



PLANNING YOUR NATURE ACTIVITY

A guide for volunteer groups



INTRODUCTION

Nature volunteer groups put in an enormous effort each year to improve our environment, campaign for change and protect our precious nature reserves.

To keep doing this important work, groups must plan their activities well and ensure their members, volunteers and the general public are kept safe.

All nature volunteer groups operating on City-owned land are now required to register with us every 12 months. While this guide is intended for leaders of these registered groups, the process described in Part B of the guide could be adapted by any group that is planning to deliver nature activities.

The guide is divided into two parts:

Part A – Information for registered groups

This covers important information that is relevant to group leaders who are registered to complete work on City-owned land.

Part B – Planning and delivering nature activities

An overview of how to safely plan and deliver nature activities on City-owned land.

To supplement the guide, there is a range of other tools available on our website including forms, safety inductions and up-to-date contacts and information.

Visit www.geelongaustralia.com.au/naturevolunteers for more information.

The City of Greater Geelong acknowledges Wadawurrung Traditional Owners of this land and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People who are part of the Greater Geelong community today.

We also thank the Yarra Ranges Council, in particular Sarah Fowler and Jen Ellison, for allowing us to use their Environmental Volunteers Guidelines as a template for this guide.

PART A: INFORMATION FOR REGISTERED GROUPS



Following is some information that explains how to become a registered nature volunteer group and the responsibilities of all parties in this arrangement. It also briefly covers the process registered groups must follow to manage risk, as well as insurances.

BECOMING REGISTERED

Each year, groups will be asked to complete an online registration form and update their group information. Information we'll ask for includes:

- group leader names and contact details
- a tally of member numbers
- a copy of the certificate of currency for the group's public liability insurance.

All registered groups will then be listed on the City's personal accident insurance policy for volunteer groups.

For more information about registering, visit www.geelongaustralia.com.au/naturevolunteers

SAFETY INDUCTIONS

All group members must undertake a safety induction. This induction must be completed prior to undertaking work on City land and can be completed online.

The induction will cover many of the topics covered in this guide including:

- roles and responsibilities
- managing activity risks
- site safety inspections
- reporting.

ANNUAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

Each year, group leaders will be invited to meet with our environment officers to develop an annual activity program that will include:

- the group vision and goals
- a schedule of activities for the next 12 months
- the risk level of each activity
- resource needs for each activity, such as seedlings for plantings.

Once these four planning steps have been completed, groups can start implementing their program and advertise their activities via our website.

BENEFITS OF BECOMING A REGISTERED GROUP

- Personal accident insurance for volunteers while they're working on City-owned land (with some limits).
- Help to source tools, materials and personal protective equipment.
- Free training and inductions in volunteer safety.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Safety is everyone's responsibility, but what you're specifically responsible for varies depending on your role.

Our responsibilities

At the City, we manage over 1,400 hectares of nature reserves throughout Greater Geelong. These reserves include coastal areas, grasslands, woodlands, forests, waterways, lakes and wetlands.

We rely on support from our nature volunteer groups to help us with this important work.

To assist registered groups, we:

- provide personal accident insurance for group members (some exclusions apply for pre-existing conditions and volunteers under 12)
- work with registered group leaders to prepare an activity program
- provide safety inductions and training
- help source tools, materials and personal protective equipment
- appoint external contractors to deliver high-risk, or complex, management actions
- provide regular updates about health and safety, events and training
- offer technical advice and support
- provide grant opportunities.

Group leader responsibilities

It is important registered group leaders do all they can to ensure the personal safety of all volunteers and members

of the public in the areas they work. To execute their duties well, they should:

- work with City officers to prepare an activity program for their group
- complete safety inductions and training as required
- appoint a site coordinator for each activity
- keep the work site as free of hazards as possible
- stick to activities listed on their annual activity program
- make sure all tools and equipment are well-maintained and in safe working order
- make sure their group has public liability insurance cover (see page 8)
- make sure one or more group members are trained in first aid (each activity or event needs to have at least one volunteer trained in first aid in attendance)
- follow the advice in this guide when running an activity (from page 9)
- follow the advice in our Safe Activity Practices for Nature Groups procedures.

Volunteer responsibilities

Volunteers have a responsibility to take care of their own safety, as well as that of others. As such, they must:

- register at each nature activity they attend and sign the Volunteer's Participation Agreement

- disclose any pre-existing injury or medical condition that may be aggravated by participating in the activity
- wear appropriate personal protective equipment for each activity (as outlined in our Safe Activity Practices for Nature Groups procedures)
- follow the directions of the site coordinator and report hazards or incidents immediately
- undertake safety inductions and training, as required
- not perform any high risk activities (see examples below).

MANAGING RISKS

All activities in life involve risk. If registered volunteer groups understand those risks, they will find there are many things they can do to eliminate or minimise them.

We support group safety by identifying potential risks, determining acceptable activities and promoting training opportunities to help equip volunteers with the required skills.

Assessing risks

We assess risk as low, medium or high.

Your activity program will identify the risk levels of each activity and how to mitigate these risks. Activities deemed to be high-risk (see examples below) cannot be performed by volunteers.

Low and medium risk works are permitted provided a Safe Activity Practice is available for each activity. However, it's important to remember that some activities may be more risky to certain volunteers, particularly if they have any pre-existing injuries or conditions likely to be aggravated by the activity.

For more information about Safe Activity Practices for Nature Groups, visit www.geelongaustralia.com.au/naturevolunteers

EXAMPLES OF HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES

The following high-risk activities should not be performed by volunteers:

- Chipper and chainsaw use
- Chemical use and/or spraying
- Ride-on mower use
- Use of powered brush cutters with blades
- Mechanical auger use
- Work requiring petrol-powered generators
- Earth-moving machinery use
- Work in high-risk locations such as heights, roadsides, near machinery, on steep slopes or in, near, or over water.

Personal protective equipment

All volunteers must wear personal protective equipment appropriate to the task. While we may be able to provide these items on occasion, groups are generally required to supply their own.

General personal protective equipment includes:

- sturdy footwear
- gloves
- long-sleeved tops and long pants, or gaiters (to protect from sunlight, bites and scratches)
- hat, sunscreen, sunglasses and lip balm
- insect repellent
- high-visibility vest
- safety glasses.

The personal protective equipment needed for most tasks is identified in the Safe Activity Practices for Nature Groups procedures available on our website.

Insurance

Where potential risks can't be avoided, volunteer groups can take out insurance to help protect against those risks. There are some liabilities each group should have insurance cover for.

Personal accident

We provide personal accident insurance cover for registered nature volunteer groups operating on City-owned land. This means that volunteers who are injured while working may be covered for injuries they receive while carrying out a designated activity.

Please be aware this insurance does not cover:

- volunteers aged under 12
- anyone with a pre-existing medical condition or injury likely to be aggravated by the activity they are carrying out.

To be covered, volunteer groups must be registered on the City's Nature Volunteer Group Register, and therefore listed on our policy, and carrying out agreed activities (as defined in their activity program).

To find out whether your group is covered, visit www.geelongaustralia.com.au/naturevolunteers

Public liability

Although we don't cover volunteer groups for public liability, we still strongly recommend that all volunteer groups have this type of cover. Public liability insurance covers a group's potential liabilities to third parties for personal injury or property damage.

By joining or being under the auspice of an environmental network, a volunteer group may be also able to access additional insurance cover.

For more information about insurance, visit www.geelongaustralia.com.au/naturevolunteers or call 5272 5272.

PART B. RUNNING YOUR NATURE ACTIVITY



Good planning is the key to successful nature activities.

In this section of the guide, we have broken down the task of organising a safe and successful nature activity into 6 easy-to-follow steps.

Steps 1–3 should be implemented before the activity (see pages 10–11), steps 4 and 5 should be implemented during the activity (see page 12–13) and step 6 should be conducted after the activity has been completed (see page 13).

STEP 1: APPOINT A SITE COORDINATOR

When planning an activity, your group must designate someone to act as site coordinator. As well as planning and

directing works, the site coordinator is also responsible for identifying and managing potential hazards.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY SITE AND ACTIVITY HAZARDS

The site coordinator should use a Nature Activity Safety Inspection and Induction Form, available on our website, to identify any hazards onsite and record actions that will be taken to reduce the likelihood of an incident occurring (known as control measures). This form can then be used on the day of your activity to induct volunteers to the site before beginning works.

As part of this process, record:

- personal protective equipment that is likely to be needed
- the exact location of the worksite and the nearest cross street or safety marker (if there is one)

- mobile coverage in the area, keeping in mind you may need to organise an alternative if network coverage is patchy
- a basic site plan that includes registration, carpark and works areas, emergency evacuation points, the first aid station, nearest defibrillator, toilets and 'no-go' areas, such as bodies of water, steep slopes, cliffs, busy roads and other hazards.

For more information about identifying hazards and managing risks, visit www.geelongcity.vic.gov.au/naturevolunteers

The site coordinator role does not always need to be filled by the same person. By training several group members, the load can be shared.

STEP 3: PREPARE FOR THE ACTIVITY

The site coordinator should check all necessary information has been provided to volunteers before the day of the event.

Details to provide include:

- site location
- activities planned for the day, such as planting, weed pulling and so on
- appropriate clothing and personal protective equipment required
- name and contact details for site coordinator and first aid person
- any other requirements, such as the need to BYO food and drink
- direction that volunteers under 12 years of age require a guardian
- information to help volunteers get to the site, such as nearest bus routes and car parking arrangements.

Other tasks the site coordinator should carry out before the day include:

- Checking the weather forecast – volunteers should not be working on Total Fire Ban days or in other unsafe weather conditions, such as heavy rain or thunderstorms.
- Availability of toilets – ideally, check to make sure they're clean before the event and bring handwashing materials.
- Organising a first aid response – this means:
 - o making sure at least one person trained in first aid is attending the event
 - o checking the first aid kit is stocked properly and
 - o making sure the kit is taken to the event.



Keep an eye on our nature volunteers web page for volunteer group induction and training opportunities. We offer health and safety training for volunteers, as well as first aid training for one or two committed members. For more information, visit www.geelongaustralia.com.au/naturevolunteers

STEP 4: INDUCT VOLUNTEERS TO THE SITE

All volunteers must be inducted to the site before they start work. This must include:

1. Introductions to site coordinator, first aid person and a group member experienced in their designated activity.
2. Time for each volunteer to read and sign the Volunteer Registration and Participation Agreement (see below), give emergency contact details and declare allergies and existing medical conditions.
2. A site tour including emergency assembly points, first aid station, equipment, toilets and 'no-go' areas.
4. Activity demonstration that covers:
 - a. how to complete allocated tasks safely (following Safe Activity Practices)
 - b. description of potential hazards and control measures in place
 - c. time for volunteers to consider other potential hazards and identify the safest way to proceed before they start work.
5. A run through of emergency evacuation and incident reporting procedures.
6. Checking that all volunteers under 12 years of age have a guardian present.

Volunteers must always work in groups of 2 or more and know their location, in case of emergency. Each group must have access to either a mobile phone with network coverage, or a handheld radio.

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT?

Guided by legislation, this agreement covers the responsibilities of a volunteer and is designed to protect the safety of all volunteers when working with a nature group. It is important to make sure that volunteers read the agreement carefully before signing this form. Download at www.geelongaustralia.com.au/naturevolunteers

STEP 5: MONITOR AND OVERSEE VOLUNTEERS

Site coordinators must check all volunteers are following Safe Activity Practices while working, as well as wearing the recommended personal protective equipment correctly.

Other responsibilities of the site coordinator during the activity include:

- recording hazards not previously noted
- following the process on page 14 if there is an incident, including recording all relevant information
- ensuring members of the public are escorted safely through the works area when required.

STEP 6: AT THE END OF THE DAY

At the end of the day, the site coordinator records the group's achievements – for example, the number of seedlings planted – in the Nature Activity Results Form.

Incidents recorded during the activity and new hazards identified must be mentioned in this report.

This information should be kept as part of group records with a copy sent to the nominated City of Greater Geelong contact person. These records will be useful for annual reporting, planning future projects, applying for grant funding, demonstrating milestones and recognising achievements.



WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS AN INCIDENT

Many types of incident can happen during a nature volunteer activity. These include:

- medical emergencies
- physical injuries
- property damage
- vehicle damage
- altercations
- bullying
- 'near miss' incidents (when a serious incident has been narrowly avoided).

Some incidents, such as medical emergencies or physical injuries, require an immediately response, while others, although less serious, still need to be reported to us.

Responding to an incident

Our first priority is always the wellbeing of the volunteer or member of the public involved.

If the incident or injury is a medical emergency, please call 000 to request an ambulance as soon as possible (see 'Calling an Ambulance' on page 15).

If it is something less urgent, consider whether it is more appropriate to:

- get the first aid person onsite
- drive the injured person to see a local doctor
- contact a relative
- call Nurse on Call (1300 60 60 24) or the Victorian Poisons Information Centre (13 11 26) for advice.

Reporting an incident

It is essential that all volunteer groups working on our land report any accident, incident, property damage or near miss to us as soon as possible (preferably within 24 hours).

All incidents should be reported to your designated environment officer. This will protect the group and the affected person, as well as assist with reconciling claims later on. Even minor incidents should be reported, as further medical attention may be required later.

Volunteers attending your activity should be encouraged to report any near miss or potential incident to the site coordinator, who must pass this information on to us as soon as possible. To report an incident, the site coordinator must:

- Contact the City's environment team, or our duty officer if it is after hours, on 5272 5272.
- Secure the site and try to avoid disturbing any evidence or placing others in harm's way.
- Take photographs of the site and, if possible, draw a diagram of the site.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

All nature volunteer activities should be supported by an emergency management plan. This is so your group is well prepared in the unlikely case of an emergency.

The plan should identify potential emergency scenarios that could occur while carrying out a group activity, such as bush fire or extreme weather. It should also describe how you'll respond and include first aid planning, evacuation planning, emergency communications

and fire prevention.

All work sites must have an emergency assembly point. This must be shown to all volunteers as part of the site induction.

In the event of an emergency, volunteers should always follow the instructions of the site coordinator and group leaders.

If you are a registered volunteer group and need assistance with emergency management planning, please contact us on 5272 5272.

CALLING AN AMBULANCE

Be prepared to answer the following questions when you dial 000:

- What service do you require – police, fire or ambulance?
- Which state are you calling from?
- What is the exact location of the emergency?
- What is the phone number you are calling from?
- What is the problem? What exactly happened?
- How many people are hurt?
- How old is the person?
- Is the person conscious (awake)?
- Is the person breathing?

Stay on the phone unless told to hang up. Follow the call taker's instructions while waiting for the ambulance. These instructions will help the patient and the ambulance paramedics.

CITY OF GREATER GEELONG

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E: contactus@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

www.geelongaustralia.com.au

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE

100 Brougham Street

Geelong VIC 3220

8.00am – 5.00pm

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