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Message from the Mayor

Thank you for deciding to become a Wodonga Council volunteer.

As a large and diverse organisation, we greatly appreciate and value the expertise and experience that our volunteers bring to our organisation.

Our city of more than 39,000 people has more than 7849 volunteers. While a highly impressive number, this is probably underestimated due to the fact Wodonga residents are known for their ability to get in and lend a hand, whether it be through a formal club or interest group, or whether it is just helping out with their child’s sport around Wodonga.

There is no doubt that without this commitment from so many people, Wodonga would not be the wonderful city it is.

Part of our commitment to you is to provide best practice standards for volunteer programs and promote a collaborative, supportive and safe working environment for volunteers.

We aspire to make the experience an enjoyable and enriching one for all council volunteers.

Volunteers inject so much depth and passion across a range of council services and it is therefore essential that the council provides support, appreciation and encouragement to develop their skills.

This handbook is just one way we wish to demonstrate to you our commitment to volunteers and held ensure you have the resources and information to continue to play your vital community role.

On behalf of Wodonga Council, I thank you for your commitment through volunteering in helping to make Wodonga great.

Anna Speedie
Wodonga Mayor
Introduction

We would like to welcome and thank you for choosing to become a volunteer with the organisation. A priority for our council is to encourage our community members to become involved in a range of activities across the city with the aim of developing stronger relationships with the community.

Volunteerism is a demonstration of a community's cohesiveness and an individual's commitment to contribute to the common good.

Through the development of the Volunteer Induction Handbook, Wodonga Council aims to provide standard volunteer guidelines that outline both your rights and responsibilities as a volunteer with the council. Please note, that this is a generic guide and there may be specific handbooks, policies and procedures which relate to the area in which you are working.

Likewise, some parts of the handbook may not apply to you and this will be explained to you during your induction with your supervisor.

About Wodonga Council

Wodonga Council is a local government area in the Hume region of Victoria, Australia, located in the north-east part of the state. It covers an area of 433 square kilometres and at the 2018, had a population of more than 41,000.

We have a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is appointed by the council (seven councillors) and has the responsibility to implement the decisions of the council.

To assist the CEO in this role and to ensure effective management and the delivery of efficient services to the community, an organisational structure with three directors has been put in place.

The council has an operating budget of more than $50 million and employs more than 230 full-time equivalent staff to provide the range of services required by the community.

About volunteering in Wodonga

Approximately 20 per cent of Wodonga's population volunteer.

The 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics indicate that 20.3 per cent of our population give their time volunteering.

As stated in the council plan 7849 residents volunteer.

Wodonga Council has more than 340 active volunteers.

They work across 12 business units. Most volunteers are placed within the council's cultural services and events teams, which includes The Cube Wodonga, Bonegilla Migrant Experience and events such as the Wodonga Children’s Fair, which requires about 70 volunteers to run successfully every year.

The city’s community centres also host a large team of volunteers who give their time and tutor or as part of the centre’s committees.
Volunteers work across a wide range of areas with Wodonga Council, including the following.

- Early Years Services
- Community Centres
- Youth Services
- Senior events and services
- Environmental Services
- Parks and Gardens
- Arts and Cultural Services: Wodonga Library, The Cube Wodonga and Arts Space Wodonga
- Events
- Bonegilla Migrant Experience
- Tourism
- Emergency Management

Some of our volunteers are long term, while others are newer to the organisation. We expect there will be more opportunities to volunteer as our city grows.

Volunteering comes in many forms, with some of those who volunteer with us being on a roster with regular days and hours, while other volunteers may help us a few times a year at special events or activities. 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 the council, its services and, of course the people who gain direct benefit from your time and effort.

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

The success of all our volunteer programs is dependent on the good relationship between the 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.

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

From time to time, we will ask our volunteers whether they might like to assist with other volunteering tasks – please note, it is completely up to you about whether you wish to help and volunteer extra time to the council. Regardless of the time or regularity you can commit to us, your work is highly valued.
Our commitment to each other

We believe it is important when entering into an agreement to become a volunteer that both parties are clear on their roles and responsibilities.

The council will:

► Professionally engage with, interview and select the right person for what the council believes is the “best fit” for a volunteering role.
► Communicate clear expectations and provide written role statements and procedures for volunteer roles.
► Undertake a formal induction program for volunteers which gives information about the council, relevant programs, training, policies and procedures.
► Engage with volunteers on decisions that will substantially affect a volunteer’s role and/or performance.
► Provide appropriate support to volunteers to assist them to perform their role, including training and feedback on performance.
► Provide a volunteer supervisor/co-ordinator within each program or facility who has the skills and knowledge to develop and supervise an effective volunteer program.
► Allocate volunteer roles that best fit the talents, skills and limitations of volunteer and to provide the opportunity for a variety of experiences possible.
► Allocate tasks to volunteers that are enriching to both the council and the volunteer.
► Effectively manage, support and resource the volunteer program.
► Ensure that volunteers enhance the services of the council.
► Provide a supportive and safe volunteering environment.

Volunteers will:

► Be sure their motives and objectives match the volunteer role and the council’s expectations before accepting a role.
► Follow and be aware of the relevant policies, procedures and guidelines.
► Be a positive contributor to the organisation.
► Accept and perform the role to the best of their ability and in a prompt, professional and reliable manner.
► Be willing to take part in induction and ongoing training as required.
► Accept support, supervision and constructive feedback on performance.
► Be open and honest in all communications.
► Participate as a team member.
► Respect confidentiality.
Definitions and principles of volunteering

Volunteering Australia introduced the National Standards for Volunteer involvement in 2015. A new volunteer definition was released and adopted:

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

Formal volunteering 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.

Principles of volunteering

The National Standards state:

► Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
► Volunteer work is unpaid
► Volunteering is always a matter of choice
► Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances
► Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
► Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
► Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
► Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
► Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
► Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
► Volunteering promotes human rights and equality

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement are:

► Leadership and management
► Commitment to volunteer involvement
► Volunteer roles
► Recruitment and selection
► Support and development
► Workplace safety and wellbeing
► Volunteer recognition
► Quality management and continuous improvement
What can you expect as a volunteer

Rights of volunteers
Volunteers are a highly valued part of council operations. To reflect this, the following list has been put together about their rights when working with us.

You have the right:
► To be treated fairly and with inclusiveness. This should be reflected in our volunteer agreement, volunteer recruitment practices, policies and procedures and organisational grievance processes.
► To be given activities or tasks worthwhile to you.
► To have purpose and ground rules of the organisation explained to you.
► To be given appropriate orientation and training for all related activities.
► To be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred (as long as the council’s volunteer co-ordinator agreed prior to the expenditure occurring because it was necessary in the role).
► To be heard and to make suggestions.
► To expect the council to have appropriate insurance cover.
► To be provided with a verbal reference or statement of service, if appropriate.

Your personal details
Personal details of a volunteer will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used by the volunteer co-ordinator and your immediate supervisor. Your details will not be give to any external or internal person without your prior content or where the council is lawfully required to do so.

Volunteer and staff relations
A volunteer enhances the work of paid staff and does not replace it. Volunteers and paid staff are partners in fulfilling the mission and programs of the council, each with differing but complementary roles to play. There needs to be understanding and respect for each other’s role, responsibilities and abilities.

Each volunteer will have a supervisor/co-ordinator with the responsibility of supporting and overseeing the volunteers, and the associated processes and procedures. That person will have the appropriate skills and training to undertake the role.

The supervisor will monitor the volunteer and have regular communication with them to identify any issues or training and support needs that would assist them to fulfill the role. This also provides opportunity for a volunteer to provide feedback and to raise issues. The grievance process is covered later in the handbook to outline the approach if differences occur.
Recruitment

Application, interview and selection

Volunteers may offer to volunteer with the council in a number of ways - some may apply for a particular venue/interest area and others may express a general desire to volunteer without being sure of which program area may suit.

Others may apply for volunteering opportunities to gain experience to assist their future employment options. Each volunteer will have different expectations of their role and it is important this is understood so that the role meets the needs of both the volunteer and the council.

Volunteering opportunities will be advertised in ways that are accessible to all sections of the community, including the council website (wodonga.vic.gov.au). The website currently provides links to the volunteer handbook and the online application form.

The application form will collect contact information, relevant personal details and may request additional information for the position, for example, driver’s licence, health condition, etc. It also includes a volunteer agreement statement.

All volunteer application forms and personal details will be held centrally by the volunteer co-ordinator and your immediate supervisor and stored in a safe and secure way. Your details will otherwise be kept strictly confidential.

Volunteers will be selected in a non-discriminatory manner, taking into account the persons’ ability and suitability to perform the duties of the volunteer role, as well as any site or program specific requirements.

Prior to any appointment volunteers will have an informal interview with the volunteer supervisor or co-ordinator of the program they may volunteer in, to explain the volunteer role and to assess whether the role is suitable for the applicant.

Background check/screening

The council does a number of background checks when it receives the application form. This will include a Working With Children's Check and police check. It should be noted that this process can take up to three weeks, which is beyond the council’s control as it is reliant on government departments to carry these out. Further details about these are in this handbook.

Placement

In determining a suitable placement for volunteers, the council will look at the skills, experience and interests of the volunteer as well as the requirements of the council and of the role(s).

From time to time volunteer programs are at capacity and are unable to accept new applicants. Applicants will be advised at the time of receipt of their expression of interest if a program is at capacity.
Induction

An induction and orientation process will be undertaken to prepare volunteers for the role and to help them to quickly become effective members of the team. The induction may be one on one or in a group. The formal induction may include some things as dress expectations, behaviour and special site/program requirements.

You will be familiarised with the area in which you will be volunteering and may meet some of your fellow volunteers and council employees. You are encouraged to ask questions about your role and what you will be doing.

The council staff member leading the orientation will work with you to fill out an induction checklist, Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) checklist, and an overview of the handbook and relevant council policies and requirements. Volunteers will be required to comply with this information and any other relevant policies and procedures to assist them in meeting their responsibilities for legal, ethical and appropriate conduct.

Volunteers will be issued with a badge/identification clearly stating “Volunteer” and this should be worn at all times while volunteering for the council. This serves to clearly identify a volunteer and their role with the council. When a volunteer ceases their role with council the badge is to be returned to the supervisor/co-ordinator.

Role description

Volunteers will also be given a role description, which clearly defines the tasks which the volunteer will be doing. This is so that everyone understands their respective responsibilities. This will include the volunteer location, designated supervisor/co-ordinator, duties, any specific skills and personal traits required and the general tasks to be undertaken.

Trial period

Volunteers with Wodonga Council will have a trial period. The length of this trial period will be established by your supervisor during the orientation. Following this, a discussion will be held in which both parties can talk about the role, its objectives and whether the council and the volunteer feel it is a satisfactory arrangement. If not, there may be a reassignment, referral to another organisation or it may be most appropriate to cease the placement.
Occupational health and safety

While undertaking activities on behalf of the council, volunteers have responsibilities for health and safety. In particular through their actions or omissions, volunteers are not to place themselves or other persons at risk while undertaking council-related activities.

Depending upon the nature of the activity, the responsibilities for volunteers may include the following:

► Being aware of and following the approved risk management procedures for the activity
► Following the directions of the person in charge of the activity
► Using plant or equipment in accordance with the correct procedures
► Bringing to the attention of the appropriate person any matter which could affect the safe undertaking of the activity
► Reporting to the appropriate person as soon as practical any incidents or near misses which relate to health and safety of the volunteer activity.

Police check and Working with Children Check

Information distributed to potential volunteers must include the requirement for individuals to undertake National Police Records Check before they commence volunteer work.

An individual should not commence volunteer work without a National Police Records Check being received by the council.

In circumstances where the council requires the volunteer to commence without delay, the volunteer will be required to complete a Statutory Declaration that declares all or any police records for the individual.

It is a legal requirement that anyone 18 years and above must undergo a police check before they commence working as a volunteer.

Ongoing volunteers will require police checks every three years. The council will fund the costs of all National Police Records Check for all volunteers and the National Police Certificate remains the property of the council.

Wodonga Council volunteers over the age of 18 years are required to hold a current volunteer Working with Children Check before volunteering begins. A Working with Children Check can be applied for online and is free to volunteers. On occasions, there are exemptions to this when there is no chance that volunteers will be in contact with children. This will be fully explained to the volunteer during the recruitment phase.

Training

The council has the responsibility to ensure volunteers are provided with appropriate training which, depending on the activity, may include the following:

► OH&S induction training, site specific
► Hazard identification
► Use of communication equipment (where required)
► On the job and/or formal training specific to the activity
► On the job training in specific risk management procedures as required
► Communication skills
► Basic administration
► Other site-specific skills
Confidentiality
Volunteers shall not use confidential information gained through their activities as a volunteer for the purpose of securing a private benefit for themselves or for any other person. Volunteers shall not disclose any confidential information for any reason without the authority to do so. Volunteers shall not disclose private or personal information as defined in the Privacy Act 2000.

Acceptance of gifts/benefits
Volunteers may accept small gifts from users of their service as appreciation of a job well done, for example, chocolates and flowers. Gifts may not be accepted when they are more substantial in nature or where there is the implication that the person may receive a favour in return.

Conflict of interest
Volunteers may not use their position to gain profit or advantage. They will be aware of circumstances where a possible conflict of interest may arise and declare it if necessary. An example of a conflict of interest might be where a volunteer purchases items on the council’s behalf from a business which is owned by the volunteer’s family. If you are unsure, please talk to the volunteer co-ordinator to gain clarity around this.

Use of resources
- Volunteers are to use council equipment during a volunteer agreement, not their own.
- Volunteers shall use council resources effectively and economically.
- Volunteers must not improperly use council resources.
- Volunteers shall not use council property for their own purposes.

Out-of-pocket expenses
From time to time, volunteers may need to use their own money to purchase materials or pay fees. Volunteers must have prior approval from their co-ordinator before they use their own money. Out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed if a claim is submitted with proof of payment attached, for example, a tax invoice. The volunteer co-ordinator must sign the claim form and supply a general ledger number for the expense.
Equitable treatment of people and situations

► Volunteers shall treat members of the public, council staff and councillors fairly and equitably and with respect, courtesy, compassion and sensitivity.
► Volunteers shall not act contrary to any law in their voluntary capacity.
► Volunteers shall not act unreasonably, unjustly, oppressively or in a discriminatory manner.
► Volunteers shall refrain from any form of conduct, in the performance of their duties, which may cause any reasonable person unwarranted offence or embarrassment or give rise to the reasonable suspicion or appearance of improper conduct.

Alcohol, smoking and other drugs

Volunteers are not permitted to drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal drugs while they are performing volunteer tasks on behalf of the council, or report for duty when their job performance is likely to be affected by alcohol or illegal drugs. Smoking is allowed during allocated break times and must be done in a designated smoking area. It is illegal to litter your butts and to smoke in an enclosed area. Smoking in the eye of the public in a council provided uniform is prohibited.

Reporting of corrupt conduct

The council is committed to an ethical workplace and requires volunteers to report corrupt conduct, maladministration or serious and substantial waste of public money.

Media protocol

Volunteers are not permitted to make any comment to the media on behalf of the council. Any queries for a statement to the media must be referred to the co-ordinator of the work activity.

The council often requires photographs/video footage to be taken of local residents, community members and volunteers using council services or participating in council events for use in publications, on council’s website, social media tools and/or by the media and affiliate organisations. The council will obtain volunteer permission before proceeding with such photographs.

Volunteers must also take care when using social media channels that their representations of the council are fair and just. Any questions relating to this should be directed to the supervisor.

Privacy and personal information protection act

The council will obtain personal information from volunteers including names, addresses, telephone numbers, criminal history information and other contact details. Personal information obtained by the council is governed by the Privacy Act 2000. This legislation provides direction for the collection, protection, storage, disposal, access and use of personal information by the council. The council will take all reasonable care to protect personal information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. To ensure that personal information held by the council is current, volunteers should notify the council if any of their details change.
Accidents and incidents

It is essential that volunteers are registered as volunteers with the council to be covered by the *Wrongs Acts 1958* (as amended). This legislation provides that:

- A volunteer is not liable in any civil proceeding for anything done, or not done, in good faith by him or her in providing a service in relation to community work organised by a community organisation.
- Any liability resulting from an act or omission that would but for sub-section (1) attach to the volunteer attaches instead to the community organisation.
- This means that a volunteer is protected from suit if they are conducting community work organised by a community organisation, if they act in good faith. However, volunteers are not protected if a volunteer knew or ought reasonably to have known that he/she:
  - Was acting outside the scope of the community work organised by the organisation;
  - Was acting contrary to any instructions given by the community organisation relating to the provision of the service;
  - Whose ability to provide the service was significantly impaired by alcohol or drugs; or,
  - Was acting in a deliberate or wilful manner that eventuated in deliberate and wilful damage to property.

Defamation and transport accident proceedings are not covered by this act.

All accidents and incidents that may give rise to a claim against the council must be reported to the council’s Risk and Workplace Safety Officer as quickly as practicable.

Injury to volunteers

Cover is provided for registered volunteers who are seriously injured/disabled while actively engaged in authorised volunteer work. If the volunteer holds a salaried position, limited cover is provided for loss of wages due to any time off work resulting from injury sustained while acting in their volunteer capacity. It is strongly recommended that all volunteers maintain membership of an ambulance scheme covering cost of ambulance transportation.

Any accidents or near misses are to be reported to the council’s Risk and Workplace Safety Officer as soon as practicable.
Admission of liability

Under no circumstances should a volunteer admit liability on behalf of the council where any personal injury or property damage to third parties occurs. Non-admission of liability is a condition of the council’s insurance policies and must be observed. Admission, or implied admission, limits the council’s ability to defend any claim.

Volunteer’s personal property

Volunteer’s personal items are not covered by council insurance while undertaking volunteer activities. Volunteers are encouraged not to bring or wear items of any significant value (including jewellery). All attempts should be taken to secure personal items against theft or damage.

Use of council equipment

Volunteers may be provided with council’s equipment to assist in performing various activities. If a licence or qualification is required to operate plant or equipment, a volunteer must provide evidence of such qualification or licence. All care should be taken to ensure that equipment is used correctly and within the guidelines or instructions provide by supervisors.

Damage to council equipment by volunteers while working under the care and control of the council is covered by council’s property insurance. The council’s policy does not cover any wilful or deliberate damage to council property.

If equipment is damaged, the supervisor must be notified immediately and an incident report completed and returned to the council’s risk management officer.

Use of the council’s motor vehicles

Volunteers may be requested to use a council motor vehicle during the course of performing various activities. The council’s volunteer co-ordinator must sight a person’s driving licence before allowing them to drive the vehicle.

The council’s motor vehicle insurance will cover damage to a council vehicle by a volunteer while working on council authorised business. The council’s policy does not cover any wilful or deliberate damage to council property.

If a motor vehicle is damaged, the council’s volunteer co-ordinator must be notified immediately and an incident report completed and forwarded to the council’s Plant, Fleet and Building Maintenance Officer within 48 hours.

The vehicle log book must be completed correctly each time the vehicle is used.

A full orientation of the vehicle will be provided before using a council vehicle.

Fines and infringements

Any court imposed fine or infringements received as a result of the actions or omissions of a volunteer will be the responsibility of the volunteer. They are wholly responsible for payment of such fines and infringements.

They include but are not limited to:

- Parking
- Speeding
- Littering
- Red light camera
Recognition of volunteers

The council is committed to recognising the efforts of all volunteers on an informal and formal basis, including but not limited to the following:

► Certificate of appreciation
► Birthday cards
► Activities, events (Volunteers Fair, morning teas and lunches)
► Letter of service and/or verbal reference on request to your direct co-ordinator

It is the responsibility of the individual volunteer co-ordinator or business unit manager to organise volunteer recognition activities.

Grievance procedure

If a volunteer has a grievance about any aspect of their tasks, other volunteers or council staff, the following process should be followed:

Step 1 The volunteer is encouraged to approach the person directly related to the issue if they feel comfortable doing so.

Step 2 The volunteer can approach the co-ordinator or the committee president in the area they are working within for a discussion and advice on how to best resolve the issue. This discussion should be treated as strictly confidential.

Step 3 If Step 2 does not help resolve the problem, then the issue should be notified to the business unit manager in writing.

Step 4 If the matter remains unresolved, the volunteer may request the matter be referred to the relevant Director or other authorised officer for discussion. A further meeting between all parties should be held as soon as practicable.

Step 5 If the matter remains unresolved the Chief Executive Officer shall provide the volunteers with a written response. The response shall include the reasons for not implementing any proposed remedy.
Cessation of role

A volunteer’s service with the council can be discontinued if:
► The council receives notice from the volunteer of their decision to cease the role;
► The council considers the volunteer has acted contrary to this handbook, and relevant program guidelines or a way in which the council is brought into disrepute;
► The council determines that the volunteer role is no longer required; or,
► The council determines that the volunteer does not have the capacity to undertake the role.

The volunteer and supervisor/co-ordinator will discuss a mutual finish date and try to allow for volunteer replacement if needed. When a volunteer leaves they need to return any council property in their possession to their supervisor/co-ordinator.

In instances of misconduct or breaches to the volunteer responsibilities, the council's volunteer co-ordinator has the right to dismiss the volunteer. This includes:
► Theft of property or funds.
► Intoxication through alcohol or other substances whilst or during volunteering.
► Verbal or physical harassment of any other volunteers, clients or staff.
► Disclosure of confidential information regarding the council and/or clients.
► Breaching any other volunteer responsibilities.
► Malicious damage to council or community property.
► Not working in a safe manner.
► Non-compliance with rights and responsibilities.