

ACT Parks and Conservation

Volunteer Policy



ACT
Government



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ACT Parks and Conservation Volunteer Policy

Document History

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Definitions

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| Volunteer | A person willingly giving their time for the common good and without financial gain |
| Individual Volunteer | A single person willingly giving their time for the common good and without financial gain |
| Casual Volunteer | A Volunteer who participates in up to 5 volunteering days each year. |
| Community Group | A group of individual volunteers working together on a ParkCare Volunteering Activity (including 'Friends Of' groups and 'ParkCare Patch' groups). |
| Incorporated Group Volunteers | Volunteers working under the direction and as part of an incorporated group |
| Volunteer Convenor | A volunteer who represents the members of a Community Group and contributes to the development of that groups Volunteer Activities. |
| Volunteer Role | A task based description of the expectations of a volunteer in contributing to a Volunteer Activity. |
| Volunteer Activity | Activities undertaken by volunteers which are approved by PCS staff |
| Volunteer Project | A planned group of Volunteer Activities carried out by Volunteers in various designated Volunteer Roles which is consistent with relevant PCS strategic, management or operational plans. |
| Volunteer Agreement | A written agreement between a Volunteer and PCS which defines the roles and responsibilities of each party. This can be completed through the Volunteer Agreement Form or by registration on the ParkCare Hub. |
| Volunteer Coordinator | An employee who is engaged by PCS for the purpose of managing the implementation of volunteer involvement in PCS activities |

1. Introduction

The ACT Government recognises the value and importance of volunteering in building an inclusive, healthy and engaged community. The ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) works in partnership with the community to provide opportunities for people of all ages, background and abilities to become involved in volunteer programs.

ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) is part of Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) and has a proud tradition of working with volunteers in a wide range of programs and projects. The goal of these programs is to ensure that the ACT's nature reserves and national parks are appreciated, protected and championed by the community.

This Volunteer Policy is a central component of the PCS Volunteer Program. It compliments and incorporates the requirements of the PCS Volunteer Management Framework (Attachment A). The Volunteer Policy requires the establishment of clear agreements for the implementation and operation of volunteer projects. The consistent use of the PCS Volunteer Management Framework and associated forms will help facilitate the effective management of volunteer projects on ACT public land.

1.1 Objectives

The objective of the PCS Volunteer Policy is to provide direction in the engagement and management of volunteers to ensure that:

- a safe working environment is provided for volunteers;
- volunteers are treated fairly, with respect and are valued and appropriately recognised for their contribution to the work of PCS;
- the management of volunteers and volunteer activities is consistent with relevant legislation such as but not limited to work health and safety, working with children, finance, and privacy.
- create opportunities for people to become active supporters and promoters of conservation and land management initiatives that complement the work of paid staff.;
- provide opportunities for volunteers to develop and enhance skills that will assist them in career and personal development; and

1.2 Principles

In providing opportunities for community volunteering on the ACT's nature reserves and national parks PCS adopts the Volunteering Australia 'Principles of Volunteering';

1. Volunteers will not be used for work that would normally require the employment of a paid public sector employee.
2. Volunteers will not be used for any role or activity that has an enforcement or regulatory basis or are considered high risk activities, for example compliance and legislative activities.
3. The department is not obliged to accept a request for voluntary work and the *Volunteer Work Agreement* can be terminated by the department at any time.

4. Volunteers have a minimum age of at least 8 years old at the time of engagement. If the volunteer is a minor (i.e. under 18 years of age) a parent or guardian must give written consent to the volunteer arrangements.

5. There is no maximum age to volunteer however the department must consider factors such as overall health and capability to undertake the duties.

6. The *Volunteer Engagement Form* (Registration) and *Volunteer Work Agreement* (Signing up to a Volunteer Opportunity with PCS) must be completed before a volunteer commences. All volunteers must comply with the ACT Government policies and procedures in relation to Work Health and Safety and use of vehicles. All personal information must be managed in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2014*.

7. Volunteers are to undertake a formal induction on commencement and must be provided with the necessary training and equipment to undertake tasks in a safe and legal manner. Volunteers must follow all reasonable directions by their supervisor.

8. Volunteer attendance (hours of work) must be recorded on sign on sheets or logged through the ParkCare online volunteer management system.

9. Volunteers engaged by third party volunteer organisations working on EPSDD projects and programs are governed by the policies and procedures of the third party.

10. Volunteers are entitled to reimbursement of out-pocket-expenses subject to prior agreement and authorisation of expenditure by the Responsible Officer.

1.4 Authority

This policy will operate within and with reference to the applicable laws of the Australian Capital Territory, including but not limited to;

Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Act 2011

Information Privacy Act 2014

Nature Conservation Act 2014

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011

1.4 Scope

This policy applies to any volunteer undertaking voluntary work for EPSDD and/ or PCS. Volunteering is defined as time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.

This policy does not apply to work experience, industry or vocational placement students. The following are not considered to be volunteers, as such are not governed by this policy:

- those seeking formal work experience (eg. school students on work experience placements);
- school groups engaged in PCS supervised programs (eg. such as school community service programs);
- those required to perform community work as a result of having committed an offence of some kind;
- co-programs with other government agencies (eg. ACT Corrective Services);

- participants in employment programs such as the Australian Government Green Army or Work for the Dole; and
- volunteers who are involved as members of advisory committees.

1. Volunteer Management

2.1 Dedicated Volunteer Management

The ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS) will work with the community to provide opportunities for people of all ages, background and abilities to become involved in volunteer programs. Volunteer management is facilitated through a suitably qualified volunteer coordinator employed by PCS who is responsible for providing leadership and managing the implementation of volunteer involvement on PCS Parks and Reserves.

Volunteer involvement will be planned to contribute directly to the purpose, goals and objectives of PCS.

PCS Staff and volunteers are made aware of, and participate in the implementation of the PCS Volunteer Policy.

1.2 Volunteer Registration

Individual volunteers will be required to register with PCS as a volunteer including agreeing to the PCS Volunteering Code of Conduct.

Community Groups volunteering with PCS and represented by a Volunteer Convenor will be required to sign a volunteer agreement with PCS on behalf of the group.

1.3 Reporting

All volunteers are required to sign the attendance register each time they participate in a volunteering activity.

Individual Volunteers are required to record their volunteer contribution and report their hours and activities to the PCS Volunteer Coordinator.

Community Group Volunteers and Incorporated Group Volunteers are required to report quarterly to the PCS Volunteer Coordinator on all volunteer activities that have taken place in ACT Parks and Reserves.

PCS will produce a report on volunteer involvement with PCS activities at the end of each financial year and retain volunteer records on file with other volunteer documents in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2014*.

1.4 Records Management

PCS will retain records of volunteer involvement including the long term contributions and achievements of volunteers.

All personal information retained by PCS will be managed in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2014*.

1.5 Resources

Volunteers are entitled to reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses associated with their tasks. Reimbursement is only possible with prior approval of a PCS manager and on providing official receipts of expenditure.

Volunteers will not be issued with PCS staff uniforms. Volunteers may be issued with other clothing, hats, badges or other items nominated for the purposes of identifying them as PCS volunteers.

Volunteer supervisors will exercise their discretion regarding wardrobe requirements and will meet any expenditure commitments.

Volunteers will be issued with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and safety clothing in order to perform specific tasks as per obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.

2. Volunteer Roles

3.1 Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

PCS will create volunteer roles which meet the needs of the individual volunteer and the objectives of the organisation. These roles will contribute to the purpose, goals and objectives of the organisation.

Volunteer roles will be clearly defined, documented and communicated. Feedback from staff and volunteers will contribute to reviews of these roles as required.

Individual Volunteers will require a Volunteer Agreement (Registration) with PCS unless they are a 'casual volunteer' (up to 5 days volunteering each year). The Volunteer Agreement must be approved by the PCS supervisor prior to the volunteers commencement.

Should the volunteer disclose information regarding a medical condition or impairment that may impact on their ability to safely undertake the required activities, the PCS supervisor must undertake a risk assessment to determine their suitability as a volunteer for the project or program. Where required, the Volunteer Agreement should record the provision of any medical clearance to participate in the volunteer activity.

Volunteers are not to work more than a full-time work load. In exceptional circumstances and due to the unusual nature of the role, Volunteers may work longer hours with approval by the Volunteer Manager.

Volunteer roles which involve wildlife must comply with the requirements of the *Animal Welfare Act 1992* and the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*. Activities which are not exempt under the activities declaration for land on which they are carried out will be required to obtain the relevant licenses and permits.

Volunteers who handle animals will be required to have the appropriate immunisations, have relevant training, experience or demonstrated animal-handling proficiency and are to be supervised by an appropriately trained and experienced PCS staff member.

Volunteers will not make comments on behalf of PCS to the media. Any engagement of Individual Volunteers, Community Group Volunteers or Incorporated Group Volunteers with the media regarding PCS coordinated volunteer programs requires prior PCS endorsement.

3.2 Volunteer Projects

Volunteer Projects will be consistent with relevant PCS strategic, management or operational plans and will take into account the impact of activities on natural and cultural heritage values.

Volunteer Projects can be initiated by PCS staff or Volunteers. Volunteer Projects initiated by individual volunteers or volunteer groups must be submitted as part of an annual plan of scheduled works and activities for approval at the beginning of each financial year.

Approval for Volunteer Projects may be granted by the PCS representative who is responsible for projects that occur in district management areas.

When planning or approving volunteer projects, the responsible District staff will consider whether the project is consistent with relevant legislation including the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* and the *Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

4. Recruitment and Selection

4.1 Volunteer Recruitment

Formal volunteer programs and opportunities may be promoted on the departmental websites, social media channels and through traditional media.

PCS will target recruitment towards a diverse range of volunteers from different backgrounds and demographics.

4.2 Volunteer Selection

Volunteers will be selected and engaged in accordance with anti-discrimination, respect, equity and diversity principles and legislation.

Merit selection of volunteers will be used where there is a competitive process.

PCS staff have discretion to exclude volunteers from participation in volunteer projects on health and safety grounds (including concern that a volunteer may be influenced by alcohol or drugs).

Volunteers can be engaged as a casual volunteer (less than 5 days a year), individual volunteer (not associated with a volunteer group) or as a member of a volunteer group.

All volunteers will be provided with an induction at the commencement of their engagement.

4.3 Termination of Volunteering Agreements

PCS may at any time terminate a volunteer agreement due to operational requirements, non-performance or inappropriate actions by the volunteer.

The volunteer has the option of terminating the agreement at any time.

Termination of the agreement should be communicated to the volunteer in writing. There is no minimum period of notice required.

4.2 Working with Vulnerable People

Volunteers will need to register with the ACT Office of Regulatory Services for a Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) card if they are working with children, or other vulnerable people for more than 7 days in 12 months, or 3 days within 4 weeks- regardless of whether parents, teachers or leaders are present. An activity of 30 minutes or more is considered to be one day.

Volunteers do not need a WWVP card if they are working with children, or other vulnerable people, for less than 7 days in 12 months or 3 days within 4 weeks (unless this includes an overnight camp).

Children who participate in PCS volunteer activities must have parental or guardian consent.

On-site, physical supervision by a parent or guardian is required for all volunteers under the age of 15 years.

If an Incorporated Group has programs that target vulnerable people and has volunteers involved in managing these programs, it is the responsibility of the Incorporated Group to ensure their volunteers and programs meet the requirements of relevant Working with Vulnerable People legislation.

5. Support and Development

5.1 Project Supervision

All volunteer projects are to be overseen or facilitated by a suitably qualified PCS staff member on behalf of the ACT Government.

PCS volunteer supervisors will have as a minimum:

- a) Hold a current Senior First Aid Certificate; and
- b) Attend an annual PCS volunteer management workshop

5.2 Volunteer Support

PCS will provide structured opportunities for staff and volunteers to communicate through quarterly ParkCare meetings.

A standard first aid kit will be located on site at every volunteer activity.

At least one volunteer with a current Senior First Aid certificate must be present at any group organised volunteer activities.

PCS will provide support to volunteer activities through staff assistance (including the designated ParkCare Ranger) and provision of equipment, knowledge and training relevant to agreed volunteer roles and projects.

5.3 Volunteer Development

Volunteers will receive appropriate on-the-job training to ensure that work practices are conducted in a safe and legal manner.

Volunteers receiving appropriate on-the-job training will have that training and related skill/s acquisition recognised in future volunteering or, where relevant, in applications for employment with PCS.

PCS will provide relevant training and development opportunities for Volunteers to enable them to meet the knowledge and skill needs for the agreed Volunteer Roles they undertake.

PCS will continue to provide new roles and development opportunities for Volunteers where appropriate.

5.4 Resolving Differences

All efforts will be made to resolve differences as promptly as possible by the PCS Volunteer Supervisor (or relevant PCS manager where the issue involves the Volunteer Supervisor).

If volunteers wish to raise a complaint they may do so in writing and address their complaint to the relevant PCS manager.

6. Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

6.2 Workplace Health and Safety Compliance

All volunteers must comply with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) and its associated framework and code of practice.

A volunteer must:

- a) Take reasonable care of their own health and safety
- b) Take reasonable care that their own conduct does not adversely affect others
- c) Comply with instructions from PCS
- d) Cooperate with PCS policies and procedures
- e) Participate in training as required
- f) Comply with all volunteer statement of duties and agreements as they relate to health and safety.

The ACT Government has a primary duty of care to ensure its workers are not exposed to any risk to their health and safety. This includes all casual volunteers, individual volunteers or volunteer groups.

6.2 Insurance

Individual volunteers, community group volunteers and casual volunteers undertaking approved PCS volunteer projects are covered by insurance for personal accident and public liability through the ACT Insurance Authority (ACTIA) for the period of engagement in volunteer duties as recorded in the Volunteer Management Framework 'sign on register' or recorded on the 'ParkCare Hub'.

Incorporated Groups will be covered by that Group's own insurance for personal accident and public liability. Incorporated Groups will present PCS with current insurance policies for public liability

cover for at least \$10 million and personal accident covering each member. If an incorporated Group does not have accident and public liability insurance which covers all the activities of its members whilst undertaking a PCS approved Volunteer Project, then its members will be engaged as PCS individual volunteers.

Any claim of injury or work-related illness by a volunteer should be reported to the Volunteer supervisor as soon as practicable.

The Volunteer supervisor should notify their management and the Community Programs Coordinator as soon as practical and document the incident through appropriate channels.

6.3 Risk Assessments

Preparation of a Risk Assessment is mandatory for all designated Volunteer Roles and is the responsibility of PCS Staff.

Preparation of a Risk Assessment is mandatory for all Volunteer Activities and is the responsibility of the supervising PCS staff member (or group convenor or Incorporated Group in the event that PCS Staff are not directly involved with the Volunteer Activity).

6.4 Safety Equipment

The ACT Government will issue Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to volunteers where reasonable and practical and when the nature of the volunteer activity requires PPE to be worn. The ACT Government will supply and renew PPE on an as needs basis. The volunteer will return any PPE issued at the conclusion of the volunteer project.

The use of powered tools and equipment is limited to those activities that are assessed safe for volunteers in a Risk Assessment and where the training, certification requirements and procedures are in place to the same level required of staff.

6.5 Herbicide and Pesticide Use

All volunteers using herbicides or pesticides will comply with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, associated regulations and relevant product labels and permits.

Volunteers who are Chemcert accredited can undertake weed control using herbicide products containing active ingredients Glyphosphate (Round Up), MCPA (Agitone 750), Fluroxypr (Starane) and Metsulfuron Methyl (Brushoff). Herbicides containing active ingredients other than those listed can only be used upon prior approval from the volunteer coordinator.

Herbicides for approved use in the ACT Parks and Reserves will only be issued to accredited volunteers, it is then the responsibility of the accredited volunteer to ensure the chemicals are stored, transported and applied in accordance with their training and product labels.

Volunteers will be issued with a maximum five litres of liquid chemical and maximum 10 grams of powder chemical at any one time.

6.6 Vehicle Use

Volunteers may be permitted to drive a PCS motor vehicle for the purposes of the project with the prior approval of the relevant PCS manager who sights the volunteers current full driver's licence

(not a probationary licence) prior to vehicle use being approved. When using PCS 4WD's, volunteers must provide evidence of accreditation that meets the standard required of staff by PCS policies prior to vehicle use being approved.

Volunteers may use their own vehicle with prior approval of the relevant PCS manager, and any damage or associated costs incurred through the negligence for the volunteer will remain the responsibility of the volunteer. The volunteer will have a current full driver's licence and comprehensive vehicle insurance. The insurance policy and the driver's licence will be sighted by the relevant PCS supervisor prior to the vehicle's use during the project.

Volunteers may drive their own vehicle during volunteer projects, providing their vehicle is registered, well-maintained and in good condition.

The availability of reimbursement for fuel is at the discretion of the PCS Volunteer supervisor.

The use of heavy plant machinery (including tractors and backhoes) which requires a specific licence or endorsement is not permitted by volunteers.

The use of light plant machinery (including ride-on mowers, push mowers and brush cutters) is limited to those activities that are assessed safe for volunteers in the Risk Assessment and where the training, certification requirements and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) are in place to the level required of staff.

7. Volunteer Recognition

PCS Volunteer supervisors will ensure that all volunteers, subject to this policy, are rewarded and recognised appropriately.

ParkCare Volunteers are entitled to a 50% discount on an Annual Parks Pass to Tidbinbilla National Park and staff discounts at the Tidbinbilla and Namadgi National Park Cafes and gift shops.

ParkCare Volunteers engaged in activities within Tidbinbilla and Namadgi National Parks are entitled to free access to these parks for the duration of their volunteering activities.

PCS will provide written references and a Statement of Service to volunteers upon request.

8. Quality Management and Continuous Improvement

8.1 Quality Management

The PCS Volunteer Policy will be regularly reviewed in line with PCS evaluation and quality management frameworks.

Feedback from PCS staff, Volunteers and other stakeholders will be considered in ongoing volunteer management and policy reviews.

Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback to PCS on volunteer management practices through emailing communityprograms@act.gov.au .