

AP53 Volunteer Policy

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Policy Objective

This policy outlines the principles by which the Benalla Rural City Council will recruit, manage and support volunteers engaged across the organisation's programs, activities, events and committees.

Volunteers and voluntary groups are an invaluable resource to our community making a significant contribution to the political, social, economic, environmental and cultural fabric of the local community.

Support for volunteers and the development of volunteering within the Benalla Rural City will enhance our vision of *a sustainable, thriving and cohesive community where lifestyle, culture, health and wellbeing are important.*

Scope

This policy applies to all Benalla Rural City Council staff, Councillors, contractors and volunteers.

Definition of Volunteering

In 2015 Volunteering Australia provided the following definition:

Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.

The term 'volunteering' covers a wide diversity of activities in Australian society. It includes formal volunteering that takes place within organisations (including institutions and agencies) in a structured way and informal volunteering, acts that take place outside the context of a formal organisation.

Consideration of the term volunteering needs to also note best practice guidelines. Volunteering should not be exploitative, or be used to replace paid employment. While volunteering provides substantial benefits to society, importantly it also provides significant benefits to the volunteers themselves. The personal benefits of volunteering need to be recognised and fostered.

Guiding Principles for Volunteer Programs and Activities

Benalla Rural City Council endeavours to support Volunteering Australia's *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (2015)* as follows:

- Standard 1: Leadership and Management
- Standard 2: Commitment to Volunteer Involvement
- Standard 3: Volunteer Roles
- Standard 4: Recruitment and Selection
- Standard 5: Support and Development
- Standard 6: Workplace Safety and Wellbeing
- Standard 7: Volunteer Recognition
- Standard 8: Quality Management and Continuous Improvement.

Refer to Attachment A: National Standards for Volunteering (2015)

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers registered with the Benalla Rural City Council to perform authorised duties on behalf of the organisation have the right to:

- be employed in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation
- be involved in activities that are worthwhile and challenging
- have a duty statement and agreed working hours
- know what is expected of them and to whom they are accountable
- be treated as a team member, with respect and dignity
- work in a healthy and safe environment and be provided with suitable equipment to undertake their roles effectively
- receive adequate and appropriate insurance cover whilst discharging their volunteering duties
- receive sufficient orientation and training to confidently undertake their volunteer work
- be reimbursed for reasonable out of pocket expenses (in accordance with policy)
- be able to access relevant policies and procedures that affect their volunteering duties
- be informed and consulted on matters which directly or indirectly affect their volunteer work
- be valued and recognised for their energy, commitment and passion
- have choices and the right to say NO to tasks which they cannot confidently undertake
- have access to a structured grievance process
- have confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act.

Volunteers registered with the Benalla Rural City Council to perform authorised duties on behalf of the organisation have the obligation to:

- be committed to the organisation
- respect confidentiality and privacy
- comply with relevant legislative requirements, e.g. Working with Children Check and Police check
- be punctual and reliable
- carry out the duties listed in your volunteer duty statement
- avoid taking on more than you really want to or have time to do
- be accountable for your actions whilst discharging your volunteering duties
- be willing to learn on the job and participate in the training opportunities provided
- ensure as much as practicable, a safe working environment for yourself and other members of your team
- give notice if your availability changes or of any changes to contact details
- advise your supervisor of any changes in your health or special needs that may impact on the job you volunteered for
- complete the required documentation if a hazard is identified or an accident occurs while on duty
- ask for further instruction or support when it is needed
- be supportive and encouraging of others and contribute to a harmonious workplace
- be a team member and be flexible in accommodating the team's requirements
- comply with all relevant policy and procedures
- refuse gifts and tips (in accordance with policy)

Volunteer Management

The engagement and management of volunteers to assist the Benalla Rural City Council will be done in a manner that complies with all relevant organisational policies and associated legislation.

All volunteers are required to complete a Volunteer Registration; undertake any relevant security checks and complete the North East Council's Induction (NECCI) training.

Benalla Rural City Council may collect personal and health information during the registration process for municipal purposes as specified in the Local Government Act 1989. Personal information is used only in line with volunteering activities is not made available to any third parties.

Commitment to Volunteers

In accordance with National Standards for Volunteering 2015 (Volunteering Australia), Benalla Rural City Council through its volunteer management processes will:

- treat each volunteer with courtesy, respect and consideration
- ensure volunteers are appropriately registered and covered by relevant insurance
- provide guidance and support within each work area
- provide volunteers with appropriate training, regular evaluation and recognition
- provide volunteers with a duty statement
- provide healthy and safe work environments
- provide volunteers with adequate resources to carry out their duties
- assess volunteer skills and, where possible, match tasks with expectations, interests and time commitments
- provide access to relevant policies and procedures
- provide access to relevant grievance procedures and proactively address areas of conflict or grievance
- ensure that volunteers are protected and not exploited
- develop and maintain a comprehensive process for managing volunteers and maintain a volunteers' register and attendance records
- ensure the contributions of volunteers are recognised, valued and celebrated.

Refer to Attachment A: National Standards for Volunteering (2015).

Police Checks and Working with Children Checks

Volunteers may be required to undertake a police check to participate in certain volunteer activities as per the legislative requirements of the area they intend to work in.

Volunteers working with children will be required to undertake any Working with Children screening as is appropriate to staff members in the same area and in reference to legislative requirements and in line with Victorian Childsafe Standards (2016).

Reimbursement of Expenses

A volunteer may be entitled to claim for out-of-pocket costs they incur while performing agreed activities in their assigned roles. Prior approval must be obtained from the appropriate supervisor and relevant receipts or documentation provided for reimbursement of any expense incurred. Expenses may include:

- extraordinary travel (excludes regular travel for volunteer duties)
- equipment such as protective clothing
- administrative costs.

Grievance Procedure

Volunteers have the right to raise and have resolved any grievances they may have without fear of retribution. Benalla Rural City Council will treat every concern or complaint seriously in a confidential and sensitive manner and where possible, is committed to resolving any issues quickly.

Occupational Health and Safety

Volunteers, whilst not considered to be employees are still owed a statutory duty of care while undertaking designated activities. Before volunteers are permitted to undertake an activity on behalf of the organisation, a risk assessment of the activity will be undertaken to ensure the following:

- the activity is suitable for volunteers
- the activity does not place volunteers 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.

Insurances

Personal Accident and Sickness

Volunteers undertaking clearly defined, approved and controlled activities are covered by limited personal accident insurance, subject to the terms and conditions of the organisation's insurance policies.

Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance

Volunteers undertaking clearly defined, approved and controlled activities are protected against Public Liability claims under the organisation's Public Liability insurance cover. Public Liability Insurance pays compensation for injury to third parties (people external to the organisation such as members of the public) or damage to their property. This does not cover injuries to volunteers or incidences where damage has been caused through wilful or deliberate acts.

Use of Private Vehicles

Volunteers using private vehicles are not covered by the organisation's insurances and volunteers must have in place their own comprehensive insurance cover.

If volunteers wish to take helpers (friends or relatives) to assist with volunteer duties, these individuals must also be registered with Benalla Rural City Council to be covered by Public Liability Insurance.

Use of Council Vehicles

Where volunteer roles involve the use of Benalla Rural City fleet vehicles, it is the responsibility of Program Managers to ensure authorised drivers have:

- completed a Nominated Driver Agreement Form
- supplied a copy of their current driver's licence
- been given adequate instruction in line with the Council's Motor Vehicle Accident Procedure.

Volunteer Database

A centralised volunteer database ensures that all appropriate information required for OHS and Insurance purposes relating to volunteers is maintained. Information contained in the database is held in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.

Responsibilities

All Benalla Rural City Council staff, Councillors, contractors and volunteers are responsible for adhering to and implementing this policy.

Adherence to the Volunteering Policy will be overseen by the Manager People and Performance.

Relevant Legislation

- Commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009
- Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988
- National Standards For Volunteer Involvement 2015 – Volunteering Australia
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (Vic) 2001
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Victorian Health Records Act 2001
- Victorian Information Privacy Act 2000
- Victorian Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004
- Victorian Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
- Victorian Working with Children Act 2005
- Wrongs Act 1958 (as amended)
- Child Safe Standards (2016)

Relevant Documents/Policies

- Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2017-2021
- Benalla Rural City Council Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Procedures
- Benalla Rural City Council Motor Vehicle Accident Procedure

Attachments

- The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (2015)

Standard 1: Leadership and management

The governing body and senior employees lead and promote a positive culture towards volunteering and implement effective management systems to support volunteer involvement.

- 1.1 Responsibilities for leading and managing volunteer involvement are defined and supported.
- 1.2 Policies and procedures applying to volunteers are communicated, understood, and implemented by all relevant staff across the organisation.
- 1.3 The organisation's risk management processes are applied to the organisation's volunteer involvement.
- 1.4 Volunteer involvement records are maintained.
- 1.5 Processes are in place to manage relationships with partner agencies in collaborative volunteer activities.

Standard 2: Commitment to volunteer involvement

Commitment to volunteer involvement is set out through vision, planning and resourcing, and supports the organisation's strategic direction.

- 2.1 The organisation publicly declares its intent, purpose and commitment to involving volunteers.
- 2.2 Volunteer involvement is planned and designed to contribute directly to the organisation purpose, goals and objectives.
- 2.3 Resources (including time, funds, equipment and technology) are allocated for volunteer involvement.

Standard 3: Volunteer roles

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles which contribute to the organisation's purpose, goals and objectives.

- 3.1 Volunteer roles are designed to contribute to the organisation's purpose, goals and objectives.
- 3.2 Volunteer roles are appropriate for the community, service user or stakeholder groups with which the organisation works.
- 3.3 Volunteer roles are defined, documented and communicated.
- 3.4 Volunteer roles are reviewed with input from volunteers and employees.

Standard 4: Recruitment and selection

Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, consistent and meet the needs of the organisation and volunteers.

- 4.1 If the organisation recruits volunteers, it uses planned approaches to attract volunteers with relevant interests, knowledge, skills or attributes.
- 4.2 Potential volunteers are provided with relevant information about the organisation, the volunteer role and the recruitment and selection process.
- 4.3 Volunteers are selected based on interest, knowledge, and skills or attributes relevant to the role, and consistent with anti-discrimination legislation.
- 4.4 Screening processes are applied to volunteer roles that help maintain the safety and security of service users, employees, volunteers and the organisation.

Standard 5: Support and Development

Volunteers understand their roles and gain the knowledge, skills and feedback needed to safely and effectively carry out their duties.

- 5.1 Volunteers are provided with orientation relevant to their role and responsibility.
- 5.2 Volunteers knowledge and skills are reviewed to identify support and development needs.
- 5.3 Volunteers knowledge and skill needs relevant to their roles are identified, and training and development opportunities are provided to meet these needs.
- 5.4 Volunteers are provided with supervision and support that enables them to undertake their roles and responsibilities.
- 5.5 Changes to the involvement of a volunteer are undertaken fairly and consistently.

Standard 6: Workplace safety and wellbeing

The health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers is protected in the workplace.

- 6.1 Effective working relationships with employees, and between volunteers, are facilitated by the organisation.
- 6.2 Processes are in place to protect the health and safety of volunteers in their capacity as volunteers.
- 6.3 Volunteers have access to complaints and grievance procedures.

Standard 7: Volunteer recognition

Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.

- 7.1 The governing body and employees understand how volunteers benefit the organisation, service users and the community.
- 7.2 Volunteers are informed about how their contributions benefit the organisation, service users and the community.
- 7.3 The organisation regularly acknowledges contributions made by volunteers and the positive impact on the organisation, service users and the community.
- 7.4 Volunteer acknowledgement is appropriate to the volunteer role and respectful of cultural values and perspectives.

Standard 8: Quality management and continuous improvement

Effective volunteer involvement results from a system of good practice, review and continuous improvement.

- 8.1 Policies and procedures are implemented to effectively guide all aspects of volunteer involvement.
- 8.2 Volunteer involvement is regularly reviewed in line with the organisation's evaluation and quality management frameworks.
- 8.3 The organisation's performance with volunteer involvement is monitored and reported to the governing body, employees, volunteers and stakeholders.
- 8.4 Opportunities are available for volunteers to provide feedback on the organisation's volunteer involvement and relevant areas of the organisation's work