

Volunteer Handbook



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Acknowledgement of Country

The Horsham Rural City Council acknowledges the five traditional owner groups of this land: the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk people.

We recognise the important and ongoing place that all Indigenous people hold in our Community.

We pay our respects to the elders, both past and present and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect for the benefit of the broader community and future generations.

Welcome

Thank you for volunteering with Horsham Rural City Council

At Horsham Rural City Council, our volunteers play a vital role in various community services, including Wimmera Libraries, The Horsham Town Hall, The Horsham Regional Art Gallery, and the Multiple Birth Support Program.

Volunteers are an important part of our organisation, and it is our obligation to ensure you have an enjoyable and safe volunteering experience.

This handbook provides you with the information you need to have a good overview of your volunteer role.

Introduction

Please take the time to read this handbook designed to respond to your questions and explain your roles and responsibilities. As a volunteer you will also receive an induction and any applicable training relevant to your area of volunteering.

Council welcomes feedback on the content as part of continuous improvement of the information Council provides to volunteers.

CONTACT US

E: council@hrcc.vic.gov.au

Civic Centre, 18 Roberts Avenue
PO Box 511

HORSHAM VIC 3402

Ph: 03 5382 9777

F: 03 5382 1111

TTY: 133677 ask for 03 5382 9777



National Standards for volunteer involvement

Volunteering Australia has developed National Standards for volunteer involvement. These standards represent what Volunteering Australia regards as 'best practice' in the management of volunteers.

The standards cover the following aspects of volunteer involvement:

1. Leadership & management
2. Commitment to volunteer involvement
3. Volunteer roles
4. Recruitment and selection
5. Support and development
6. Workplace safety and wellbeing
7. Volunteer recognition
8. Quality management and continuous improvement

The National Standards incorporate the following principles:

- Volunteer involvement should be a considered and planned part of an organisation's strategic development, aligning with the organisation's strategic aims and incorporated into its evaluation framework.
- Effective volunteer involvement requires organisational leadership, and a culture and structure that supports and values the role of volunteers.
- Volunteers have rights, which include the right to work in a safe and supportive environment with appropriate infrastructure and effective management practices.
- Volunteers have responsibilities, including acting responsibly, being accountable for their actions to the organisation and respecting the organisation's values and practices.

Being a volunteer

Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as 'time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain'.

Volunteers are an important resource, strengthening community connections to Council, building inclusive and connected communities. Volunteering expands an individual's skills, experience and social networks.

Volunteers benefit by increasing their sense of belonging, meeting new people and gaining new skills, keeping the mind active, and increasing their sense of worth.

Volunteer responsibilities

- Meet HRCC registration and induction requirements as may be applicable.
- Undertake Police and Working with Children's Checks as required.
- Practice privacy and confidentiality.
- Be accountable for your actions.
- Be committed to your role as a volunteer.
- Ask for support when required.
- Value and support other team members.
- Treat other volunteers, council staff, Councillors, contractors, clients and members of the community with respect and dignity.
- Perform your volunteering role with honesty and integrity.
- Respect and abide by the Volunteer handbook and other relevant policies, procedures and work instructions.
- Ensure all your personal information provided to Council is true and accurate.
- Notify of any health and safety issues or potentially hazardous situations that may pose a risk to you or others and report any accidents or incidents (including near misses) relating to paid staff, volunteers, clients or the workplace.
- Act in a professional manner at all times when representing Council in your volunteer role.
- Safely use any property or equipment given to you in your role and only for the purpose of the role.
- Give adequate notice if you are unable to attend at agreed times and dates.

Council values its volunteers and will provide you with:

- An induction and any training necessary for your role/s.
- Safe work practices and environment.
- Respect for your privacy, including keeping your private information confidential.
- A Council liaison officer, so that you have the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback (including grievances).
- Information relating to policy, procedure or legislation that may affect your role.
- Insurance as stated within Council's Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance Policy.

Vision, Values and Behaviours

Council’s vision communicates our values and commitment to achieving its goals. Our values serve as guiding principles, setting the standard for the way Council staff should act and conduct their work. This handbook identifies that volunteers have the same level of responsibility as paid staff with regard to their behaviour and activities while carrying out their duties as a volunteer.

Our Organisational VISION

A progressive and innovative organisation,
delivering high quality and sustainable services

Our Organisational VALUES



WE VALUE	FLEXIBILITY We are adaptable to changing circumstances	ACCOUNTABILITY We are responsible for our behaviour and actions	INTEGRITY We are ethical, transparent and honest in our conduct	RESPECT We value diversity and appreciate others and will not tolerate sexual or other forms of harassment
	MY BEHAVIOUR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am willing to embrace new ideas and ways of doing things• I am committed to finding a way to make it happen• I seek opportunities for ongoing learning and continuous improvement• I am willing to compromise for a better outcome	MY BEHAVIOUR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I lead by example• I take ownership of my actions and decisions• I perform my role with pride• I deliver what I promise	MY BEHAVIOUR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I do the right thing• I always bring my best self to work• I communicate openly and directly• I act in the best interests of the community	MY BEHAVIOUR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I treat others the way I expect to be treated• I care for the people I work with• I am inclusive and treat everyone equally• I consider other views to gain a shared understanding

Induction

All Council volunteers are required to complete an induction. Induction will include information about:

- Health & safety
- Grievance
- Privacy & Confidentiality
- Conflict of interest, gifts benefits & hospitality
- Fraud & corruption
- Any additional training relevant to your role
- Child Safe Standards
- Media & Social media
- Insurance
- Equal opportunity, Anti-discrimination, bullying & harassment

Details of your induction and the associated arrangements will be provided to you by the liaison officer near the time of your commencement.

Training

Volunteers will need to attend an induction to ensure that you are:

- Familiar with the environment in which you will volunteer.
- Understand the responsibilities and duties of your role.
- Have the information you need to safely volunteer at HRCC.

There may be some program specific training. For some volunteers certain training will be mandatory. Volunteers may also choose to participate in optional training sessions that are offered.

Risk Management

Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Council is committed to providing an environment which is safe and without risk to health and safety and free from all forms of inappropriate behaviour.

Council's responsibility and commitment to health, safety and wellbeing is guided by the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010* and *Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

As a volunteer you will:

- Be aware of your own health and safety and also that of other people, including other volunteers.
- Follow policy, procedure, or instructions as they relate to providing a safe workplace for volunteers, council staff, Councillors, contractors and members of the public.
- Report incidents, accidents or near misses promptly.
- Follow health and safety instructions.

Child Safe Standards

Horsham Rural City Council is committed to providing and promoting child safe environments. Council has zero tolerance for Child Abuse and aims to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and secure and have fun. This includes the physical, emotional, cultural, and social wellbeing of all children.

Council takes all allegations of child abuse seriously and is committed to:

- Providing processes for reporting allegations of child abuse.
- Ensuring an efficient and thorough investigation and/or referral where required.
- Maintaining adequate record keeping and reports of child abuse.
- Ensuring our Councillors, staff, volunteers and any individual performing employment related duties on behalf of Horsham Rural City Council know what to do and who to tell if they suspect or observe child abuse.
- Reporting allegations of child abuse to the appropriate authorities.

For further information refer to HRCC Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Reporting a Child Safety Concern Procedure.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest principles are about transparency. A failure to provide the right level of transparency or not take appropriate action may be perceived as an indicator of misconduct.

We disclose conflicts of interest as a way of demonstrating we are not using our public duties to further our own private interests (or the interests of family, friends or associates)

Conflicts of Interest must be declared. A conflict of interest occurs when a volunteer's duties conflict with their private or personal interests.

More information will be provided at induction and can be found by reading HRCC Conflict of Interest Procedure located on Council's website.

Gifts, Benefits & Hospitality

Giving or receiving gifts may give the impression of favouritism and could raise expectations of the level of support you can provide in your volunteer role. As such, Council asks that volunteers don't give or receive gifts.

Further information can be found in the Gifts Benefits and Hospitality Policy accessible on Council's Website

Fraud & Corruption

HRCC does not tolerate fraud or improper conduct by its volunteers, officers, Councillors, or contractors nor the taking of reprisal against those who come forward to disclose such conduct.

Council is committed to providing an organisational culture supported by appropriate policies and procedures to prevent fraud and corruption. Where fraudulent or corrupt conduct has been observed or suspected we have an obligation to report matters in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Policy & Framework and Public Interest Disclosure Procedure. Further information can be found on Council's website.

Privacy & Confidentiality

Council commits to treating information collected from (and about) volunteers in accordance with the Principles of the *Privacy & Data Protection Act 2014*. Your personal information will not be disclosed to any other party unless Council is required to do so by law.

It is expected that confidential information will not be disclosed or released in a manner that violates the privacy rights of any individuals or Council.

Volunteers are to:

- Keep information that could identify someone private.
- Ensure confidential information is not given to anyone outside of your volunteering group or Council.
- Be sensitive to what level of information is shared to achieve a task.
- Keep information learned during your volunteering role confidential, even if you are no longer volunteering.

Fire Danger Days

On days with the highest fire danger risk Council may cancel or postpone events/services/programs to maximise employee, volunteer and community safety while ensuring appropriate emergency responses can be enacted as required. Your Council officer liaison will advise you.

Evacuation & Emergency Procedures

If relevant to your role, volunteers will be provided with information about evacuation and emergency exit procedures at induction. If you are unclear as to your required response or duties, please ask for clarification. Volunteers must adhere to the instructions of the designated emergency warden during an emergency situation.

Media & Social media

Council has a Social Media Policy that is relevant to all Council volunteers. Council volunteers do not have permission to answer questions or make any comments about Council on any social media sites.

In all circumstances media inquiries are to be directed to Council. If you are approached by the media you should advise that you are not authorised to make comments on behalf of HRCC and all media enquiries should be referred to Council's Senior Media & Communications Officer or delegated officer, for coordination of a response including requests to take part in a photograph.

Grievances

HRCC will treat all complaints confidentially, seriously and empathetically. Volunteers will not be penalised, disadvantaged or victimised if raising concerns or complaints.

If issues can be resolved initially between parties involved, they will not be escalated. If this is not the case the Council liaison Officer relevant to the volunteer group will attempt to resolve the conflict. If this is not possible the issue or complaint will be escalated to the next level of hierarchy at HRCC, including Managers, Directors and the CEO.

While volunteering

Breaks from duty

Breaks depend on the context of your role and you will be treated with the same courtesy and respect as paid staff. If this is relevant to your volunteering role more information will be provided in your induction.

Smoking

The Horsham Rural City Council has a duty under the *Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all officers, Councillors, volunteers and contractors in an attempt to prevent illness or injury.

All indoor areas are smoke-free and smoking/vaping is not allowed anywhere on the premises.

Smoking and vaping is also prohibited in all council vehicles and plant. Smokers must smoke outside (clear of any air inlet ducts), at least 10 metres from any entrance of any Council building and make sure to dispose of cigarette butts appropriately. Smokers who experience difficulties with the Smoking in the Workplace Policy are advised to consult their Council liaison Officer and discuss individual concerns.

Employee Assistance Program

HRCC subscribes to an assistance program that offers confidential counselling and support. Volunteers are able to access this service. Please note this can be about any life issue, not just in relation to your volunteering role. Contact your liaison Officer for details.

Insurance

Council's insurance policy covers volunteers while they are carrying out authorised volunteering duties and with Council awareness that the duties are being performed. As a volunteer you will be expected to:

- Comply with relevant legislation
- Undertake necessary training
- Follow instruction
- Adhere to guidelines
- Abide by procedures
- Only act in the scope of your role
- Take care to prevent injury or damage to property

Council's personal accident insurance policy will only cover:

- Non-Medicare expenses
- Income loss benefit
- Pay-out in the unfortunate event of severe accident or disablement

A volunteer is unlikely to receive insurance cover if they are:

- Acting out of scope of their role
- Under the influence of alcohol or non-prescription drugs
- Negligent
- Breaking significantly from protocol or procedure



Inappropriate Conduct or performance

Breaches of any Council policies or legislative requirements and other inappropriate conduct may lead to dismissal from the volunteer role. This may include but is not limited to:

- Breach of confidentiality & privacy
- Harassment, discrimination, bullying, victimisation
- Use of alcohol or illegal drugs while undertaking volunteer duties
- Committing criminal offence while undertaking volunteer duties
- Disruptive behaviour
- Workplace violence
- Theft or inappropriate use of HRCC property

Leaving your volunteer role

It is understood that sometimes due to changing circumstances and other opportunities volunteers may need to cease their volunteer role.

If this is the case:

- Give as much notice as possible.
- Provide the Council liaison Officer with an update on the progress of any work.
- Return any Council assets that you may have in your possession such as identification/name badge or equipment.

Equal opportunity & Anti-Discrimination

HRCC volunteers are included in Council's Equal Opportunity Policy (Discrimination & Harassment). This Policy also complements Council's Vision and Values. All volunteers have the right to a workplace free of discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence.

Council encourages and recognises diversity in the workplace and respects and values differences based on gender, ethnicity, colour, age, race, religion, disability, nationality and sexual orientation.

Volunteers also have a responsibility to treat all volunteers, Council staff and the community equally and in a non-discriminatory manner. Any form of bullying or harassment will not be tolerated.

Recognition and Thank you

At various intervals throughout the year HRCC will take time to thank you for volunteering and for supporting Council and the community. There will be different opportunities to come together and share food or a social activity. However, we want you to know that we are grateful every day and not just on those occasions. We appreciate the great service of our volunteers in helping the community that we are all a part of, and that HRCC serves. We sincerely thank you.



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