

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

PARTICIPATION POLICY

**AUTHORISATION DETAILS**

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| **EFFECTIVE DATE** | December 2018 | |
| **REVIEW DATE** | December 2020 | |
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| **APPLICABLE TO** | All Yarra Ranges Volunteers | |
| **AUTHORISATION** | SLT – 12 December 2018 | WCC – not required |

*We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Wurundjeri People as the Custodians of this land. We also pay respects to all Aboriginal Community Elders, past and present, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the history of this region.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the valuable contribution made to both Council and the wider community by Council volunteers. Volunteer generosity is vital in supporting the extension and enhancement of Council’s services to the community and in assisting to build socially inclusive and connected communities. While volunteering provides substantial benefits to Yarra Ranges Council and the community, it is also personally rewarding to the volunteers themselves.

This policy has been developed based on the National Standards of Volunteer Involvement set by Volunteering Australia. The Standards contain best practice benchmarks specifically designed to help organisations to attract, recruit, mobilise, protect and recognise volunteers.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Version No. | Date Modified | Modified by | Folder No. | Record No. |
| 1 | 08-09-2008 |  |  |  |
| 2 | 02-11-2018 | Senior HR Business Partner |  |  |

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1. **SCOPE**

This policy will apply to volunteers undertaking tasks on behalf of Yarra Ranges Council and Council employees responsible for supervising volunteers.

This Policy does not apply to:

* ‘Friends of’ groups
* Other organisations operating in the Yarra Ranges Council using volunteers to deliver their services;
* Volunteers of sporting clubs;
* Volunteers of Service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, Apex, RSL, etc.
* Volunteers of Public Halls or committee of management.

1. **PURPOSE**

This policy demonstrates the Yarra Ranges Council’s commitment to the volunteers assisting the Council in its services, programs and projects, by providing a consistent and standardised approach to the way they are supported in their roles and work practices. Key objectives of this policy are to:

* Ensure Council’s Volunteering Program contributes to an inclusive and connected community where active participation is encouraged and supported.
* Ensure all Volunteers serving at Council have duties that are safe, significant, fulfilling, and appreciated.
* Recognise good volunteer management and training as central to attracting, engaging and retaining suitable Volunteers within Council services and programs.
* Ensure Volunteers and staff working with Volunteers comply with statutory obligations such as Occupational Health and Safety requirements, Child Safe Standards and other Equal Opportunity/Anti- discrimination legislated requirements and Council policies such as the Employee Code of Conduct.
* Support volunteers through the provision of access to a Council contact officer and all relevant information to assist them in understanding and undertaking their roles.

1. **Guiding Principles**

In its ongoing work with volunteers across a diverse range of Departments, Council has adopted the following definition of volunteering developed by

[Volunteering Australia](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/definition-of-volunteering/): “time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain”.This means a Volunteer is an ‘unpaid’ person engaged by Yarra Ranges Council to perform activities that support Council’s community.

## 3.1 National Standards of Volunteer Involvement

This Policy is based on the national standards of volunteer involvement and:

* Adopts the National Standards of Volunteer Involvement’s eight principles of volunteer governance and program implementation;[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Provides detail as to how Council addresses governance and program implementation principles in the table below.

| **Principle** | **Council’s Commitment** |
| --- | --- |
| 1. **Leadership and Management** | Senior management will lead and promote a positive culture towards volunteering and ensure that accountabilities and responsibilities are clearly assigned to ensure that all Volunteers are effectively managed Council wide. |
| 1. **Commitment to Volunteer Involvement** | The role of Volunteers is visible in key documents regarding vision, planning and resourcing, and Council’s strategic direction. Appropriate resources will be allocated for volunteer involvement in strategic documents such as the Council Plan. |
| 1. **Volunteer Roles** | Volunteers shall carry out volunteer appropriate work, assigned and supported by the Yarra Ranges Council. Volunteer roles are meaningful, integral, contribute to Council’s purpose, goals and objectives and are documented in position descriptions and communicated. |
| 1. **Recruitment and Selection** | Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, inclusive, accessible, consistent and meet with the needs of Council’s programs, services, service recipients and Volunteers. To help maintain the safety and security of services, employees, Volunteers and Council, screening processes will be applied appropriate to role specifications. This will assist Council to maintain compliance with legislative obligations. |
| 1. **Support and Development** | Investment in training (on the job or formal classroom) is made as necessary to equip Volunteers with the understanding of their roles, and the knowledge, skills and feedback needed to safely and effectively carry out their assigned duties. |
| 1. **Workplace Safety and Wellbeing** | Volunteers are included in Council’s Health and Safety Policy and procedures, Equal Employment Opportunity Policy, Code of Conduct, Child Safe Standards, Employee Assistance Program, Human Rights Charter; and Council’s duty of care to Volunteers is recognised across Departments. Volunteers have access to complaints and grievance procedures. |
| 1. **Volunteer Recognition** | All Volunteers at Yarra Ranges Council shall be treated with respect and gratitude for their contribution. Volunteer contributions are understood, appreciated and acknowledged in an informed and meaningful way. |
| 1. **Quality Management and Continuous Improvement** | Effective Volunteer management is encouraged with senior staff supporting consistent implementation of Volunteer Procedures across Departments, and regular reviews of programs, roles and procedures to meet best practice. Volunteers will be provided appropriate feedback channels and their input considered in review and development of processes that impact on them. |

1. **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Council’s Community Volunteers Participation Policy articulates Council’s commitment to volunteers in delivering services, programs or projects by resourcing, supporting, informing and training volunteers and setting realistic expectations for the Council, volunteers and community.

To this end the following key areas of responsibility have been developed:

* Recruitment of Volunteers
* Management of Volunteers
* Induction and Supervision of volunteers
* Addressing complaints/grievances
* Risk management
* Volunteer Exit
* Privacy

Volunteer Induction Resource Kit, which includes:

* Volunteers rights and responsibilities
* Council’s rights and responsibilities
* Information surrounding Council’s policies and procedures
* Information of what to expect when commencing your volunteer role with Council
* Key Council contacts

## Recruitment of Volunteers

To assist with attracting volunteers, Yarra Ranges Council will make sure that all volunteer opportunities are advertised through the Council website as a minimum. Other streams of advertisement may include:

* Eastern Volunteers
* Local Newspaper
* Social Media
* Email distribution networks
* Seek
* External networks and other avenues

Council will ensure that position descriptions and physical requirements documents for designated volunteer positions will be made available to applicants and current volunteers, in an effort to best match volunteers with the role that they wish to participate in. Volunteer position descriptions assist the volunteer and their supervisor to understand the role that is being performed and will include points such as key functions of the role, expectations in relation to the role, time commitments and its intended outcomes

Applicants for volunteer roles may be required to attend an interview and provide details of 2 referees as a way to ensure that the volunteers experience is best for all involved.

The work that volunteers carry out is extremely important and as a result Yarra Ranges Council has legal obligations to ensure the safety of volunteers and the safety of vulnerable community members that we serve together. Dependent on the role, volunteers may be required to:

* Undergo a National Criminal Police Check
* Have a current Working with Children Check
* Provide their drivers licence, car insurance and registration details
* Undergo a driver’s history check
* Disclose any pre-existing medical conditions that may impact on their ability to undertake the volunteer role safely.
* Complete a statutory declaration

Volunteer position descriptions will specify if these requirements are required.

Where Council volunteer roles require a Working With Children Check, volunteers will have to comply with the Department of Justice requirement to list Yarra Ranges Council as an interested organisation with 21 days of being offered a volunteer role. If this process is not followed it may result in the volunteer role being suspended until such time as Council can validate that this has occurred. This step is necessary as it is a legal requirement for some of Council’s programs and it also ensures that children in our community are safe.

If Yarra Ranges Council is not listed as an organisation or if the Working With Children Check is returned with a negative result, the relevant Council officer will have a conversation and put it in writing to the particular volunteer as Council would be unable to proceed with appointing that prospective volunteer.

If a National Criminal Police Check is returned with “dis-closable” outcomes, an assessment will then be made by People and Culture and the relevant Department Manager as to whether a volunteer position is still able to be offered to the prospective volunteer. Consideration will be given to the nature of the volunteer role, the dis-closable outcomes, risks and equal opportunity guidelines.

## Management of Volunteers

Many of the Council’s department and individual service units commit resources and take responsibility for guiding the work of volunteers in their programs which includes recruitment, induction, supervision, training and work instructions.

In developing its volunteers' management policies and codes of practice, the Yarra Ranges Council complies with all policies, legislation and service, program or project requirements, based on the National Standards of Volunteer Involvement.

The Council applies Human Resource management practices to promote and support volunteers to meet program, individual and volunteer goals and to deliver an efficient and effective service, program or project. This includes ensuring that volunteers understand their obligations under Councils Employee Code of Conduct which applies to volunteers.

## Induction and Supervision of Volunteers

Volunteers are informed about the Council’s Vision, structure and background relevant to their role, on entry to the organisation. Volunteers are provided with appropriate orientation to the aims of the specialist program and receive support and guidance to carry out their duties in these specialist settings. They are also assigned a contact officer who can assist with any questions in regards to their role.

Each volunteer has a comprehensive, accurate and current Position Description that clearly outlines the requirement of their role. These responsibilities are further discussed in the Employee Code of Conduct which applied to volunteers.

All client-focussed programs or activities run by the Council and funded by the State or Commonwealth have a specific role for volunteers within the program specifications, based on client needs whilst maintaining independence and dignity.

Volunteers are clearly informed, during orientation, about out-of-office expenses that can, and cannot, be reimbursed by the Council. Furthermore the reimbursement is an open and accessible process.

Volunteers are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to duty of care, confidentiality, privacy and maintaining professional boundaries

Council will allocate responsibility and resources to training and development, and provides training to address identified needs, induction and compliance with health and safety and equal employment opportunity/anti-discrimination legislation, as well as specific program requirement training. Council will provide a variety of times and locations to assist volunteers to attend.

Additionally, Council monitor the work of volunteers, provide appropriate feedback and recognise formally and informally, the contribution made by volunteers to the organisation and to the community.

## Health and Safety of Volunteers

The Yarra Ranges Council promotes and protects the health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers through clear policies, procedures, compliance with legislation and guidelines, use of safe work practice and providing a healthy and safe environment.

The Council gives clear instruction and direction to prevent emergencies, in the first instance, consistent with its duty of care obligations and to implement its emergency plans and agreed emergency procedures to protect the health and safety of its community, volunteers and staff.

Yarra Ranges Council requires volunteers to:

* Take reasonable care of their own health and safety.
* Take reasonable care that their acts do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons or themselves.
* Follow policy, procedure or instructions to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable a safe workplace.
* Report all incidents, injuries and near misses to their program supervisor immediately.

Where a volunteer has been involved in a serious/critical incident as part of their volunteering work, the Council provides appropriate debriefing to that volunteer or group of volunteers or refers to the Employee Assistance Program, if deemed necessary.

## Addressing Grievances/Complaints relating to Volunteers

The Council has clear expectations regarding the personal and professional behaviour of volunteers and will deal fairly and consistently with all volunteers, implementing all equal opportunity, code of conduct, health and safety and relevant policies and legislation.

Volunteers have the right to fair, equitable, culturally safe and timely action in order to resolve grievances or complaints arising from their involvement in programs and activities within the Council, respecting the privacy and confidentiality of all parties.

If the volunteer has a grievance or complaint they are able to raise this with their program supervisor.

## Risk Management

Council’s Public Liability/Professional Indemnity and Personal Accident Insurance extends to volunteers undertaking approved tasks for Council.

However, volunteers are not entitled to Workers Compensation under the Accident Compensation Act 1985, although have limited benefits under the Council’s personal accident insurance. A summary can be found in the Volunteer Induction Resource Kit. More detailed information can be provided on insurance coverage for volunteers, on request.

For those volunteers who need to use their own vehicle for the purpose of performing their volunteer duties (ie, meal delivery), Council holds insurance to cover the loss of the insurance excess up to a maximum as stated in the insurance policy. To be eligible to claim under this policy, the vehicle must be comprehensively insured. Council will not be liable for any costs associated with vehicles which are not comprehensively insured, or claims for lost personal property, including loss from private vehicles.

## Volunteer Exit

Council recognises and understands that the personal circumstances of volunteers may change and that volunteers may need to cease their involvement with their volunteer position. Council requests that volunteer’s give their program supervisor reasonable notice (in writing), particularly in programs that work to a roster (e.g. Meals on Wheels).

On resignation, volunteers will be required to return any Council identification and other assets along with any confidential Council information that the volunteer may possess.

Volunteers will be asked to complete a quick exit survey which will give Yarra Ranges Council information on our procedures and how you enjoyed your time volunteering with Council. This information will in turn support us to continually improve our services.

## Privacy

Compliance with privacy legislation is a core requirement for Council as a public sector agency, and as such Council staff are required to ensure that all information collected and stored in regards to our registered volunteers is managed in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*.

Similarly, all volunteers engaged by Yarra Ranges Council are also required to abide by the same Privacy Principles whilst conducting activities on behalf of Council.

Volunteers are required to treat any personal and confidential information disclosed through their volunteering role in an appropriate manner.

If a breach of confidentiality or any unauthorised release of personal affairs information occurs, remedial action will occur in accordance with the Code of Conduct and/or Privacy Breach protocol.

1. **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The Volunteer Working Group will review the Policy and the Volunteer Induction Resource Kit every two years (or sooner if changes required) to ensure updates are made to continuously improve the volunteer program.

Departments will use the Volunteer Induction Resource Kit as a tool to monitor their own performance in implementing the Policy.

# SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Contact the People and Culture - Organisational Development Team.

# RELATED DOCUMENTS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Legislation | *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)  *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)  *Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* 2006 (Vic)  *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic)  *Working with Children Act 2005* (Vic) |
| Policies and/or Procedures (Council and Internal) | Equal Opportunity Policy and Procedure  Equal Opportunity Complaint Form  Health and Safety Policy  Code of Conduct  Safeguarding Children Policy  Diversity and Inclusion Policy  HSMS 04 Health and Safety Training  Risk Management Policy  Bushfire Season Workplace Relations Policy |
| Standards / Other References | Council Plan 2017-2021  Gender Equity Action Plan  [The Child Safe Standards - Commission for Children and Young People](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/being-a-child-safe-organisation/the-child-safe-standards/) |

1. The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, Volunteering Australia, 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)