurate and truthful information about the organisation for which you are working;
- to be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses;
- to be given a copy of the organisations volunteer policy and any other policy that affects your work;
- not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker;
- not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes;
- to have a job description and agreed working hours;
- to have access to a grievance procedure;
- to be provided with orientation to the organisation;
- to have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988; and
- to be provided with sufficient training to do your job.

*Reference https://volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1376971192VAVolunteerRightsandchecklist.pdf

Procedures

The following procedures are designed to ensure that Council's volunteers are appropriately recruited, screened, inducted and supervised in a way that ensures they operate within Council's legislative, policy and procedural frameworks.

Engaging a Volunteer

Volunteers are managed locally by the Division and are engaged with the approval of the Department manager. The relevant Department manager will determine if their unit can accommodate and supervise a volunteer, and will allocate a supervisor responsible for the volunteer/s.

Recruiting and onboarding a Volunteer

Prior to the recruitment/engagement of a volunteer, the relevant manager must specify what pre-employment checks are required for a volunteer to work in their unit, including Criminal Checks and Volunteer Working with Children Checks (see below). These checks must be sighted by the manager and copies forwarded to Human Resources before the volunteer commences work with Council.

Volunteers are on-boarded, and their records are retained by Council.

Checks for Volunteers Working in Child Related Sectors

Volunteers in identified child related sectors may need to obtain a Volunteer Working with Children Check clearance prior to commencing volunteer work.

For guidance, the Office of the Children’s Guardian has identified that volunteers in the following areas would require a Volunteer Working with Children Check clearance:

- Youth Services
- Transport Services for Children
- Entertainment for Children
- Cultural, recreation, sporting or community services that involves providing programs for children
- Any location where the volunteer may be supervising children or young people.

In addition, Council’s SWP 9.25 Working with Children identifies volunteers in the following areas as requiring a Volunteer Working with Children Check clearance:

- JM Robson Aquatic Centre
- Eskbank House and Museum
- Lithgow and Branch Libraries
- Council events (e.g. Halloween)

Managers are responsible for ensuring all existing volunteers’ Working with Children Checks are current and that these checks are recorded Council’s Record Management System. Human Resources is responsible for verifying the volunteers’ Working with Children Check.

Managers must also check the Working with Children Check status of any existing volunteer transferring to their Division.

Inducting a Volunteer

Upon commencement volunteers must be made aware of Council’s key policies, procedures, and the Code of Conduct obligations through an induction program, which is coordinated by the volunteer area Manager, Human Resources and WHS Officer. The induction program may be tailored to the individual volunteer activity. Induction must include completion of a Work Health and Safety Induction and other relevant safety training.

Supervising Volunteers

Managers must ensure appropriate levels of supervision, training and management are provided to volunteers. Volunteers should receive regular feedback and acknowledgement but are not performance managed in the way that employees are. Managers will also ensure regular support is provided to volunteers and ensure all volunteers have a healthy and safe workplace.

Ceasing of Volunteer Arrangements

A volunteer arrangement can be ceased by a volunteer or Council at any time. Council requests one week's notice and will attempt to give the same notice period, considering the circumstances. All volunteers must return any property and files (electronic or otherwise) belonging to Council prior to leaving.

Volunteers are expected to act in accordance with relevant Council policies, procedures, and the Code of Conduct. If any volunteer acts in a manner which does not uphold these standards, the volunteer arrangements with Council may be terminated. Managers may seek advice or assistance from Human Resources if needed.

Provision of Insurance

Council provides volunteers with public liability cover and personal accident cover.

Use of Private Vehicle

Any volunteer who is required to operate a vehicle as part of their volunteering duties must provide the Manager with proof of their current driver's license.

If using a private vehicle as part of their volunteer role, the volunteer must provide evidence of their motor vehicle third party and comprehensive insurance details. Volunteers are responsible for any parking or traffic offences they commit by not complying with the NSW road laws. Council will not provide reimbursement for any such fines.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Council will reimburse volunteers for personal costs incurred by the volunteer providing the:

- Expenses claimed have prior approval by the relevant Manager and may include:
 - Motor vehicle expenses;
 - Public transport costs; which does not include public transport from home to the volunteering activity or the return trip home;
 - In limited circumstances, parking fees; and
 - Other approved program and project costs which may be incurred from time to time.
- Costs incurred on behalf of Council while carrying out Council's activities must be demonstrated by supporting documentation for example, receipts.
- Reimbursement has no connection to the volunteer's income-producing activities or services rendered to Council in a professional or commercial capacity; and
- Reimbursements will only cover expenses actually incurred, or to be incurred by the volunteer.

Provision of Non-Cash Benefits

In some circumstances, Council may provide volunteers with reasonable non-cash benefits such as meals, clothing, and token items of recognition for their contribution to the community and length of service

Recognition of Volunteers

Recognising the contribution of volunteers motivates and enhances their experience. In addition to regular verbal recognition, managers of volunteers should consider implementing the following methods of recognition:

- An event (morning or afternoon tea or lunch), for example during National Volunteers Week
- Week, at Christmas time or in recognition of International Volunteers Day
- A framed certificate or token recognising milestones, such as five-year contributions,
- signed by the General Manager
- Annual letters of thanks
- Nomination of national awards through Volunteering Australia; and/or
- Other established and/or suitable recognition schemes as deemed appropriate.

Responsibilities

Managers will:

- Ensure appropriate levels of supervision, support and management are provided.
- Appoint volunteers in accordance with the principles of anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity.
- Provide a safe workplace for all volunteers.
- Ensure relevant background checks, including criminal check and Volunteer Working with Children Checks, are specified at the time that a volunteer position is created and undertaken before a volunteer is engaged.
- Ensure there is no conflict of interest between the volunteer's personal interest, pecuniary, non-pecuniary and Council's volunteering activities.
- Provide a general induction and activity specific training where appropriate.
- Provide information on Council's Work Health and Safety procedures, including correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE) as required.
- Inform volunteers of their responsibilities.
- Maintain a full and accurate record of volunteers in accordance with Council's

Records Management Policy and Privacy Management Plan.

- Provide appropriate insurance coverage for volunteers

Human Resources will:

- Provide sufficient oversight of volunteer procedures as appropriate.
- Maintain records of all volunteer information.
- Verify Working with Children Checks, where relevant.
- Provide content and advice for volunteer induction.

Volunteers will:

- Follow the reasonable directions of their supervisor.
- Comply with Council's values, policies, procedures and Code of Conduct.
- Comply with Council's Work Health and Safety guidelines, including correctly wearing/using personal protective equipment (PPE) when provided/issued.
- Perform volunteer activities in accordance with the agreed role description and working arrangements.
- Attend induction and participate in training activities as required.
- Manage information and data in compliance with Council's Records Management Policy and Privacy Management Plan.
- Arrive on time and report their absence from volunteer work as soon as possible to their supervisor to ensure that alternative arrangements may be made.
- Promptly report to their supervisor existing issues in relation to, or any changes to licences, health or personal circumstances that might impact on their capability to effectively perform a volunteer role.
- Ensure all media enquiries are directed to Council's Communications team.
Volunteers are not authorised to answer any questions or make any comments to the media.
- Before commencing volunteer work, provide Council with relevant documentation (e.g. Working with Children, identification documents, other qualifications).
- Provide one week notice of an intention to cease volunteering with Council, where possible.

Consultation

This policy has been reviewed in consultation Human Resources, Risk & Governance, relevant Managers, the Health and Safety Committee, the Community Development Committee and current volunteers.

References

Laws and Standards
Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
Australian Taxation Guide-Volunteers and Tax-NAT 4612
Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 NSW
Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013 NSW
Children's Guardian Act 2019
Civil Liability Act 2002 (NSW)
Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 NSW
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 NSW
Volunteering Australia, National Standards for Volunteer Involvement 2015
Work Health and Safety Act/Regulation 2011
Policies and Procedures
Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy
Code of Conduct
Records Management Policy
Privacy Management Plan

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