



45 POLICY FOR VOLUNTEERING IN BERRIGAN SHIRE

About Berrigan Shire

Berrigan Shire's vision for its community includes:

→ MISSION STATEMENT

To provide leadership and excellence in service to the community to enable an enhanced quality of life to be achieved.

→ GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Community Leadership

The Council will, through consultative processes, fulfil a leadership and co-ordination role on issues that affect our community.

Continuous improvement is essential to our success

We must strive for excellence in everything we do, in all of our output, in the safety and demonstrated value of our services, our human relationships and our efficiency and effectiveness.

The Community of the Berrigan Shire is the focus of everything we do

Our work must be done with the users in mind, providing the necessary services and capital works that are required at the most affordable value while achieving the highest level of safety and quality required by the community.

We will seek and encourage the community to be involved in what we do.

Our way of operation is based on Teamwork and Trust

The Council and its employees operate as a team and will interact with trust and respect and together we will work towards our common goals.

Integrity is never compromised

The conduct of the Council must be pursued in a manner that is respected for its integrity

Introduction

Volunteers are a cornerstone of the Berrigan Shire community, participating in social, recreational, sporting, cultural, environmental, community support and civic activities and programs.

This input contributes to the quality of life enjoyed by Berrigan Shire residents and improves access to facilities and services. Volunteers also bring to the organisation their specialist advice and skills, and provide additional human resources to particular programs.



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The contribution of volunteers remains vital to Berrigan Shire and Council recognises and values the reciprocal nature of the relationship between organisation and individual. As with many organisations, Berrigan Shire relies on volunteers to assist with the provision of services and facilities for the community.

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Berrigan Shire supports the "Universal Declaration on Volunteering" as proclaimed by The International Association for Volunteer Effort at its 16th World Volunteer Conference, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, January 2001, and supported by Volunteering NSW.

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The Universal Declaration on Volunteering

Volunteering is a fundamental building block of civil society. It brings to life the noblest aspirations of humankind - the pursuit of peace, freedom, opportunity, safety, and justice for all people.

In this era of globalisation and continuous change, the world is becoming smaller, more interdependent, and more complex. Volunteering - either through individual or group action - is a way in which:

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- human values of community, caring, and serving can be sustained and strengthened;
- individuals can exercise their rights and responsibilities as members of communities, while learning and growing throughout their lives, realising their full human potential; and
- connections can be made across differences that push us apart so that we can live together in healthy, sustainable communities, working together to provide innovative solutions to our shared challenges and to shape our collective destinies.

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At the dawn of the new millennium, volunteering is an essential element of all societies. It turns into practical, effective action the declaration of the United Nations that "We, the Peoples" have the power to change the world.

This Declaration supports the right of every woman, man and child to associate freely and to volunteer regardless of their cultural and ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, and physical, social or economic condition. All people in the world should have the right to freely offer their time, talent, and energy to others and to their communities through individual and collective action, without expectation of financial reward.

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We seek the development of volunteering that:

- elicits the involvement of the entire community in identifying and addressing its problems;
- provides a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves;
- enables others to participate as volunteers;
- complements but does not substitute for responsible action by other sectors and the efforts of paid workers;



- enables people to acquire new knowledge and skills and to fully develop their personal potential, self-reliance and creativity;
- promotes family, community, national and global solidarity.

We believe that volunteers and the organisations and communities that they serve have a shared responsibility to:

- create environments in which volunteers have meaningful work that helps to achieve agreed upon results;
- define the criteria for volunteer participation, including the conditions under which the organisation and the volunteer may end their commitment, and develop policies to guide volunteer activity;
- provide appropriate protection against risks for volunteers and those they serve;
- provide volunteers with appropriate training, regular evaluation, and recognition;
- ensure access for all by removing physical, economic, social, and cultural barriers to their participation.

Statement of intent

This document provides a frame of reference for Berrigan Shire in its interaction with its many volunteers.

Berrigan Shire aims to facilitate partnerships with individuals and groups and encourage participation in a broad range of community activities to increase the level of satisfaction for those contributing.

Berrigan Shire aims to promote the value and recognition of volunteering to encourage increased participation from individuals in activities that benefit the community.

Berrigan Shire aims 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.

Definition of volunteering

Volunteering is an activity that takes place through a not-for-profit organisation or project and is:

- Of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Undertaken of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment;
- In a position not designated as paid; and
- Underpinned by the Volunteer Australia 'Principles of Volunteering'

General principles



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- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice.
- Volunteering is an activity that is unpaid and not undertaken for the receipt of salary, pension, government allowance or honorarium.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community.
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.
- Volunteering is an activity performed generally in the not for profit sector.
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

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Philosophy

Berrigan Shire values the contribution made by volunteers and seeks to recognise that by:

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- Acknowledging that the relationship between volunteers and Berrigan Shire is a reciprocal one;

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- Acknowledging that volunteers exercise free choice in committing to Berrigan Shire;

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- Acknowledging that volunteers are of equal status and deserve the same treatment and respect as paid employees, and that Berrigan Shire can expect the same standards of its volunteers as it expects of its paid employees;

- Ensuring volunteers are not used to replace paid staff positions and only carry out work that they have agreed to;

- Stating and acknowledging the contribution of volunteers in Berrigan Shire documentation and recording hours worked;

- Providing an opportunity for the development of skills and experience;

- Providing support in the form of clear policy guidelines, training, recognition and support, and the provision of references if required.

Recruitment of volunteers

Volunteers often have clear expectations of the 'value' of the volunteer experience and are equally clear about the type of work they wish to undertake. In placing a volunteer it is important to recognise these different expectations and how each might contribute to meeting the needs of the organisation as well as the individual.

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The recruitment policy is driven by Berrigan Shire's purpose which is to fulfil the needs of our organisation and the expectations of our volunteers.

Berrigan Shire applies the principles of equal opportunity to its recruitment processes and will not withhold a volunteer job on the basis of race, age, gender or religion.



See Berrigan Shire Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement.

The area of work and level of involvement will be arranged on an individual basis at time of interview with the manager/supervisor of the area in which the volunteer has expressed interest.

Prospective volunteers are matched for their suitability to existing position descriptions. The selection criteria for each position depends upon the particular skills needed to fulfil the duties of that position.

Position description

A Volunteer position description should be completed before a volunteer can be allocated to an area of Council. This description must include:

- The responsible staff member's department;
- Their role as a Volunteer;
- Background information pertaining to the relevance and need of the volunteer's position;
- A list of basic tasks involved;
- Desirable skills required to carry out the position;
- Duration of position and time commitment;
- Name of supervisor.

Registration

All new volunteers are encouraged to meet with the manager/supervisor of the area in which they are to volunteer, to discuss their interest in volunteering, and to fill out a registration form. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Determine what brought them to Berrigan Shire;
- Discuss any particular expectations regarding volunteering;
- Get to know them ie: their background, what they are doing now;
- Determine their availability;
- Talk about the areas in which volunteers can work and the type of work they can do;
- Talk about expected commitment from volunteers;
- Ask about any special needs or limitations Berrigan Shire ought to be aware of;
- Discuss their suitability for Berrigan Shire and Berrigan Shire's suitability for them;

All Section 355 Committees are to notify the Council of new Volunteers prior to them starting work.

Independent Volunteer Groups (IVG)



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From time to time, Council will work with Independent Volunteer Groups (IVG), such as Lions, Rotary, Red Cross etc. These are groups who are organised, and undertake volunteer activities and/or work with Council to provide a service.

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If Council decides to enlist the services of an IVG then Council has an obligation to ensure the group has the capacity to deliver the services in a manner which is safe to the volunteer.

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Council is to ensure that the IVG has a commitment and capacity to comply with the *OHS Act 2000 (NSW)* and the *OHS Regulation 2001 (NSW)*. The general duty of the IVG is to demonstrate that the volunteers have the capacity to undertake their activities in a safe work location, have undertaken a hazard identification, completed risk assessment, consulted with volunteers, are utilising appropriate plant in a same manner, using substances safely, and employing systems of work which are safe.

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This checklist will be completed by IVG and Council prior to Council working with an IVG to provide services.

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Induction

Once a volunteer has been placed to the volunteer's and the supervisor's mutual satisfaction, the volunteer's rights and responsibilities (see below) will be discussed with them.

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They should be given a copy of their job description and this policy. Volunteers are to then be given a tour of the place (or base) of the volunteer activities and introduced to all available members of staff. Staff to be informed as to the volunteer's duties and who they will be working with. The tour to include:

- Tea room and tea/coffee making facilities etc.
- Toilets
- Other office activities/equipment, and
- Emergency exits
- Notification to volunteer of any hazards identified in the risk assessment carried out by Council staff

All voluntary appointments are to be appraised regularly. If either the volunteer or the supervisor feel that the appointment is not working, either a new position may be found or the volunteer may be asked to wait until a suitable new position comes available.

Training



Supervisors are expected to provide adequate training to enable their volunteers to carry out their proscribed duties. The supervisors are responsible for their volunteers while they are learning to use Berrigan Shire equipment and must make themselves available to help when needed.

Volunteers are to be encouraged to develop and expand their personal skills to maintain and enhance Berrigan Shire's effectiveness. Specific training for volunteers will be provided where appropriate and financially possible.

Rights of volunteers

Berrigan Shire volunteers have a right to:

- Receive adequate information and a clear job description of what is expected and to understand why they are doing a task and how it fits into the broader program,
- Be assigned a suitable project, task or job and to say no to tasks they are unable to do, or would rather not do and to ask for a new job,
- Where appropriate, to have on-the-job supervision provided by a designated staff member,
- Receive respect and support from their co-workers as well as recognition and feedback from their supervisor for their work,
- Be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses, providing prior approval is obtained with the supervisor,
- Be briefed on the broader aspects of Berrigan Shire and discuss with their supervisor whether Berrigan Shire is suited to them or whether they are suited to Berrigan Shire,
- Request a reference from their supervisor when applying for a job, providing the volunteer has worked at Berrigan Shire for a minimum period of three months,
- Provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations regarding their job or the wider program,
- Have access to dispute resolution procedures and to be supported through such a process,
- Have their personal details kept in a confidential manner,
- Work in a safe and healthy environment, and
- Be provided with a place to work and suitable tools and materials.

Responsibilities of volunteers

We ask that our volunteers agree to:

- Be reliable and commit, where possible, to regular day/s and time of work so tasks can be planned accordingly;
- Keep Berrigan Shire informed of changes of address and phone number;
- Be responsible to and consult with their supervisor;
- To ask for support when needed;
- Agree to do job training necessary to carry out duties as stated in their position description;
- Abide by any Berrigan Shire policies regarding their work;



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- Appreciate and respect the confidential nature of information that may be acquired during course of duties;
- Discuss any grievances or problems with their manager/supervisor.
- Not to spend money or order goods on behalf of the Berrigan Shire without prior approval;
- Notify their manager/supervisor if they are no longer able to work with Berrigan Shire;
- Agree to work in a safe and healthy way and not jeopardise the health and safety of others;
- Inform Berrigan Shire of any pre-existing medical conditions or special needs that Berrigan Shire should be aware of that might effect the volunteer's ability to undertake certain tasks;
- Report any injury immediately to their supervisor;
- Not smoke in any Berrigan Shire building or vehicle.

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Berrigan Shire's commitment to volunteers

Berrigan Shire recognises that volunteers contribute a vast wealth of skills, knowledge and support towards the running of Berrigan Shire. All Berrigan Shire staff in return are to treat volunteers with respect and support.

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Confidentiality

All volunteers' personal information will be treated:

- with confidentiality, and
- within legislative boundaries which seek to protect privacy and personal information.

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Working with children

People wanting to volunteer to work with children and young people have to satisfy some legislative requirements.

All people looking after children and young people have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for them.

In July 2000, new legislation that affects all people working with children and young people was introduced.

- [Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998](#)
- [Child Protection \(Prohibited Employment\) Act 1998](#)

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These laws make up the Working with Children Check. Their goal is to create workplaces where our children are safe and protected.

Employers are required to ask all volunteers and employees who work primarily with children if they are a "prohibited person" as defined under the legislation, and all employees, paid and unpaid must tell their employer if they are.



A prohibited person is a person convicted of a serious sexual offence, or registrable offence under the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000*.

Potential volunteers may also be asked to undergo employment screening, although this is only mandatory for persons in paid child-related employment, foster carers, ministers of religion and members of religious organisations. Child related employment includes those working in child care centres, school and pre-schools, detention centres, hospitals, refuges, commercial child minding agencies, clubs, and associations with significant child membership and religious organisations.

If volunteers become a "prohibited person" they must immediately notify Berrigan Shire and cease their role in a child-related.

It is the responsibility of those people seeking employment/volunteer work that primarily involves direct contact with children, where that contact is not directly supervised, to:

- agree to allow the employer to undertake all aspects of the employment screening process (Attachment 3)
- complete a declaration saying whether or not they are a prohibited person when applying for child-related employment (Attachment 4)

Relevant criminal history, apprehended violence orders and prior employment checks, including relevant disciplinary proceedings, will be conducted on recommended proposed volunteers.

Action required by volunteers:

- return the prohibited employment declaration to their supervisor within one month of being asked to provide the declaration
- agree to allow Berrigan Shire to undertake all aspects of the employment screening process.

Reimbursement

General expenses

Managers/supervisors should advise their volunteers of their budget limitations and must approve any purchases before they are made. Volunteers will then be reimbursed for approved purchases out of supervisor's budget.

Receipts must be obtained and the manager/supervisor is to fill out petty cash claim on the volunteer's behalf.

Travel expenses

With prior approval by the relevant manager/supervisor, all travel expenses incurred reasonably by a volunteer in the course of her/his duties shall be fully reimbursed by Berrigan Shire upon presentation of appropriate documentation.



Where a volunteer is required to use her or his own vehicle for Berrigan Shire's business, the volunteer shall be paid a vehicle allowance, out of the Manager/supervisor's budget, in accordance with going rate paid to staff as stated in Berrigan Shire's Salary Policy and the relevant Local Government (State Award) 2001.

Occupational health and safety

Berrigan Shire is committed to providing a safe work place for all staff and volunteers and in return ask that volunteers accept their responsibility to work safely. This means working intelligently, with common sense and foresight.

Occupational health and safety procedures have been developed to provide a safe working environment for all staff and volunteers, and to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 and its regulation:

- Each activity will need to carry out a risk assessment and identify any operating procedures that will require detailed process documentation to comply with Council policies.
- Procedures for use of equipment should be detailed.
- Personal protective equipment and clothing requirements identified and adequate budget allocated.

All volunteers are asked to notify their manager/supervisor on arrival at Berrigan Shire office/depot, and of their departure each day to indicate their presence in the building. This is especially important in case of evacuation.

Smoking is not permitted in any Berrigan Shire building or vehicle.

Volunteers are to report any injury immediately to their manager/supervisor, who should then follow documented Berrigan Shire injury notification procedures (see Berrigan Shire Council Occupational Health and Safety Manual).

Drug and alcohol free workplace

Berrigan Shire has a drug and alcohol free workplace policy. This policy is applicable to volunteers who undertake activities on behalf of Council.

Insurance cover

When engaged in Council activities, volunteers are covered by Council's insurance against injury or accident and public liability, if they are a registered volunteer with Council.

Section 355 Committees must notify the Council of all current members annually and must notify the Council immediately of any new members. This is to ensure that Volunteers are covered by the Council insurance while performing their duties.

Volunteers must be promptly added to the volunteer register kept by Berrigan Shire and its insurers. Managers/supervisors should notify the insurance officer of new volunteers so they may be added to the register.



Departing volunteers should also be removed from the register.

Equal opportunity and harassment

Equal Opportunity

Principles

Berrigan Shire is committed to equal opportunity and its effective implementation.

Berrigan Shire is opposed to discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age, physical or mental disability, religious beliefs, marital status, parental status, career status, sexual preference, political affiliation, industrial activity, pregnancy, victimisation, physical features or social and cultural backgrounds.

Policy

Applicants will be considered for voluntary positions at Berrigan Shire solely on the basis of skill, aptitude and relevant qualifications.

Berrigan Shire is committed to the equal participation of women and men in the organisation.

Harassment

In general, harassment is any form of behaviour that:

- you do not want
- offends, humiliates or intimidates you
- targets you because of your sex, pregnancy, race, marital status, disability, age, carers' responsibilities, homosexuality or transgender

Berrigan Shire will not tolerate harassment of any kind to staff or volunteers. Any harassment claims should be discussed with the manager/supervisor as soon as possible. All claims will be treated with confidentiality.

Sexual harassment

In general, sexual harassment is any form of sexually related behaviour that:

- you do not want
- offends, humiliates or intimidates you
- in the circumstances, a reasonable person should have expected would offend, humiliate or intimidate you.

Berrigan Shire will not tolerate sexual harassment of any kind to staff or volunteers. Claims of sexual harassment will be handled promptly, confidentially and in a manner that is fair to all involved in the complaint.

Sexual harassment is unacceptable and unlawful.

Whether the person intended to sexually harass his/her victim is irrelevant. It is how the victim feels that is important.

Any harassment claims should be promptly brought to the attention of the manager/supervisor.



Dispute resolution procedure

It is hoped that all disputes can be solved through discussion with concerned parties. It is advisable that all disputes are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Where a staff member has a dispute with a volunteer

If a staff member has a dispute with a volunteer they should try to resolve it directly by talking with the volunteer. If this does not resolve the problem or if the staff member is not able to discuss it with the volunteer, they should notify their manager/supervisor. If the dispute is of a serious nature it should also be put in writing and a copy given to the manager/supervisor. The manager/supervisor's role is to talk with both parties to determine a solution. Where appropriate, the manager/supervisor should mediate a meeting between the volunteer and the staff member to discuss the problem openly. If the dispute is of a serious enough nature, disciplinary action may be taken.

Where a volunteer has a dispute with a staff member

If a volunteer has a dispute with a staff member, they should advise their manager/supervisor as soon as possible to discuss the dispute. The manager/supervisor may ask the volunteer to put the dispute in writing. If the dispute continues or is of a serious enough nature, disciplinary action may be taken.

Conduct

Certain rules of conduct and behaviour apply to ensure a harmonious work environment for all concerned. This is set out in Berrigan Shire's Code of Conduct.

Resignation

Volunteers are an invaluable resource to Berrigan Shire but it is recognised that due to changing circumstances the volunteer may need to resign from their voluntary position. Berrigan Shire asks all volunteers to give as much notice, preferably in writing, as possible to their manager/supervisor prior to leaving Berrigan Shire.

All volunteers are asked to return any books, materials or files (electronic or otherwise) belonging to Berrigan Shire before they leave.

Berrigan Shire is committed to constantly improving its volunteer program and all feedback regarding the volunteer's experience at Berrigan Shire would be appreciated.

Emergency evacuation

In the event of a fire or discovery of smoke, volunteers are to notify the nearest staff member immediately. No volunteer should risk personal safety by trying to put out fire.



Should the alarms go off, all volunteers should follow staff to the nearest exit and evacuate the building immediately. Emergency exits are posted on noticeboards at Berrigan Shire offices and depots.

No attempt should be made to finish current tasks or to find personal belongings. All volunteers should then wait with staff outside the building at the nominated meeting place until they have been accounted for. No-one should leave the vicinity until that time.

Evaluation

The Volunteer Policy will be regularly reviewed and updated as required.

(Adopted by Council 18/6/03)

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