



CUMBERLAND
CITY COUNCIL

Volunteers Policy

AUTHORISATION & VERSION CONTROL

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BACKGROUND / INTRODUCTION

Cumberland City Council values the contribution of volunteers and recognises that the work they undertake contributes to improving the quality of life and the quality of the environment in Cumberland Local Government Area.

Volunteers work alongside staff to deliver and enhance a broad range of services and programs offered by Council. The activities undertaken are of benefit to the Council and the local community and complement, but do not replace, the services and programs provided by paid staff. Volunteers also assist Council by developing links in the local community and encouraging community cohesion and independence.

Volunteering is undertaken:

- To be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment (apart from reimbursement of expenses as appropriate);
- Do not replace the services and programs provided by paid staff; and
- In designated volunteer positions only.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- Provide opportunities for community minded residents to participate in Council program or services as volunteers;
- Establish a high quality and consistent standard approach to recruiting, training and managing volunteers across all areas and activities of Council;
- Ensure that all volunteers are treated with equity, fairness and respect and used ethically;
- Recognise and value the contributions made by volunteers;
- Ensure that Council's resources are used efficiently and effectively to maximise benefits to the individual, community and Council; and
- Ensure that service continuity is assured, set standards and rules, and reduce liabilities.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All individuals applying to volunteer with Council;
- Members of Council Committees and Panels (unless they participate in as part of their paid employment);
- All individuals and organisations volunteering in activities coordinated by Council such as Clean Up campaigns, environmental groups and community events.
- All Councillors, Council employees, contractors and consultants are responsible for implementing this Policy.

The following people and positions are not considered volunteers for the purpose of the policy:

- Councillors who carry out activities as part of their local government duties;
- Council staff who volunteer with external organisations as part of their work;

- Community organisation representatives who work with Council as part of their paid employment capacity, unless they engage in duties and/or activities outside of and separate to their substantive paid role;
- Secondary and tertiary students fulfilling work experience requirements as part of their studies;
- Duke of Edinburgh students;
- Participants fulfilling social security benefit / mutual obligations*.

** Note: While Council may use 'Work for the Dole', 'Community Services Orders' and any other mutual obligation participants, these are not, for the purpose of this Policy, considered Volunteers. Mutual Obligation Workers are subject to all Council's codes, policies and procedures that apply to paid employees and volunteers.*

DEFINITIONS

Volunteer: A volunteer is a person who supplies labour:

- 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, self-benefit and environmental benefits;
- In designated volunteer positions as determined by Council.

Sensitive Position: A 'Sensitive Position' is one where a volunteer may:

- Be working with vulnerable people such as elderly and frail, young children and individuals with disability;
- Be working in a service users' home;
- Have cash handling responsibilities*

** Note: Due to the high risk associated with cash handling, Council will minimise volunteers' cash handling responsibilities wherever possible. If cash handling is required, volunteers will be supervised at all times by an authorised Council staff member or strict procedures will be in place and monitored.*

POLICY STATEMENT

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 volunteers are treated as equals, trained where necessary, given appropriate recognition and support and protected through the provision of a safe and healthy workplace. Council is committed to increasing volunteering opportunities that will lead to skills development and learning opportunities.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Volunteers will not be required to take up additional work during industrial disputes or paid staff shortage.
2. Volunteer opportunities at Council will be actively promoted to residents of Cumberland including via the Council website to ensure equitable access for all.
3. Application forms for volunteer positions will be made available to the public via the Council website and customer service points.
4. Volunteer procedures will be clearly documented and implemented across all areas of Council where volunteers are involved.

5. Applicants will be assessed on merit, short listed, and selected in accordance with Council's policies and Volunteer Guidelines.
6. Volunteers must be aged between 16 and 90 years of age. Some positions require volunteers to be at aged 18 years old or older.
7. Council will maintain a central register of all volunteer applications received and volunteers placed.
8. Volunteers can expect clear delineation of their duties, responsibilities and working environment and will be provided with up-to-date role descriptions and volunteer agreements that clearly set out their duties, time commitment, rights, responsibilities and reporting requirements.
9. Volunteers will be provided with appropriate insurance coverage whilst they are identified and registered as volunteers of Cumberland City Council and are working in clearly defined activities that are approved of and controlled by Council.
10. Volunteers will be provided with a healthy and safe workplace compliant with Work, Health and Safety legislation.
11. Council will identify and provide volunteering opportunities for people of all abilities and provide work spaces, practices and support to encourage people with disability to volunteer, in line with Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan.
12. Volunteers will be provided with induction and orientation that outlines Council operations, policies and safety requirements.
13. Volunteers will be provided with information on Council's Volunteer Code of Conduct as well as grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures.
14. Volunteers will be provided with appropriate levels of supervision, support and management.
15. Council will undertake ongoing development and review of volunteer procedures to ensure best practice in relation to induction procedures, training, safety and wellbeing, management, recognition and retention.
16. Where appropriate, budget provision will be made to cover the reimbursement of approved out of pocket expenses in some volunteers programs.
17. Volunteers will be treated as valuable team members and advised of opportunities to participate in decision making.
18. Council will recognise the valuable contributions of volunteers annually through facilitating recognition events, awards and certificates where appropriate.
19. Council has the right to both refuse or terminate a volunteer placement if:
 - There is a perceived risk to a customer's or volunteer's health or welfare;
 - Suitable volunteer duties are not available or are no longer available;
 - The volunteer does not comply with Council's policies and procedures or Code of Conduct.
20. Volunteers who come into contact with children and young people must complete a Working with Children Check.
21. Volunteers who are placed in roles which are designated as 'sensitive positions', must complete a Police Criminal Records Check prior to commencement as a Council volunteer. Statutory declarations will be required in addition to Police Criminal Records Check in the following instances:
 - Volunteers who have applied for but have not yet received a Police Certificate;
 - For any volunteer who has been a citizen or permanent resident of a country other than Australia after the age of 16 years.
22. Due consideration will be given to the costs and benefits of involving volunteers in any particular Council program or activity at any given time.
23. Volunteer supervisors will be provided with appropriate level of support and training and development to undertake their roles.

RELATED LEGISLATION

- Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000
- Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- NSW Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection) Act 1998
- WHS Act 2011
- Local Government Act 1993
- Home and Community Care Act 1985
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Carers Act 2010
- Community Services Act 1993
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Commonwealth)

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COUNCIL POLICY

- Cumberland City Council Volunteer Program Guidelines
- Cumberland City Council National Police Record Check Guidelines
- Cumberland City Council Aged & Disability Volunteer Handbook
- Cumberland City Council Volunteer Induction Checklist for 'Sensitive Positions'
- Cumberland City Council Code of Conduct
- Cumberland City Council Child Protection Policy
- Cumberland City Council Working Alone, In Isolation or In Confined Spaces Policy
- Cumberland City Council Working in Isolation Safe Work Method Statement
- The Aged Care Standards
- NSW Disability Service Standards
- Volunteers Statement of Principles, NSW Volunteering
- Volunteering Australia National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for- Profit Organisations.