



# Bellinghen Shire Council **POLICY**

Internal Use Only

External Use

## **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

Department: Corporate & Community Services  
Responsible Officer: Deputy General Manager Corporate & Community  
Contact Officer: Catherine Tait  
Date Approved by General Manager:  
Date Confirmed by SCC:

**Adopted:**  
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### **1.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the support and management of volunteers throughout Bellinghen Shire Council (Council). It will provide staff and volunteers with clear information about their roles and responsibilities when engaged in Council's volunteer programs. The key purposes of the policy are that:

- 1.1 Council values and recognises the contribution that volunteers bring to Council and the community generally.
- 1.2 This Policy aims to provide guidance and assistance to all managers and supervisors who are involved in administering and managing volunteer arrangements. It outlines the issues to consider in connection with volunteering and may also be useful for volunteers in understanding the parameters of their engagement by Council.

Please note people who are volunteer members of committees established under section 355 of the NSW Local Government Act have additional separate specific guidelines and procedures for the operation of their committees which are outlined in the document *Section 335 Guidelines*.

### **2.0 SCOPE**

This policy is relevant to each of the following:

- All individuals applying to or registered with Council to volunteer.
- Volunteer organisations with a direct relationship to Council (excluding incorporated associations).
- Work experience students.
- Committees of Council set up under the provisions of Section 355 of the NSW Local Government Act.

This policy does not extend to individuals volunteering for the purpose of fulfilling community service requirements as directed by a court of law or government sponsored employment support programs.

### **3.0 DEFINITIONS**

**Program Manager** Paid employee of Council who is responsible to manage a specific volunteer or volunteer project.

**Program Coordinator** Volunteer leader with the Volunteer group and is also the key contact for the volunteer organisation working with Council

**Volunteer**

A genuine volunteer is generally understood as a person who willingly gives unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills. A volunteer undertakes volunteering work for personal, charitable or social motivations without any expectation of financial gains.

**4.0 POLICY STATEMENT**

Council aims to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to develop volunteering opportunities, promote volunteering, raise the profile of volunteerism and facilitate access to information about volunteering opportunities.

The placement of volunteers within Bellingen Shire Council is for the mutual benefit of the community, Council and the volunteer.

This policy therefore encompasses the following:

**4.1 Selection, engagement and management of volunteers**

- 4.1.1 Council will select and engage volunteers having regard to both the person's suitability to assist Council and, where appropriate, to anti-discrimination and equal employment legislation.
- 4.1.2 Individuals or organisations who offer voluntary assistance to Council will be required to complete the appropriate application form and lodge it with the relevant Program Manager for consideration of suitability for the role. Council reserves the right not to engage a volunteer should they deem the volunteer unsuitable for the role.
- 4.1.3 Where appropriate, Council will provide volunteers with the appropriate level of orientation and training.
- 4.1.4 Volunteers should be appropriately managed and supported by Council. To this end, it is important that volunteers are supervised in a way that is fitting of the duties they perform.
- 4.1.5. Where volunteers are members of Section 355 committees, the appropriate ratification process needs to occur as listed in the 355 Committee Guidelines
- 4.1.6. Working hours and commitments will be agreed to and met for the purposes of communication and contact. Volunteers should advise the relevant Program Manager or Program Co-ordinator if they cannot meet the agreed commitments.
- 4.1.7. Volunteers are required to record their name, date and time of volunteering in an attendance register or diary. Attendance at a committee meeting is recorded as part of the committee minutes.

**4.2 Standard of volunteer conduct**

- 4.2.1 Volunteers are expected to maintain an appropriate standard of conduct in the performance of voluntary work. This standard is outlined in the BSC's Code of Conduct. Volunteers must treat employees, agents, contractors, councillors, ratepayers, members of the public and other volunteers with appropriate courtesy. Volunteer must also respect the confidentiality of information and documents to which a volunteer has access to in connection with their volunteer work.

### **4.3 Safety and insurance coverage for volunteers**

- 4.3.1 Council understands its obligations to volunteers under work health and safety laws. Council wishes to provide a safe working environment for volunteers.
- 4.3.2 Council's work health and safety practices and procedures apply to volunteers. Accordingly Council will explain the relevant safety requirements to volunteers.
- 4.3.3 Appropriate and adequate insurance coverage will be provided to volunteers.
- 4.3.4 Volunteer use of their own equipment is limited to equipment that would not (in a commercial setting) require a specific licence or certification to operate. E.g. use of a chainsaw in a commercial operation would require the operator to hold a specific licence to operate, therefore use of chainsaws is limited by Council to those who are certified.

### **4.4 Duties performed by volunteers**

- 4.4.1 A genuine volunteer may provide assistance to Council in a variety of ways, provided that assistance is not a substitute for a paid position within Council's structure. Accordingly, Council should not engage a person to perform volunteer work if the work performed would ordinarily be paid for by Council.
- 4.4.2 With this in mind, volunteers should not be used by Council to perform routine or specialist duties ordinarily undertaken by paid employees. The limitation includes any instance where work or a position becomes available as a result of an employee's absence from the workplace.
- 4.4.3 A volunteer should not be placed in a role previously held by a paid employee unless the volunteer is appointed on merit in accordance with Council's recruitment process.
- 4.4.4 Council may, where appropriate, define volunteer roles, including preparing descriptions of the duties to be performed.
- 4.4.5 Consideration of appropriate recognition will be given to volunteers who assist with Council projects. Such recognition is at the discretion of the relevant Program Manager.

### **4.5 Reimbursement of expenses**

- 4.5.1 Volunteers will be reimbursed by Council for any expenses reasonably incurred in connection with the performance of the voluntary work provided these expenses are previously agreed with the Program Manager. A volunteer making a claim for reimbursement must supply Council with proof of the expense claimed.

### **4.6 Duration of a volunteer engagement**

- 4.6.1 A volunteer engagement can come to an end at any time. However, there is an expectation and need, within a professional context, for fair notice to be provided with respect to cessation of duties. For example, a volunteer ideally should provide from one to two weeks notice if they can no longer volunteer. Council will provide the same level of notice should they no longer require the volunteer's services.
- 4.6.2 In instances of misconduct or breaches of volunteer responsibilities including the BSC Code of Conduct, Council has the right to dismiss the volunteer, and

depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, dismissal may be without prior warning and be immediate. This includes:

- theft of property or funds
- intoxication through alcohol or other substances whilst or during volunteering
- verbal or physical harassment of other volunteers, clients or staff
- disclosure of confidential information regarding the Council and/or clients
- malicious damage to Council or community property
- acting in an unsafe manner
- mental incapacity to undertake the volunteer role

## 5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 5.1 Council

- Provide a safe work environment for volunteer activities
- Provide appropriate supervision, instruction and training to enable the volunteer to safely and effectively perform activities
- Provide procedures to effectively administer and support volunteer activities

### 5.2 Manager/Supervisor

- Where appropriate document the range of activities to be performed by a volunteer
- Lead and support the volunteer in their activities
- Provide feedback on performance and effectiveness
- Arrange resources and equipment needed to achieve the activities
- Ensure that adequate induction, instruction and WHS measures have been provided prior to the commencement of volunteer work
- Maintain the volunteer register

### 5.3 Volunteer

- Safely perform activities as required
- Comply with relevant Council policies and procedures
- Undertake induction, orientation and other training as required
- Advise Council when they wish to cease the volunteering relationship

## 6.0 RELATED PROCEDURES

The volunteer policy will be supported by a number of tools in its implementation.

1. **Volunteer Register** – a comprehensive register of volunteers will be developed and will include such information as contact details, completed inductions and training as well as skills of the individual, and any agreed personal equipment and PPE.
2. **Volunteer Handbook (code of conduct)** – this existing document will be reviewed as part of the policy implementation phase. In its current format it provides volunteers with a general introduction to Council, the rights and responsibilities of both parties, code of conduct responsibilities and basic health and safety information. (Attachment 9.1 B).
3. **Section 355 Guidelines** – provides guidelines for the effective operation of the committee on behalf of Council. This is relevant to the specific type of volunteer group.
4. **Toolkit for Program Managers** (yet to be developed) – will provide general direction and resources for Council staff who are responsible for volunteers covering areas such as recruitment, induction, training, duty of care, recognition, retention and partnerships

## **7.0 LEGAL PARAMETERS**

- *NSW Local Government Act, 1993*
- *NSW Work Health and Safety Act, 2011*
- *NSW Work Health and Safety Regulations, 2011*

## **8.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

*Volunteer Handbook*

*Section 355 Guidelines and associated Appendices*

*Model Code of Conduct*

*Toolkit for Program Managers and Coordinators (under development)*