

POLICY REGISTER

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT POLICY

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1.1	General Manager	Addition of wording around digital administration, Child Safety and Vulnerable Persons, and Clarity on Volunteer-Run events	Council Minute No. 157.5.25 (22nd May 2025)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Warren Council is committed to encouraging equitable access to services and facilities that meet the needs of the community and to recognise that volunteers contribute to the political, social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the community by:

- Expanding the ability of the community to respond to the needs of the public by providing a broad range of community services and activities
- Engaging the community in protecting local resources, improving the physical environment and support for environmental issues
- Strengthening community cohesion, social wellbeing and trust.

Council recognises that volunteers from the community make a valuable contribution to a range of Council activities. They may be involved in caring for others less fortunate, improving community-owned assets, caring for the environment or public contact roles.

Through their commitment and energy, volunteers enrich the fabric of the local community.

The Volunteer Management Policy is produced to address the need to formalise roles and responsibilities for all involved in the volunteering process and support volunteering opportunities in our community. This Policy provides the framework for volunteers and Council workers to work cooperatively and safely at all times. (Refer Attachment 1 - Volunteer Management Process Flow Chart)

Refer also to procedures and guidelines for specific volunteer tasks and activities.

2. OBJECTIVES

- Ensure that volunteering remains a mutually beneficial activity.
- Recognise the importance of volunteer contribution to a wide range of services to the community and working with Council to achieve its vision mission and Policy objectives.
- Clearly define the responsibilities of volunteers and Council workers.
- Provide guidance to volunteers and Council workers to maintain a safe and healthy workplace and community.

3. SCOPE

- Volunteers who participate in Council managed projects and / or events.
- Council employees involved in the management, coordination or supervision of volunteer programs and volunteers.

4. DEFINITIONS

WHS – Work Health and Safety. (Previously referred to as ‘OHS’ – Occupational Health and Safety)

PCBU – Council as an employer with paid workers is a PCBU. Under work health and safety legislation, a PCBU is ‘a person conducting a business or undertaking’. A PCBU conducts a business or undertaking alone or with others.

Manager – Paid worker of Council with delegated responsibility to manage the functions of a Branch / Department / Business Unit.

Program Coordinator – Paid worker of Council who is responsible for coordinating the volunteer program(s)

Volunteer – A volunteer means a person who does community work on a voluntary basis not working for payment or reward (the person may receive out-of-pocket expenses). A volunteer is a ‘worker’ when engaged by a PCBU to carry out work.

Volunteer Association – (May be incorporated or unincorporated) Under work health and safety legislation, is a group of volunteers working for one or more community purposes e.g. sporting, benevolent or recreational and no one is paid to work for the association. If someone is paid, the association is considered to be a PCBU and therefore, has WHS obligations.

Community work – Community work is work that is not for financial gain and that is done as a charitable, benevolent, philanthropic, sporting, educational or cultural purpose.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General Manager and Directors

- Ensure that processes are in place to manage the health and safety of volunteers
- Ensure adequate resources are available for the effective management of risks relating to volunteer activities;
- Ensure that adequate pre-requisites are in place prior to volunteers commencing duties
- Ensure the periodic review of the implementation and effectiveness of risk control measures for volunteers
- Ensure Council consults, coordinates and co-operates with other duty holders to meet their Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislative requirements in relation to the effective management of risks associated with volunteers
- Ensure that processes are in place for the review of this Policy and the processes for managing volunteer risks every two years.

B. Managers

- Ensure the identification, assessment, control and monitoring of hazards and hazardous activities related to volunteers
- Periodically review the implementation and effectiveness of control measures to manage risks associated with activities volunteers conduct, and revise of controls if necessary
- Provide Senior Management and the WHS/HR Officer with reports on volunteer related risks and controls for the areas over which they have control
- Ensure an appropriate person (e.g. Volunteer Supervisor or Site Supervisor) is appointed to supervise volunteers

- In conjunction with the WHS/HR Officer and in consultation with the HSR/HSC, review this Policy and the effectiveness of the processes for managing volunteer risks every two years.

C. Supervisors

- Identify hazards associated with volunteers and their activities, assess the risks and implement effective control measures;
- Conduct risk assessments in consultation with workers and other duty holders
- Monitor and review the implementation and effectiveness of controls and revise controls where necessary
- Provide information, training and supervision to all volunteers on hazards and hazardous activities related to the work that they undertake
- Liaise with the WHS/HR Officer for assistance in managing risks associated with volunteers and the activities they undertake.

D. WHS/HR Officer

- Oversee the system and processes for the identification, assessment, control and monitoring of risks that may arise from the activities volunteers undertake
- Consult with key stakeholders in managing risks associated with volunteers and provide information to Council management and workers as applicable
- Monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the risk management process for volunteers and provide reports to senior management as required.

E. Health and Safety Committee (HSC)

- Participate in the identification of hazards and control measures for volunteer activities, where required; and
- Participate in reviewing the effectiveness of risk controls implemented for volunteer's activities.

F. Volunteer

- Complete Councils induction and any relevant training prior to undertaking any volunteer activities;
- Take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety; and
- Take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of others; and
- Comply, so far as reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction given by council to allow council to comply with its legal obligations; and
- Cooperate with any reasonable Policy, procedure or instruction of council relating to health and safety that has been notified to workers.
- Report to the appropriate person as soon as practical any matter which could affect the safe undertaking of the activity

G. Volunteer Supervisor or Site Supervisor

- Complete a Volunteer Induction Checklist prior to the volunteer undertaking any duties
- Ensure that activities are conducted in accordance with Council WHS procedures

6. PROCEDURES

Before volunteers are permitted to undertake an activity on behalf of or under the direction of Council, a risk assessment of the activity will be undertaken by the relevant Manager in consultation with the Program Coordinator to ensure the following:

- The activity is suitable for the volunteer(s)
- The activity does not place the volunteer(s) 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.

When satisfied that the activity is appropriate for volunteers, and before the activity commences, the relevant Program Coordinator is to ensure the following matters are addressed:

- Potential hazards have been identified
- Consultation has been undertaken with the volunteer(s) regarding safe work procedures
- Appropriate risk management procedures and controls have been developed
- Volunteers have been provided with information, instruction, training with regard to risk management procedures relevant to the activities they are involved in
- 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 of the activity, there are safe means of entry and exit which are identified to the volunteers
- Arrangements are in place for the appropriate level of supervision and monitoring of the activity
- Records are kept of attendance, tasks undertaken and information on incidents including near misses
- Volunteers are provided with appropriate information, instruction and training which, depending on the activity, may include the following:
 - WHS induction training
 - Hazard identification
 - First aid
 - Responding to an emergency
 - Use of communication equipment
 - On-the-job training in specific risk management procedures as required.
 - Council's Model Code of Conduct
 - Volunteer Management Manual

While undertaking activities on behalf of Council, volunteers have responsibilities for health and safety. In particular, volunteers through their actions or omissions are not to place themselves or other persons at risk while undertaking activities on behalf of Council.

7. CONSULTATION, CO-ORDINATION AND CO-OPERATION

Council (as the PCBU) will consult, so far as is reasonably practicable, with volunteers who carry out work for Council and who are, or are likely to be, directly affected by health and safety matters.

Volunteers are required to actively participate in consultation arrangements and cooperate with all reasonable instructions, policies and procedures that make up Council's health and safety management system and processes.

Volunteers generally do not work the same hours and may work in different environments and locations to other workers. The most effective consultation mechanisms for each project or job involving volunteers will be determined in consultation between the Program Coordinator and volunteers.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

In adopting risk management procedures, Council is committed to providing the highest possible level of protection based upon the hierarchy of risk control.

In accordance with statutory requirements, Council will seek to apply the following approach to managing risks, in order to achieve the lowest level of risk that is reasonably practicable. As a first priority, Council will seek to eliminate the identified hazard.

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the hazard and associated risk, then Council will aim to minimise the risk by:

- Substituting the hazard
- Isolating the hazard
- Using engineering controls
- Using administrative controls.

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) is to be considered as the last resort measure. Before adopting the use of PPE, Council will ensure all other measures have been considered which, either singly or in combination, have been unable to establish an acceptable level of protection for the volunteer.

Some hazards will require using a combination of control measures that may include the use of PPE.

A. Identifying Risks and Controls Associated with Volunteer Activities

The Manager/Supervisor for the relevant work area must ensure that any work activities or events involving volunteers have a WHS Risk Assessment completed prior to the work commencing or the event being booked. This assessment will follow the process outlined in Council's Managing WHS Risks Procedure and will identify the hazards associated with the activity and the required control measures. The WHS/HR Officer will assist the Manager/Supervisor with the completion of the risk assessment as required.

The Manager/Supervisor will ensure that all risk control measures identified in the WHS Risk Assessment are implemented.

Volunteers are not permitted to undertake high risk work tasks (e.g. working at heights, traffic control, etc.). Where required, Council will arrange for appropriately qualified personnel to complete these tasks.

Where volunteer activities involve children or vulnerable persons, volunteers must comply with relevant legislative requirements such as Working with Children Checks (WWCC), and mandatory reporting obligations. Council will ensure probity checks are completed where required.

If a volunteer group independently delivers a public event under a partnership with Council, insurance, risk planning, and approvals must be done through a signed Event Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

B. Providing Training, Equipment and Supervision for Volunteers

Volunteers will be provided with the required instruction, information and training for their role.

All volunteers must receive Council induction prior to undertaking any activities on behalf of the Council.

The Volunteer Induction Checklist in Appendix 3 can be used to track all WHS requirements for volunteers including any pre-requisites for the role, required PPE and mandatory training/instruction.

Approved volunteers will be recorded in the Volunteer Register (see Appendix 4).

C. Supervision of Volunteers

The relevant Manager will ensure that adequate supervision is arranged for volunteers. Where practicable, the Volunteer Supervisor / Site Supervisor should be present while volunteers undertake work activities. Where this is not practicable (e.g. remote locations, community transport), the Supervisor must consider how adequate supervision can be implemented. This may include planned or random site visits and maintaining communication with volunteers to check the progress of their activities and discuss any issues / hazards they may have identified.

D. Use of Plant and Equipment

Where practicable, Council will supply any plant / equipment required for volunteer tasks. Volunteers must be trained in the use of plant or equipment and deemed to be competent prior to operating it. Volunteers are not permitted to use or operate equipment if they have not been authorised by Council.

Volunteers must receive prior approval if they wish to supply their own equipment. Any equipment supplied by volunteers must be checked and authorised by the Volunteer Supervisor / Site Supervisor prior to being used.

The Volunteer Supervisor / Site Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that pre-start checks are undertaken for all plant and equipment used by volunteers.

Electrical items must have a current test/tag record attached to the item.

The Supervisor is authorised to prevent the use of, or remove, any item considered unsafe or inappropriate for the task.

E. Personal Protective Equipment

Council will supply volunteers with appropriate personal protective equipment for the tasks they are undertaking. The Volunteer Supervisor / Site Supervisor is responsible for ensuring volunteers use and maintain PPE, and for arranging the replacement of any worn / damaged items.

F. Hazard/ Incident Reporting

Volunteers must report all hazards or incidents to their Volunteer Supervisor/ Site Supervisor who will follow Councils relevant procedures including the Managing WHS Risks and Incident Reporting and Investigation procedures.

Volunteers will have the same access to post incident briefing and support as is provided to Council's workers.

Volunteers are able to raise complaints and grievances as per Council's Internal Reporting Procedure.

G. Insurance and Liability for Volunteers

Council will carry appropriate insurance policies to cover volunteers (e.g. public liability). In some cases, volunteers will be required to demonstrate that they have their own insurances (e.g. comprehensive car insurance if using their own car). Any insurances required by the volunteer will be determined prior to starting work.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

During the volunteer activity lifecycle, Council will ensure appropriate monitoring and review processes are conducted. These may include and not be limited to supervision of activities by the Program Coordinator and monitoring of:

- Attendance registers
- Compliance with risk management procedures and safe work procedures and instructions
- Use of Council owned plant and equipment
- Impact on the environment
- Incident reporting procedures
- Volunteer(s) health and wellbeing.

10. INDEPENDENT INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANISATION

In considering the relationship council may have with an independent individual or Organised Group it may be appropriate to enter into an agreement with the organisation, treating the arrangement similar to a contractor. The Group should be able to demonstrate to Council their ability to undertake the task or project in a safe manner. Council will site evidence of the groups commitment and ability to deliver health and safety initiatives in managing the tasks/project.

11. NON-COMPLIANCE

Issues of non-compliance with policies, procedures or not cooperating with reasonable instruction of the person in charge of the activity by volunteers may result in termination or disciplinary action being taken by the Manager or Program Coordinator. Whilst it is not desirable to take the "big stick approach", non-compliance must be dealt with and issues raised to ensure the activity is conducted in as safe a manner as possible with volunteer(s) not placing themselves or other persons at risk while undertaking activities on behalf of council.

12. ADMINISTRATION

Single Entry Point

The engagement of volunteers and ongoing administration of the work relationship should be coordinated, in a similar manner as paid workers. A single point entry will assist a council in maintaining administrative management of the volunteers.

Where a designated Program Coordinator or the like is not in place, individual workers with responsibilities for overseeing or engaging with volunteers will consult, co-ordinate and co-operate to ensure volunteer activities are effectively and efficiently managed across all functional areas.

The Volunteer Management Process Flow Chart represents the process for engaging and working with volunteers.

Digital Administration

In addition to its general records administration processes, Council may maintain digital records of volunteer applications, inductions, training, and activity logs through secure document management systems to ensure continuity, auditability, and data privacy compliance.

13. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Warren Shire Council Work Health and Safety Policy
- Warren Shire Council Managing Work Health and Safety Risks Guideline
- Warren Shire Council Incident Reporting and Investigation Guideline
- Warren Shire Council Incident/Injury Register
- Warren Shire Council Work Health and Safety Risk Assessment Form
- Warren Shire Council Risk Register
- Warren Shire Council Corrective Action Report
- Warren Shire Council – Volunteer Register
- Warren Shire Council – Volunteer Application Form

14. REFERENCES

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 (NSW)
- Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks 2011 (SafeWork NSW)
- The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement 2015 (Volunteering Australia)
- The Essential Guide to Work Health and Safety for Organisations that Engage Volunteers 2012 (Safe Work Australia)

15. REVIEW PROCESS

This Policy should be reviewed every four (4) years or within 12 months of a Council Election. The Policy may be reviewed and amended at any time at Council's discretion (or if legislative changes occur).

16. Attachment 1 Volunteer Management Process Flow Chart

