



CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 15

VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

June 2016

1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- encourage and facilitate voluntary activity which contributes to the achievement of the department's nature conservation, recreation and land management objectives and which builds community awareness, understanding and commitment to these objectives;
- ensure appropriate opportunities for voluntary participation are provided for individuals, interest groups, peak organisations and communities; and
- facilitate involvement in educational and social development programs relevant to the department's mission.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all departmental staff and operations.

3. CONTEXT

Community involvement is an integral part of the Department of Parks and Wildlife's operations. The department has traditionally enjoyed support from volunteers in groups or as individuals, working cooperatively in well-established relationships with staff to the mutual benefit of the department and the community.

Volunteer groups and individuals may be involved either by working directly with the department on activities managed by it, or through sanctioned independent activities that assist in the achievement of the department's objectives.

A volunteer may be defined as 'someone who willingly gives time for the common good and without financial gain' (Volunteering Australia, 2015). Volunteers are valuable to the department because they build communication links and understanding between the department and the community, as well as expanding the department's work capabilities, knowledge and skills base.

The department is guided by national and international best practice volunteer management approaches. Refer to Volunteering Australia for national standards, and the Parks and Wildlife Volunteer Management Manual for current departmental practices.

This policy formally recognises the importance of volunteers to the department's operations, and seeks to provide a framework for the formal management of volunteers wishing to support the department directly and through associated volunteer programs.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife acknowledges that:

- volunteering is not a substitute for paid work;
- effective volunteer involvement requires organisational leadership and a structure that supports and values the role of volunteers;
- volunteers have similar rights, privileges and responsibilities to paid employees, including the right to work in a safe environment, and are required to adhere to the department's *Code of Conduct* and to respect the department's values;
- volunteers should be acknowledged and recognised for their contribution; and
- volunteers should be reimbursed for approved out-of-pocket expenses.

Other forms of community involvement

While some groups do not conform entirely to the definition of volunteering, a number of other groups also engage in unpaid work that assists the department. These include:

1. those seeking work experience or research projects as a requirement of formal studies;
2. work performed as part of a community development program; and
3. those required to perform community work as a result of a court order.

There are also a small number of volunteer groups which are paid a fee to cover running costs for work done, for example, through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Conservation Volunteers Australia, and through Green Army or other similar initiatives. All of these groups deserve assistance from the department and carry out valuable work on land managed by the department.

Work experience provides students with an opportunity to assess conservation and land management as a career, and the department as an employer. Some of these students may in future become employees of the department. There is also an increasing demand for undergraduate and post-graduate tertiary institutions to provide research opportunities for students. In most cases this research benefits the department.

Community-based offender programs are important and may involve a requirement to perform a community service. The department believes that it has a social responsibility to be involved in this type of program and has a long-standing MOU with the Department of Corrective Services to facilitate programs for both community-based offenders and prisoners.

Students seeking work experience who are not part of an educational course will be treated as volunteers.

4. LEGISLATION

Formal community involvement is facilitated through relevant sections of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* and the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* which set out requirements for public input into statutory processes including the development of management plans or programs.

In addition to these legislative requirements to engage with the community, the department is committed to building respectful and supportive relationships with our

neighbours, visitors, volunteers, partners, the individuals and organisations who do business with the department, and the communities in which the department works. These values are reflected in the department's [Strategic Directions 2014-17](#).

5. POLICY

The department will aim to ensure its work is supported by the community, and is reflective of community needs and priorities. In doing so, the department will:

- 5.1 Provide a broad range of opportunities for volunteers to assist the department in ways which build community support for the department's work and complement its core business.
- 5.2 Promote, support and encourage community groups and individuals in voluntary activities which assist the department in achieving its objectives.
- 5.3 Seek and recruit interested members of the community as volunteers, taking a coordinated approach to promoting and managing volunteer opportunities.
- 5.4 Seek to be inclusive of culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and implement strategies to achieve effective engagement with these groups where appropriate.
- 5.5 Provide training and support for volunteers to ensure they have a safe and enjoyable experience while volunteering for Parks and Wildlife.
- 5.6 Provide training for departmental staff in the management of voluntary activities, including administration and departmental safety and health responsibilities.
- 5.7 Recognise the range of volunteer motivations and devise appropriate methods to acknowledge and reward the contribution of volunteers.
- 5.8 Encourage the formation of friends groups and associations which focus on particular areas.
- 5.9 Administer and manage voluntary activities according to codes of work practices including safety, industrial relations, insurance cover, equity and nature of activities to be undertaken.
- 5.10 Be innovative in engaging volunteers and take advantage of new technologies and approaches, such as online discussion forums and social media.
- 5.11 Develop volunteer projects within guidelines and agreements developed through discussions with unions and industrial officers.
- 5.12 Support volunteer projects that facilitate government and private sector investment or support.
- 5.13 Ensure appropriate senior officers are involved in volunteer management.
- 5.14 Document volunteer management processes to ensure good records that will also enable the learning and sharing of project successes and challenges among departmental staff.

Policy relating to other forms of community involvement

The department will:

- 5.15 Provide opportunities where possible for approved secondary school work experience programs.
- 5.16 Continue to support the *Bush Ranger* cadet program.
- 5.17 Accommodate where possible tertiary students seeking work experience or research/study opportunities.
- 5.18 Provide work experience opportunities where possible for Aboriginal people.
- 5.19 Cooperate with community and conservation volunteer groups or other initiatives to assist where departmental objectives can be met.
- 5.20 Identify and develop appropriate opportunities for prisoners and community-based offender programs in accordance with the MOU with the Department of Corrective Services.
- 5.21 Develop, build, maintain and strengthen its relationships and partnerships with the community, business partners and recreation organisations to achieve the department's goals.

6. STANDARDS

This policy should be read in conjunction with [Corporate Policy Statement No. 76: Public Participation and Stakeholder Engagement](#) as well as the department's [Volunteer Management Handbook](#), which provides operational guidelines and current national standards.

The department is guided by national and international best practice approaches and by Volunteering Australia's National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (see Appendix 1).

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

In order to implement this policy effectively, the following strategies will be adopted:

- 7.1 To ensure appropriate supervision, support and inclusion, the department will provide information and resources to staff for implementing effective and innovative volunteer management processes. These include the [Volunteer Management Handbook](#) provided on the intranet, advice from the Volunteer and Community Engagement (VCE) Unit and other professional development and training opportunities.
- 7.2 Volunteer roles will be clearly defined, documented and communicated, including skill and knowledge requirements.
- 7.3 Volunteer records, including names, contact details, activities and acknowledgements relating to the department will be coordinated by the Parks and Wildlife Volunteer Coordinator.

- 7.4 An officer in each region (and some branches) will be given responsibility for the administration of volunteer activities in their region/branch. Districts and branches planning volunteer programs should budget appropriately.
- 7.5 Volunteers will be provided with the necessary training, equipment, safety guidance and other resources to ensure volunteers are able to undertake their roles safely and with maximum effectiveness.
- 7.6 All departmental staff working with volunteers will maintain and forward registers of volunteer names, activities and hours to the Parks and Wildlife Volunteer Coordinator.
- 7.7 Volunteers will be recruited where required (and feasible) to complement the roles of departmental staff.
- 7.8 An industrial assessment system will be used to consult affected staff and unions. The staff consultation process will be included during the planning, development and implementation of all volunteer projects.
- 7.9 The Volunteer Management Manual provides guidance on recruitment and termination, recoupment of out-of-pocket expenses, eligibility for uniform etc. for volunteers.
- 7.10 Friends groups will be encouraged and assisted to bring together people with mutual interest in a specific park or area through recreational, conservation and educational activities. Friends groups and other permanent volunteer groups should aim to become self-administering, reporting back to VCE via their local department officer.
- 7.11 The volunteer program will be assessed periodically, including evaluating volunteer expectations, motivations and levels of satisfaction.
- 7.12 The Parks and Wildlife Volunteer Coordinator will monitor developments in volunteer management processes in other agencies, States and overseas to ensure continual improvement.

Implementation strategies relating to other forms of community involvement

The department will:

- 7.13 Follow the [Operational Policy](#) on work experience placements as a requisite of formal study programs, student research projects or theses, and for personal initiative work experience students. This Operational Policy is available on the intranet (at link provided above) or from People Services Branch.
- 7.14 Develop Operational Guidelines on the use and management of prisoner and community-based offender programs.

8. CUSTODIAN

Director Parks and Visitor Services.

9. PUBLICATION

This policy will be made available on the department's website and intranet.

10. KEY WORDS

Public participation; community involvement; volunteers; volunteering; partnerships; work experience; prisoners; community-based offenders.

11. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed no later than June 2021.

12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved by



Jim Sharp
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Effective date: 30 June 2016