

SOUTH COAST **ENVIRO-EXPERIENCES**



VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

JANUARY 2024

creating
community
connections
through
volunteering

**A guide for engaging volunteers at
South Coast NRM**

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1. Welcome

Welcome to South Coast NRM's dedicated team!

For our volunteers, we are delighted to have you on board and appreciate your contribution in making a real difference towards preserving the unique biodiversity of the South Coast region. The Volunteer Management Handbook will provide you with essential guidelines, resources and safety protocols before you embark on this rewarding experience.

To our staff, thank you for your contribution and commitment in engaging volunteers to enhance the work that you do.

We are looking forward to having you on our team!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LB94', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Luke Bayley

CEO South Coast NRM

2. Purpose of this Handbook

This Volunteer Management Handbook has been prepared by South Coast NRM to provide guidance to both South Coast NRM staff and volunteers. It is designed to ensure staff and volunteers have clarity and understanding on the following:

1. The responsibilities staff have to their volunteers and vice versa.
2. What volunteers can be expected to do.
3. Where to go to find clarification about the volunteer role.
4. That overall, there is a consistent approach across the organisation when working with volunteers.

3. South Coast NRM and Volunteering

South Coast NRM is a community based, independent, not-for-profit organisation that works with the community and stakeholders to maintain and improve a healthy and productive environment for the long-term benefit of communities within the South Coast region. Involvement with the communities of the South Coast plays an important role in setting strategic directions and ensuring projects and programs support the preservation and improvements of the unique and valuable landscape in which we live and work. The success of our Strategic Plan hinges on the active involvement of community and its volunteers. Through education, awareness, and collaborative projects, we aim to empower our communities to take an active role in protecting our shared environment. You can view South Coast NRM's [Strategic Plan](#) on our website.

Definition of Volunteering

Volunteering Australia defines 'volunteering' as:

Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.

Volunteering for the 'common good' means that a volunteer contributes their time to a project task that benefits the community, the environment, South Coast NRM and the volunteer. Volunteering can cover many different activities, and in natural resource management (NRM) it can include undertaking activities, without payment, such as environmental monitoring and rehabilitation to help promote and maintain the sustainable management of natural resources.

Volunteer activities are not exclusively those conducted outdoors but can include a range of activities that benefit the organisation such as graphic design, administrative tasks, and data entry opportunities. Volunteers will be matched to tasks according to their abilities, preferences, availability and skills.

Why is Volunteering Important?

Volunteers add value to South Coast NRM by bringing skills, knowledge and a willingness to make a positive contribution to the organisation, the environment and the community. Within the organisation, volunteers take on responsibilities and contribute to project objectives, whilst providing resources that may not otherwise be accessible.

Volunteers do not replace paid staff, instead they complement staff delivering project outcomes.

National Standards

South Coast NRM will endeavour to meet the National Standards for volunteering as maintaining high standards for volunteer management will ensure that we remain a place of choice for volunteering and maximise the organisational benefits. The [eight national standards for volunteer management](#) were published by Volunteering Australia in 2015.

4. Governance & Operations of South Coast NRM

South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc. (South Coast NRM) is governed by a skills-based Board in accordance with the Constitution.

The Board works to achieve South Coast NRM's objectives, determine the strategic direction, vision, and mission, and operate in accordance with our values.

The Board is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation and risk management of South Coast NRM, including achievement of performance and financial targets. The Board are responsible for the recruitment and management of the Chief Executive Officer, (CEO) who reports directly to the Board. The CEO is responsible for delivering the strategic direction, set by the Board, and the operations of the organisation. The CEO is supported by Executive Managers and an Executive Assistant. The current executive positions are: Executive Manager Business and Governance and Executive Manager Operations and Engagement.

The Board is supported and informed by committees which operate with dedicated Terms of Reference. The current Board endorsed committees are:

- Audit and Risk Committee
- Business Development Committee
- South Coast Environment Fund Committee
- Board Nominations and Remuneration Committee

Regarding the operations of South Coast NRM, there are effectively two business units with unique roles and responsibilities that work together to implement the Strategic Plan:

1. Business and Governance:
 - Financial management, accounts receivable and payable,
 - Human resource management,
 - Governance and compliance,
 - Work Health and Safety, (WHS),
 - Insurance,
 - Building management and security, vehicle management, asset management, information technology,
 - Corporate information management,
 - Contracts administration,
 - Administration services and
 - South Coast NRM membership.
2. Operations and Engagement:
 - Project and program development, including grant and tender submissions,
 - Stakeholder engagement, (consultation, community participation, Indigenous participation, broad communications) to support project delivery, South Coast NRM Strategic Plan and Southern Prospects,
 - Project management including financial management, monitoring and evaluation, reporting and contracts management,
 - Project delivery,
 - Facilitation of Southern Prospects, the South Coast regional strategy for natural resource management
 - Technical expertise in natural resource management
 - Projects information management

5. Expected Ethics and Conduct of Volunteers

Code of Conduct

South Coast NRM is a professional organisation with high standards and expects that all volunteers adhere to behaviours that exemplify these standards. This section describes the behaviours and standards which all volunteers are expected to abide by to uphold the mission and values of South Coast NRM.

Conduct and Behaviour

South Coast NRM expects that volunteers will uphold the standards and values of South Coast NRM.

Volunteers should always treat others with respect and courtesy, reflecting the objectives of both policy and government legislation regarding access, inclusion, and equal opportunity. Volunteers are expected to behave with integrity in their dealings with others, providing support and assistance to fellow volunteers, individuals and South Coast NRM staff members to whom they provide services or information.

Harassment and bullying are not tolerated in South Coast NRM's workplace or in any venue where its services are delivered. All volunteers share responsibility for ensuring that South Coast NRM's workplace is free from bullying and harassment and that the appropriate processes are used to deal with any incidents that may arise.

Community Care

South Coast NRM has a responsibility to provide services which are sensitive to the needs of the community and the individuals within it. During their work, South Coast NRM's volunteers will encounter children and vulnerable members of the community and have a duty to protect the rights, safety, financial security, and the wellbeing of these individuals. To fulfill these responsibilities South Coast NRM may require that volunteers have relevant screening requirements such as Working with Children Clearance.

A volunteer must advise a South Coast NRM staff member immediately if any Authority commences proceedings that may result in any clearance being negated.

South Coast NRM will advise volunteers of the procedures required to apply for the identified clearance/s and at times, may meet the normal costs associated with obtaining the required clearance/s. South Coast NRM may require volunteers to renew the required clearance/s every three years, or such lesser period required by law.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All volunteers are required to maintain the confidentiality of all personal and corporate information which they may have access to during their time volunteering at South Coast NRM. This information is only for use in the course of their duties at South Coast NRM and may not be used for other purposes.

Volunteers must also respect the privacy of individuals who are registered with South Coast NRM and should not use or disclose personal details except when expressly authorised by South Coast NRM. This includes disclosure to any other volunteer.

Except when expressly authorised by South Coast NRM, a volunteer will not:

- Directly or indirectly reveal, or cause to be revealed, to any third party any confidential dealings, finances, transactions, or affairs of South Coast NRM or any of its clients which may come to their knowledge during their period of their involvement.
- Use for their own benefit or gain or that of any other person, firm or company, any confidential information belonging to South Coast NRM.

Volunteers should observe these requirements even after they no longer volunteer for South Coast NRM.

Conflict of Interest

Volunteers must disclose any actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest to a South Coast NRM staff member at the earliest opportunity. For more details around what a conflict is, refer to South Coast NRM's Conflict of Interest policy. For more information you can also refer to ["Managing conflicts of interest | ACNC."](#) The Board and/or Senior Management will determine whether the conflict of interest requires the individual to withdraw from participation in an activity or decision.

Internet and Email Access

The primary purpose for access to the internet and email is to assist South Coast NRM's volunteers carry out the duties of their role. Volunteers may use the internet and email access that may be provided by South Coast NRM for any volunteering-related purpose.

Limited personal use is permitted if it:

- Is infrequent and brief,
- Does not interfere with volunteering duties of South Coast NRM,
- Does not compromise the security of South Coast NRM's system or impact on South Coast NRM's electronic storage capacity or network performance,
- Does not incur any additional expense for South Coast NRM,
- Does not violate any laws,
- Does not compromise any confidentiality requirements of South Coast NRM.

A volunteer may not use the internet or email (including internal email access) provided by South Coast NRM to:

- Conduct a business,
- Create or exchange messages that are discriminatory, offensive, harassing, bullying, obscene or threatening,
- Knowingly visit websites containing illegal, objectionable (including pornographic), or criminal material,
- Create, store or exchange information in violation of copyright laws including the uploading or downloading of commercial software, games, music, or movies,
- Use internet-enabling activities such as gambling, gaming, or conducting illegal activities,
- Create or exchange advertisements, solicitations, chain letters and other unsolicited or bulk email.

Personal Mobile Phone Use

Volunteers are asked to limit time on personal calls when on duty and minimise any adverse impact on others.

Personal Use of Work Telephones

Limited personal use of work telephones is permitted when it is infrequent, brief and does not interfere with a volunteering role or the operation of South Coast NRM.

Dress Code

Volunteers are required to demonstrate a neat and presentable standard of dress.

Drugs and Alcohol in the Workplace

South Coast NRM is committed to providing volunteers and visitors with a smoke, drug, and alcohol-free workplace during designated work hours. Alcohol is permitted to be served at designated social occasions, but this must be approved by the CEO.

The unlawful distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance in South Coast NRM's offices or shared spaces is prohibited.

The Board must be notified immediately if a volunteer is:

- Convicted of a drug or alcohol violation arising out of conduct occurring in the workplace
- Fined, or has their license suspended while driving a South Coast NRM vehicle under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants.

Gifts

Volunteers may on occasion receive gifts in recognition of services provided when volunteering for South Coast NRM. A South Coast NRM staff member must be advised when this occurs.

Care of Personal Property

Volunteers should take reasonable precautions to ensure the security of personal possessions brought into South Coast NRM to reduce the risk of theft or damage. South Coast NRM does not take responsibility for loss or damage to personal property due to negligence or wilful action on the part of a volunteer.

Volunteers are encouraged to bring only items considered essential to their daily needs, whether working in the office or at a temporary work location. Depending on the circumstances, volunteers may be compensated for loss or damage to personal effects which occurs during, or because of, carrying out official duties at the office or at a temporary work location.

6. Work Health and Safety

South Coast NRM is committed to promoting healthy and safe workplaces for volunteers, visitors, and contractors.

This is undertaken by:

- Eliminating risks to health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable; and
- Minimising residual risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Board Responsibilities

Members of the Board of South Coast NRM are required to exercise due care and diligence, including taking reasonable steps to:

- Acquire and keep up to date knowledge on work health and safety matters,
- Understand the nature and operations of the work and associated hazards and risks,
- Ensure that South Coast NRM has, and uses, appropriate resources and processes to eliminate or minimise risks to work health and safety,
- Ensure that South Coast NRM has appropriate processes to receive and consider information about work-related incidents, hazards, and risks, and to respond in a timely manner,
- Ensure that South Coast NRM has, and implements, processes for complying with their duties and obligations including:
 - Consulting with volunteers and contractors, and
 - Providing appropriate training and instruction,
- Verify the provision and use of the relevant resources and processes.

Duties of Volunteers

Volunteers must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions. Dignity of risk needs to be considered as long as it doesn't put others in risk. They must also cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health or safety at the workplace.

Duties of Other Persons at the Workplace

Any person at a workplace, including customers and visitors, must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.

They must also comply, so far as they are reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by South Coast NRM to ensure a safe and healthy workplace.

Consulting with Volunteers

The South Coast NRM staff member should consult with volunteers when:

- Identifying hazards and assessing risks arising from their role,
- Proposing changes that may affect the health and safety of volunteers or members of the public,
- Making decisions about:
 - Ways to eliminate or minimise risks,
 - The adequacy of facilities for volunteers' welfare when involved in South Coast NRM activities,
 - Procedures for resolving health and safety issues,
 - Procedures for monitoring the health of volunteers or workplace conditions,
 - How to provide health and safety information and training to volunteers.

Consultation should be undertaken collaboratively, although there is no requirement for consensus to be reached.

Incident Notification

All incidents (including near misses) should be reported as soon as possible to the South Coast NRM staff member. They should be recorded and investigated promptly with corrective actions taken using the South Coast NRM Incident and Hazard Report form.

Pandemics

There have been several pandemics in recent years, including the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in significant community disruption, illness, and severe illness, including death, in Australia.

Keeping volunteers, clients, and the community safe is of utmost priority.

South Coast NRM follows Government directives to reduce the risk of community transmission. These may include reinforcing personal hygiene by providing training, resources and signage, physical distancing, adapting programs or processes to minimise contact, working from home, testing, and quarantining.

Additional measures may also be put in place, based on consideration of our circumstances, risks and potential mitigants.

Volunteers and contractors will be consulted and kept informed of settings for working in pandemics. They are encouraged to talk with a South Coast NRM staff member about any issues, concerns or ideas that support their safety, and the safety of the community.

First Aid

South Coast NRM encourages volunteers to hold a current first aid certificate. South Coast NRM from time to time may arrange and/or support first aid training for volunteers.

Emergency Procedures

Emergency procedures are to be covered during the site induction for all events. It is imperative that all volunteers are familiar with the evacuation procedure and concerns should be raised immediately with the South Coast NRM staff member.

Volunteering Virtually

South Coast NRM supports virtual volunteering for some roles, to promote accessibility and inclusion.

It is to be put in place through mutual agreement. Arrangements must meet the operational needs of South Coast NRM as well as providing a suitable option for the volunteer. Volunteer role descriptions should specify the nature of the arrangement and confirm that the virtual volunteering environment is safe and secure.

Where virtual volunteering is all or most of an individual's work time, the agreement should also include mechanisms for communication and reporting, to ensure that the volunteer member is included in general communication, meetings, and social events.

The agreement should include details of any equipment or expense reimbursement which is to be provided by South Coast NRM, where applicable.

Volunteers involved virtually can be granted approval to access email and electronic records using remote access protocols. Volunteers must take proper precautions regarding any South Coast NRM data which is stored on their personal device. All volunteers are required to maintain the confidentiality of all personal and corporate information which they may have access to during their time at South Coast NRM and to ensure that this information is always secure.

7. Volunteer Conditions

Volunteer Recruitment and Induction

Volunteers will be recruited based on suitability for the position.

Volunteers will be provided with a role description. Orientation is provided to all new South Coast NRM volunteers and is aimed at introducing them to South Coast NRM and to the policies and procedures governing practices at South Coast NRM.

During this induction, the emergency procedures will be explained, and volunteers taken on a guided tour showing them the layout of the premises including the kitchen, toilets, fire extinguisher location, emergency exits and muster points. Volunteers will also be introduced to the fire warden and first aid officers.

Ongoing Support & Development

Volunteers will be provided with ongoing support and supervision. Volunteers are designated a South Coast NRM staff member to supervise them dependent on their role and tasks being assigned/undertaken.

Annual Review

An annual review will be held to evaluate performance and determine further training requirements or opportunities for regular volunteers. The particulars of the annual review will be decided between the volunteer and their designated supervisor.

Review of Volunteer Role Descriptions

Volunteer role descriptions may be reviewed by South Coast NRM from time to time. Volunteers will be consulted during this process and advised of any changes.

Identified Education and Training Requirements

South Coast NRM encourages its volunteers to enhance their knowledge of matters relating to their volunteering position. Should training needs be identified during the Annual Review or a volunteer identifies an appropriate course or event, consideration will be given as to what level of support which may be provided by South Coast NRM.

Termination of Service - by Volunteer

Should a volunteer wish to resign from their role they are asked to give South Coast NRM reasonable notice. The volunteer will be paid any outstanding reimbursements due. All property of South Coast NRM must be returned prior to leaving South Coast NRM.

When a volunteer terminates their engagement with South Coast NRM, the volunteer may be offered the opportunity to take part in an exit interview. A record of the interview will be retained. Our wish is to obtain information that may help to:

- Establish the reasons for leaving,
- Analyse any trends in the reason for leaving,
- Gain constructive feedback on the volunteer's position and their time at South Coast NRM.

Termination of Service - by South Coast NRM

South Coast NRM may terminate volunteer services if the volunteer is no longer required for reasons included but not limited to:

- The volunteer is considered not suitable for the position offered,
- The workload changes such that the volunteer is no longer required, and
- The workload changes such that the volunteer does not have suitable skills for the work available.

Termination due to Misconduct

South Coast NRM may terminate a volunteer in the event of misconduct. Misconduct includes breaches of any of South Coast NRM's policies which warrant instant dismissal and includes serious misconduct. Examples of misconduct include:

- Theft of property or funds from South Coast NRM,
- Wilful damage to South Coast NRM property,
- Intoxication through alcohol or other prohibited substance whilst volunteering,
- Verbal or physical harassment, including bullying, of any other employee, volunteer, board member or any other person particularly in respect of race, sex, or religion,
- Disclosure of confidential information regarding South Coast NRM to any other party without prior permission from a South Coast NRM staff member,
- Falsification of any of South Coast NRM's records for personal gain or on behalf of any other employee/volunteer, or
- Unwillingness or inability to support and further the mission of South Coast NRM and/or the objectives of the program.

Immediate dismissal would only take place in the most serious of circumstances, and in these instances:

- The South Coast NRM staff member will advise the volunteer,
- The volunteer may wish to include the presence of a support person,
- A written report is prepared and approved and stored in a secure location on the premises of South Coast NRM, and
- All property of South Coast NRM must be returned.

8. Communications & Marketing

Promotional Material

All promotional material is to be approved by the South Coast NRM staff member to ensure that the design and content are consistent with South Coast NRM's publications.

Media Contact

The CEO has sole responsibility of determining what media interviews and other media opportunities and activities are undertaken on behalf of South Coast NRM.

Should a volunteer be approached with a media or promotional opportunity they should immediately advise the South Coast NRM staff member who will consult with the CEO to determine if the request is appropriate and who should speak on behalf of South Coast NRM.

Media Releases

Media content development and release will be managed by South Coast NRM staff.

Social Media

Social media content development and release will be managed by a South Coast NRM staff member. Volunteers may be consulted or quoted in the social media content.

Managing Client Feedback

From time to time, clients (e.g., land owners) may feel unhappy with the volunteer engagement and although this may sometimes be caused by external factors, volunteers are encouraged to always assist and support their clients. Where this occurs, the South Coast NRM staff member must be notified.

When clients have a complaint or other issue, use the four steps shown below to help in managing the situation.

1. **Listen:** To them without interruption. To show that you understand their problem, it may be helpful to repeat their issue back to them in your own words.
2. **Acknowledge:** Acknowledge their issue and apologise for the inconvenience. Don't be defensive, don't over explain and don't assign any blame. Thank them for their feedback.
3. **Act:** Tell the client you will pass their feedback onto the South Coast NRM staff member who will respond to them directly. Take their details, so that they can be contacted later if appropriate.
4. **Follow Up:** Make sure that you pass on the message to the South Coast NRM staff member.

Intellectual Property

Any changes, innovations and ideas initiated by volunteers belong to South Coast NRM and and/or the client. The South Coast NRM staff member will provide advice in relation to intellectual property on a case-by-case basis.

All records, documents and other papers or electronic images, together with any copies or extracts thereof, made, or acquired by volunteers during their volunteer role with South Coast NRM must be returned to South Coast NRM on demand, or otherwise no later than upon the termination of their role.

9. Internal Grievance Resolution

Every effort should be made to solve problems cooperatively and informally. If a volunteer feels they have cause for complaint regarding their treatment within South Coast NRM, they may seek resolution via a formal grievance process.

All formal avenues for handling of grievances will be fully documented and the volunteer's wishes will be considered in the determination of appropriate steps and actions. All complaints will receive thoughtful consideration in a timely manner and will be discussed with the individual who raised them. Discussions held are confidential.

Volunteers are assured they will not be disadvantaged using these procedures whether decisions are found for or against their grievance.

Trigger	Action	Responsibility
Volunteer is unable to resolve an issue or grievance informally or would like assistance/support to resolve it.	Volunteer to raise with a South Coast NRM staff member. The content of this discussion is confidential however there will be a record that a discussion has occurred in relation to a grievance.	Volunteer to raise the issue
Initial discussion results in agreement that a staff member of South Coast NRM will seek to resolve the issue.	Staff member of South Coast NRM will seek to resolve issue, considering both the views of the volunteer and the wellbeing of South Coast NRM. Record a brief description of the action they have or will take.	South Coast NRM staff member
Issue is resolved satisfactorily	Staff member of South Coast NRM notes for the record that the grievance has been resolved and reports to the CEO.	South Coast NRM staff member
Issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the volunteer	Volunteer to make a formal, written complaint to the Board.	Volunteer

10. Financial Management

South Coast NRM will provide sound and transparent financial management throughout its operation.

All expenditure will be in alignment with the goals and aspirations of South Coast NRM, and funds will be used to provide and support South Coast NRM's role in the broader community. Use of corporate resources and facilities will be managed by South Coast NRM staff; any procurement will be the responsibility of the staff member, not the volunteers, to ensure alignment with South Coast NRM's goals. Tools, resources, and equipment are provided for use in the course of duties, and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure that they are used appropriately.

Insurance

South Coast NRM holds the following insurance coverages relating to volunteers:

- Voluntary workers personal accident
- Public liability
- Motor vehicles
- Business interruption and cyber protection

South Coast NRM operates a fleet of vehicles. Pool vehicles are available when staff and/or volunteers are required to travel on behalf of South Coast NRM. Vehicles must be booked by a South Coast NRM staff member. Volunteers are only eligible as drivers in relation to fatigue management and must adhere to the relevant policy.

Volunteer Reimbursement

Volunteers may be reimbursed for travel or other out-of-pocket expenses. This should be clarified with the South Coast NRM staff member prior to undertaking the volunteer task. Reimbursements may be available for:

- Costs of volunteer screening,
- Cost of travel:
 - a rate per kilometre in accordance with the ATO guidelines¹ and parking costs or
 - public transport costs
- Cost of any required training or memberships.

Volunteers should not be out of pocket for any equipment or office supplies required to undertake their role. These and any other costs that may be subject to reimbursement are required to be approved before spending any personal money.

All volunteers are required to comply with the appropriate procedures for approval and reimbursement of expenditure.

¹ <https://www.ato.gov.au/Business/Income-and-deductions-for-business/Deductions/Deductions-for-motor-vehicle-expenses/Cents-per-kilometre-method/>



Creating community connections through environmental volunteering

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