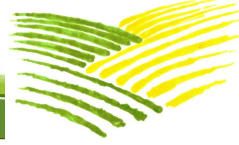




SOUTHERN
MIDLANDS
COUNCIL



Volunteer Induction Handbook

*Assisting in Building Capacity & Sustainability
in the Southern Midlands*

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September 2013

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1. Purpose of handbook

Welcome to Southern Midlands Council's volunteering program! The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with information to help you feel welcome and supported in undertaking your volunteer position with Southern Midlands Council.

Becoming a volunteer opens up a world of opportunity to learn new skills, develop self-confidence and simply enjoy yourself - to become involved in your community in a way that is interesting, personally satisfying and fun.

Importantly, the services that you provide as a volunteer are of great benefit, not only to yourself, but to Council, its services and, of course the people who gain direct benefit from your time and effort.

Volunteering can be formal or informal, full-time or part-time, occasional or even once-off. It is undertaken willingly by the volunteer without coercion, has no financial payment, and complements the activities of paid staff.

Whatever type of volunteering you want to do, you will have a responsibility towards the organisation and the tasks you accept, just as you would towards paid employment.

The success of all our volunteer programs is dependent on the good relationship between Council and volunteers. This handbook is designed to guide our relationship, so we ask that you read it carefully and refer to it on an ongoing basis.

Council values the significant contribution of volunteers who in their various roles, deliver and enhance a broad range of services and programs offered by Council.

For projects that include conservation, *Landcare* and the like in field work environments, Council has, through Conservation Volunteers Australia been provided access to a CVA developed resource handbook titled "*In Safe Hands*" that will be issued to each Project Manager/Supervisor. This is a comprehensive *tool kit* that will provide valuable assistance in ensuring that your time with Council and in the field is enjoyable and productive as well as safe. Council documents, plans and details can be viewed in full on our website at www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au

2. About Southern Midlands Council

Our Vision

The following vision for the Southern Midlands municipal area was developed by Councillors on the basis of the information and advice provided at community meetings.

- A Community spirit based on friendliness, co-operation and self help;
- An environment which encourages local creativity, enterprise and self help;
- A diversified local economy creating employment opportunities through sustainable agriculture, heritage tourism, forestry, and viable historic villages/service centres;
- Development based on the proper management of local resources and the physical environment;
- A range and standard of services within the Southern Midlands which meet local needs and are affordable as well as efficient.

Our Mission

The Mission for the corporation of Council identifies the roles and purpose of the Council. The mission was developed by Councillors and senior staff.

The Council in partnership with the community will:

- Work for the benefit of the community;
- Be forward looking and provide leadership;
- Operate as a team of Councillors and staff focused upon performance;
- Be financially responsible.

Our Guiding Principles

The following principles or philosophies represent the beliefs and values which will guide the culture of the Southern Midlands Council and underpin its work towards achieving the Vision and Mission. Council and staff, including Volunteers will:

- Consult and listen to our customers and employees by maintaining open communication;
- Treat people with respect and courtesy;
- Give advice to the best of our professional ability;
- Be sensitive to the needs of residents;
- Respond promptly to customers concerns and requests;
- Be fair, equitable and consistent in decisions and conduct;

- Fully utilise the expertise and resources available to Council within the organisation and the Community;
- Develop the full potential of Councillors and staff
- Operate in accordance with the “Southern Midlands Council Code of Conduct” adopted by Council

3. Volunteer rights and responsibilities

As a volunteer you have the right to:

- Be proactive in knowing your duties and how to undertake them effectively;
- Be reliable and committed;
- Attend training sessions where appropriate;
- Keep all communications with or concerning clients and Council records confidential;
- Report any accident or injury immediately to your supervisor.
- Ask for support where needed;
- Follow Council’s policies and procedures;
- Work with Council staff and your fellow volunteers to maintain an acceptable team attitude;
- Be flexible and accepting of changes and updates to policies, procedures and programs;
- Give adequate notice if you are unable to assist at agreed times and dates; and
- Give adequate notice before discontinuing your volunteering role.

4. Council’s expectations of volunteers

Occupational Health and Safety

The health, safety and welfare of Southern Midlands volunteers are of paramount importance. You have a right to a safe workplace.

All work sites will be maintained according to Occupational Health and Safety requirements, including:

- providing and maintaining suitable equipment
- implementing and observing safe systems of work
- the provision of adequate information, training and supervision
- identifying hazards to safety and health and implementing appropriate controls.

It is the responsibility of your supervisor to take prompt action to eliminate and reduce the risk of injury.

Any incident that results in an injury to you, other staff members or volunteers, including hazards that have the potential to cause injury, should be reported immediately to your supervisor.

Your responsibility for safety includes:

- taking reasonable care of your own safety and that of others;
- using safety devices and protective equipment correctly;
- not performing any procedure or task unless you have received appropriate training and instruction;
- reporting any accident or injury immediately (completing an incident report form and give it to the program supervisor); and
- ensuring that you are not, by the consumption of alcohol or drugs, in such a state to endanger your own safety or that of others.

If you have any queries in relation to Occupational Health and Safety issues, please discuss these with your supervisor or contact Council's, Manager Corporate Services, Bronwyn Porter on 62 545 000 or Manager Community & Corporate Development, Andrew Benson on 62 593 011.

Council has prepared a Volunteers OH&S and Risk Management Handbook (available on request) that will be useful on projects that are related to outdoors activities. This Handbook draws on information in the Supervisor's Handbook titled "*In Safe Hands*" which is a publication developed by Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) and for which Southern Midlands Council has agreement from CVA to use.

Southern Midlands Council Code of Conduct

The *Code of Conduct* was developed in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1993*. The *Code of Conduct* is an extremely important document and broadly:

- identifies Council's values and behaviours;
- promotes and provides a framework for elected members, staff and volunteers to work in the best interests of the Southern Midlands community;
- ensures elected members, staff & volunteers understand and are accountable for their actions.

The scope of the *Code of Conduct* applies to all volunteers of Southern Midlands Council. As a volunteer, you have an obligation to fulfil your voluntary duties in accordance with the expected standards in the Council's Code of Conduct.

5. Important information regarding your volunteer role

Insurance

Public Liability

Whilst you are volunteering with Council you are deemed to be acting on behalf of Council and as such, are indemnified under Council's general Public Liability Insurance Cover. This extends to third party personal injury and/or property damage.

Council does not cover you for any valuables, money, clothing or other personal property, lost or stolen whilst volunteering.

Personal Accident

Whilst you are volunteering with Council you are not deemed to be an employee for the purposes of Work cover.

If you are injured during the course of your volunteering you will be required to complete an incident report and a register of injury form, which are available from your supervisor.

Council has a Personal Accident Insurance policy in place to provide limited protection, disablement and death benefits to volunteers while performing voluntary work. To be eligible for this you must be registered and the activity must be authorised by Council. Any expenses recoverable from any other source such as Medicare or private health insurance are not claimable.

Capital Benefits

Death or disability - \$100,000

Injury Assistance

Non-medical related expenses including

- Domestic Home Help: \$250 per week (max 52 weeks)
- Home Tutorial Benefit: \$100 per week (max 52 weeks)
- Weekly Benefits for injury: \$750 (max 104 weeks)
- Weekly Benefits for Sickness: Nil (assumes that volunteers are not required when they are sick)
- Excess Period: 7 days
- Non-Medicare Medical Expenses: \$1,000 any one injury
- Out of Pocket Expenses: \$100 per week (max 52 weeks)

Medical Expenses

As stated the policy does provide \$1,000 cover for non-Medicare medical and out of pocket expenses for any one injury. This includes all medical expenses including physiotherapy and travelling costs. Medical accounts should be lodged with Medicare or your private health fund.

Motor Vehicles

Council does not have insurance to cover damage to, or caused by, volunteers' private vehicles.

All drivers and passengers of registered vehicles are covered by the Motor Accident Insurance Board (MAIB) for medical expenses for bodily injury arising from a motor vehicle accident.

It is recommended that you have a minimum Third Party Fire and Theft level of insurance* and that your vehicle must be registered and be in a road worthy condition. A valid and current Tasmanian driver's license must also be held.

Any speeding offences, traffic parking infringements incurred while performing volunteer duties will not be paid by Council.

*If you have any queries in relation to insurance issues please discuss with your supervisor or contact Council's Manager Corporate Service on 62545000 during normal working hours.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All volunteers must comply with the Personal Information Protection Act 2004 to protect the personal information of Council's customers, volunteers, employees and contractors.

Access to Confidential Information

As a volunteer, you may have authorised access to privileged information relating to clients, employees, members of the public or the overall operations of Southern Midlands Council.

Please ensure this information is securely stored at all times and not disclosed to any person including employees and/or other volunteers, friends or family, except in the course of your official duties.

As part of your role as a volunteer you may be required to collect and/or use the personal information of customers such as name and address information or telephone numbers. You must not discuss client details with anyone other than your supervisor.

It is also important that whilst working with clients you do not reveal your own home address or telephone number.

Your volunteer role needs to remain at a professional level at all times.

Confidentiality refers to the trust and assurance that the content of any specific information will remain entrusted between Southern Midlands Council and the people and communities it deals with.

Confidentiality of information must be respected for:

- the protection of the client and their right to privacy
- the protection of the service and its reputation
- the protection of and reputation of staff and volunteers.

Volunteers should not disclose to any third party any confidential information in their possession or knowledge relating to Southern Midlands Council's affairs, business dealings or transactions.

'Confidential information' includes, but is not limited to, the following types of information:

- any information relating to Council's technology or intellectual property
- details of Council's facilities, equipment and methods of operation
- details of Council's employees, customers, suppliers or other third parties working with Council
- any information on Council's commercial agreements
- any financial information
- any other information not generally available to the public, or which you reasonably consider as confidential.

Your Privacy

As required by federal and state legislation, Southern Midlands Council is committed to protecting your right to privacy. It is the responsibility of your supervisor to ensure that your privacy and confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Council respects all personal and confidential information you give and will do everything possible to protect information from unauthorised access, loss or misuse.

Any information collected for statistical purposes will only be used in a non identifiable manner. Council will store all personal data and information according to the *Australian Privacy Principles (APP)* [The APPs are found in the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012 (Cth)*] and will not release any personal information to any third party.

In addition:

- all volunteer databases are password protected
- only in instances where you have given prior consent, can information be provided to external organisations such as Centrelink

- your individual file will be securely stored and is only accessible by designated staff (yourself included). After a period of 12 months inactivity, your file will be securely destroyed.

If you have any queries in relation to privacy or confidentiality, please discuss these with your supervisor or contact Council's Manager Community & Corporate Development, Andrew Benson on 62 593 011

Fair treatment in the workplace

As a volunteer with Southern Midlands Council you have a right to a workplace free of discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence. Volunteer supervisors are responsible for ensuring that access to and conduct of all volunteer activities and programs are unaffected by an individual's race, age, sex, marital status, pregnancy, family commitments, religion, political beliefs, physical features, impairment, sexual preference or socio economic background.

As a volunteer, you have the right to make a complaint against instances of discrimination and are entitled to have the matter dealt with in a prompt, confidential and impartial manner.

To raise an issue or lodge a formal complaint, please refer to the Grievance Procedure complaint handling procedures.

You also have a responsibility to treat all volunteers, staff and customers equally, in a non-discriminatory manner with consideration and respect.

Harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination that has the purpose or effect of interfering with a person's work performance whilst creating a workplace that is intimidating and/or hostile. Harassment in all its forms is unacceptable and unlawful.

Harassment is defined as behaviour or conduct:

- that is unwelcome or unsolicited
- that may reasonably be said to offend, humiliate, intimidate or distress the person(s) who are the target of the behaviour.

Harassment may include:

- practical and/or mocking jokes
- comments or stereotyping in reference to race, gender, physical appearance, disability or religion
- inappropriate sexual comments or innuendo
- acts of physical intimacy
- campaigns of hate (through social media or any other method), silence, vilification or isolation.

Council aims to cultivate a culture of openness and transparency, where all employees and volunteers have working relationships characterised by mutual respect.

Grievance Resolution Procedures

A grievance is any event, condition, rule or practice which a volunteer feels violates their rights, treats them unfairly or causes them any degree of unpleasantness or unhappiness when volunteering.

Volunteers have the right to fair and equitable treatment of grievances and complaints in a timely and professional manner. It is our aim to resolve disputes amicably through conciliation and negotiation. Grievance and disputes will be handled in accordance with the Council policy.

If the grievance is still unresolved then a recommendation or decision along with further action is to be taken by the Manager Community & Corporate Development in consultation with Management as appropriate.

A copy of Council's Complaints & Grievances Policy along with the Discipline & Counselling Procedures is available from your Project Manager.

Record Keeping

Accurate record keeping helps Council to effectively plan for volunteer involvement and to manage and support volunteers effectively.

Upon your acceptance as a Council volunteer, an individual file will be created, and where applicable, will include:

- completed volunteer engagement agreement form
- results of reference checks (if required)

- training record
- positions held
- dates and numbers of hours worked
- details of client feedback
- awards received
- documentation relating to any grievance matters including instances of dismissal
- date and reason for leaving.

Probity Checks

Some areas of activity require volunteers to present a current Police check and/or Working with Children Check. A pre-volunteering Medical check may also be required. Your supervisor will provide advice about all probity checks.

Orientation and Induction

You will be required to attend and complete all compulsory Occupational, Health and Safety, and Induction Training specific to your volunteering duties.

Support and Supervision

As a valued volunteer for Southern Midlands Council, you have the right to access appropriate levels of support and guidance through a suitably experienced supervisor.

Your supervisor is responsible for the daily management of the volunteer program and is your first point of contact. The supervisor, in partnership with yourself, will determine the right balance of support and supervision needed to not only perform your work successfully, but to bring your personal enjoyment and satisfaction.

Identification

Where personal identification is required, you must display this at all times whilst performing your voluntary duties for Council.

Attendance and Punctuality

Once work times have been agreed, we ask that you arrive for work at those times. If you are unable to attend as usual, due to illness or other commitments, please contact your supervisor as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Our volunteer programs offer the flexibility of being able to accommodate changes to your availability, so please discuss any changes you would like to make to your time commitments or length of stay with your supervisor.

Dress Code

As a Council representative, you are responsible for upholding Southern Midlands' professional image within the community. If you have not been advised of any dress requirements specific to your workplace, we ask that you dress in a manner appropriate to the conditions and performance of your duties. Where your role involves the direct provision of services to the public, it is important that you are clearly identifiable.

6. Starting off as a Volunteer

Gifts and other Personal Benefits

Refer to Council's Gifts & Benefits Policy in your Induction Kit

In relation to work undertaken on behalf of Council, volunteers are:

- not permitted to accept gifts from clients
- not to enter into any private arrangements with clients that can be construed as benefiting from their position as a Council volunteer
- not to offer or agree to buy any property belonging to clients
- not to sell any items to clients
- not to arrange privately, to undertake work (paid or unpaid) outside the parameters of the volunteer program.

To protect the rights and interests of our most vulnerable clients, in addition to safeguarding yourself against possible accusations of stealing, you must not accept any gifts or other offers during the course of your work.

In some circumstances this may appear unavoidable without causing offence. If this does occur you should report the gift to your supervisor.

Training and Development

Appropriate training is essential to inform, prepare and protect volunteers and our clients.

Specifically, training allows you to carry out your work to the best of your ability and ensures our services and programs are of the highest quality. Above all, your participation in training should be an enjoyable learning experience. From time to time, legislation may require that some of our volunteers need to update their skills or be given specific information that ensures they are confident and safe in their role.

Feedback

If you have a suggestion on how things could be improved or would like to comment on how something is working well, we would like to hear about it. This can be given verbally or in writing to your supervisor.

Reward and Recognition

Recognising the vast wealth of skills, knowledge and support our volunteers contribute to Southern Midlands occurs in a number of ways. Some of these are:

- recognising the potential and/or expertise of volunteers and using it
- highlighting volunteer contributions via *Southern Midlands News* and internal newsletters
- celebrating and encouraging volunteer participation in Southern Midlands
- certificates of appreciation
- social events such as morning teas and barbecues
- verbal and/or written reference if requested
- acknowledging years of service
- Community engagement and relationship building.

Exiting the Southern Midlands volunteer experience

Council understands that sometimes due to changing circumstances and other opportunities, volunteers may need to resign. To ensure the resignation process occurs with only minimal disruption, we would appreciate your assistance in the following ways:

- giving as much notice as possible
- providing your supervisor with an update on the progress of your work
- returning any material belonging to Council (including identification).

We would greatly value your participation in either a brief exit interview with your supervisor or in answering a survey before you leave. This will help us to identify any areas for improvement or matters that require policy or management action.

Concluding your Volunteering Agreement

Council is committed to providing support, supervision and training for all volunteers, however at times there may be instances where volunteers can be asked to leave.

Instances that may result in termination include:

- conduct that threatens the safety or wellbeing of clients, staff and volunteers including physical or verbal assault
- failure to comply with Occupational Health & Safety requirements/directions
- breaches of confidentiality
- dishonesty or theft.

In any of the events outlined in the previous dot points, the supervisor will liaise with the Manager Community & Corporate Development to determine whether an alleged offence constitutes serious misconduct. The supervisor, in conjunction with the Manager Community & Corporate Development, will be responsible for recording the details associated with the incident including the type of offence, volunteer involvement, any mitigating circumstances and the outcome of the investigation and this will be placed on the volunteer's individual file.

7. Frequently Asked Questions

How do my volunteering duties differ from the work of paid staff?

Your volunteering duties provide an extension or enhancement to what Council offers to the community rather than a replacement of a paid staff position.

Will there be training opportunities available to me as a Council volunteer?

As part of the *Local Government Act 1993* and Council's obligation to its volunteers, a formal induction session is provided which includes Occupational Health and Safety training. You will also have the opportunity to participate and complete further training and skill development to enhance your volunteer role.

Do I need to provide Council with my date of birth?

Yes, your health and safety is important to us and your date of birth is required to ensure you are fully covered by Council's insurance policies.

Will I be provided with a fuel allowance if I am using my own vehicle whilst performing my volunteer duties?

This should be in the first instance clarified with your Project Manager. If you are using your own vehicle to perform your volunteer duties, such as driving from one job location to another job location (on the same day) you may be provided with a fuel allowance in line with Council's staff fuel allowance policy. Fuel reimbursement does not include driving to and from your designated workplace location.

Will I need to provide references before commencing my volunteer role and if at any stage I conclude my volunteer role will I be provided with a reference if requested?

This will depend on the position. Upon request, your supervisor will provide you with a reference if you conclude your volunteer role with Council.

8. Forms

Volunteer Registration Form

Mr, Miss, Ms, Mrs: First Name: Last Name:

Street Address:

Town/Suburb: Postcode: Country:

Telephone (Home) Telephone (work): Mobile:

Email:

Date of Birth: / /

Emergency Contact Person: Relationship (e.g. Parent, Partner):

Telephone (h): Telephone (w): Mobile:

Email:

Do you have any medical conditions, allergies, disabilities or past injuries **that may affect your participation?**

Yes No (please circle)

If yes – Please discuss with Project Manager and complete the questions over the page.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION:

I agree to comply with the following terms that refer to my participation in all projects and activities:

- 1) I have notified the Project Manager of any relevant medical conditions and pre-existing injuries, and I consent to the Project Manager rendering or authorising such medical treatment as necessary and accept responsibility for all associated expenses.
- 2) I am a volunteer and not an employee of the Council/Committee.
- 3) I will not smoke, consume or store alcohol or illicit drugs while working on a project site.
- 4) I shall respect the rights, feelings and property of all others associated with projects.
- 5) I shall cooperate with the Project Manager to ensure a safe, happy and hygienic team environment.
- 6) My placement on all projects is at the discretion of the Project Manager.
- 7) Photographs or videos taken of me on a project may be used by the Committee for promotional purposes.

I understand that failure to comply with any of these conditions may result in the Project Manager requesting me to leave.

SIGNATURE

DATE: / /

Office use only – to be initialled and dated by the Project Manager who undertakes each step

<i>STATEMENT</i>	<i>INITIALS</i>	<i>DATE</i>
1 All declared pre-existing medical conditions discussed with volunteer		
2 Safety briefing has been provided		
3 All information has been checked and complete		

10. Attachments

Gifts and Benefits Policy