



Policy Owner: Director Corporate Services

Category: Operational

Direction: 5. Our Civic Leadership

1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

1.1 North Sydney Council acknowledges that volunteers contribute to the political, social economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the local community by:

- a) strengthening community cohesion, intergenerational exchange, social wellbeing and trust;
- b) expanding the ability of the community to respond to the needs of its citizens and provide a range of services and activities;
- c) engaging the community in protecting local resources, improving the physical environment and support for environmental issues; and
- d) encouraging understanding of, and acceptance of, culture, diversity and difference; and
- e) providing people with the opportunity to contribute whilst offering skills development and learning opportunities.

1.2 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) recognise and value the contribution made by volunteers and voluntary groups to the projects and services delivered by Council;
- b) manage and support Council volunteers in accordance with National Standards for involving volunteers in not-for-profit organisations;
- c) work in partnership with community groups and relevant stakeholders to develop volunteering opportunities, promote volunteering, raise the profile of volunteerism and facilitate access to information about volunteering opportunities; and
- d) provide staff and volunteers with clear information about their roles and responsibilities when engaged in Council's volunteer programs.

1.3 Council adheres to the principles of a child safe organisation and is committed to the care and protection of all children and young people.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1 This Policy applies to all Council staff and all members of the public participating in the Council-approved volunteer programs.

2.2 Council volunteers include:

- a) volunteers who are citizen members of Council managed Reference Groups and Working Groups;
- b) volunteers who participate in Council-approved volunteer programs including Bushcare, Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability, Community Garden programs, HarbourCare, Stanton Library, Streets Alive program and Youth/Councillor Mentor Program, as well as Council managed community/cultural events including North Sydney Art Prize; and
- c) volunteers who participate in Council supported partnership programs.

2.3 Council volunteers do not include:

- a) volunteers involved in Work for the Dole initiatives;
- b) volunteers involved in not-for-profit and/or non-government organisations delivering services within North Sydney local government area, unless they are part of a partnership program;
- c) students on formal vocational placement accompanied by documentation and insurance coverage from their educational institutions;
- d) students without formal placement documentation and insurance coverage from their educational institution; and
- e) volunteers not part of a Council-approved volunteer program or educational institution.

2.4 This Policy does not apply to community representatives involved in North Sydney Community Precinct System i.e. Precinct Committees as this program is governed by Council's *Precinct System Policy*.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Applicant(s) - member(s) of the public applying to volunteer in a Council program as outlined in 2.2.

3.2 Supervisor - is the Appointed Council Officer responsible for the supervision and training of volunteers.

3.3 Partnership Program - includes formal partnership between Council and State government agencies and/or community organisations including the Aboriginal Heritage Office.

3.4 Volunteer - a person who performs/assists in the delivery of a Council project/service willingly and without financial payment.

3.5 Working with Children Check (WWCC): The WWCC is a requirement for anyone

who works or volunteers in child-related work in NSW. The check provides either clearance to work with children for five years, or a bar against working with children.

4. PROVISIONS

4.1 Guiding Principles:

Council's guiding principles for volunteer programs and activities are:

- a) Council supports the principle that volunteers are managed, supported and resourced in accordance with the National Standards for Involving Volunteers in not-for-profit organisations, developed by Volunteering Australia;
- b) Council acknowledges the principles that volunteer initiatives require a commitment to resourcing and that it can play a dual role of supporting volunteers who assist in the provision of Council services and programs, and play a leadership role of developing volunteering within the North Sydney local government area; and
- c) Council *will ensure* that volunteer or unpaid positions not be used to replace paid positions.

4.2 Procedures:

Consistent with Council's commitment to maintain best practice standards in volunteerism these guidelines identify the roles and responsibilities of employees engaging volunteers and the processes required to meet the minimum standards.

4.2.1 Role Statement - the supervisor will develop a role statement (description) that clearly outlines the volunteer role and the expectations of Council. The role statement confirms the expectation that volunteers are engaged for specific tasks. It ensures that volunteers are clear about what is expected of them in their role.

4.2.2 Application Process - potential volunteers must complete an Application Form, supplying the following information - name, address, emergency contact details, role applied for, if relevant, area(s) of interest, applicable skills or background; times and days of availability and where possible applicants must also provide two references/referees.

Prospective volunteers may be required to meet with the supervisor and depending on the duration and complexity of the volunteer engagement, may be required to attend an interview.

4.2.3 Selection and Appointment - applications will be assessed by the supervisor. Once an application has been assessed, an acknowledgment will be sent to the applicant. An offer will be made which details the offer and terms of the agreement. Formal acceptance is required which will consist of the applicant signing the offer. Upon receipt of approval, the applicant will need to liaise with the supervisor about start dates and hours.

Applicants who are not selected will be advised of the outcome; and may be referred to other Council volunteer programs.

4.2.4 Reference/Police Checks/Working with Children Check - You may be asked to undertake a Working with Children Check or a Police Check. If the Police Check confirms a criminal record, the supervisor will assess the suitability of the applicant against the role. If you are unable to receive a clearance for a Child Related position you will not be able to work in the role. References may be contacted to confirm the person's identity and check suitability for the work.

4.2.5 Work Health and Safety - volunteers, in the same way as Council employees, are entitled to work in an environment that is safe. Supervisors are responsible for providing volunteers with Council's *Work Health and Safety Policy* and procedure, and any other relevant safe work procedures where applicable. Volunteers shall follow all safe work procedures and seek instruction when required. It is a standard condition of consent that all work is carried out in accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017*.

4.2.6 Incidents - Volunteers must report incidents to their supervisor as soon as possible. Details of all incidents and emergencies involving volunteers will be recorded by the Supervisor and reported to the Risk Department and People and Culture Department, where relevant.

4.2.7 Equal Opportunity - In accordance with the relevant legislation, Council aims to provide a workplace that is free of direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and bullying in all areas pertaining to employment and volunteering. Prospective volunteers are protected under the relevant legislation when applying for a role within Council and must comply with Council's *EEO, Anti Discrimination and Anti Harassment Policy*.

4.2.8 Insurance - Council's Public Liability/Professional Indemnity and Personal Accident insurance extends to volunteers undertaking tasks for Council. Volunteers are not entitled to workers compensation

under the *Workers Compensation Act 1987* and the *Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998* but have limited benefits under Council's personal accident insurance. On request, Council will provide detailed information on insurance coverage for volunteers.

- 4.2.9 Induction and Training - volunteers will be assigned a supervisor who will be responsible for providing access to necessary training. Volunteers will begin with an identified trial period after which staff will assess whether the volunteer is suitable for the role.
- 4.2.10 Support and Supervision of Volunteers - volunteers will have regular contact with their supervisor to discuss issues and problems as they arise. The frequency of these meeting will depend on the volunteer role and regularity of volunteering.
- 4.2.11 Reimbursement of Expenses - volunteers are to be paid out-of-pocket expenses incurred during their role for Council. This may include travel to meetings on behalf of Council, but not travel to and from Council for their volunteer shift. It can also include materials purchased for the project the volunteer is participating in with Council. All expenses must be authorised in writing by the supervisor before they are incurred. Expenses such as meals and childcare will not be reimbursed.
- 4.2.12 Media Protocols - Council policy states that only authorised personnel will provide comment to the media. All media enquiries must be directed to the Manager Communications and Events. If this person is not available, an appropriate person will be appointed as media liaison at the time of the event. Under no circumstances should the volunteer offer to answer any questions or comment in any way.
- 4.2.13 Confidentiality - volunteers working with Council must keep all privileged information in relation to Council, staff and customers confidential. However, information affecting the health and safety of customers, staff or others including members of the public shall be reported to Council.
- 4.2.14 Driving - if requested to drive a Council vehicle the volunteer must have a valid current Drivers Licence and provide a copy of their Licence to the supervisor.
- 4.2.15 Gifts - volunteers are discouraged from accepting gifts from customers. Volunteers should report in writing any gifts accepted in writing to their supervisor. Council may direct that gifts be returned if this is considered to be a breach of conflict of interest.

4.2.16 Absences - volunteers must report their absence from volunteer work as soon as possible to their Supervisor to ensure that alternative arrangements may be made.

4.2.17 Grievance Procedures/Dispute Resolution - volunteers have a right to raise a grievance without fear of retribution. All grievances shall be handled in a confidential and sensitive manner and where possible, responded to in a timely manner in accordance with Council's *Disciplinary & Misconduct Policy*.

The following procedures shall apply:

- a) should any matter occur which is of concern to a volunteer, he/she shall raise the matter with their immediate Supervisor.
- b) if the issue is not settled to their satisfaction, the volunteer may raise the matter with their Direct Manager.
- c) if the issue is still not settled to their satisfaction, the volunteer may raise the matter with the Divisional Director.

4.2.18 Feedback and Recognition - the performance of all volunteers will be regularly reviewed on an informal basis. Regular supervision will allow ongoing review of a volunteer's performance, role satisfaction and provide an opportunity for the volunteer to give feedback to the Supervisor.

4.2.19 Unsatisfactory Performance - if a volunteer's work is unsatisfactory or, deviates from principles and goals of service, contravenes the rights and responsibilities of volunteers or places a customer/employee or any other person at risk:

- a) the volunteer's Supervisor will discuss the issue with the volunteer and establish the appropriate standard of conduct/performance with the volunteer.
- b) a written record of the meeting is to be kept of the issues discussed and the agreed strategies to support the volunteer to improve their performance. The volunteer will receive a copy.
- c) deliberate or negligent acts that grossly endanger the safety of others, abuse of a member of the public, serious misconduct or making statements, which are likely to discredit Council, or other similar incidences may result in cessation of the volunteer agreement immediately.
- d) if a volunteer believes that their placement has been terminated unfairly the volunteer can raise their grievance with the Manager of the business unit. This should be submitted in writing with the reasons why the action is considered unfair, and the remedy sought.

- 4.2.20 Ceasing of Volunteer Arrangement - cessation can occur by either party. Council requests one week's notice and will attempt to give the same notice period in normal circumstances. All volunteers are to return any property, files (electronic or otherwise) etc. belonging to Council prior to leaving.
- 4.2.21 Marketing - Council uses a range of marketing methods to ensure community awareness of its services and facilities. These include brochures, posters and other visual displays in community noticeboards, newsletters, and mail-outs, ceremonies and launches for individual projects, displays at markets and fairs and media releases. It is proposed that a number of these methods will be used to maintain ongoing interest in and awareness of volunteer opportunities.
- 4.2.22 Record Keeping - Council will keep and maintain a Volunteer Database. The database will be a confidential register of volunteer details which will not be released to parties outside Council without the prior consent of volunteers. Volunteers must be registered on the database to be covered by Council's Insurers. From time-to-time volunteers may be sent a newsletter.

5. RESPONSIBILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY

- 5.1 Supervisors and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that volunteering activities are undertaken according to this Policy and the *Code of Conduct - Standards for Volunteers and Community Representatives*.
- 5.2 Volunteers assisting in the provision of Council services have the right to:
- a) work in a healthy and safe environment;
 - b) be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation;
 - c) be adequately covered by insurance;
 - d) be given accurate and honest information about Council;
 - e) be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, provided these are approved prior to expenditure;
 - f) be given a copy of this Policy and any other relevant policies and procedures;
 - g) have a role statement and agreed working hours;
 - h) have access to a grievance procedures;
 - i) be provided with an orientation to Council and the specific service for which the volunteer is working;
 - j) have personal and confidential information dealt with in accordance with Council's *Privacy Management Plan*; and

k) be provided with sufficient training to perform their role.

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

- a) respect and adhere to Council policies and procedures;
- b) ensure a safe working environment for Council employees, other volunteers, customers and members of the public;
- c) provide accurate and honest information to Council employees, other volunteers, customers and members of the public;
- d) performance volunteer activities in accordance with the agreed role statement and working arrangements;
- e) treat Council, personal and confidential information in accordance with Council's *Privacy Management Plan*; and
- f) attend orientation and other training activities as required.

5.4 Supervisors coordinating volunteers have a responsibility to:

- a) provide a safe and healthy workplace as far as practicable for volunteers to perform their role for Council;
- b) provide volunteers with induction (orientation) and ongoing supervision;
- c) provide volunteers with all necessary safety information, instruction, personal protective clothing and equipment (as required);
- d) provide training to volunteers where required;
- e) treat volunteers as valuable team members, inform and consult them on matters that affect their work and acknowledge their contributions; and
- f) report incidents involving volunteers and work health and safety issues to Council's WHS Specialist and Risk Officer.

6. RELATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS/LEGISLATION

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Council policies and documents:

- Bushcare Volunteer Program Guidelines
- Code of Conduct - Councillors and Staff
- Code of Conduct - Volunteers and Community Representatives
- Community Engagement Policy
- Child Safe Policy
- Gifts and Benefits Policy

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following (internal) staff policies and documents:

- Child Protection Employment Screening Procedure
- Council Fleet Vehicle Policy
- Disciplinary and Misconduct Policy

- Equipment Allocation Policy
- Employment Screen - Working With Children Check
- EEO, Anti Discrimination and Anti Harassment Policy
- EEO Management Plan
- Fit for Work: Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Web Access and E-mail Policy

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents/legislation:

- National Standards for Involving Volunteer in Not-for-profit Organisations, Volunteering Australia
- Workers Compensation Act 1987
- Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Resolution No.	Review Date
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APPENDIX 1: VOLUNTEER DECISION MAKING TREE

