

Policy

Volunteer Management

Version 2.6

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Division:
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Sustainable Communities and Environment
Creative and Inclusive Communities
Council Policies/Protocols/Procedures
See Version Control

Tweed Shire Council is committed to using plain language so that our documents and publications are easy to understand.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear information about Volunteer Management at Tweed Shire Council. The main readers of the document are Tweed Shire Council staff and volunteers.

Volunteer Management Policy

1. Policy objectives

- Provide context for a consistent and coordinated approach to volunteer governance, recruitment, training and management across all Council programs involving volunteers, in line with the [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#).
- Define the relationship between Council staff and Council volunteers and ensure all parties understand their roles and responsibilities, fostering a mutually beneficial association and reducing risk.
- Provide a safe and healthy workplace for Council volunteers through appropriate training and induction, and ensure volunteers are treated equitably, respectfully and utilised ethically.
- Recognise the important contribution volunteers make to achieving Council and community goals.

1.1. Definitions

Volunteer

In accordance with Volunteering Australia's National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, Council adopts as its definition of volunteering: 'Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain'. In the context of this policy, the use of the word 'Volunteer' encompasses each of the volunteer types listed below.

Council Volunteer

A person or entity who gives of their time:

- for no financial reward by Council.
- at no direct financial cost to the volunteer.
- of their own free will and without coercion.
- for community benefit.
- in designated volunteer positions of Council and directed by authorised Council staff.

Volunteer Program Supervisor

The Volunteer Program Supervisor ensures that risk assessments, induction, training, attendance sheets and records are completed and maintained for each volunteer project.

The Volunteer Program Supervisor will also ensure adequate supervision of volunteers, either by a Council employee or in liaison with the associated organisation.

Associated Volunteer

A volunteer engaged by an entity external to Council but providing volunteer services on Council land/property (for example, Landcare) directed by a designated person authorised by the external entity.

Associated Volunteer Organisation Supervisor.

A volunteer supervisor engaged by an entity external to Council but providing supervision to volunteers on Council land/property (for example, Landcare).

Volunteer Program Manager

Council officer (typically the Unit Manager or Coordinator but may be an authorised officer) who is responsible for the coordination of the volunteer program(s) in their area of responsibility.

The Volunteer Program Manager has the authority to recruit and dismiss volunteers and ensures that the Program Supervisor is trained in volunteer supervision.

Volunteer Arrangement

The key characteristics of a genuine Volunteer Arrangement include the:

- parties did not intend to create a legally binding employment relationship.
- volunteer is under no legal obligation to attend the workplace or perform work.
- volunteer does not expect to be paid for their work.
- volunteer is undertaking the work for the purpose of benefiting the organisation/community and not to obtain a private benefit for themselves.

Volunteer Program

For the purposes of this policy and all associated protocols and procedural documents which form part of Council's Volunteer Management Framework, a Volunteer Program refers to any organised, Council authorised activity which assists in the achievement of Council's objectives and is undertaken by volunteers.

Worker

Has the same meaning as 'Worker' under Section 7 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, as being:

- An employee
- A contractor or subcontractor
- A worker of a contractor or subcontractor
- A worker of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the person's business or undertaking
- An outworker
- An apprentice or trainee
- A student gaining work experience
- A volunteer
- A person of a prescribed class

1.2. Policy background

Tweed Shire Council recognises and values the significant support and ongoing contribution made by volunteers to the quality of life of the residents of the Tweed.

Council benefits from the efforts of volunteers, while volunteers experience the satisfaction of participating in activities which benefit the community. Volunteers are central to building strong, healthy and inclusive communities by supporting and contributing to a variety of Council services and programs.

Support for Council volunteers, and investing in the development of volunteer programs, helps Council to achieve its vision of the Tweed being recognised for its desirable lifestyle, strong community, unique character and environment and the opportunities its residents enjoy.

This policy addresses the need to formalise roles, responsibilities and boundaries of all involved in the volunteering process. Council has a duty of care for all its employees and volunteers and is committed to providing a safe working environment. To achieve this, it is necessary for all Council volunteers and Council officers responsible for volunteer programs to comply with relevant legislation, Council policies, protocols and procedures.

1.3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all registered Council volunteers undertaking authorised activities for and on behalf of Council.
- all individuals applying to volunteer with Council.
- people who are registered as mutual obligation participants with Services Australia.

- all individuals and organisations volunteering in activities coordinated by Council.
- associated volunteers undertaking Council-approved activities under the auspices of an external organisation on Council land/property (such as Landcare Australia; Incorporated Coastcare and Dunecare groups).
- Council employees who volunteer out of business hours in Council-related activities.

The policy does not apply to:

- volunteer members of advisory committees and sub-committees established for the purposes of Section 355 and 277 of the *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*
- associated volunteers undertaking activities under the auspices of an external organisation who are not working on Council land/property (such as Landcare Australia; Incorporated Coastcare and Dunecare groups) or not working on an approved project at a designated time.
- secondary and tertiary students undertaking work experience or internships as part of their course of study.
- participants fulfilling social security benefit obligations. Note: while Council may use *Work for the Dole* participants and individuals undertaking Community Service Orders, these are not considered volunteers for the purposes of this policy.
- Councillors who undertake activities as part of their local government duties.
- Council employees who volunteer with external organisations as part of their work.
- representatives of external organisations who work with Council as part of their paid employment.

2. Policy

Council is committed to creating opportunities for volunteers that are productive, meaningful and of benefit to the community and the volunteer. Council will ensure that all Council Volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities, receive appropriate support, supervision and training, and are protected through the provision of a safe and healthy workplace. Council will also reward and recognise the contribution of volunteers through skills development and learning opportunities.

Council's Volunteer Programs will be modelled on the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement – a best practice framework to support the involvement of volunteers in organisations. The 8 standards address the following key areas of volunteer involvement:

1. Leadership and management
2. Commitment to volunteer involvement
3. Volunteer roles
4. Recruitment and selection
5. Support and development
6. Workplace safety and wellbeing
7. Volunteer recognition
8. Quality management and continuous improvement.

The National Standards underpin all volunteer program procedures and guidelines. They provide direction on good practice and enable self-assessment of Council's implementation and performance of Volunteer Programs.

2.1 Responsibilities

Council and individual volunteers each have an obligation to ensure that volunteer participation is safe, effective and enjoyable. To achieve this, volunteers and Council have shared responsibilities. These responsibilities are underpinned by Tweed Shire Council's core values and the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement.

Tweed Shire Council values

We look after people and our places, explore all opportunities, and are proud of our passionate approach.

We care about each other, choose to be here, and are in this together.

We have conversations where everyone can contribute and are willing to have ago.

We put back in to make a difference, so that our Tweed community is even better tomorrow than it is today.

Shared responsibilities

Council will:

- Recognise the different roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers.
- Ensure Volunteer Program Managers and Volunteer Program Supervisors are resourced sufficiently to effectively implement the Volunteer Management Policy and relevant procedures in their areas of responsibility.
- Ensure Volunteer Program Managers provide sufficient training and resources to Volunteer Program Supervisors to oversee the volunteer program(s) they are responsible for.
- Provide induction and training to volunteers relating to the activities they will be undertaking, to ensure volunteers are competent to perform allocated tasks.
- Create a climate of mutual respect.
- Provide a safe work environment and ensure risk management procedures are implemented and followed.
- Ensure records of volunteers are kept securely in accordance with privacy legislation and attendance records are completed and maintained.
- Ensure that volunteers are not used to replace paid employees undertaking core functions of Council.

Volunteers will:

- Read and understand the objectives of the Volunteer Program they are volunteering in.
- Understand, acknowledge and comply with the requirements of relevant Council policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Participate in induction and training as required.
- Operate under the direction and supervision of a designated Council Volunteer Program Supervisor or an Associated Volunteer Organisation Supervisor.
- Take care for the health and safety of themselves and others and notify the Volunteer Program Supervisor of any potential hazardous situation.
- Promptly report all incidents, accidents, illness and any risks to health, safety and the environment to the Volunteer Program Supervisor.

3. Related legislation

Records Act 1998 and Private and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998

Work Health and Safety Act (NSW) 2011

Work Health and Safety Regulation (NSW) 2018

Work Health and Safety Management System Documentation

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, Volunteering Australia

Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace Non-Employee Workers Protocol

Child Safety Policy

Policies and protocols relating to protected disclosures.

3.1 Volunteer procedures and protocols

To support the management of Council's Volunteer Program, relevant policies, protocols and supporting documents will be provided to volunteers at induction and must be read and acknowledged before commencement of volunteer tasks.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Volunteer Role Statement
- Volunteer Agreement
- Tweed Shire Council Volunteer Handbook
- Volunteer Procedures – program-specific procedures document.

4. Compliance

All volunteer types described in this policy are expected to comply with the standards and responsibilities outlined in this policy.

4.1 Volunteer Work Health and Safety

All Workers have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and are required to perform their duties in accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, and all relevant Work Health and Safety Risk Assessments, Safe Work Methods Statements, Standard Operating Procedures and site-specific requirements and instructions.

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*, Volunteers are deemed to be a Worker of Council and as such, are owed a statutory duty of care while undertaking activities on behalf of Council.

Council will:

- Inform council volunteers of known risks and hazards in their place of volunteering.
- Provide guidance to volunteers about how to identify risks and hazards.
- Provide guidance on the implementation of appropriate controls to eliminate, or if not possible, reduce the level of risk to an acceptable level to create a safer, healthier workplace for volunteers.

Volunteers have a responsibility not to place themselves or other persons at risk while undertaking Council-related activities or carrying out volunteering activities on Council owned land/ facilities.

4.2 Insurances

Council maintains conditional public liability and personal accident insurance cover for registered volunteers conducting authorised Council work on council-owned land.

Personal accident insurance cover may be available to volunteers between the ages of 18 and 90. For volunteers outside of this age range, conditions apply.

4.3 Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

The recruitment and selection of Council Volunteers will be conducted in a fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner, ensuring equal opportunity for all individuals who meet the criteria. The process will involve:

- **Role Statements:** clear description of volunteer duties, responsibilities, and required skills.
- **Eligibility criteria:** volunteer requirements such as level of commitment, relevant skills and qualifications, and alignment with Council values.
- **Advertising:** promotion of volunteer opportunities through diverse channels to attract a wide pool of candidates.
- **Application process:** Council Volunteers must complete a formal online application, including providing personal details, relevant experience, and availability.

- **Interviews/assessments:** Candidates may be interviewed to assess their suitability for the role and fit within the team.
- **Screening and checks:** Background checks including Working with Children Checks, National Police Check, or reference checks may be required depending on the nature of the role.
- **Volunteer Agreements:** Upon selection, volunteers must sign an agreement confirming their acceptance of the role expectations and responsibilities.

4.4 Consequences for breaches of Volunteer Agreement

Volunteers are expected to adhere to the Council's Volunteer Agreement. Breaches will be managed according to the following framework:

- **Minor infractions:** For minor breaches (e.g. lateness, non-compliance with procedures), the Volunteer Supervisor will facilitate a discussion with the volunteer to allow an opportunity for feedback from both parties and agree on a way forward.
- **Serious breaches:** Major violations (e.g. harassment, safety violations, confidentiality breaches) will be reported to the Volunteer Manager and People and Culture and may result in formal investigations. Consequences may include temporary suspension or cessation of the volunteer agreement.
- **Disciplinary process:** Volunteers have the right to be informed of allegations and provide their perspective before decisions are made.
- **Appeals:** Volunteers may appeal decisions through a formal process if they believe disciplinary action was unjust.

4.5 Reimbursement of Expenses

To ensure volunteers are not financially disadvantaged, Council may reimburse volunteers for pre-approved expenses incurred during their designated volunteer shift. This will include:

- **Eligible expenses:** Reimbursement may cover travel costs associated with undertaking the volunteer role, materials purchased for approved volunteer duties, or other reasonable costs directly related to the volunteer role. Prior agreement is required from the Volunteer Program Manager.
- **Approval process:** Volunteers must seek prior approval from their Volunteer Program Supervisor or Volunteer Program Manager for any expenses.
- **Documentation required:** Volunteers must submit receipts or documentation as proof of the incurred expense.
- **Reimbursement timeline:** Reimbursements will be processed in accordance with Council's financial procedures.

4.6 Problem resolution and grievances

Council is committed to providing a positive and respectful volunteering environment. Volunteers have access to fair and transparent processes for addressing issues or complaints:

- **Open communication:** Volunteers are encouraged to first raise concerns informally with their Volunteer Program Supervisor or Volunteer Program Manager.
- **Formal grievance process:** If the issue is not resolved informally, volunteers can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Volunteer Program Manager in the first instance and then the People and Culture Unit for additional support and advice. An impartial investigation will follow, involving all relevant parties. All grievances will be dealt with promptly, confidentially, impartially and with sensitivity. All formal avenues for handling of grievances must be fully documented and the volunteer's wishes should be considered in the determination of appropriate steps and actions.
- **Mediation:** Where necessary, mediation may be offered to resolve conflicts or disputes.

- **Confidentiality:** All complaints will be treated confidentially and in accordance with privacy legislation.
- **Appeals:** Volunteers may appeal grievance outcomes through an established process.

4.7 Confidentiality and Privacy

Council values and protects the privacy of its volunteers. All personal information collected from volunteers will be handled in accordance with privacy laws and Council's privacy policies:

- **Collection of information:** Volunteers' personal details (e.g. name, address, qualifications) will be collected for the purposes of recruitment, management, and program improvement.
- **Data storage:** Personal data will be securely stored in a confidential system and accessed only by authorised Council staff.
- **Use of information:** Volunteer information will be used only for managing volunteer participation and compliance with legal obligations.
- **Disclosure:** Personal information will not be disclosed to third parties without the volunteer's consent, except as required by law.
- **Volunteer access:** Volunteers have the right to access and update their personal information held by Council.

Council is committed to protecting personal information in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and Council's Privacy Management Plan. Volunteers may be exposed, directly or indirectly, to confidential information and/or sensitive material during their volunteer activities. Volunteers must not disclose any private or personal information to anyone. This includes any information that is not publicly available, such as telephone numbers. Volunteers shall not use information, including confidential information gained through their volunteer activities, for the purpose of securing a private benefit for themselves or any other person.

4.8 Cessation of volunteer involvement

Volunteer engagement may be ended, either voluntarily or involuntarily, following these procedures:

- **Voluntary cessation:** Volunteers can cease their roles by providing notice to their Volunteer Program Supervisor and outlining their reasons for leaving.
- **Involuntary cessation:** Council may cease a volunteer's involvement if they breach the Volunteer Agreement, fail to meet role requirements, or for other valid reasons such as safety or legal concerns.
- **Exit interview:** Upon cessation, volunteers may be offered an exit interview to provide feedback on their experience.
- **Final settlement:** Any outstanding reimbursements or equipment belonging to Council must be settled before the volunteer's departure.

5. Review period

This policy will be reviewed within 12 months of the election of each new Council or more frequently in the event of any legislative changes or change in circumstances.

6. Useful links

[Tweed Shire Council website](#)

[Volunteering Australia – National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#)

7. Version control

Version #	Summary of changes made	Date changes made
1.0	Previously included in Operational Management System (OMS) Manual Date changes made	
2.0	Complete rewrite of Policy	30 August 2012
2.0	Incorporated into new policy template	20 June 2013
2.1	Page 5: Associated Documentation updated to include reference to the "Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace Non-Employee Workers Protocol".	6 August 2015
2.2	Amended Insurances Section in accordance with JLT advice to remove age restrictions	22 March 2019
2.3	Reviewed policy in line with Council requirements.	13 July 2022
2.4	Policy rewritten to incorporate the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and reflect best practice for volunteer management.	13 November 2024
2.5	Page 4, incorporated: <i>Records Act 1998 and Private and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998</i>	12 February 2025
2.6	Adopted by Council	20 March 2025