

Volunteer Policy

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Directorate:	Community Services		
Responsible Officer:	Manager Community Development, Sport and Recreation		
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1. Purpose

This Policy acknowledges the City of Greater Dandenong's commitment to supporting and encouraging volunteering within Council. It also acknowledges Council's broader commitment to volunteering across the municipality through its contract relationship with the Greater Dandenong Volunteer Resource Service (GDVRS).

This policy defines Council's adherence to the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement and best practice.

Volunteering provides opportunities to directly participate in community life through one of Council's many services to the community. The value and contribution of volunteering leads to economic benefits as well as an increase in social inclusion, physical and psychological wellbeing and career opportunities.

Volunteering strongly supports the development of a diverse, vibrant, cohesive and sustainable community and Council is committed to supporting a council wide volunteer program.

2. Background

Volunteering can be defined as an activity undertaken for the benefit of the community and the volunteer, without expectation of payment.

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Volunteering provides individuals and organisations with the opportunity to make a difference in their community, in their own life and in the lives of others by the giving of their time, skills and knowledge.

Volunteers can be recruited into a Council service in order to enhance the delivery of that service. However, Council volunteers are not intended to replace the roles of paid Council employees.

The City of Greater Dandenong has a long history in supporting volunteering opportunities for the benefit of the community. Within Council, volunteering has traditionally focused on Home and Community Care services. Over the past ten years Council has expanded opportunities for volunteer engagement into the following service areas:

- Community Care
- Community Arts, Culture and Libraries
- Community Wellbeing
- Community Development, Sports and Recreation
- Environment
- Corporate Services.

The benefits of volunteering for Council include:

- Enhancing Council's service delivery to the wider community
- Strengthening local community connections to Council
- Strengthening communities and building a resilient civil society
- Building inclusive and connected communities
- Expanding an individual's skills, experiences and social networks
- Impacting in a positive way on an individual's health and wellbeing
- Educating newly arrived migrants on the role and impact of local government.

Council recognises and acknowledges the valuable contribution Council's volunteers make to a wide range of Council programs by:

- Hosting a recognition event during National Volunteer Week and on International Volunteer Day
- Awarding a Volunteer of the Year at the Australia Day Awards
- Displaying volunteer 'Thank You' flags at all of the city's gateways during National Volunteer Week.

The City of Greater Dandenong reflects best practice in volunteering through membership of Volunteering Victoria. Volunteering Victoria is the state body for all volunteer organisations and provides resources and support at a state level.

Volunteering Australia is the national body for the voluntary sector and the leader in the development of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement. It provides the

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definition of volunteering, and the principles to guide recruitment, active engagement and recognition of volunteers.

The Council wide volunteer program adheres to the National Standards for volunteer involvement.

In 2014 Council introduced a Paid Volunteer Leave Program for staff recognising the benefits to the community of providing not-for-profit organisations access to skilled volunteer staff. Council staff may contribute one standard paid day of work per financial year (pro rata for part time employees) to an approved charitable organisation within the municipality.

In 2015 Council contracted GDVRS to provide volunteer matching and training support for the municipality. This contract was renewed in 2020 for a two-year period with the possibility of two 12-month extensions.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, Council staff, contract staff and Council volunteers. It guides Council's efforts to promote, recruit, engage and recognise volunteers across Council's programs and services.

It does not apply to student placements or people undertaking work experience.

Council's internal Volunteer Program is responsible for the recruitment, retention and recognition of volunteers who support a wide range of Council services and programs directly.

Volunteer committee members of endorsed advisory committees are governed by a separate Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct.

This policy does not apply directly to the GDVRS which has its own overarching policies. Council's contract terms and conditions with GDVRS are outlined in a formal contract agreement.

The GDVRS is contracted to provide enhanced volunteer support to residents and non-profit organisations, including small sporting and social support groups within the Greater Dandenong community.

Provisions related to Council's paid volunteer program are detailed in the Paid Volunteer Leave Guidelines and does not fit within the scope of this policy. However, it is noted that if an employee of Council applies, and is accepted to volunteer through Council's Volunteer Program, it is deemed to be a private matter. This volunteering is unpaid and does not form part of a staff member's employment relationship with Council.

4. Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter – Compatibility Statement

All matters relevant to the Victorian Human Rights Charter have been considered in the preparation of this Policy and are consistent with the standards set by the Charter.

5. References

- The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement 2015
- Volunteering Australia - The Definition of Volunteering 2015
- Volunteering Australia - Principles of Volunteering 2015
- Volunteer Leave Guidelines – City of Greater Dandenong
- Greater Dandenong Volunteer Resource Service Contract – 2020.

6. Definition

Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain (July 2015 Volunteering Australia). Volunteering is an activity which 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
- In designated volunteer positions only.

7. Council Policy

Council commits to the recruitment, engagement, support and recognition of volunteers across a range of Council services and programs.

The following principles have been developed to articulate the role of Council in supporting, engaging and protecting Council volunteers and to support the integrity of the Council's Volunteer Program.

Council will:

- Support the involvement of volunteers in the development and delivery of a range of Council services and programs
- Provide leadership, support and advocacy to increase volunteer participation within Council
- Raise the profile of volunteerism through positive promotion and education
- Acknowledge, recognise and celebrate the contribution volunteers make to Greater Dandenong through Council's service delivery

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- Facilitate access to information, advice, and volunteering opportunities within Council
- Support the GDVRS to facilitate volunteering opportunities and training within the municipality
- Provide ongoing support, training and recognition for volunteer staff
- Protect volunteers in the workplace through its duty of care to provide a safe work environment
- Ensuring all Council volunteers are provided with appropriate volunteer insurance coverage
- Cover the costs of out of pocket expenses where appropriate
- Respond to current practice in the sector and legislative change
- Coordinate the Staff Volunteering Program
- Provide the opportunity to participate voluntarily on Council reference groups through community member roles.

Council recognises 'Formal Volunteering' which responds to specific identified community needs and is conducted in a structured environment.

7.1 Volunteering Standards

The National Standards provide a framework for the development and implementation of volunteer programs within Council. These standards address eight key areas of volunteer governance and implementation which Council supports and encourages.

Council supports and encourages volunteering by:

- **Leadership and Management**
 - Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer. Volunteering is a matter of choice, of one's free will and without coercion
 - Council will promote a positive culture towards volunteering and encourage the implementation of effective management systems to support volunteer staff internally.
- **Commitment to Volunteer Involvement**
 - Volunteering is a legitimate way for individuals to participate in supporting their community through Council services, programs and advisory committees.
 - Council's commitment to volunteering is set out within the Council Plan and Community Wellbeing Plan and supports the organisation's strategic direction.

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- Council's commitment to volunteering in the wider community is set out in the GDVRS contract terms and conditions and key performance indicators.

- **Volunteer Roles**

- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.
- Council will promote the engagement of volunteers in meaningful roles including, where appropriate, working from home roles, which contribute to Council's purpose, goals and objectives.

- **Recruitment and Selection**

- Volunteering is an activity performed solely in the not for profit sector and is unpaid.
- Council will promote volunteer recruitment and selection strategies that are planned and consistent with service and program requirements. Volunteer opportunities are available to people aged 16 years and over, and participation does not take the place of paid staff. Volunteer roles are promoted via Council's website and through the GDVRS.
- Recruitment of volunteers is coordinated by the Volunteer Program in discussion with engagement program staff. The Volunteer Engagement Officer is responsible for interviewing and selecting candidates to meet the requirement of the volunteer role.
- All volunteer applications are considered and assessed for suitability. This includes all relevant checks and references.
- The exception of this practice is participation of volunteers as community member participants in endorsed Advisory Committees. These volunteers apply under a defined Advisory Committee Terms of Reference document providing guidelines on selection criteria, expectations of members, and a Code of Conduct. Advisory committee members are formally endorsed through a Council Report.
- In accordance with its policies and legislation, Council embraces diversity and values the unique contribution of all people regardless of gender, race, ethnic origin, age, religion, sexual preference, marital status or disability. Council is committed to providing an environment free of harassment and discrimination.

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- **Support and Development**

- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Council ensures volunteers understand their roles and gain the knowledge, skills and feedback necessary to safely and effectively carry out their duties through induction, position descriptions and training programs.

- **Protecting Volunteers - Workplace Safety and Wellbeing**

- Protection for volunteers has been afforded through legislation and public policy. For example, national workplace health and safety legislation recognises the importance of protecting volunteers in the workplace, and where working from home arrangements are in place, through its duty of care to provide a safe work environment and the need to provide appropriate volunteer insurance coverage for active volunteers.
- To ensure the integrity of Council's volunteer program, volunteers have rights and responsibilities, some which are enshrined in legislation, and some of which are the moral obligations of an organisation involving volunteers.
- Council will continue to adopt and promote such practices through the Council wide Volunteer Program.
- Volunteers will participate in volunteer orientation and training programs that provide information and resources in order to safely and competently carry out volunteer roles.
- Council supports practices that ensures the health, safety and wellbeing of volunteers are protected.

- **Volunteer Recognition**

- Recognition of volunteer involvement is an important aspect of Council's Volunteer Program.
- Council will continue to ensure the value, contribution and impact of the role of volunteers is understood, recognised and promoted within the organisation.

- **Quality Management and Continuous Improvement**
 - Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.
 - Council will promote effective volunteer management strategies by implementing good practice, reviews and continuous improvement.

7.2 Termination

Council reserves the right to terminate the engagement of a volunteer, should a volunteer breach the terms and conditions of their engagement. This will be in accordance with guidance supplied by Organisational Development.

8. Related Documents

Plans - Current

Council Plan
Community Wellbeing Plan
Community Safety Plan
Disability Action Plan
Imagine 2030 Community Plan
People Seeking Asylum and Refugees Action Plan
Reconciliation Action Plan

Strategies – Current

Arts and Cultural Heritage Strategy
Positive Aging Strategy

Policies – Current

Child Safe Policy
Community Engagement Policy
Family Violence Employee Support Policy
Greater Dandenong Diversity, Access and Equity Policy
Grievance Resolution Policy
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Policy
Prevention of Bullying and Violence in the Workplace Policy
Police Check Policy
Risk Management Policy
Workplace Equal Opportunity Policy
Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy

Code of Conduct – Current

Code of Conduct – Volunteers

Acts – Current

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)

Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Resources - Current

Volunteer Position Descriptions

Volunteer Application Form

Volunteer Induction Kit

Elder Abuse Information

Volunteers Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteer Agreement Form

Volunteer Police Checks

Working with Children Check

Volunteer Insurance Coverage

Program Service Manuals

Petrol Reimbursement Form

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