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| Chapter 15 – Volunteers |
| This chapter looks at the use of volunteers. |

# 15.1 Introduction

Most committees use volunteers to help with the work that needs to be done on the reserve. Volunteers can be:

* committee members
* members of the community
* community organisations, such as Rotary clubs or Landcare groups.

# 15.2 Induction

Your committee should provide a suitable induction and support when a new volunteer starts with the committee or a volunteer is intending to undertake a new activity.

## Mentors

Some committees assign a mentor to one or more volunteers. The volunteer can contact this person if they have a query. The mentor or another suitable person also accompanies the volunteer on their activity until it is established that the volunteer can safely and competently undertake the activity.

## Activity to be undertaken

Ensure that the volunteer is aware and understands:

* the nature of the volunteer work they will be doing
* any hazards associated with the activity
* emergency procedures and contacts.

# 15.3 Volunteer attendance register – keep one!

Keeping records makes it clear who are committee-approved volunteers. This is vital for ensuring that volunteers are covered by personal accident insurance when undertaking authorised activities on behalf of the committee.

Records should be kept of:

* the date, time and location of a volunteer’s work
* the work undertaken.

The following table is an example of a volunteer attendance register. It can be used to record volunteer activities on the reserve for insurance, administrative, reward and recognition purposes.

To comply with privacy laws, a volunteer’s contact details should be kept separately to this register.

## Example volunteer attendance register

This is a basic volunteer register. Your committee can develop a register to suit its needs depending on matters such as the nature of the reserve, the activities being undertaken and the pool of volunteers.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Name | Time in | Time out | Event (if applicable) | Task(s) performed | Volunteer's signature |
| 17/4/12 | John Smith | 10:30am | 12pm | Monthly working bee | WeedingPainting |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

# 15.4 Insurance cover and obligations

Volunteers are covered by DELWP’s group personal accident insurance policy if they are injured while taking part in voluntary activities as **authorised** by the committee.

Examples

A volunteer is injured while helping at an authorised fundraising activity for the committee.

A volunteer is injured while taking part in a working bee that he or she is authorised to participate in.

## DELWP Insurance team – incident reporting

If a volunteer is injured, advise the **DELWP Insurance team** as soon as possible:

* by email to risk.audit.insurance@delwp.vic.gov.au
* by phone via the customer contact centre on 136 186,
* by mail to the Senior Insurance Officer, DELWP, PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002, or
* via the local DELWP [regional office](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/communities-and-regions/regions-and-locations).

See 12.4 ‘Incidents and claims’ for further information, including what file notes need to be made and retained for insurance purposes.

## WorkSafe Victoria – incident reporting

It is a legal requirement that any incident involving volunteers must be reported within 48 hours of the incident to WorkSafe (13 23 60).

* led to serious injury or death
* **might have led to** serious injury or death.

See WorkSafe’s [guide to incident notification](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/guide-incident-notification) for details. Also notify the DELWP Insurance team as above.

# 15.5 Volunteer and emergency contact details

Your committee may find it useful to collect information from volunteers such as their name and contact details and the name and contact details of an emergency contact.

The committee may also find it useful to offer volunteers the opportunity to provide information such as:

* their areas of interest, skills, experience and capabilities
* whether they agree to being in photos and articles that may identify them, to help promote the reserve and volunteering.

Privacy requirements must be complied with. See 15.6 below.

# 15.6 Privacy requirements

When collecting, using and storing information about a volunteer, your committee must comply with the requirements of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*. For privacy reasons:

* Keep the information collected about a volunteer **separate from the volunteer attendance register.**
* Provide volunteers with a **privacy collection notice** (see below for what kind of information to include).
* Ensure that information collected about volunteers is stored securely and protected from unauthorised access, alteration, use or disclosure. If the information is somehow leaked or used by an unauthorised person for a purpose other than what it was provided for, it is a breach of privacy.

## Privacy collection notice

If your committee will be collecting information about a volunteer, such as entries in the *Attendance register*, provide volunteers with a [**privacy collection notice**](https://ovic.vic.gov.au/resource/collection-notices/). The law requires the notice to contain certain information. Your committee may find the wording below useful to use.

Example

**Privacy collection notice**

The *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* requires us to give you the following information.

1. The name of the committee of management is XXXXX. To contact the committee xxxxx’
2. You have a right to see the information we collect on you.
3. Information we collect about you is used to help us meet our obligations in managing the reserve, including our health and safety and insurance obligations. It may also help us to organise our volunteer activities and understand your skills, interests, experience and suitability for various volunteer activities.
4. We do not disclose your information to other individuals and organisations except to the extent required to facilitate your role with us as a volunteer. We never sell your information to third parties.
5. This information is not required to be collected by any law. However, the information you provide will assist the committee to meet its obligations under health and safety laws and its insurance obligations.
6. There are no consequences for you if you do not provide the information requested. However, for health, safety and insurance reasons your involvement in volunteer activities may be restricted or unable to occur if the information is not provided.

# 15.7 Reimbursement of expenses

Volunteers are only entitled to receive reimbursement for expenses. If volunteers were to be reimbursed for *more* than their expenses, it would change the nature of the relationship. A committee-volunteer relationship would become an employer-employee or contractor relationship. See chapter 13 ‘Employees’ and chapter 14 ‘Hiring contractors’.

Keep careful records of reimbursement for expenses, including receipts, so that if audited the committee can prove that everyone involved was acting with integrity.

# 15.8 Occupational health and safety

Committees have a duty of care to provide a healthy and safe working environment for volunteers under sections 21 to 23 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*.

See the [WorkSafe Victoria](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/) website or phone 1800 136 089 (toll free) for further information. The WorkSafe website also has information, such as [Volunteer health and safety: a handbook for community service organisations](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/volunteer-health-and-safety-handbook-community-service-organisations).

Volunteer Australia issues a [volunteer rights and checklist](https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1376971192VAVolunteerRightsandchecklist.pdf). Your committee may also find it useful to look at Safe Work Australia’s [Essential Guide to Work Health and Safety for Volunteers](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/book/essential-guide-work-health-and-safety-volunteers), which discusses health and safety for volunteers in other Australian states and territories.

There is a legal requirement to report certain serious incidents and near misses to WorkSafe within 48 hours. See WorkSafe’s [guide to incident notification](https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/guide-incident-notification).

# 15.9 Volunteers on subcommittees

Your committee may establish subcommittees to assist with its duties. A subcommittee can be:

* ‘standing’ (ongoing), such as a finance subcommittee
* a working group established for a particular task, such as a spring planting subcommittee.

Subcommittees have no power in their own right. They **cannot make decisions on behalf of the committee**. Their recommendations must be brought back to the full committee to be considered, approved, amended or rejected.

It is therefore possible for subcommittees to include a mixture of committee members and non-committee members, such as volunteers with relevant skills and knowledge.

# 15.10 Encouraging volunteers

Engaging with the community is a good way to encourage volunteers to assist with the reserve. This benefits the committee, provides enjoyment and fulfilment for the volunteer, and is consistent with the purpose of the reserve.

Some ways of sparking volunteer interest include:

* Encourage involvement in working bees, tree plantings and similar activities.
* Seek assistance from community members who have specific knowledge about flora, fauna, cultural significance and history, recreational needs, and other areas of expertise relevant to the reserve.
* Provide lunch for volunteers at reserve working bees. It is a good idea to include vegetarian options.
* **Advertise** your need for volunteers through the services listed on the [Volunteering Victoria](https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/managing-volunteers/searching-for-volunteers/) website.
* Report activities in the local newspaper and on social media.
* Utilise social media, such as a Facebook page for the reserve and an Instagram account, to generate volunteer interest and communication.

Always get permission from anyone identifiable in the photo before posting it or identifying them in any way in your posts. It is possible that using this kind of information without getting consent can result in physical harm, embarrassment or other problems for the individual.

Other suggestions for encouraging volunteer interest and participation are:

* Encourage attendance at an Annual General Meeting, which is a public event.
* Committee members are appointed by the Minister or their delegate. For local committees, this usually means an ‘election’ is held. This is a public event. Encourage the community to participate. The successful candidates are then nominated for approval by the Minister.
* Where appropriate, invite members of the community to attend committee meetings.

For further information on encouraging volunteer participation see 2.9 ‘Engaging with the community’.

# 15.11 Electronic copy

An electronic copy of this document is available from the DELWP website ([www.delwp.vic.gov.au/committees](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/committees).