

**ACT Parks and Conservation**

# **Volunteer Policy**



**ACT**  
Government



**Draft 2017**

Document History

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>
Version 1.0	Original Sept 2009
Version 2.0	July 2010
Version 3.0	July 2015
DRAFT Version 4.0	November 2017
	Approved by: Daniel Iglesias- Director ACT Parks and Conservation Service  Effective from: Next review due:

## Definitions

<b>Volunteer</b>	A person willingly giving their time for the common good and without financial gain
<b>Individual Volunteer</b>	An individual person willingly giving their time for the common good and without financial gain
<b>Casual Volunteer</b>	A Volunteer who participates in up to 5 volunteering days each year.
<b>Community Group</b>	A group of individual Volunteers working together on a ParkCare Volunteering Activity (including 'Friends Of' groups and 'ParkCare Patch' groups).
<b>Incorporated Group Volunteers</b>	Volunteers working under the direction and as part of an incorporated group
<b>Volunteer Convenor</b>	A Volunteer who represents the members of a Community Group and contributes to the development of that groups Volunteer Activities.
<b>Volunteer Role</b>	A task based description of the expectations of a Volunteer in contributing to a Volunteer Activity.
<b>Volunteer Activity</b>	Activities undertaken by Volunteers which are approved by PCS staff
<b>Volunteer Project</b>	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.
<b>Volunteer Agreement</b>	A written agreement between a Volunteer and PCS which defines the roles and responsibilities of each party.
<b>Volunteer Supervisor</b>	An employee who is engaged by PCS who is supervising Volunteers or Volunteer activities.
<b>Volunteer Coordinator</b>	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. The Volunteer Policy requires the establishment of clear agreements for the implementation and operation of volunteer projects. The consistent use of the PCS Volunteer Policy and online systems (the ParkCare Hub) 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 including, but not limited to, work health and safety, working with vulnerable people, finance, and privacy.
- opportunities are created for people to become active supporters and promoters of natural and cultural heritage conservation and land management initiatives that complement the work of paid staff;
- opportunities are provided for Volunteers to develop and enhance skills that will assist them in career and personal development

### 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' in addition to the following principles;

1. Volunteers will not be used for work that would normally require the employment of a paid employee.
2. Volunteers will not be used for any role or activity that has an enforcement or regulatory function 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 a Volunteer Agreement can be terminated by the department or the volunteer at any time subject to clause 4.3 of this Policy.

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 ACT PCS must consider factors such as overall health, potential risk of injury and the capability of an individual to undertake the volunteer activity.

6. Volunteers must be registered with ParkCare before they commence any volunteer activity (with the exception of casual Volunteers as per Section 2.2). All Volunteers must comply with their duties under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the ACT Government relating to health or safety in the workplace. 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 comply with any reasonable instruction from the ACT Government in relation to Work Health and Safety. Prior to undertaking a volunteer activity, volunteers must participate in a safety induction.

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, but are still required to abide by the PCS Code of Conduct

### 1.3 Authority

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

*Animal Welfare Act 1992*

*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

*Heritage Act 2004*

*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.

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 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.

### 2.2 Volunteer Registration

Individual Volunteers will be required to register with PCS as a Volunteer including agreeing to the PCS Volunteer Code of Conduct. Casual Volunteers (up to 5 days volunteering each year) are not required to be registered as a ParkCare Volunteer, however their attendance must be recorded by the Volunteer Convenor or Supervisor and provided to the Volunteer Coordinator.

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.

### 2.3 Reporting

Volunteers will report all incidents/ accidents involving Volunteers (whether or not an injury results) to the Volunteer Supervisor or Volunteer Coordinator as soon as practicable, but within 48 hours as per ACT Government policy.

Volunteers must report *Notifiable Incidents* immediately to WorkSafe ACT and the Volunteer Coordinator. Notifiable incidents include the following;

- The death of a person; or
- A serious injury or illness of a person; or
- A 'dangerous incident' as defined in section 37 of the WHS Act 2011

Further detail regarding what is a Notifiable Incident can be found on the ParkCare Hub.

Volunteers can report Notifiable Incidents to WorkSafe ACT on 02 6207 3000 or after hours 0419 120 028.

Note: It is a requirement under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* that if an incident is Notifiable, the scene of the incident must be preserved/ not disturbed until cleared by a WorkSafe Inspector.

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 (this can be done through the ParkCare Hub, verbally or by email).

Volunteer Groups (who have not reported individual volunteer contributions) 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*.

## 2.4 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*.

## 2.5 Resources

Where prior approval has been sought from a PCS manager or the Volunteer Coordinator, Volunteers are entitled to reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses associated with their tasks upon 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.

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* and in accordance with section 6.4.

# 3 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 assist PCS in determining if a Volunteer is physically or mentally able to perform the volunteer activity.

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

Volunteer roles may be categorised further by:

- ParkCare Patch – volunteer activities that are site specific and often initiated by Volunteers (eg- 'friends of' groups)
- Wildlife Assist – Volunteer roles that relate to wildlife management
- Visitor Assist – Volunteer roles that relate to visitor services on PCS estate
- Ranger Assist – Volunteer roles initiated by PCS staff

Should the Volunteer disclose information regarding a medical condition or impairment that may impact their ability to safely undertake any required activities, the Volunteer Supervisor must undertake a risk assessment to determine their suitability as a Volunteer for a 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 Coordinator.

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, unless the volunteer is appropriately licensed.

Volunteers will not make public or social media comments or talk to the media about incidents or operational matters on behalf of ACT Parks and Conservation/ ParkCare or whilst displaying the ParkCare uniform and PCS logo without authorisation (this does not exclude Volunteers making public comments in a private capacity or while representing another organisation where they are not seen to be speaking on behalf of the ACT Parks and Conservation Service).

## 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 community 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.

Volunteer Projects and Activities must comply with the requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*, the *Heritage Act 2004* and the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*. Activities that 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.

When planning or approving volunteer projects, the responsible district staff will consider whether the project is consistent and complies with relevant legislation.



## 4. Recruitment and Selection

### 4.1 Volunteer Recruitment

Formal volunteer programs and opportunities will be promoted in a variety of ways, including on ACT Government 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 community group) or as a member of a community group.

All Volunteers will be provided with a mandatory 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.

Volunteers are also permitted to terminate an agreement at any time.

Termination of an agreement by the organisation should be communicated to the Volunteer in writing and include the reasons for the termination. There is no minimum period of notice required.

Upon receipt of a notice of termination, the Volunteer may seek review of the termination by writing to:

The Director, ACT Parks and Conservation Service  
GPO Box 158  
Canberra ACT 2601

### 4.4 Working with Vulnerable People

Volunteers will need to register with the Access Canberra 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 work with 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 and other legislation.

## **5. Support and Development**

### **5.1 Project Supervision**

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

PCS volunteer supervisors will:

- a) Hold a current Senior First Aid Certificate;
- b) Attend an annual PCS Volunteer management workshop; and,
- c) Have knowledge and understanding of the risks/hazards associated with the volunteer activity which they are supervising.

### **5.2 Volunteer Support**

PCS will provide structured opportunities for staff and Volunteers to communicate through quarterly ParkCare meetings, which will include consultation on work health and safety matters.

A standard first aid kit will be located on site at every group 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 a 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 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 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 formally raise a complaint they may do so in writing and address their complaint to the relevant PCS manager.

## 6. Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

### 6.1 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:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety;
- Take reasonable care that their own acts or omissions does not adversely affect the health and safety of others;
- Comply, so far as reasonably able, with any reasonable instructions from PCS;
- Abide by PCS policies and procedures relating to health or safety at the workplace;
- Participate in training as required; and,
- Report any Notifiable Incidents in accordance with section 2.3 of this Policy.

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 and community groups.

Where Volunteers are operating alone, they must ensure they have adequately allowed for their own safety by:

- Ensuring the Volunteer Coordinator or Volunteer Supervisor is aware of their activity, location and contact details;
- Have adequate forms of communication on their person; and,
- Have ready access to a first aid kit

### 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 'sign on register' for the volunteer activity or recorded on the 'ParkCare Hub' online reporting system.

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 personal accident and public liability insurance that 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 who must enter it into the ACT Government reporting system within 48 hours of the incident occurring.

The Volunteer supervisor should notify their management and the Community Programs Coordinator as soon as practicable 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 Volunteer Supervisor (or Volunteer 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 PCS 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 Australian Qualification Training Framework Level 3 (equivalent to ChemCert and SMARTtrain 3) 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. Cut-stump (cut and dab) herbicide application may only be undertaken by volunteers who are not accredited if they are under the direct supervision of an AFQ3 qualified volunteer or staff member.

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.

A Volunteer 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 motor vehicles,

Volunteers must provide evidence of accreditation that meets the standard required of staff by PCS policies prior to vehicle use being approved.

Volunteers may drive their own vehicle during volunteer projects, providing their vehicle is registered, well-maintained and in good condition. Any damage or associated costs incurred through the negligence of 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.

Fuel costs may be reimbursed in accordance with Section 2.5.

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 paid staff.

## 7. Volunteer Recognition

PCS Volunteer Supervisors will ensure that all Volunteers, subject to this policy, are recognised and celebrated appropriately.

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

ParkCare Volunteers engaged in activities within Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve 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.

PCS will also host an annual Christmas Party for all active volunteers.

## 8. Quality Management and Continuous Improvement

The PCS Volunteer Policy will be regularly reviewed in line with PCS evaluation and quality management frameworks, and in line with the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*

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](mailto:communityprograms@act.gov.au).