



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Many people volunteer with Council each year to help provide community services, regenerate natural bush land and serve on committees and cultural development projects.

We aim to provide a diverse range of opportunities for volunteers and are very grateful for the time and energy donated by our volunteers.

Volunteering offers many benefits, including:

- ▷ learning or developing skills;
- ▷ meeting new people;
- ▷ gaining work experience;
- ▷ building self-esteem and self-confidence;
- ▷ improving health;
- ▷ making a contribution to our community;
- ▷ making a difference in someone's life; and
- ▷ expressing gratitude for help you may have received in the past from an organisation.

If you are considering becoming a volunteer and helping our local community, I encourage your participation and commend you for your decision.

SCOPE

The *Nambucca Valley Council Volunteer Handbook* is applicable to all current and potential volunteers of Council.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION

The following information should be considered in conjunction with this handbook:

- ▷ Volunteer Work Health and Safety Information Handbook
- ▷ Nambucca Valley Council's Code of Conduct
- ▷ Local Government Act 1993
- ▷ Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- ▷ Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1984
- ▷ Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- ▷ Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- ▷ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- ▷ Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- ▷ Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012

WHY VOLUNTEER?

Volunteering is a great opportunity to contribute to the local community, make new friends, develop new skills and have fun! Volunteers are fundamental to the successful provision of our much needed services and programs. The vital contribution of volunteers enables us to reach out to more people and provide an invaluable contribution to the community.

This document aims to provide some tips and guidelines for you as a volunteer. If you

have any questions, please speak with your supervisor.

Thank you for deciding, to become a volunteer and we hope you enjoy your experience of volunteering with us.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Nambucca Valley Council aims to:

- ▷ increase its capacity to acknowledge, support and resource the many volunteers who participate in activities to further strengthen the Nambucca community;
- ▷ facilitate partnerships with individuals and groups and encourage participation in a broad range of community activities to increase the level of satisfaction for those contributing;
- ▷ encourage individuals, each with their own skills and experiences, to participate in activities to promote inclusion from all sections of the community;
- ▷ promote the value and recognition of volunteering to encourage increased participation from individuals in activities that benefit the community; and
- ▷ define clear guidelines for the participation by volunteers to allow individuals to have a clear understanding of the nature and commitment of their involvement in Council activities.

EXPECTATIONS

WHAT CAN VOLUNTEERS EXPECT OF COUNCIL?

You may expect the following from Council:

- ▷ placement, where able, in the type of volunteer work which suits your skills and/or interests;
- ▷ relevant orientation and an Information Handbook which includes a statement of Council's mission and objectives;
- ▷ an induction;
- ▷ supervision of your operations and training;
- ▷ freedom from pressure to undertake activities you feel unable or ill equipped to complete, or feel go beyond the original reason for your volunteering;
- ▷ feedback regarding performance;
- ▷ support, encouragement and appreciation for your efforts;
- ▷ sunscreen and insect repellent to be issued if you are working outdoors;
- ▷ appropriate personal protective equipment as needed for the performance of your volunteer tasks including instruction on its use.

WHAT DOES COUNCIL EXPECT OF ITS VOLUNTEERS?

Council expects the following from you:

- ▷ a regular commitment of time for the program you have volunteered in;
- ▷ a commitment to attend training programs;
- ▷ to follow instructions given and seek clarification if needed;
- ▷ assigned tasks and duties to be undertaken in a responsible, dependable, conscientious and courteous manner;
- ▷ representation of Council in a politically neutral manner;
- ▷ cooperation with other volunteers and employees;
- ▷ respect for the confidentiality of the Council and any client with whom you may be working;
- ▷ adherence to Council's volunteer handbook and Volunteer Work Health and Safety Handbook; adherence to the Council's Equal Employment Opportunity, Work Health and Safety, media and ethical practice policies and procedures;
- ▷ advice to Council as early as possible regarding your intention to leave your volunteer project;
- ▷ to be responsible for your own transport costs, unless specific arrangements are made in advance;
- ▷ provision of your own hat and appropriate attire (ie sturdy boots) if working outdoors;
- ▷ standard of dress should be appropriate to the work being undertaken. Hats and sunscreen are to be worn when working outdoors; and
- ▷ to report any incidents or accidents involving volunteers or members of the public to the appropriate Council staff member.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COUNCIL

Council will:

- ▷ recognise the different roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers;
- ▷ create a climate of mutual respect;
- ▷ provide a safe work environment;
- ▷ ensure that volunteers have access to the appropriate guidelines and policies;
- ▷ provide sufficient induction and training relating to various activities;
- ▷ assess volunteer skills to match tasks with expectations, interests and time commitments;
- ▷ ensure that volunteers are not used to permanently replace paid staff; and
- ▷ require volunteers to work under the direction and supervision of paid staff and/or appointed program coordinators.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers have obligations to Nambucca Valley Council and are required to:

- ▷ acquaint themselves with the objectives and functions of Council and the service they are providing;
- ▷ understand and acknowledge the relevant Council policies and procedures;
- ▷ participate in the appropriate induction and training provided;
- ▷ operate under the direction and supervision of Council staff to achieve the objectives required;
- ▷ notify of any potentially hazardous situations to themselves or a third party; and
- ▷ report any injury/damage to themselves or third party to their direct supervisor or Safety and Risk Officer.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY REQUIREMENTS APPLICABLE TO VOLUNTEERS

Nambucca Valley Council is committed to fair dealing and high standards of ethical behaviour in its care, control and management of the Local Government area. As a volunteer you need to demonstrate standards of conduct and ethics that assist in maintaining public confidence and public trust in Council.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

While undertaking activities on behalf of Council, volunteers have responsibilities for health and safety.

In particular through their actions and omissions, volunteers are not to place themselves or other persons at risk while undertaking Council related activities. Depending upon the nature of the activity, the responsibilities for volunteers may include the following:

- ▷ be aware of and follow the approved risk management procedures for the activity;
- ▷ follow the directions of the person in charge of the activity;
- ▷ use plant or equipment in accordance with the correct procedures;
- ▷ bring to the attention of the appropriate person any matter which could affect the safe undertaking of the activity; and
- ▷ report to the appropriate person as soon as practical any incidents or near misses which relate to health and safety of the volunteer activity.

For more information please refer to Council's Volunteer Work Health and Safety Information Handbook.

GENERAL CONDUCT

You must avoid behaviour that could constitute an act of disorder or misbehaviour.

Specifically, as a volunteer you must avoid conduct that:

- ▷ contravenes the Local Government Act 1993, associated regulations and Council's relevant administrative requirements;
- ▷ is detrimental to the pursuit of the charter of Council as stated in the Local Government Act;
- ▷ is improper or unethical;
- ▷ is an abuse of power or otherwise amounts to misconduct;
- ▷ causes, comprises or involves intimidation, harassment or verbal abuse;
- ▷ causes, comprises or involves discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment and
- ▷ causes, compromises or involves prejudice in the provision of a service to the community.

You must act lawfully, honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out your volunteering work. You must treat others with respect at all times.

EQUITABLE TREATMENT

Volunteers, in carrying out Council duties must:

- ▷ act reasonably, justly, in accordance with the law and in a non-discriminatory manner;
- ▷ deal with all situations consistently, but treat each matter on its merits;
- ▷ take all reasonable steps to ensure that the information upon which decisions or actions are based is factually correct

and that all relevant information has been obtained;

- ▷ treat all staff members, Councillors and members of the public fairly and with courtesy; and
- ▷ refrain from any form of conduct, in the performance of your duty, which may cause any person unwarranted offence or embarrassment, or give rise to the reasonable suspicion or appearance of improper conduct or bias in the performance of your duties.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

If Council is to maintain the trust and confidence of the community, Council must ensure that the actions and decisions of Council's volunteers are free from any conflicts of interest and are also clearly seen to be free from any conflicts of interest.

As a volunteer, you must not allow your private interests to interfere with your volunteering duties. Any actual or potential conflict between your private interests and those of Council are to be avoided. The onus is on you to notify your supervisor or a senior manager if a potential or actual conflict of interest arises.

USE OF INFORMATION

It is important that the community has confidence that any information acquired by Council is used only for Council purposes.

As a volunteer, if you access any confidential information (commercial or personal) from Nambucca Valley Council during the course of your volunteering duties, you must:

- ▷ protect the confidential, commercial and personal information;
- ▷ only access it when needed in your capacity as a volunteer for Council;
- ▷ not use the confidential, commercial or personal information for any unofficial purpose outside the work of Council;
- ▷ only release the confidential, commercial or personal information when you have the authority to do so;

- ▷ only use confidential, commercial or personal information for the purpose it is intended to be used; and
- ▷ not use Council information for personal purposes.

GIFTS AND BENEFITS

As a volunteer you must never demand or request any gift or benefit for yourself or anyone else in connection with your volunteering duties.

If you are offered or receive a gift, you must advise your supervisor who will fully explain Council's Code of Conduct requirements in relation to gifts and benefits.

USE OF COUNCIL RESOURCES

Council equipment, facilities, property and other resources are to be used:

- ▷ ethically, effectively, efficiently, economically and carefully;
- ▷ for the benefit of Council and only in connection with your volunteering work for Council; and
- ▷ with no usage for private purposes and only in accordance with the details stated in Council's Code of Conduct.

BREACHES

It is everybody's responsibility (including volunteers) to not only act in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct but also to report any breaches of the Code immediately.

As a volunteer you should report such incidents to the General Manager. Breaches of the Code may lead to disciplinary action, sanctions and/or matters being referred to the appropriate investigative body, i.e. the Police, Ombudsman, or the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important for volunteers to have regard for the privacy of individuals and the confidential nature of information contained within the work area. If you have any doubts on whether information may be classified as confidential you should refer such matters to your supervisor. Examples of confidential information include (but are not limited to) names, addresses, contact details and monetary amounts.

CHILD PROTECTION AND CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS

Some volunteer positions may require a NSW Working With Children Check, or a criminal history check to be carried out. If this is required you will be notified.

Any volunteer position requiring you to be with unsupervised children aged 16 or under will require you to apply online at www.newcheck.kids.nsw.gov.au for a Working With Children Check and present your approved Application Number to Council prior to commencement.

Any volunteer position requiring you to deal with cash, or entering resident's homes will require a criminal history check to be carried out. If this is required you will be given the appropriate forms and instructions.

COPYRIGHT, AUTHORSHIP AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Council has a responsibility to increase and communicate knowledge. Any written material, photographs and activities developed as part of your work at the Council is copyrighted and remains the property of Council.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If a circumstance arises where a volunteer needs to raise an individual grievance, to ensure that the grievance can be addressed and resolved, the following process should be followed:

- 1 The volunteer is encouraged to approach the person directly related to the issue if they feel comfortable doing so.
- 2 The volunteer can approach the relevant supervisor in the area they are working within for a discussion and advice on how to best resolve the issue. This discussion should be treated as strictly confidential.
- 3 If the issue remains unresolved, then the issue should be progressed to the section manager in writing.
- 4 If the matter once again remains unresolved, the volunteer may request the matter be referred to the relevant department head for discussion. A meeting between all parties should be held as soon as practicable.
- 5 If the matter remains unresolved, the General Manager shall provide the volunteer with a written response.

The response shall include reasons for not implementing any proposed remedy.

At any stage of the procedure volunteers are entitled to have the support of an advocate of your choice present for any meeting held to resolve any grievance.

MEDIA PROTOCOL

Volunteers are not permitted to make any comment to the media on behalf of Nambucca Valley Council. All media enquiries should be referred to Council's Corporate Services Department.

GENERAL INFORMATION

FINANCIAL REMUNERATION

You will not receive any financial remuneration for being a volunteer. However, you are entitled to reimbursement of any unavoidable out-of-pocket expenses. You should seek approval from your supervisor should you anticipate any out of pocket expenses. If appropriate approval has not been sought from your supervisor, reimbursement may not be possible.

Your supervisor should be able to anticipate costs that may be incurred in the course of your duties and make arrangements so that you are not required to make payments. Any out-of-pocket expenses that can be anticipated should be approved in advance by your supervisor.

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure appropriate resourcing of the project and to avoid situations which may result in out-of-pocket expenses or allowances being paid to you.

TRAINING

Council will provide a one-on-one or group induction training time with your supervisor, where you will be trained on specific aspects of your volunteer role. This training will also include training in Work Health and Safety. This is compulsory training for all volunteers. This will be followed by overall on-the job training, showing you in detail what is required of your role.

Depending on your role, you may receive further training, training in groups or training documents if needed.

If there are skills or issues you are unsure of, or need further direction on, your supervisor will be happy to assist, so please speak to them.

UNIFORMS

Volunteers are generally not provided with a uniform, unless the project requires protective or identifying clothing.

FEEDBACK

For volunteers participating in longer term projects, there will be meetings held every few months where you can discuss work issues of mutual interest with other volunteers, raise any issues or concerns and share information. You have the right to make suggestions and be heard. Of course, volunteers are able to meet outside these meetings, if they wish. One of the many benefits of volunteering is making new friends with similar interests and becoming part of a network within the community.

PERSONAL TELEPHONE CALLS

You are requested not to use Council phones for personal calls except in the case of an emergency.

SMOKING

Smoking is not permitted by law in Council buildings and vehicles. If you wish to smoke you must do so in Council designated smoking areas or outside the premises and not within 10 metres of the entrance of the building. Waste products must be disposed of in appropriate bins.

INSURANCE

Volunteers are insured while undertaking duties authorised and directly related to Council. This cover does not extend to volunteers under the age of 12 years of age or over the age of 90 years. Any volunteer outside of this age range must complete a waiver form.

Volunteers Workers Insurance cover provides cover for volunteers following accidental injury, disability or death whilst performing duties on behalf of the Council, including travel between their place of

abode and the location where the volunteer undertakes their role. The volunteer supervisor can supply further details of the level of insurance cover available upon request.

This type of insurance covers a level of benefit for:

- ▷ death and capital benefits and accidental death benefits;
- ▷ the loss of income if the volunteer was unable to work through an injury sustained while volunteering;
- ▷ proven Emergency Home Help necessarily incurred for non-income earners;
- ▷ necessary Student Home Tutorial Cost; and
- ▷ out of pocket expenses up to \$500 directly resulting from an injury whilst volunteering (upon receipt of all claims and receipts). Council may consider and refer to the Insurer, additional costs above this amount, upon verification of the injury and on supply of all claims and receipts.

No cover is provided for those medical expenses covered by Medicare or other health benefit funds or any gap as it is illegal to offer this form of insurance unless the organisation is a registered medical fund provider.

All claims will be put through the supervisor and will need to be assessed and verified by Council and/or the Insurer.

TERMINATION OF A VOLUNTEER

In instances of misconduct or breaches to the volunteer responsibilities, Nambucca Valley Council has the right to dismiss the volunteer.

CEASING VOLUNTEERING

If you wish to cease volunteering, please advise your supervisor as early as possible regarding your intention to leave the programme. Please let your supervisor know at least one week in advance. Giving this notice will enable the supervisor to make arrangements to ensure continuity in the programme you are leaving, so that clients are not neglected, or activities disrupted for other volunteers.

The supervisor will ask you if you would like to have an exit interview so Council can learn from your experience in volunteering with us, to help us evaluate and improve our volunteering programmes.

**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
EFFORTS AND
CONTRIBUTIONS
TO NAMBUCCA
VALLEY COUNCIL'S
VOLUNTEER
PROGRAMS!**

**Nambucca Valley Council
www.nambucca.nsw.gov.au**

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like further information on any of the topics covered in this handbook or have any general enquiries, please contact your Supervisor.