



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

**Please keep this handbook with you when working on-site**



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## Welcome to Lismore City Council

Welcome and thank you for offering your time, energy and knowledge as a volunteer with Lismore City Council. Your choice to volunteer with Council greatly enhances the services that we provide and you play a vital role in creating a vibrant community in Lismore.

We hope to that you might benefit in some way by volunteering with Council, whether that is through personal and career growth, self-fulfilment in service to others, or something to do to remain active and connected to community life. Whatever the reason, this handbook has been created to assist you in your role as a volunteer and to protect your health and safety; and the health and safety of others.

It is important that you read this handbook before commencing any activities with Council and that you please ask questions of Council staff if there is anything you don't understand.

Thank you again for being such an inspiration to this community and remember that volunteering should be enjoyable. If you are not enjoying your time with Council for any reason please talk with Council staff.

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## Definition of Volunteering

Volunteers willingly give their time for the common good and without financial gain. Volunteering is always a matter of choice and is never exploitative or used to replace paid employment. A volunteer seeks to enhance the services already delivered by Council.

## Principles of Volunteering

Council will uphold and work to the following Australian principles of volunteering:

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.
- Volunteer work is unpaid.
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice.
- Volunteering is not compulsorily work undertaken to receive government allowances.
- Volunteering is legitimate way in which citizens can participate in community life and connect with each other.
- Volunteering is a way for individuals or groups to address environmental, community and social needs.
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the government or not-for-profit sector only.
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work.
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

## Volunteer Rights

As a volunteer you are not covered by an industry award or workplace agreement however; you do have rights. It is important that you know your rights. Council must do everything in its power to ensure that your rights are not violated and act quickly to correct and manage any violations, or any perceived violations.

As a volunteer you have the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe environment in accordance with relevant Work Health and Safety legislation.
- Be engaged in accordance with Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination legislation.
- Be adequately covered by insurance.
- Be given accurate and transparent information about Council.
- Be reimbursed for genuine out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation.
- Be provided a copy of Council's Volunteer Policy, Code of Conduct, Values Statement and any other document that affects your engagement.
- Not to undertake the work of Council staff during industrial disputes.
- Be clear of your volunteer role and duties.
- Be provided with an orientation, training and site induction.
- Have access to a grievance / complaints procedure.
- Have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with relevant privacy legislation.
- Be formally recognised that you make a valuable contribution to community life both socially and economically.



## Volunteers Responsibilities

As a volunteer with Council you will have responsibilities. These responsibilities are mainly for your protection, the protection of others, and to make your experience with Council as enjoyable as possible. We understand that it can be burdensome to fill out paperwork, read documents, and listen to what seems like endless instructions. We have done our best to minimise this for you.

As a volunteer with Council you will be required to:

- Understand Council's Policies, Procedures and Code of Conduct relating to activities that they are engaged in.
- Understand the principles of volunteering and why you want to volunteer for Council.
- Understand the rules, guidelines and values of Council and be prepared to comply with them as outlined in this handbook and any other documentation provided by Council staff.
- Ask questions should you not understand any information or documentation provided by Council staff.
- Complete all forms required by Council, including attendance sheets and sign-off sheets.
- Be dependable and reliable, arrive on time and notify the supervisor if unable to attend.
- Be willing to undertake training and development when offered.
- Understand the scope and limits to the work and ask for clarification and support when you need it.
- Know and recognise personal limitations and notify your supervisor of any medical condition or special needs that may prevent the performance of your duties.
- Work as a member of a team and treat others with respect.
- Address any areas of conflict with your supervisor.
- Advise Council staff when you can no longer volunteer with Council.
- Adhere to the values of Council and respect the confidentiality of any information you become aware of.
- Get prior approval from your supervisor or Council staff of any expenditure related to activities.
- Never put your health and safety, or the health and safety of others at deliberate risk.
- Follow all reasonable instructions and directions from Council staff at all times, particularly in relation to Work Health and Safety.
- Wear personal protective clothing / equipment as instructed whilst undertaking your duties and never interfere with, deliberately tamper or destroy this equipment.
- As soon as practical report any incident, accident, illness or near misses to Council staff.
- Never be under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol when performing your duties and inform your supervisor of any legal medication that you are taking that may affect your activities.
- Return all items belonging to Council, including equipment, vehicles and clothing upon the cessation of duties or volunteering at Council.
- Not make any public statements to the media on behalf of Council.
- Never smoke in Council owned vehicles and buildings and only smoke on notified breaks / locations, and away from other volunteers and flammable materials.
- Provide constant parental / guardian supervision of children under the age of 18.

## Council's Code of Conduct

As a volunteer you will be supplied with Council's Code of Conduct which we encourage you to thoroughly read and ask questions if you don't understand any of the contents. We have summarised the main points for you below:

- All volunteers are responsible for their own good conduct when volunteering with Council.
- When volunteering with Council you should at all times be courteous towards the general public, Council staff, Councillors and other volunteers and you should not bring the Council into disrepute. You must also obey all relevant laws.
- This Council is committed to providing equal opportunity and an ethical environment free of harassment or discrimination and you are expected to contribute to this environment.
- Council has community, environmental and legal responsibilities and you are expected to honour them when volunteering.
- Other matters that are included in the Code of Conduct are dealt with throughout this handbook.

If you breach Council's Code of Conduct you will no longer be able to volunteer with Council.





## Council's Values

As a volunteer with Council you will be required to adhere to Council's values as follows:



- We cultivate a sense of belonging for everyone.
- We are honest and build trust between each other.
- We consider our actions and our reactions to others.
- We are understanding, caring and respectful of differences.
- We are accountable for all that we do and support others in their responsibilities.

### Show mutual respect



- We are determined, disciplined, consistent and realistic.
- We plan, prepare and take ownership of our efforts.
- We show leadership through professionalism.
- We support each other to achieve our best.
- We work safely together.

### Strive to do our best



- We are passionate about the work we do.
- We improve and look for better ways to do things.
- We care about each other and our community.
- We recognise and reward hard work.
- It's ok to have fun.

### Love doing what we do



- We encourage participation and inclusion in all our communications.
- We are transparent, fair and accountable.
- We are trained to do our jobs well.
- We communicate respectfully.

### Connect, listen and learn

## About Volunteering with Council

Council currently engage volunteers in the following areas:

### **Richmond /Tweed Regional Library**

You may assist with shelving of library items, customer service, delivering books and supporting local history activities. Weekend and night activities may be required.

### **Art Gallery**

You may assist with visitors to the gallery and answer phone enquiries and monitor displays. You may be asked to mentor young people who participate in workshops and activities at the gallery. Weekend and night activities may be required.

### **Tourism and Events**

You may assist with preparation / clean-up of events, promotion, customer service, providing directions, and general day to day activities. Weekend and night activities may be required.

### **Partnering and Community Engagement**

You may assist with community working bees and events that form part of the community plans. Weekend and night activities may be required.

### **Parks and Environmental Strategies**

You may assist with mowing and edging of grass, spraying of weeds, hand weeding bushland regeneration, litter collection, removal of graffiti, land maintenance, tree planting, and community education programs. Weekend activities may be required.

### **Goonellabah Sports and Aquatic Centre**

You may assist with special events and sporting carnivals. Weekend activities may be required.

### **Lismore Memorial Baths**

You may assist with special events and sporting carnivals. Weekend activities may be required.

### **Waste Facility**

You may work in the Lismore Revolve Shop assisting with cleaning, shop stocking and repairing items for sale.

### **Lismore Memorial Gardens**

You may be asked to assist with garden maintenance, weeding and cleaning graves and memorials.

On your registration form you may wish to indicate which areas you would prefer to work in while at Council.

To volunteer with Council you must be at least nine years of age and no older than 90. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be under the strict supervision of an adult parent or guardian at all times while volunteering with Council. Volunteers over the age of 90 will be assessed on a case- by-case basis and can be asked to provide a doctor's certificate stating which duties they might be fit to undertake.

Council volunteers will be asked to complete a registration form and sign an agreement. Any forms you are asked to complete will remain on file for a period of five years and are protected under privacy legislation. If you do not complete these forms you are not covered by Council's insurance policies and cannot be a volunteer. We have tried to reduce forms to the bare minimum and you will only be asked to complete them once every five years however, you will be asked each time you undertake activities for Council if any of your information has changed, particularly in relation to your emergency contacts.

You may also be informally interviewed by Council staff to see if you are suitable for volunteering and staff may ask for referees.

## **Your Supervisor's Role**

Each day you volunteer with Council you will have a designated supervisor whom you will report to and who will guide you during your engagement. Where possible Council will try to make the supervisor the same person each day of your engagement. Your supervisor may not be on site at all times but should be contactable during each period of engagement.

Your daily supervisor is responsible for ensuring that you are kept healthy and safe during your engagement and that you are very clear about your duties and behaviour. Your supervisor should also be able to provide guidance and advice on any concerns or problems you may encounter.

## **Your Working Hours and Recording Your Attendance**

Your working hours will be agreed upon with your supervisor. You may be required to work weekends and nights depending on which area of Council you choose to volunteer. You will need to sign-on at the commencement of your duties and sign-off when you finish up for the day. As a general rule you must have an uninterrupted 20 minute break after every five hours of work (please take these breaks) and you can't work for more than 15 hours a week in a voluntary capacity. If you are working at night please walk with someone (or in a group) to your vehicle after your shift.

We acknowledge that there are times that you may not be able to make your volunteering commitment, please contact your supervisor as soon as possible if you are unable to attend due to sickness or a prior commitment. If you can't get in touch with your supervisor please leave a message by phoning, 1300 87 83 87.

## **Your Training and Instruction**

Your level of training and instruction will depend on your role and the activities that you are expected to undertake. You will be provided with a job description which will outline your duties. Some job descriptions may be really specific because you have clear duties and are working with Council on a continuous basis, others will be fairly general because the work responds to changing needs. If you are ever unsure about what you are doing on a daily basis please ask your supervisor.

Any necessary formal training will be approved, arranged and provided at Council's expense and you will never be left out-of-pocket. There is an expectation that you undertake some form of on-the-job training.

## Police Checks

Depending on your role at Council you may be required to complete an Australian Federal Police – National Police Check (NPC) application form. This police check is not an assessment of your ability; it is only a list of offences a person has committed to see if they are suitable to work in a particular area of Council. Your supervisor will explain why you have to complete this form and if you do not wish to complete it, please say so. It will mean that you cannot volunteer in that particular role but we might be able to find another area at Council in which you can volunteer.

## Working with Children Check

The Working with Children (WWC) Check and a Police Check are different checks. Under the *Working with Children Act 2005* (the Act) if you are undertaking child-related work you must have a WWC Check even if you have also had a Police Check. The WWC Check is to determine if a person poses an unjustifiable risk to the safety of children. The WWC Check screens a person's criminal records and in some cases their professional conduct. Your supervisor must tell you why you have to undertake this check and you can say no however, you will not be able to volunteer in any role where you work with anyone under the age of 18.



## Your Health and Safety

As a volunteer you are now classified as a 'worker' under the Work Health and Safety legislation. Council has a duty of care to make sure that you go home safe and healthy. Before you start duties Council staff will conduct a risk assessment. This assessment will include:

- If the activity you are about to undertake is suitable for you.
- If the activity will put your health and safety at any risk.
- If you have the physical capacity to undertake the duties.
- If you have the skills, knowledge, certificates and training to undertake the role.
- If the site you will be working at poses any risks to your health and safety.

When satisfied that all these things have been carefully examined, Council staff will 'induct' you and will make sure:

- You know who your supervisor is.
- You know how to contact emergency services.
- Potential hazards have been identified and appropriate measures have been put in place.
- You have received instruction in safe work measures and have been told the possible risks in undertaking these activities.
- You have received instruction in how to use any plant or equipment and have had necessary tickets checked.
- You have been told how to use chemicals and where to store them correctly.
- You know how to report an incident or near miss.
- You know the safe entry and exist points of the site and know how to evacuate the site, including the assembly point.
- You know where to find a first aid kit, first aid officer, or first aid instruction sheet.
- You know where to find shade and a water supply.
- You know how to correctly wear and when to apply your personal protection equipment.

Volunteers work in a wide range of activities and these activities require different levels of physical fitness. Taking tickets at an event is very different work to weeding. It is your responsibility to assess your own health, fitness and physical limits. Remember that if you have old injuries; allergies; diabetes; are taking medication; have a heart condition; or you become unwell during the course of the day it can put OTHERS at risk. Please let your supervisor know and don't feel that you will never be able to volunteer at Council again. When you are back on track, we will find the appropriate duties for you.

It is not a requirement but it might be a good idea to talk to your GP about appropriate activities that you could do as a volunteer.

## Reporting an Incident or Near Misses

Sometimes accidents happen, no matter how well we plan to avoid them. What's important is that they are managed well to minimise injury and to avoid them occurring again. No matter how small the injury we need to know about it. Please let your supervisor know, even if it was a 'near miss', where someone almost got hurt. You might have been lucky this time but your supervisor will need to change things so that we remove luck out of it!

## Alcohol and Other Drugs

You cannot volunteer at Council under the influence of alcohol or drugs that impair your ability to carry out your duties, or cause danger to the safety of yourself or others. Council has established a program of testing for alcohol and drugs. If you take prescription medication that may affect your abilities please let your supervisor know before commencing duties. You will be sent home if you are deemed to be unfit for duty.

If not provided with a copy of Council's *WHS Procedure on Alcohol and Other Drugs*, please ask your supervisor for one.

## Council's Dress Code

While volunteering with Council you will be required to wear your volunteer identification badge and a reasonable standard of dress. Please don't buy anything special, smart casual is fine, which basically means neat, comfortable yet informal and not too revealing.

If you are volunteering outdoors you will need to wear comfortable and practical work clothes that don't cause you to overheat in the summer months. You must wear protective equipment and clothing (i.e. hardhats, sunhats, boots or joggers, long pants, long sleeve shirts, masks, safety glasses) when you are instructed to do so. Council will remove you from your activities if you do not comply with protective equipment and clothing instructions.

While volunteering at special events you may be required to wear special clothing (t-shirt/cap) that will identify you as a Council volunteer. This clothing will be supplied to you free of charge and you will be notified if you have to return it.

## Leaving Us

Sometimes relationships just don't work, and sometimes people's circumstances change. If at any time you are not enjoying your engagement with Council or feel that the workload is too much, please feel comfortable resigning from your volunteer role. We only ask that you talk to someone at Council first, we may be able to help. It might be as simple as making arrangements for you to volunteer in another, less demanding area. Please provide Council with as much notice as possible when leaving us.

Unfortunately, Council may ask you to leave the volunteer program. We don't make this decision lightly because we need all the volunteers we can get! We will always provide you with a reason. Council must treat you in a consistent, fair and equitable way.

Whatever the reason, we ask that you please return any equipment / clothing that has been supplied by Council. You may also be asked to be involved in an exit interview which will help us to improve this program however; it is completely up to you if you wish to go ahead.

## Grievances / Complaints

If you have a grievance or complaint please in the first instance talk to your supervisor who will help you to resolve the issue. The matter will be dealt with following *Corporate Procedure 1.2.77 Grievance and Complaint Handling*. If you are not provided with a copy of this document when you commenced with Council please ask for a copy.

If the grievance or complaint is about your supervisor then please call Council on phone, 1300 87 83 87. You can ask for your privacy to be protected and for People Services (HR) to guide you through *Corporate Procedure 1.2.77 Grievance and Complaint Handling*.

## Out- of-Pocket Expenses

You should never need to buy anything to undertake your activities at Council however, if in the unforeseen event that you do, you will need to get prior approval from your supervisor for the purchase and provide a tax receipt.

## Using your Private Vehicle

If you are using your own private vehicle for volunteer work at Council you must provide proof of comprehensive car insurance, a current NSW drivers licence, and vehicle registration. Council does not accept any liability for damage or loss of a private vehicle.

## Insurance Cover

Council holds several insurance policies to cover its liability. These include:

- Public Liability;
- Personal Accident; and
- Property.

Public Liability Insurance covers damage or injury to the public, including volunteers as a result of an act or omission by Council due to negligence. Negligence always has to be substantiated.

Personal Accident Insurance provides limited benefits where death or injuries are suffered in the course of Council duties. This policy does not cover volunteers under the age of nine and over the age of 90.

Property Insurance covers damage resulting from occurrences such as water leaks, storms, fires, vandalism, theft and natural disasters. Under the policy any burglary or malicious damage must be reported to the Police.

Any additional services or contractors engaged by Council must hold their own insurance policy.

The personal items of volunteers is not covered by any of these policies, so please ensure that you secure any personal items (handbags, mobile phones etc) at all times.



## Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest arises if your own interests, or other people including family, friends or an employer, conflict with your obligations to Council. This conflict could influence the way in which you perform your duties at Council, particularly if you are to gain an income (called a pecuniary interest). Sometimes there is no actual conflict but others could perceive it that way. In any case, best to let your supervisor know upfront before you commence activities with Council. Your supervisor will let you know what to do.

## Reporting Corruption, Maladministration and Wastage

When volunteering with Council you have a responsibility to report any suspected instances of corruption, maladministration or serious and substantial waste to Council. Please report this to your supervisor and if you suspect your supervisor is involved, please contact Council on phone, 1300 87 83 87. You can ask for your privacy to be protected under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

## Gifts or Benefits

You cannot offer gifts or benefits to Council staff which is likely to influence them in any way. You should also not receive gifts or benefits that might influence your activities with Council. You can however, receive a token gift that is not seen as compromising such as, ties, scarves, pens, chocolates or flowers.

Cash should not be, under any circumstances, offered or accepted while you are volunteering with Council.

## Use of Council Resources

Council resources may only be used for Council purposes unless appropriate approval is provided. Council resources include staff as well as equipment.

## Smoke Free Workplace

Council is a smoke free workplace and you must never smoke in Council owned vehicles, facilities and work sites and only smoke on notified breaks and away from others and flammable materials. Your supervisor will be able to tell you where you can smoke off-site.



## Confidentiality and Intellectual Property

As a volunteer you may come across information that is confidential and personal, particularly in relation to details about staff, Councillors, customers and other volunteers. This information is to remain confidential and you are not to disclose this to anyone, including your family and close friends. You will be asked to sign an agreement about this and it will remain in place even if you no longer volunteer with Council. If you are not sure about what is confidential please ask your supervisor before disclosing anything, but as a general rule if it is personal information (someone's address, phone number, medical history) it is private. Council also has a responsibility under the privacy legislation to keep your personal information confidential. You should never collect, access or remove someone's personal information either, unless you have been specifically asked to do this as part of your duties with Council.

Intellectual property shall remain the property of Council. In essence this means that any service or product that you might develop while engaged as a volunteer with Council belongs to Council. Unfortunately you cannot claim it to be your property and find your fortune!

## Aboriginal and Cultural Heritage

There is a rich array of Aboriginal culture sites across this area which includes stone arrangements, flakes, scarred and tattooed trees, axe heads, middens, hearths, campsites, fish traps, grooved rocks and stone quarries. Protection of these places and landscapes is related to the long-term survival of cultural stories and traditions in Aboriginal culture. There is legislation that deals with the protection of Aboriginal culture and heritage. If you become aware of any object while working on-site please inform your supervisor. You could also come across relics that have early European cultural heritage value which should also be protected.

## Talking to the Media

As an individual you can talk to the media about anything but you cannot speak on behalf of Council. If you are asked to provide a comment to the media, best to talk to your supervisor first.

## Thanks and Recognition

Another reason it is important to keep your records with us up-to-date is that once a year you will be notified of a special event with the Mayor and General Manager to provide us with an opportunity to say thanks. We hope that you can make it.

If you require a statement of your volunteer service with Council we are more than happy to provide this. Please ask your supervisor to arrange.

## Contacts

Please use this section to write down any contact names and numbers that you need to remember on-site.

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONTACT NUMBER</b>
My Supervisor is	
Council Contact Centre	1300 87 83 87
Emergency – Police / Fire / Ambulance	000
Lismore Police Station	6626 0599



*Dedicated hearts like yours  
Are not so easy to find.  
It takes a special person to be  
So generous and kind.*

*To care so much for your fellow man  
Is a quality all too rare.  
Yet you give of your time and talents,  
For all in need to share.*

*So thank you for being a volunteer,  
We're privileged to work with you.  
We want you to know how appreciated you are,  
Not just today, but the whole year through.*

(Author Unknown)

**Thank you for taking the time to read this Handbook  
and we hope you enjoy your experience volunteering  
with Lismore City Council!**