

RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL POLICY REGISTER

Policy No: 1.3.10

Reference: Personnel - Volunteers

POLICY:	VOLUNTEER
FUNCTION:	Corporate Administration
OBJECTIVE:	To ensure that members of the community and Council have mutually agreeable goals in regard to projects and project management and to ensure safe, achievable and effective community projects.
DIRECTORATE:	CORPORATE SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

This policy seeks to enhance the relationship between Richmond Valley Council and the community. The aim of the policy is to:

- Increase community and volunteer partnerships with Council on Community projects.
- Encourage increased opportunities and support volunteering across the Council area.
- Firmly entrench the use of volunteers to assist Council with the provision and maintenance of facilities.
- Create opportunities for increased participation of our local volunteer community and establish an active and vibrant volunteer network assisting maintenance and delivery of works and services.
- Recognise and value the substantial and ongoing contribution made by volunteers and voluntary groups to the quality of life of Richmond Valley Council residents.

PURPOSE

Richmond Valley Council is committed to providing the community with the best possible service delivery. To achieve this requires a high level of commitment and competence from all those who provide that service, including volunteers.

The volunteer policy addresses the need to formalise roles and responsibilities of all involved in the volunteering process by:

- Ensuring that volunteering remains a mutually beneficial activity.
- Recognising the important contribution volunteers make to achieving Council and community goals.
- Clarifying the relationship between Council staff and volunteers.
- Providing a safe and healthy workplace for volunteers.
- Ensuring that Council fulfils its duty of care to potential volunteers and to the existing workforce.
- Identifying training requirements to ensure associated activities are undertaken in a safe manner.
- Providing appropriate supervision to ensure activities are satisfactorily performed.

SCOPE

- Committees of Council set up under the provisions of Section 355 of the Local Government Act
- All individuals applying to volunteer with Council, i.e. Visitor Information Centre, Library, Casino Cultural and Community Centre, Administration building
- Work experience students
- All individuals and organisations undertaking work on Council property, but not under the direction of Council i.e. Service Clubs, Showground Trusts, Roadside Clean up campaigns, Environmental groups, Sporting bodies and Recreation Groups

DEFINITIONS

Organisation	Not for profit organisations such as service clubs, charitable organisations, Rural Fire Service and the like that carry their own insurance and manage the involvement of their volunteers through their own organisation.
Program Co-ordinator	Volunteer leader with the Volunteer group and is also the spokesperson for the Organisation.
Department Manager	Paid employee of Council with delegated responsibility to manage the functions of a Department within Council.
Program Manager	Paid employee of Council who is responsible to manage the project.
Human Resources	Section within Council that manages the Volunteer Policy functions.
Volunteer	A volunteer is a person who is motivated to undertake some form of community activity, not for financial gain, and in so doing, the community derives a benefit from the activity undertaken by the volunteer.

SOURCES OF VOLUNTEERS

Organic: These volunteers tend to be issue focused. They approach Council with a desire to assist in some way, typically in relation to a local issue that directly involves them, or their neighbouring surroundings. An example of this type of volunteer can be someone who undertakes to mowing the lawn at a local reserve.

Group: These volunteers tend to be organised and have some form of structure whether formal or informal. With certain groups there can also be some form of sponsorship from Council. Examples of these types of groups could include "Meals on Wheels", Section 355 Committees, etc.

Independent/Organised Group: As the name implies these groups are external to Council and have their own organisational and management structure. They are project focused, use their own resources and the only interaction with Council could well be that the project is conducted on Council land. Examples of these groups can include, Clean up Australia, Landcare etc.

RESPONSIBILITIES

General Manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- The Volunteer Policy is effectively implemented; and
- Work Health and Safety (WHS) principals are enforced in the work place.

Department Managers are responsible, and will be held accountable for, ensuring that:

- The Volunteer Policy is effectively implemented in their area of control;
- Supervisors have the support necessary, and are held accountable for, their specific responsibilities;
- Employees under their control are consulted about issues affecting their health and safety;
- Prompt action is taken to eliminate unsafe or unhealthy conditions or behaviour; and
- Projects have been assessed as suitable for volunteer activity.

Program Manager, including Program Co-ordinators, are responsible, and will be held accountable, for:

- Taking all practical measures to ensure that the area they control is safe and without risks to health and that the Volunteer policy is adhered to;
- Ensuring that persons at the workplace are behaving in a safe manner;
- Volunteers are supervised, supported, resourced and trained sufficiently to perform the required tasks;
- Notify the Human Resources department when a volunteer is to be engaged and inductions conducted;
- Detecting and promptly remedying risks to health and safety where they have the necessary authority, or promptly reporting these risks with a proposed solution to their supervisor who has the necessary authority to fix the problem;
- Referring Volunteers' health and safety concerns to their manager if they cannot be resolved;
- Ensure all paper work is completed prior to the volunteer commencing;
- Ensure all volunteers undertake site specific inductions; and
- Monitor and review activities conducted, by undertaking random audits.

Volunteers are responsible, and will be held accountable, for:

- Taking reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others;
- Co-operating and complying with the Volunteer Policy and Program;
- Promptly reporting all incidents, accidents, illnesses and any risks to health and safety; and
- Follow instructions of Program Manager/Coordinator.

Human Resources Department is responsible for:

- Maintenance of the volunteer register and associated procedures and documents.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO COUNCIL VOLUNTEERS

In order to enhance the volunteer's experience and comply with legislation and duty of care, Council will aim to:

- Interview and employ volunteers in accordance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation.
- Provide volunteers with induction and training.
- Provide volunteers with a healthy and safe workplace.
- Provide appropriate and adequate insurance coverage for volunteers and ensure they understand the coverage provided for them.
- Not place volunteers in roles that were previously held by paid employees or have been identified as paid jobs.
- Differentiate between paid and unpaid roles.
- Define volunteer roles and develop clear role statements.
- Provide volunteers with a copy of policies pertaining to volunteers.
- Ensure volunteers are not required to take up additional work during industrial disputes or paid employees shortages.
- Provide all volunteers with information on grievance and unsatisfactory performance policies and procedures
- Acknowledge the rights of volunteers.
- Inform volunteers of their responsibilities as volunteers and ensure that their work complements but does not undermine, the work of paid employees.
- Offer volunteers the opportunity for professional development within the scope of their role.
- Reimburse volunteers for out of pocket expenses as agreed.
- Treat volunteers as valuable team members, and advise them of opportunities to participate in decision-making; and
- Acknowledge the contributions of volunteers.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers assisting in the provision of Council services have the right:

- To work in a safe and healthy environment in accordance with the WHS Act;
- To be treated fairly and shown respect;
- To be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and antidiscrimination legislation;
- To be adequately covered by insurance;
- To be given accurate and truthful information about Richmond Valley Council;
- To be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses as agreed;
- To be given a copy of Richmond Valley Council's Volunteer Policy and any other relevant Policies and procedures;
- Not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker;
- Not to do the work of paid employees during industrial disputes;
- To have a role statement and agreed working hours;
- To have complaints and concerns taken seriously;
- To be provided with an volunteer induction to Richmond Valley Council and the specific service for which the volunteer is working;

- To have personal and confidential information dealt with in accordance with the Privacy Act 1998 (Cth), Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW), in particular, the Information Protection Principles and the Health Privacy Principles contained in these Acts; and
- To attend induction and other training activities as required.

Volunteers assisting in the provision of Council services have the responsibility to:

- Respect and adhere to Council policies and procedures;
- Follow instructions of Program Manager/Coordinator;
- Ensure a safe working environment for other volunteers paid employees, clients and members of the public;
- To comply with Council's code of conduct, complete agreed working arrangements and adhere to their outlined role;
- To perform volunteer activities in accordance with the agreed role statement and working arrangements;
- To follow instructions of the Program Coordinator;
- Where required wear appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing;
- To treat Council personal and confidential information in accordance with the Privacy Act 1998 (Cth), Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW) and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW), in particular, the Information Protection Principles and the Health Privacy Principles contained in these Acts; and
- Report injuries and complete an incident report for any injuries, incidents or near misses.

ROLE OF COUNCIL IN DEVELOPING VOLUNTEERING

The community is enhanced by the efforts of community groups including: sporting activities, recreation and leisure pursuits, the environment, the arts, culture and heritage, education, childcare, community safety, emergency relief, social clubs and the care of the aged and of people with a disability. Many of these community groups are managed exclusively by volunteers and the services of the groups are delivered by volunteers.

Council acknowledges and supports its role in developing volunteering within Richmond Valley. Council, through its Volunteer Policy will work towards further developing this role with an aim to:

- Provide leadership and support to volunteer based community groups.
- Promote and encourage volunteering to the community and to the business sector.
- Raise the profile of volunteerism and the work of voluntary community groups.
- Work in partnership and collaboration with community groups, the business sector and other relevant stakeholders to further develop volunteering opportunities.
- Establish and maintain a system of reward and recognition of the contribution made by volunteers and voluntary groups.
- Ensure community groups have access to Council resources and facilities on a fair and equitable basis.

REFERENCES

- Volunteer Management Procedure
- Volunteer Information Handbook
- Volunteer Registration Forms
- Work Health and Safety Act NSW 2011 and associated Regulations
- General Safety Handbook
- Safe Work procedures
- Specified Personnel Policies and Procedures, for e.g. Work Health and Safety, Equal Employment Opportunity, Smoking in the Workplace, Positive Working Relationships Policy, Code of Conduct.

VARIATION

Council reserves the right to amend this Policy from time to time.