Volunteer Policy

Strategic Reference	Outcome 3 – Community Strategy 1.4 – Support volunteering as an essential element in delivering community outcomes and building wellbeing. Strategy 2.2 – Work with communities to provide and promote a range of programs and opportunities to connect and engage around shared interest. Outcome 5 – Leadership Strategy 3.10 – Recognise the valuable contribution of volunteers to the district.
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Applicable Legislation	Volunteer Protection Act 2001 (SA) Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (SA) Work Health & Safety Act 2012 (SA) Work Health & Safety Regulations 2012 (SA) Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA) Local Government Act 1999 (SA) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cmwth) Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Cmwth)
Referenced material	*Volunteers 'The Essential Guide to Work Health and Safety for Volunteers'* – SafeWork Australia *Volunteer Workforce and Safety Training Framework – A guide for South Australian Local Government* - Volunteering SA&NT *Covering All Bases – An information guide for managing volunteers in Local Government* – Local Government Association Mutual Liability Scheme
Related Policies	Safe Environments – Children & Other Vulnerable People Policy Human Resource Policy Code of Conduct for Council Employees
Related Documents	Volunteer Handbook Volunteer Management Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Volunteer Policy is to:

- Guide Council's vision for the ongoing recruitment, management and recognition of volunteers
- Assist in defining the role, rights and responsibilities of volunteers
- Encourage active community participation and social interaction through appropriate volunteering opportunities
- Provide a best practice framework for the relationship between Council staff and volunteers

2. Policy Statement

Council recognises the importance of volunteers within its community and acknowledges their contribution to improving the quality of community life within our council area.

Volunteers are valued for providing customer focused services and enhancing established Council programs or amenity. Council encourages volunteers to contribute their unique talents, skills and knowledge whilst finding a sense of satisfaction, community connection and improved wellbeing.

Volunteer programs help to forge a strong bond between the Council and the local community and will extend and enhance services to improve the quality of community life by:

- Encouraging community engagement, participation, independence and interdependence;
- Encouraging volunteerism;
- Providing additional access to resources and information;
- Increasing opportunities for social interaction, support and satisfaction;
- Value-adding to services and programs; and
- Extending the reach or impact of Council services and events.

Council will demonstrate best practice for volunteer engagement, and, in this case, the recruitment, support, management, recognition, retention and celebration of volunteers.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions apply:

"Council" means the Coorong District Council.

"Council volunteer" means an individual who is approved by and registered with Coorong District Council to support the delivery of its services, activities, programs and/or projects.

"Volunteering" is defined as time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain *(Volunteering Australia, 2015).*

Volunteers are defined as persons who undertake activities:

- Benefits the community, council and themselves by participating in volunteer programs
- Provides their services of their own free will
- Does not receive any monetary reward (out of pocket expenses are not regarded as monetary reward)
- Complements, but does not replace or threaten the livelihood of paid workers
- Of benefit to Council and the local community

"Volunteer Management Officer" means an employee who has delegated responsibility to coordinate volunteer management at operational level and/or provides regular support to volunteer program supervisors.

"Volunteer Management System" means the suite of policies, procedures, resources and databases that facilitate the recruitment, support, management, retention and recognition of volunteers and volunteer programs.

"Volunteer program" is the collective term used to describe a Council service, activity, program or project that involves volunteers in its delivery model.

4. Council's Responsibilities to Volunteers

Council's general employee management policies also apply to volunteers.

Council will:

a) Recognise the different roles, rights and responsibilities of volunteers;

b) Create a climate of mutual respect;

c) Provide a safe work environment;

d) Ensure that registered volunteers have access to the services of the Local Government Association Mutual Liability Scheme, Local Government Association Workers Compensation Scheme and a Personal Accident policy;

e) Provide appropriate induction and training relating to the various activities being undertaken;

f) Assess volunteer skills to match tasks with expectations, interests and time commitments;

g) Ensure that volunteers are not used to permanently replace paid staff;

h) Require volunteers to work under the direction and oversight of paid staff (known as volunteer program supervisors); and

i) Contribute to the planning and evaluation of volunteer involvement.

5. Responsibilities of Volunteers

Volunteers have obligations to Council and are required to:

a) Act honestly and with reasonable care and diligence;

b) Demonstrate appropriate behaviour while volunteering including:

- Not attempting to influence another person for advantage or favour
- Reporting potential conflicts of interest
- Not soliciting, demanding, requesting or accepting any gift or benefit from another person

c) Maintain confidentiality and privacy regarding Council business, program information or any other sensitive, private information they come across during their volunteer duties;

d) Acquaint themselves with the objectives and functions of Council and the services they are providing;

e) Understand and acknowledge the requirements of relevant legislation, Council policies and guidelines;

f) Participate in appropriate induction and training;

g) Where necessary, undertake a Department of Human Services Working with Children Check depending on their role(s);

h) Operate under the direction and supervision of the relevant volunteer program supervisor to achieve the objectives required;

i) Notify of any potentially hazardous situation to themselves or a third party;

j) Report any injury/damage to themselves or a third party;

k) Notify the Volunteer Management Officer and/or relevant volunteer program supervisor as soon as possible of any concerns or the intention to give notice to cease volunteering; and

l) Seek pre-approval for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses incurred through their volunteer role.

Volunteers are entitled to the rights and responsibilities under various legislations, including the *Work Health & Safety Act 2012*. Volunteers must therefore adhere to the Work Health & Safety requirements of Council. Volunteers will be instructed on these requirements as part of the induction program.

6. Council's Rights

Council has the right to:

a) Negotiate a commitment from a volunteer;

b) Expect a volunteer to undergo appropriate induction and training;

c) Expect to be notified in advance if a volunteer is unable to undertake duties;

d) Refuse a volunteer placement;

e) Request that a volunteer undertakes a police check or medical predetermined by the chosen area of work; and

f) Expect a volunteer to embrace privacy and confidentiality obligations.

7. Council's General Responsibilities

Council will ensure that volunteers:

a) Do not take responsibility for duties specifically assigned to paid staff;

b) Have adequate skills and knowledge to undertake duties;

c) Are welcomed and treated as valued and integral members of Council's team;

d) Are provided with an induction and appropriate training;

e) Receive appropriate support and supervision;

f) Are registered with Council and insured whilst understanding approved work activities;

g) Have a safe working environment, safe equipment and safe systems for volunteers; and

h) Have adequate resources to ensure the sustainability of the volunteer management system.

8. Policy

8.1 Work Health and Safety Laws

Volunteers have rights and obligations under the Work Health & Safety Act 2012. Volunteers must therefore adhere to the work health and safety requirements of Council. Volunteers will be instructed on these requirements as part of their induction, training and volunteer role statement.

8.2 Eligibility for Volunteering

Council has a volunteer program application process and welcomes all expressions of interest from the community with respect to volunteering for Council.

8.2.1 **Individuals** – Citizens interested in volunteering in a Council volunteer program will be assessed through the application and training process for suitability against the following criteria:

- The individuals' suitability for volunteering, taking into consideration their skills and interests, requirements of the role, competency, National Police Clearance;
- The organisational needs (ie. vacancy in program area where the individual wishes to volunteer)
- Willingness to be flexible to the requirements of the organisation
- This clause will be administered by Council's Volunteer Management Officer

8.2.2 **Section 41 Committee** – Prospective volunteers for a Section 41 Committee must follow the respective expression of interest process. All expressions will be subject to Council ratification. This clause is to be read in conjunction with the respective committee Terms of Reference.

8.2.3 **Elected Members** – Elected Members who wish to register as volunteers will be required to follow the volunteer application process to ensure they are provided with the same rights and responsibilities which apply to all volunteers engaged by Council. If an Elected Member wishes to volunteer, they are clearly doing so in the capacity of a volunteer and must not exercise their authority as an Elected Member over staff, volunteers or members of the public.

8.3 Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers will be officially registered with Council following successful completion of the volunteer engagement process, which includes one or a combination of the following:

- Application and briefing/interview
- National Police Clearance and Working With Children screening, where relevant
- Corporate induction
- Volunteer role statement
- Site induction and relevant program training
- Three (3) month probationary period

8.4 Recognition

Council enjoys recognising and placing emphasis on the valuable contributions made by volunteers.

Council will organise (subject to operational and/or financial provisions), the awarding of recognition and celebration of volunteers through an annual appreciation function.

8.5 Protection and Insurance

Council will comply with the various legislation protecting volunteers.

Council will purchase Public Liability Insurance and Personal Accident Insurance to cover volunteers who are identified as registered volunteers of Council and whilst engaged in clearly defined activities that are approved and controlled by Council.

Volunteers are covered by the Local Government Association Mutual Liability Scheme in the case of accident or injury **only** whilst engaged in activities as described in the volunteer role statement and that are supervised or controlled by Council.

Council is bound by the Health Insurance Act 1973 which prohibits the reimbursement of out-of-pocket medical expenses incurred due to injury or illness.

In an emergency (as a volunteer), and as a duty of care, an ambulance will be called to attend to a volunteer. The volunteer has the right to refuse treatment or transfer by attending ambulance officers. The Local Government Association Mutual Liability Scheme's public liability insurance does not extend to ambulance cover.

8.6 Working Relationships

Elected Members, employees and volunteers will achieve the best outcomes for the community by working together as a team and will treat members of the community and each other with respect, courtesy and sensitivity.

8.7 Use of Council Resources

Volunteers will be provided with the appropriate resources to undertake the duties and responsibilities for their volunteer role. These resources are not provided for the private use by the volunteer.

8.8 Media Liaison

Volunteers are not permitted to liaise with media on behalf of Council. The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for maintaining all media relationships.

8.9 Confidentiality

Volunteers may have access to, or are provided with, information that may need to be considered or treated confidentially. Such information should be handled in a careful and prudent manner, and the interests of the community must be balanced with the potential for damage if confidentiality is not maintained.

8.10 Drugs and Alcohol

The possession or use of any illegal drugs or the abuse of prescription drugs or alcohol during volunteer working hours is prohibited and can result in Council suspending or withdrawing volunteer engagement.

8.11 Ceasing Volunteering

When a volunteer ceases their role with Council, they must inform the Volunteer Management Officer and return all Council property in their possession to the respective volunteer program supervisor or their nearest Council office.

9. Availability/Accessibility

This Policy is available for inspection at Council's offices during normal business hours & Council's website and will be emailed to interested parties on request (please lodge request in writing via email to council@coorong.sa.gov.au)

10. Document History

This Policy will be reviewed at least every three (3) years or more frequently if legislation or Council requires.

Version	Adopted	Minute No	Description of change(s)
1	15 November 2011	358/11	New policy
2	19 November 2013	412/13	Cyclical review
3	20 December 2016	267/16	Cyclical review
4	15 October 2019	315/19	Cyclical review
5	18 February 2025	032/25	Definitions and Volunteer Responsibilities refined New section included (Section 8) to reference various policy positions on volunteering