

Establishing a “Friends of” Volunteer Group procedure

1. INTRODUCTION

This procedure supports the Volunteer Policy and provides instruction on the establishment of “Friends of” volunteer groups.

The purpose of the procedure provides structure and the basic requirements of establishing and maintaining "Friends of" volunteer groups ensuring they are managed effectively to Council and community expectations that are safe, productive and of mutual benefit.

2. PROCEDURE STATEMENT AND SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Port Macquarie Hastings Council “Friends of” volunteer groups. Organisations not formally known as a “Friends of” group should use this procedure as a guide in establishing and managing their volunteer organisation. “Friends of” groups are responsible for the following procedure when setting up and coordinating their organisation:

2.1. Determine Volunteer Purpose, Type and Site Location

- **Volunteer Purpose:** Clearly define the purpose of the volunteer group. Identify the main goals and objectives, such as environmental conservation, community engagement, or site maintenance.
- **Volunteer Type:** Identify whether the volunteers will be direct PMHC volunteers or indirect volunteers working on council or council-managed land - see “Friends of” under 5. Definitions
- **Identify Site:** Select the specific location in consultation with Port Macquarie Hastings Council to benefit from the "Friends of" group. Ensure the site is accessible and has sufficient space for volunteer activities.
- **Site Assessment:** Conduct a thorough assessment of the site to identify any potential hazards, special requirements, and overall suitability for volunteer activities.

2.2. Define the Scope of Works

- **List Activities:** Clearly define the activities volunteers will be involved in, such as maintenance, clean-up, planting, educational programs, or community events.
- **Task Breakdown:** Break down each activity into specific tasks, detailing the necessary steps, required tools, and estimated time for completion.
- **Responsibility Assignment:** Assign responsibilities to volunteers based on their skills and interests. Ensure there is a clear chain of command and point of contact for any issues that arise.

2.3. Environmental/Social Pathway and Deliverables

- **Initial Evaluation:** Evaluate the proposed activities to determine any environmental or social impact. Consider factors such as disturbance to local wildlife, changes to landscape, waste management, and use of chemicals and impact to community.
- **Consultation with Authorities:** Consult with Port Macquarie Hastings Council to understand the requirements and determine the necessary pathways and deliverables for your specific activities.

2.4. Establish mandatory requirements for the Volunteer Group

- **Public Liability Insurance:** Ensure the volunteer group secures \$20 million in public liability insurance. This is necessary to cover any potential risks and liabilities associated with the group's activities.
- **Site Supervisor:** Nominate a site supervisor and provide contact details who will be responsible for all volunteers on site. The site supervisor's duties include conducting inductions, ensuring compliance with Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) requirements, and providing any necessary training to volunteers.

2.5. Obtain Approvals

- **Internal Approval:** Establishment of the group must be approved via Council and register of groups must be maintained by Group Manager, Liveable Communities.
- **Contact Land Manager:** If proposed site is not on Council land or managed land contact the land manager at Port Macquarie Hastings Council for the area to discuss and obtain necessary permissions or guidelines for the volunteer activities.

2.6. Draft the Volunteer Agreement

The Volunteer Agreement should include the following:

- **Introduction:** Provide an overview of the "Friends of" group, its mission, and objectives.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the volunteers, including specific tasks and expectations.
- **Code of Conduct:** Include a code of conduct that outlines the expected behaviour and attitudes of volunteers.
- **Training and Safety:** Detail any necessary training volunteers must undergo before participating and highlight safety protocols and emergency procedures. Emphasise the site supervisor's role in ensuring these requirements are met.
- **Resources and Support:** Specify what resources (e.g., tools, equipment) and support (e.g., training, supervision) will be provided to volunteers.
- **Duration and Commitment:** Define the duration of the volunteer agreement and the expected time commitment from volunteers.
- **Termination Clause:** Include a clause detailing the conditions under which the agreement can be terminated by either party.
- **Submission:** Submit the draft Volunteer Agreement for approval by Council as per Section 2.5

2.7. Implement and Monitor

- **Orientation Session:** Conduct an orientation session for all volunteers to familiarise them with the site, scope of works, and safety protocols.
- **Ongoing Supervision:**
 - **Direct Volunteers:** Require ongoing site supervision to ensure tasks are completed safely and effectively.
 - **Indirect Volunteers:** Managed by the nominated site supervisor of volunteer group to ensure proper oversight and adherence to guidelines.
- **Regular Reviews:** Regular quarterly reviews on the progress of the volunteer activities and adjust as needed. Gather feedback from volunteers to improve the program.

2.8. Documentation and Reporting

- **Record Keeping:** Maintain accurate records of volunteer participation, tasks completed, and any incidents or issues that arise.
- **Reporting:** Provide regular reports to stakeholders, including any achievements, challenges, and future plans for the "Friends of" group. One report delivered to council as a minimum annually or upon request from Council.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES

Community Activation Team

- **Implementation and Communication:** Responsible and accountable for implementing and communicating this procedure.
- **Review and Update:** Ensuring this procedure is reviewed and updated to meet external compliance requirements.

Various Council teams

- **Group Management:** Different Council teams will oversee the governance and management of the "Friends of" groups based on their areas of responsibility. For example, the Environmental Coordinator will manage environmental lands and coordinate with the Liveable Communities Team (LC) and Parks and Gardens teams. Social embellishment projects will be managed by the Liveable Communities team with assistance from other areas of Council.
- All activities conducted by the "Friends of" groups must receive written approval from Council Staff before any work begins.

Group Manager Liveable Communities

- **Monitoring Compliance:** Responsible for monitoring compliance with this procedure.
- **Group register:** Maintaining the register of "Friends of" groups

4. REFERENCES

Council volunteer policy adopted 15/06/2023

National standards for volunteering involvement - Volunteering Australia

5. DEFINITIONS

Volunteer - Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good without financial gain

Direct Council Volunteers

Direct council volunteers are individuals who participate in activities directly organised and supervised by the council. They are officially registered with the council, follow council policies and procedures.

Key Characteristics:

- Officially registered with the council
- Supervised by council staff
- Follow council policies and safety standards
- Align with council goals and projects

Indirect Volunteers

Indirect volunteers are organisations or groups working on council-managed land or projects, but not directly supervised by the council. They belong to external organisations or community groups and are managed by a nominated site supervisor from their own group.

"Friends of" volunteers are dedicated community members, groups, or organisations that look after ecological, conservation, educational, or heritage sites designated by the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council. These volunteers engage in activities that support the preservation, enhancement, and

promotion of these sites, contributing to the overall vitality and interest of the public spaces within the Local Government Area.

Key Characteristics

- **Part of External Organisations or Community Groups:** Members often come from established organisations or community groups that share a commitment to site conservation and enhancement.
- **Managed by a Nominated Site Supervisor:** Each site has a designated supervisor who oversees volunteer activities and ensures alignment with council objectives.
- **Support Council Projects Independently:** Volunteers work autonomously to support council projects, contributing their expertise and resources.
- **Operate Under Partnership Agreements with the Council:** Collaborations are governed by formal agreements that outline roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
- **Follow Council Policies and Safety Standards:** All activities must adhere to the council's policies and safety guidelines to ensure the well-being of volunteers and the protection of sites.

Membership and Selection Process

- **Expression of Interest (EOI):** Members, including individuals, community groups, and organisations, will be selected through an EOI process, which includes specific criteria to ensure the most suitable candidates are chosen.
- **Membership Term:** Members will serve for a period of two years, with annual reviews to assess performance and alignment with project goals. After the two-year term, reapplication is necessary for continued involvement.
- **Active Volunteers:** While members of the "Friends of" management groups are selected through the EOI process, there may be additional active volunteers who work with these groups but are not part of the official management team.

Activities and Council Approval

- All activities undertaken by the Friends of volunteers must receive written approval from Council staff prior to commencement. This ensures that all projects align with the council's objectives and standards for site management and conservation.

6. PROCESS OWNER

Community Planning and Environment

7. AMENDMENTS

Nil