

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre

Adopted: 20 July 2017

Background & Context

Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre is committed to providing excellent service to its customers and tourism operators throughout all areas of Council's activities and with a variety of engagement mechanisms. The existing and future contribution made by volunteers in this regard is highly valued by Council, as it is through the input of volunteers that Council is able to offer extended assistance in a variety of the services which it offers.

In accordance with the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2012 and supporting regulations, Council must provide a safe environment for its employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors who are all deemed as workers under this Act. It is therefore imperative that the following policy is adhered to by all of Council's volunteers.

Volunteers will only undertake duties that assist Council to enhance the quality of lifestyle and tourism within Balonne Shire Local Government Area, the role of a volunteer is not intended to be a substitute for the functions of qualified, nor employed staff.

In addition it is our mission to maximize the level of enjoyment experienced by each visitor so they choose to return and/or share their great experiences of our Shire with friends, family and fellow travellers.

Purpose & Scope

Council acknowledges that volunteers contribute to the political, social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the Balonne Shire community by:

- Strengthening community cohesion, social wellbeing, and trust.
- Expanding the knowledge of the tourist travellers and giving excellent customer service and verbal communication.
- Expanding the ability of the community to respond to the needs of its citizens and provide a range of services and activities.
- Engaging the community in protecting local resources, improving the physical environment, support for environmental issues and extending the range of Council services to the community.
- Encouraging understanding of, and acceptance of, culture, diversity and difference.

This policy includes clear procedures and processes to support volunteering. This policy applies to all volunteers involved in the Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre organised activities, including Council staff, who volunteer to be involved in activities external to their normal workplace duties. The primary purpose of the Balonne Shire Council Volunteering Policy is to define clear guidelines for participation by volunteers to allow individuals to have a clear understanding of the nature and commitment of their involvement in Council activities.

Definitions

Volunteering is an activity which is:

- of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- undertaken of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- for no financial payment; and
- in a position not designated as paid.

A Designated Staff Member will be responsible for supervising a volunteer. The Designated Staff Member can be a Manager, Supervisor of a section or such other member of staff so appointed to supervise volunteers. This role will form part of the Designated Staff Member's normal duties. The Designated Staff Members responsibilities may include to:

- Develop a role description or list of duties for the volunteer;

- Ensure a set of standard operating procedures for the volunteer's work;
- Development and review of operating guidelines;
- Conduct the induction of the volunteer;
- Ensure all induction requirements are complete;
- Conduct the probationary review of the volunteer;
- Provide leadership and support to the volunteer;
- Organise and allocate tasks and coordinate operational work where required;
- Ensure appropriate performance by the volunteer;
- Review the volunteer's performance annually during the time they volunteer with Balonne Shire Council;
- Engender an environment of inclusion of the volunteer in processes and decision making of the work area;
- Ensure appropriate access to training for the volunteer.

The Designated Staff Member will be provided with appropriate guidance to fulfil their responsibilities to the volunteer.

Policy Provisions

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCESS

a) Role statement for a volunteer position

The relevant supervisor (or designated staff member as supervisor) will develop a role statement that clearly outlines the volunteer role and the expectations of Council. The role statement confirms the understanding that volunteers are engaged for specific tasks. It ensures that all volunteers are clear about what is expected of them in their role. If the role is very short term, like a tree-planting day for example, the tasks will be listed in the registration form. Longer-term placements and roles that are more complex require a more extensive role statement.

b) Selection and Appointment

People expressing an interest in a volunteer role with Council will complete a registration form and be given a role statement for the role they are interested in. The role details may be listed on the registration form or within a standalone volunteer role statement. This will depend on the duration and complexity of the role. Prospective volunteers will be required to meet with the relevant supervisor for the position or such other staff member designated to be responsible for volunteers in a department of Council and depending on the duration and complexity of the volunteer engagement, may be required to attend an interview.

At the time of the interview, volunteers will be given information about the role and any associated conditions required for the placement. Applicants who do not meet the selection criteria may not be accepted for the role and will be advised of the outcome. Once selected the supervisor will ensure that the all documents are placed in a secure file and recorded in their personnel file and as appropriate also inform Workplace Relations.

c) Obligations of Volunteers

Volunteers are expected to maintain the same standards of confidentiality, courtesy, organisational discipline and compliance with Code of Conduct and other relevant policies as are required of paid employees. Volunteers are to be issued with a copy of Council's Code of Conduct.

Engagement and service as a volunteer with Council will not be construed as providing any access to, or right for consideration for, future paid employment with Council.

d) Volunteers assisting in the provision of Council services have the right:

- To work in a healthy and safe environment,
- To be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and Anti-discrimination legislation,
- To be adequately covered by insurance and effective workplace health and safety procedures,
- To be given accurate and truthful information about Balonne Shire Council related only to their volunteering role,
- To be reimbursed for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses as agreed,
- To be given a copy of Balonne Shire Council's Volunteer Policy and any other relevant policies and procedures,
- Not to fill a position previously or intended to be held by a paid worker,
- Not to do the work of paid employees during industrial disputes,
- To have a role statement and agreed working hours,
- To have access to a grievance procedure,
- To be provided with an induction to Balonne Shire Council and the specific service/program for which the volunteer is working,

- To have personal and confidential information dealt with in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998,
- To be provided with sufficient training to perform their role,
- Be provided with sufficient resources and support to undertake the tasks for which they have volunteered.

e) Responsibility

The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre and the use of volunteers. Departments may develop additional procedures which reflect the types of programs and volunteers required for their specific areas of activity and to give effect to this policy.

f) Procedure

Once a volunteer has been offered a placement an induction will be undertaken to ensure the volunteer is provided with all the information necessary to begin meaningful participation with Council.

The induction will cover the following broad areas:

- Completion of relevant paperwork
- Introduction to Council
- Information about the group/work area
- Code of Conduct and other relevant policies
- Training
- Work Health and Safety legislation and application
- Work Site Introduction and availability of resources

The Visitor Information Centre will maintain a register of all volunteers, and the original of this form is to be registered in their personnel file.

g) Application and Approval

Volunteers must complete a Volunteer Application Form and a Volunteer Agreement Form (copies attached). Before volunteers can start work, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (or a Director) must approve their appointment. The Designated Staff Member in charge will provide the volunteer with a copy of this policy and a copy of Council's Code of Conduct.

h) Recruitment

Balonne Shire Council does not regularly conduct recruitment programs for volunteers. Volunteers are welcome to apply to an approved Council organised activity in line with this policy.

i) Working with Children and Police Checks

Council will require the volunteer to undergo the working with children check or relevant police checks for certain activities as appropriate.

j) Procedure and Outline of Duties

Volunteers are to be provided with the activity-specific procedures including risk assessment, hazard identification and control measures for the duties being undertaken.

k) Workplace Accident Cover

Volunteers are covered by relevant insurances including Personal Accident Insurance. Under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2012, volunteers are considered workers for the purposes of the Act and are to be afforded all appropriate considerations as employed staff in their role with Council.

l) Confidentiality

Volunteers must ensure that any information accessed through their volunteering duties remains confidential. Any breach of this confidentiality requirement may result in termination of the volunteer's services for breaching the Local Government Act's confidentiality obligations.

m) Probation/Trial Period

In some circumstances Volunteers may be subject to a probationary period. Volunteers will be advised at their induction of the length of their probation/trial period. In most cases a trial would continue for a period of 3 months. Normally a volunteer will have their performance reviewed after one month and then at the completion of the 3 month period. If at the end of this time either party does not feel that the arrangement is working, the voluntary opportunity may be terminated.

Volunteers should expect to have their performance reviewed on a regular basis throughout the duration of their participation with Council as determined by their Designated Staff Member.

n) Attendance

Volunteers are required to advise their supervisor or manager if they are unable to attend work, where scheduled. Council asks all volunteers to give as much notice as possible to their Designated Staff if they are knowingly going to be absent from work.

o) Work Health and Safety Training

Before starting work volunteers must participate in a program which familiarises them with workplace health and safety requirements. This program includes consultation with the supervisors as to the hazards at the site and controls developed. Volunteers must take reasonable care for the health and safety of people at work. Volunteers are also required to cooperate with the supervisor in the interest of health, safety and welfare and report any unsafe acts or unsafe conditions associated with their work.

Volunteers will be provided with a brief induction to the organisation by the organising staff member. Further training will be provided as required.

Volunteers who will be working on Council land, which is deemed to be a Construction Site, must have attended a WorkCover Accredited General Construction Induction work in QLD Course and have with them at all times their General Construction Induction Card (white card).

p) Media Protocols

Council policy states that only authorised personnel will provide comment to the media. All media inquiries must be directed to the Communications Officer or Chief Executive Officer. If this person is not available, an appropriate person will be appointed as media liaison at the time of the event. Under no circumstances should the volunteer offer to answer any questions or comment in anyway.

q) Cessation of service

Volunteers are an invaluable resource to Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre. Balonne Shire Council asks all volunteers to give as much notice as possible to their Designated Staff Member before leaving Council. Cessation can occur by either party giving one week's notice or by mutual agreement by both parties. All volunteers are to return any materials, files (electronic or otherwise) etc belonging to the Council prior to leaving.

Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre is committed to constantly improving volunteer opportunities and all feedback regarding the volunteer's experience at Council would be appreciated. If the volunteer is leaving due to any sort of problem or dissatisfaction with Council it would be beneficial if they notified the Designated Staff Member as to their reasons. Confidentiality will be respected in all matters.

r) Statement of Volunteer Service

A Statement of Voluntary Service will be available at any time after the completion of 3 months voluntary service with Balonne Shire Council. It will contain the following information – Commencement date, length of voluntary service and key duties and responsibilities. The Statement of Service will be signed on behalf of the Designated Staff Member. Balonne Shire Council does not provide written references. Individual work sections may wish to provide their own informal recognition to their volunteers where it is considered that such voluntary service merits such recognition.

Objectives

- Recognise and value the substantial and ongoing contribution made by volunteers and voluntary groups to the quality of life of the community and tourists of the Balonne Shire.
- Work in partnership with community groups, the business sector and relevant stakeholders to develop volunteering opportunities, promote volunteering, raise the profile of Volunteerism and facilitate access to information about volunteering opportunities.

Related Documentation

APPENDIX A

Balonne Shire Council – Volunteer Checklist

Balonne Shire Council – Volunteer Application Form

Balonne Shire Council – Volunteer Agreement Form

Balonne Shire Council – Volunteer Role Statement Template

Balonne Shire Council – Volunteer Induction Declaration

Approval & Review

Balonne Shire Visitor Information Centre will review this policy annually or as required.

Approval Date:

20 July 2017