GLEN INNES SEVERN COUNCIL

VOLUNTEERS’ HANDBOOK
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Introduction

This Volunteers’ Handbook contains a range of information important to your role as a Glen Innes Severn Council volunteer, including Council policies, Authorised Statements, Workplace Health and Safety, and emergency information.

Volunteers may be involved and/or work in areas such as:

- Tourism
- Recreation
- Land Care
- Environment
- Special Events
- Art Gallery
- Library Services.

Definition of a Volunteer

A volunteer is considered to be a person who undertakes an activity on behalf of Council either directly or indirectly and is not entitled to an employment contract with Council in regard to that activity. Although there is no direct personal remuneration which could be considered income for the volunteer undertaking the activity, there may be arrangements made for the payment of out of pocket expenses associated with the activity.

Principles of Volunteering

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.
- Volunteer work is unpaid and always a matter of choice.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community.
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit or local government sector.
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work.
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.
- Volunteering is an opportunity to learn new skills and meet new people.

Volunteer Program Purpose

Our volunteer program aims to provide volunteers with a level of engagement with our community in our Local Government Area.

Roles for Volunteers

Council and individual volunteers each have an obligation to ensure that volunteer participation is safe, effective, and most of all, enjoyable. Volunteers contribute to a range of activities and through their commitment and enthusiasm, volunteers enrich the fabric of the local community. Volunteers will be recruited in line with the procedures outlined in this manual.
Rights and Responsibilities of Glen Innes Severn Council

- Acknowledge the extent and importance of volunteer contributions;
- Increase awareness both internally and externally of the contribution of volunteers;
- Conduct relevant induction for volunteers;
- Provide information on Council policies and procedures impacting on activities;
- Provide clear operational guidelines for each activity;
- Ensure staff provide open and honest information and respond to concerns and queries;
- Provide clear guidelines on the relationship between staff, volunteers, and Councillors;
- Consult on matters that will impact on volunteers’ participation;
- Provide opportunities to engage in worthwhile activities;
- Regularly review the role of volunteers and volunteer activities;
- Maintain adequate volunteer recruitment processes;
- Maintain Equal Employment Opportunity policies in engaging volunteers;
- Provide a safe working environment;
- Provide relevant insurance cover;
- Provide adequate resources for volunteers to conduct activities in accordance with adopted Management Plans and Policies;
- Where appropriate, acknowledge and identify the skill levels of individual volunteers;
- Where appropriate, identify and provide opportunities for skill development for individuals;
- Actively promote volunteer and group activities;
- Where appropriate, provide each volunteer with identification whilst undertaking volunteer work;
- Provide appropriate levels of supervision and on the job training.

Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

- Complete the work that was volunteered for, and be dependable;
- Work as part of the team;
- Be willing to learn and further develop;
- Follow any guidelines, policies and procedures relevant to the volunteering position;
- Act in a manner that does not undermine Council in the community;
- Ask for help when needed, and ask questions when more information is required;
- Accept supervision in the spirit in which it is meant;
- Provide proof of identity to Glen Innes Severn Council;
- Respect the confidentiality of other volunteers, Council employees, Council and others as appropriate;
- Record attendance details in an attendance register, log book or minutes of a meeting for insurance purposes;
- Where required, undertake a Prohibited Employment Declaration as per the Child Protection Prohibited Employment Act, 1998;
- Work within your own physical limits and area of skill;
- Notify your supervisor of any issue relating to work task allocation, which may impact on your participation, for example prior or existing physical restrictions;
- Attend training as required.

Recruitment

How Volunteers can be recruited
Volunteers will be recruited by completing the application for volunteer work form, available from the Director/Manager/Supervisor of the Section of the Council that is seeking to engage a volunteer.
Prohibited Employment Declaration
All people looking after children and young people have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for them. Legislation was introduced in New South Wales that affects all people working with children and young people.

- Commission for Children & Young People Act, 1998;

These laws make up the Working with Children Check, the goal being to create workplaces where children are safe and protected.

The Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998 defines child-related employment as: "any employment that primarily involves direct contact with children where that contact is not directly supervised".

It is the responsibility of those seeking volunteer work that primarily involves direct contact with children where that contact is not directly supervised to:

- Complete a declaration saying whether or not they are a prohibited person when applying for child-related employment;
- Agree to allow Council to undertake all aspects of the employment screening process.

It is an offence for a prohibited person to apply for volunteer employment that primarily involves direct contact with children where that contact is not directly supervised. It is therefore the responsibility of a prohibited person NOT to apply for any such position.

Termination of a Volunteer
In instances of misconduct or breaches of the volunteer responsibilities, the Director/Manager/Supervisor has the right to dismiss the volunteer. This includes:

- Theft of property or funds;
- Intoxication through alcohol or other substances whilst or during volunteering;
- Verbal or physical harassment of any other volunteers, clients or staff;
- Disclosure of confidential information regarding the Council and/or clients;
- Breaching any other volunteer responsibilities;
- Malicious damage to Council or community property;
- Not working in a safe manner.

Application Form
A volunteer application form is attached to this manual. All volunteers must complete the form prior to their commencement of their volunteer activities. This is to be submitted to the Director/Manager/Supervisor of the Section of the Council that is seeking to engage a volunteer.

The details on these forms will be entered into the Glen Innes Council volunteer records database held by Council.

Volunteer Database
A centralised volunteer database has been developed to ensure that all appropriate information required for WHS and Insurance purposes relating to the engagement of volunteers is maintained.

The Director/Manager/Supervisor of each Council Section is responsible for maintaining and updating their relevant area of the Central Volunteer Database. Information contained in the database is held in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIPA).
Work Health and Safety
Volunteers, whilst not considered to be employees of Council, are still owed a statutory duty of care while undertaking activities on behalf of Council (see Work Health and Safety Act 2011 NSW). Before volunteers are permitted to undertake an activity on behalf of Council, a risk assessment of the activity will be undertaken by the Director/Manager/Supervisor to ensure the following:

- The activity is suitable for volunteers;
- The activity does not place volunteers at risk to their health and safety;
- The volunteer has the physical capacity to undertake the activity;
- The volunteer has the knowledge and skills required to undertake the activity in a safe manner;
- A copy of the risk assessment is forwarded to Council’s WHS Coordinator and filed in Dataworks in the Volunteer Folio.

N.B. A copy of the risk assessment template is attached to this Manual

Council’s Responsibility
When satisfied that the activity is appropriate for volunteers, Council is to ensure the following matters are addressed before the activity is commenced and within agreed timeframes:

- An induction check list is completed and registered in Dataworks;
- The potential hazards have been identified;
- A risk assessment has been completed and copy of the risk assessment is forwarded to Council’s WHS Coordinator;
- Consultation has been undertaken with the volunteers regarding safe work methods;
- Appropriate risk management procedures have been developed;
- Volunteers have been provided with information, instruction and training with regard to risk management procedures;
- Any plant or equipment to be used by volunteers is safe;
- There is in place a system of work for the safe handling, use, storage and transport of plant, equipment or any substances to be used in the activity;
- At the location for the activity there are safe means of entry and exit which are identified to the volunteers;
- Arrangements are in place for the appropriate monitoring and supervision of the activity;
- Records are kept of attendance, tasks undertaken, and information on incidents including near misses.

Volunteers’ Responsibility
While undertaking activities on behalf of Council, volunteers have responsibilities for their own health and safety. In particular, volunteers, through their actions or omissions, 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;
- Report to the appropriate person as soon as practical any incidents or near misses which relate to health and safety of the voluntary activity.

Manual Handling
Manual handling results in one third of all occupational injuries within the Australian workforce. Please take care in any activity involving manual handling and be aware of the dangers.
Manual handling is simply the action of:
- Lifting;
- Pushing;
- Pulling;
- Carrying;
- Lowering;
- Moving;
- Holding;
- Restraining.

Manual handling is more than simply carrying an object. It can include a wide range of activities that can prove a risk to your health and well-being. It should be noted injury is not always simply caused by the size of the load but also the method used to lift or move the load.

Always assess any task involving manual handling risk with great care and consider your own stature, strength and that of others in the workplace. For more information on correct Manual Handling Techniques, please speak to your supervisor.

Training
Council also has the responsibility to ensure volunteers are provided with appropriate training which, depending on the activity, may include the following:
- WHS induction training;
- Manual handling;
- Traffic control;
- First aid;
- Sharps and sun protection;
- Responding to an emergency;
- Use of communication equipment (where required);
- On the job and/or formal training specific to the activity;
- On the job training in specific risk management procedures as required.

Equal Employment/Volunteering Opportunities

Glen Innes Severn Council is committed to promoting a working environment that recognises and values the diverse social profile of its volunteers. Council will develop, implement, monitor and evaluate policies and procedures for all volunteers, both existing and potential, that are fair and do not discriminate unlawfully, either directly or indirectly, against any volunteer.

In all policies and practices of Glen Innes Severn Council, there shall be no discrimination or harassment in voluntary employment with regard to:

- Race (including colour, nationality, descent, ethnicity, ethno-religious origin), gender, pregnancy, marital status, disability, sexual preference, age or carers responsibilities.

It is unacceptable for volunteers to make comments to other volunteers, Council employees or members of the public, which are discriminatory with regards to:

- Sexuality or sex.
- Health or marital status.
- Physical or intellectual ability.
- Race, ethnic or religious background.

Discrimination and/or harassment will not be tolerated. Where instances of discrimination and/or harassment occur, they will be investigated in a confidential manner. If proven, the
Council will consider the appropriate action to be taken which could result in the Volunteer being dismissed from their voluntary engagement.

**Volunteering Code of Conduct**

**Confidentiality**
Volunteers shall not use confidential information gained through their activities as a volunteer for themselves or for any other person for the purpose of securing a private benefit.

Volunteers shall not disclose any confidential information for any reason without authority.

Volunteers shall not disclose private or personal information as defined in the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998*.

**Acceptance of Gifts/Benefits**
Volunteers may accept small gifts from users of their service as appreciation of a job well done e.g. chocolates and flowers. Gifts may not be accepted when they are more substantial in nature and where there is the implication that the person may receive a favour in return.

**Conflict of Interest**
Volunteers may not use their position to gain profit or advantage. They will be aware of circumstances where a possible conflict of interest may arise and declare it if necessary.

**Use of Resources**
- Volunteers must not improperly use Council resources.
- Volunteers shall use Council resources effectively and economically.
- Volunteers shall not use Council property for their own purposes.

**Policy and Procedures**
Volunteers agree to be bound by relevant policies and procedures of Glen Innes Severn Council applicable to their volunteering position.

**Equitable Treatment of People and Situations**
- Volunteers shall treat members of the public, Council staff and Councillors fairly and equitably and with respect, courtesy, compassion and sensitivity.
- Volunteers shall not act contrary to any statutory law in their voluntary capacity.
- Volunteers shall not act unreasonably, unjustly, oppressively or in a discriminatory manner.
- Volunteers shall refrain from any form of conduct in the performance of their duties which may cause any reasonable person unwarranted offence or embarrassment or give rise to the reasonable suspicion or appearance of improper conduct.

**Duty of Care**
Council has a legal responsibility to provide a duty of care to all volunteers to ensure that they are not exposed to any risk of injury or illness from either the tasks they are undertaking, the equipment they are using or the environment that they are working in.

**Dress**
To protect persons from UV exposure, volunteers working outdoors will be required to wear long sleeve or three quarter length sleeve shirts with collar, loose fitting long trousers, enclosed footwear, hat with a broad brim, sun cream and sunglasses. Volunteers working indoors will wear appropriate and sensible clothing and footwear for the activities they may be undertaking.
Alcohol and Drugs
Volunteers are not permitted to drink alcohol or take illegal drugs while they are performing work on behalf of Council, or report for duty when their job performance is likely to be affected by alcohol or illegal drugs.

Reporting of Corrupt Conduct
Council is committed to an ethical workplace and requires volunteers to report corrupt conduct, maladministration or serious and substantial waste of public money.

Incident Reporting
All accidents, incidents, injuries and near misses must be reported to your Supervisor immediately. If you were to sustain an injury or near miss you will be required to complete an Incident Report, which your Supervisor will assist you with. It is important to report everything no matter how small so we can make improvements to minimise the risk of something similar occurring.

Media Protocol
Volunteers are not permitted to make any comments to the Media on behalf of Council other than were approval has been granted under the Section 355 Community Committee of Council Manual. Any queries for a statement to the media must be referred to the General Manager or Director of the work activity.

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act
Council will obtain personal information from volunteers including names, address, telephone numbers, child protection screening (where applicable) and other contact details. Personal information obtained by Council is governed by the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIPA). This legislation provides direction for the collection, protection, storage, disposal, access and use of personal information by Council.

Council will take all reasonable care to protect personal information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. To ensure that personal information held by Council is current, please notify Council if any of your details change.

Insurance
Insurance policies are in place to cover Council's volunteers. To be covered by our insurances volunteers:

- Must be aged between 10 - 90 years (those under 18yrs must have a parent or guardian sign the registration form);
- Be registered with the Council, by completing an application for volunteers form and completed a Council Induction checklist with their supervisor;
- Please note other family members or friends are not covered under this policy if assisting your with your duties, they must register and meet this criteria.
- If using your own car, you are required to have your own comprehensive car insurance policy however injuries sustained as a result of your voluntary duties will be covered under our personal accident policy.
- If you sustain an injury whilst undertaking your voluntary duties for Council, you are covered under our insurance policy, but you first need to claim from Medicare and your Health Fund.
Personal Accident Insurance
Council’s personal accident insurance policy covers volunteers whilst performing activities authorised by Council. The insurance also covers volunteers on direct route to and from the authorised event or activity.

It should be noted that the policy only covers volunteers aged between 10 and 90 years. As a result persons outside of this age bracket cannot be engaged in any voluntary activities.

Council will take all reasonable care to ensure that volunteers operate in a safe working environment. Volunteers are required to act in a responsible manner and in accordance with standard operating procedures. Wilfully or deliberately causing injury is not covered by Council’s insurance.

Any accident that occurs whilst under the care and control of Council should be reported to the immediate supervisor as soon as possible. A report must be completed by the supervisor and returned to Council’s Risk Management section within 24 hours.

Public Liability Insurance
Whilst working under the care and control of Council, volunteers are protected against public liability claims under Council’s public liability insurance cover. Council’s insurance does not cover incidences where damage has been caused through wilful or deliberate acts.

If damage is caused or an incident arises, the supervisor must be notified immediately and an incident report completed and returned to Council's Risk Management Unit.

Volunteer’s Personal Property
Volunteers’ personal items are not covered by Council’s insurance whilst undertaking volunteer activities. Volunteers are encouraged not to bring or wear items of any significant value (including jewellery). Council will supply all necessary protective equipment. All attempts should be taken to secure personal items against theft or damage.

Smoke Free Policy
Council has in place a Smoking in the Workplace policy that prohibits smoking in general workplaces and motor vehicles.

Use of Council Equipment
Volunteers may be provided with Council equipment to assist in performing various activities. If a license or qualification is required to operate plant or equipment, a volunteer must provide evidence of such qualification or license. Training will be provided to ensure that equipment is used correctly and within the guidelines or instructions provided by supervisors.

Damage to Council equipment by volunteers whilst working under the care and control of Council is covered by Council's Property Insurance. Council’s policy does not cover any wilful or deliberate damage to Council property. If equipment is damaged, the supervisor must be notified immediately and an incident report completed.

Use of Council Motor Vehicles
Volunteers may be requested to use a Council motor vehicle during the course of performing various activities. The volunteer coordinator must site and retain a copy of a person’s driving license before allowing them to drive the vehicle. A copy of the driver's licence must be recorded in the Volunteer Folio in Dataworks.
Damage to a Council vehicle by a volunteer whilst working under the care and control of Council is covered by Council's Motor Vehicle Insurance policy. Council's policy does not cover any wilful or deliberate damage to Council property.

If a motor vehicle is damaged, the supervisor must be notified immediately and an incident report completed and returned to Council's Risk Management Section and registered in Dataworks.

The vehicle log must be maintained each time a vehicle is used by a volunteer.

**Fines and Infringements**

Any court imposed fine or infringements received as a result of the actions or omissions of a volunteer will be the responsibility of the volunteer. A Volunteer is wholly responsible for payment of such fines and infringements.

They include, but are not limited to:
- Parking;
- Speeding;
- Littering;
- Red light camera.

**Out of Pocket Expenses**

From time to time, volunteers may need to use their own money to purchase materials or pay fees. Volunteers must have prior approval from their supervisor before they use their own money.

Out of pocket expenses will only be reimbursed if a claim is submitted with proof of payment attached i.e. a tax invoice. The supervisor must sign the claim form and supply a general ledger number for allocation of the expense.

**Recognition of Volunteers**

Volunteers are entitled to request a statement of tasks that they have undertaken in their role with Council.

**Grievances Procedure**

If a volunteer has a grievance about any aspect of their tasks, other volunteers or Council staff, the following process should be followed:

Step 1 - If you feel comfortable to approach the person directly to discuss the issue, do so.

Step 2 - The volunteer can approach the Supervisor or the Committee Chairperson 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.

Step 3 - If Step 2 does not help resolve the problem, then the issue should be notified to the relevant Manager in writing.

Step 4 - If the matter remains unresolved, the volunteer may request the matter be referred to the Director of the Division or other authorised officer for discussion. A further meeting between all parties shall be held as soon as practicable.
Step 5 - If the matter remains unresolved the General Manager shall provide the volunteer with a written response. The response shall include the reasons for not implementing any proposed remedy.

This Policy references the following policies, procedures and information:

- Australian Celtic Festival Strategic Plan 2015-2020
- Cash Handling Policy.
- Code of Conduct.
- Code of Meeting Practice.
- Complaints Policy.
- Customer Service Standards.
- Drug and Alcohol Policy.
- Human Resources Policy Statement Register.
- Smoke Free Work Place Policy.
- Sun Smart and Personal Protective Equipment Policy.
- The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement 2015.
- Work Health and Safety Policy.
- Workplace Discrimination and Bullying / Harassment Policy.
- Section 355 Community Committees of Council Manual.

Annexure

- Glen Innes Severn Council WHS Worker Induction Form
- Application for Volunteer Work Form