

PHENS LAKES



Volunteer



Work Health & Safety

2018 HANDBOOK



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Overview

1.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide volunteers with helpful information relating to Work Health and Safety (WHS) that is essential knowledge when volunteering for Port Stephens Council.

Council acknowledges and recognises the wonderful contribution that volunteers make to our community, through whose activities enhance the area in which we live and provide strong social and community benefits.

1.1

Registered Council volunteers

People who have been approved by Council to work on its land, services and facilities, such as Section 355 Committees and volunteers with the Sports Councils, Libraries, Visitor Information Centre, Ngioka Centre and advisory groups. Attendance at PSC Induction Training is compulsory for all these volunteers.

- Council provides direct support to these volunteers.
- Activities undertaken include enhancing community halls and facilities, sporting ovals, parks, reserves, foreshores, libraries, visitor information and events.
- Council provides ongoing WHS support and training for these volunteers.
- Volunteers are also consulted on WHS issues.

1.2

Casual volunteers

People who are not a Registered Council Volunteer but attend a committee 'working bee' or other Council approved activity on a casual basis. These volunteers are required to participate in a site induction prior to the commencement of work and to follow instructions as appropriate. After a few occasions of casual participation, a person should be encouraged to become a Registered Volunteer so their contribution can be recognised and valued.

1.3

Contracting volunteers

People who volunteer with an external organisation which has been given approval to undertake work on Council land through a formal agreement.

- Council enters into partnerships or agreements with external organisations that are given approval to undertake work on Council land.
- The requirements for these volunteers depend on the nature of the formal agreement with Council and the volunteer organisation.
- Because these volunteers undertake their activities on Council land, they are required to meet Council's WHS requirements. This can mean attendance at Council WHS Training or other appropriate means.
- The sponsoring organisation is responsible for these volunteers.

1.4

Community volunteers

People in the community who volunteer with other groups and organisations.

- Council provides subsidised facilities, financial support, sponsorship, staff and technical support, and interaction with community advisory groups and activities.
- Council has a role in community development and planning, which often involves interaction with volunteers and community based groups.



Work Health & Safety Act 2011

2.1

Overview

In NSW we are governed by the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. This Act describes the general requirements necessary to ensure a safe and healthy workplace. The Act was amended in 2011 to provide a greater focus on identifying and eliminating risks within the workplace.

Under WHS legislation, certain volunteer associations, volunteers and organisations who engage volunteers now have new responsibilities. Volunteers are now deemed as 'workers' and as such are given the same duty of care.



2.2

Council obligations

Under the legislation, Port Stephens Council is referred to as a “Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU)”. A PCBU must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of all its workers, including volunteer workers.

Volunteers carry out a wide range of work in a variety of environments, and the level of care that is required will depend on the individual circumstances.

Council makes assessments of the hazards and risks volunteers are likely to encounter and take reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or minimise those risks. This may mean volunteers are not permitted to undertake some activities, such as the use of power tools and machinery, working at heights, excavation and burning.

If you carry out work for Council as a volunteer, then you are owed a duty of care under the WHS Act. Council must provide, so far as reasonably practicable:

- safe work premises;
- safe plant and substances;
- safe work procedures;
- protective equipment;
- information, instruction, training and supervision; and
- adequate facilities.

2.3

Volunteer obligations

Volunteers have the same duties as ‘workers’ at the workplace, being:

- to take reasonable care for your own health and safety;
- to take reasonable care that your conduct does not adversely affect the health and safety of others;
- to comply with any reasonable instruction that is given to you by Council; and
- to cooperate with any reasonable policy or procedure relating to health and safety at the workplace.

Prosecution of volunteers

Volunteers who carry out work for Council are required to take reasonable care for their own health and safety. Like any other duty holders who do not comply with direction and their duties under the WHS Act, volunteer workers can be prosecuted in their capacity as a worker.

This is the same for any person, including a member of the public, who visits a workplace and is also required to take reasonable care for their own health and safety.

Definitions

Volunteers - The WHS Act defines a volunteer as a person who is acting on a voluntary basis irrespective of whether the person receives out-of-pocket expenses. Where a volunteer performs work for a PCBU they do so as a worker and the PCBU has primary duty of care for the worker. All workers, including volunteer workers, are protected under the WHS Act.

Workers - Anyone who carries out work for a PCBU, such as employees, contractors and volunteers are deemed as workers.

Officers - An officer is a person who makes decisions or participates in making decisions, that affects the whole, or a substantial part of, an organisation and has the capacity to significantly affect the financial standing of that organisation. An officer of a PCBU must exercise due diligence to ensure that the PCBU complies with their duties under the WHS legislation.

2.6

Payments to volunteers

Reimbursement payments are not regarded as wages or salary when carrying out volunteer work. However, payments for carrying out volunteer work would constitute a wage or salary and mean that the person is not a volunteer.

2.7

Consultation with volunteers

Council consults with its volunteer workers regarding the management of health and safety, and aims to ensure volunteers have a reasonable opportunity to contribute to the improvement of health and safety. Volunteers are represented on Council's Work Health and Safety Committee through the Volunteers Coordinator, and are also consulted on an on-going basis through emails, safety alerts and posters, site inductions, additional training and attendance at Forums.



WHS Policy and Management Directives

3

Council has a number of policies and management directives in place relating to WHS. The Work Health and Safety Statement of Commitment provides an overview of what Council's responsibility is in regards to safety - see Appendix 1.

In addition to policies and management directives, there are also a number of procedures that form a key component of Council's Health and Safety Management System. They describe how Council manages the health and safety hazards in the workplace and the controls in place to eliminate or mitigate any risks.



Risk management

4

Work health and safety is all about the management of people's safety. Risk management, as it is known, is a four-stage process of recognising situations which have the potential to cause harm to people or property, and doing something about it.

Step 1 The identification of hazards

Identify all hazards that could cause injury or illness to anyone in the workplace.

Step 2 The assessment of risk

Assess the hazard and prioritise in order of high risk to low risk, in consultation with the person doing the job. Find out how significant the risk is, i.e. could it cause a serious injury, illness or damage to the environment?

Step 3 The control and management of hazards and risks

Identify and implement the best method of controlling the risk (hazard), in consultation with the person doing the job. The Hierarchy of Controls must be applied when considering control options.

Step 4 The review of those control measures systematically and incidentally

Definitions

Hazard A hazard is anything (including work practices or procedures) that has the potential to harm the health or safety of a person.

Risk A risk is the likelihood or possibility of harm occurring as a result of exposure to the hazard.

Risk assessment and SWMS

Once both the type of harm that may occur from exposure to the hazard, and the likelihood that this will happen have been considered, Council's Risk Assessment Matrix (provided separately to this booklet) will help determine how significant the risk is, and what action should be taken.

Council manages the various levels of risk through a Risk Assessment process, this being Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS).

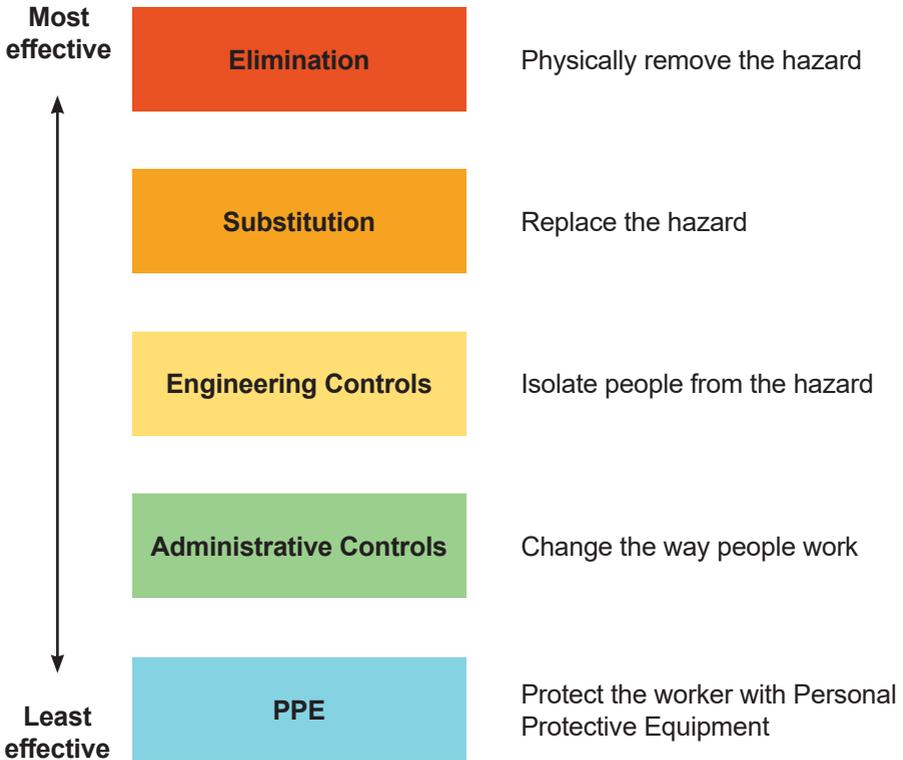
SWMS identify hazards, initial risks, control measures to be implemented, residual risk, persons responsible for implementation, training needs, permits required, legislation, Codes of Practice, PPE required, tools required to undertake work and National Standards applicable to the risk assessment.

In accordance with the WHS Regulation 2017, a Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) must be prepared for all high risk work. PSC is committed to developing SWMS's for a broader range of work activities than is required by the legislation. As such generic SWMS's have been prepared for many of the activities undertaken by volunteers, such as mulching, tree planting, weeding, litter removal and food handling. Council staff responsible for managing volunteers can provide volunteers and committees with many generic SWMS templates which can be adapted to suit specific situations. These templates can also assist in the preparation of other SWMS.

4.2

Hierarchy of Controls

The development and implementation of risk control measures occurs in accordance with the Hierarchy of Controls. Where practicable, elimination of the hazard and associated risk will occur. Where elimination is not practicable, minimisation of the risk is required, in accordance with the following Hierarchy of Controls:



A combination of the above measures may be required to minimise risk to the lowest level reasonably practicable.

Site induction and SWAT

All volunteers involved in work at Council workplaces and completing work activities under the direction of Council, must be inducted to the site, project or activity prior to the initial commencement of work, whether they are a Registered Council Volunteer or casual volunteer.

A Specific Worksite Assessment and Toolbox (SWAT) form is to be completed by a Council Responsible Officer (such as a Parks Program Officer) in conjunction with committee volunteer representatives prior to the project or activity commencing. Evidence that a volunteer has participated in a site induction is recorded in the SWAT form (name and signature).

This SWAT form also allows for casual volunteers who have not done WHS Induction Training and are not a Registered Council Volunteer to participate in working bees or other activities. Once a person has volunteered on a few occasions, and wish to continue, they should be encouraged to become a Registered Volunteer and undertake Council's formal Induction Training.

The Specific Worksite Assessment and Toolbox form is not the same as, nor does it replace, the Daily Attendance Form for volunteer activities. The Daily Attendance Form allows committees to maintain a record of their working bees/ activities, participants and times.



Image provided by Henk Tobbe

A site meeting should be held at the commencement of each day to discuss relevant matters such as:

- Any site changes to be recorded in the SWAT form;
- Review of the relevant Safe Work Method Statements for the task;
- Supervisory arrangements for the site/task;
- Reporting arrangements for hazards/incidents;
- Type and location of amenities and facilities (e.g. first aid kits, water, sun cream);
- Emergency procedures;
- Consultation arrangements; and
- Any Personal Protective Equipment requirements.

It is the responsibility of Council staff who manage volunteers to monitor committees and volunteers for compliance with site inductions using the SWAT form and Safe Work Method Statements for the task.

Completed SWAT forms and Daily Attendance Form (or copies of) should be forwarded to the Volunteers Coordinator to be recorded in Councils records management system.



Approvals for work

With regard to committees and volunteers undertaking work outdoors, all work must be approved by Council:

- There are numerous types of activities already approved by Council to be carried out by volunteers, such as tree planting, weeding, mulching, cleaning and painting, for which there are already generic Safe Work Method Statements. These types of activities still need to be carried out in consultation with the relevant Council Responsible Officer (e.g. Parks Supervisor), and approval given prior to the commencement of works.
- If a project is outside the approved regular scope of works, approval will most likely be required prior to the commencement of works, and utilising the 'Proposed Works on Council Land Application Form'. Contact your Council Responsible Officer for further information.

Activities not to be undertaken by volunteers

As per Council's 'WHS Management of Volunteers Procedure', the following types of activities are not permitted to be undertaken by volunteers unless approval is obtained from Council:

- Use of chainsaws;
- Use of 'plant' – any equipment beyond hand tools eg ride on mowers, bob cat;
- Work on electrical equipment;
- Work at heights/ladders (unless library volunteers specifically trained by PSC library staff);
- Tree branch removal;
- Unapproved clearing;
- Excavation or trenching ;
- Burn offs; and
- Chemical handling (unless volunteer has undertaken training in the use of the chemical and is approved for the specific task, such as herbicide use for weed control).

4.6

Requirements for working outdoors

Many volunteers work in an outdoor environment undertaking activities on behalf of Council. These volunteers must remember the following items:

- Sun Protection
- Personal Protective Equipment;
- Gloves – type appropriate for task;
- First Aid Kit – on site at all times;
- Fresh water for drinking and washing (spills); and
- Risk Incident/Hazard Report book.



Reporting hazards, incidences and injuries

Volunteers must document and report all hazards, incidents, near misses and injuries to Council within 24 hours. If after hours, the volunteer is to report this via the after-hours service by phoning Council's switch (02) 4988 0255. Council's Responsible Officers are to then ensure that the incident is managed in line with Port Stephens Council Risk Incident/Hazard Reporting and Investigation Procedure.

The purpose of reporting hazards, incidents, injuries and near misses is twofold. Firstly, Council has a responsibility to manage our workers and volunteers, and this cannot be done unless we know about them. Most importantly though, it provides information which can be used to ensure the same type of situations do not re-occur.

With regard to Section 355 Committees, Risk Incident/Hazard Report books have been issued to all committees, or can be obtained from the Volunteer Coordinator. All completed Incident Report Forms should be forwarded to the relevant officer from your committee, and/or your Council Responsible Officer.

Incidents should always be reported, including:

- All injuries - all incidents resulting in injury to a volunteer worker or member of the public on a Council worksite or Council owned property;
- Property damage - all damage to Council property (vandalism, storm, theft etc); and
- Near misses - with the potential to cause personal injury. Any incident or situation that could have the potential to cause injury or damage.

To report a hazard, incident, injury or near miss, follow this procedure:

1. Notify your Council supervisor immediately; and
2. Complete a Risk Incident/Hazard Report form within 24 hours and send to your Council supervisor.

Tips in completing incident reports:

- Write legibly;
- Use "Completing Incident Reports" instructions on the inside cover of the book;
- Include as much details as possible; and
- Forward the completed report within 24 hours

4.8

Personal accident cover

Personal accident cover for volunteers is not required by legislation, however Port Stephens Council has taken out a personal accident policy for volunteers to assist if volunteers are injured whilst volunteering for Council. Volunteers would be required to fill out a Risk Incident/Hazard Report form, as well as a claim form. For further information contact Council's Risk Management Coordinator on phone (02) 4988 0255.

4.9

Hazardous chemicals

A hazardous chemical is any substance, mixture or article that has the potential to harm the health of persons when used in the workplace. "Use" includes the production, handling, storage, transport and disposal of the substance in the workplace.

Long and short term protection from hazardous chemicals is achieved by:

- the provision of health and safety information to workers, including information on the Safety Data Sheets;
- assessment of the risks arising from hazardous chemicals; and
- control of the risks.



Safety Data Sheets

Safety Data Sheets (SDS), previously known as Material Safety Data Sheets, are prepared by the manufacturers of the product. They are available from the manufacturer or supplier. Assistance in obtaining SDS can be sought from the Volunteers Coordinator.

No product should be used in the workplace without first obtaining a copy of the SDS from the supplier or the Volunteers Coordinator. SDS must be less than five years old and be in the Globally Harmonised System format.

A Safety Data Sheet tells you:

- the ingredients of the product;
- the health effects of the product and first aid instructions;
- exposure standards;
- personal protection required;
- precautions to follow when using the product;
- fire and spill control measures; and
- safe handling and storage information.

Using SDS's in the workplace:

- Keep copies of the SDS for each product used;
- Store the SDS so it is accessible to everyone; and
- Make sure everyone in your team is familiar with the contents of the SDS for the products used in your area.

First aid

Volunteer groups are required to have a suitable first aid kit available at all times.

(Note: First Aid Kits and replacement items can be purchased from Port Stephens Council stores and charged via Sundry Debtor Account, or through other avenues.)

First Aid Training is available for appropriate Council Volunteers as required.

Personal Protective Equipment

It must be noted that the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) alone is not sufficient to manage a hazard, and is the last control measure in the Hierarchy of Controls. PPE simply presents a barrier between the user and the hazard.

Volunteers are responsible by law to cooperate with the measures put in place to protect workers in the workplace. Advice on the correct equipment to wear, or where to get it can be sought from your committee representative or Council responsible officer.

- PPE should be stored appropriately and kept in a clean and well-maintained condition at all times ready for use.
- PPE should be replaced if damaged. If replacement items are required, notify your supervisor.
- PPE necessary for Section 355 Committee volunteers to undertake their roles can be purchased from the annual subsidy granted to each committee. Goods can be ordered from Council's store and charged to the committee via their Sundry Debtor Account.

Safety Footwear

Suitable fully enclosed leather footwear should be worn at all times by volunteers when working outdoors, and is sufficient for the work undertaken by volunteers to undertake.

Gloves

Gloves can be useful in certain cases for the protection of your hands. Never wear gloves around moving machinery or any environment where the glove may become trapped and cause the hand to be dragged into a hazard. Always remove gloves before using a hammer.

Eye Protection

Safety glasses can be purchased from Council's store or through other avenues, but must comply with the relevant Australian Standard. You must always wear eye protection when there is a danger of flying particles or splashes of hazardous liquids or chemicals. If anything should enter your eye, seek medical attention and do not allow anyone else to remove it. Do not allow a foreign body to remain in your eye overnight.

Sun and heat protection

To ensure your maximum protection against the sun's rays, cover up as a necessity during daylight hours, particularly from the hours of 10.00 am to 3.00 pm, as these are the hottest times of the day. The following should be undertaken:

- sunscreen (apply when skin is dry);
- wide brimmed hats;
- tinted sun glasses; and
- sun protective clothing (long sleeve shirt, long pants or knee length shorts).

Infectious sharps

Never put your hands into areas unless you are certain that it is safe to do so. Always check these areas thoroughly before placing your hands in. Areas such as sumps, pipes, toilets, sandpits, gardens, and many more, may contain infectious sharps such as used hypodermic needles.

If you feel that you have been injured by an unknown or potentially infectious sharp, take the following steps:

- encourage bleeding from the wound by squeezing the surrounding area;
- wash the wound thoroughly with disinfectant or soap and warm water;
- cover the wound with a clean waterproof dressing;
- report the incident within 24hrs to your Council responsible officer;
- seek competent medical treatment, this should include blood testing with follow up, advice and counselling; and
- if safe to do so, retrieve the offending object in accordance with Council's standard/safe operating procedure to prevent injury to others.

NOTE: Volunteers should not pick up sharps unless they have received training from Council and have appropriate PPE and equipment. Dispose sharps containers at sharps disposal drop off locations, or contact Councils Customer Service to arrange for collection.

4.15

Fire protection

In case of fire or emergency phone 000. All volunteers should make themselves aware of the location and nature of fire fighting facilities in and around Council buildings and facilities, and how to use them. It is important to note the designated emergency evacuation point and make your way safely and quickly there.

- Know the location of fire escapes;
- First sound the alarm, then fight the fire;
- Only attempt to fight the fire if you are appropriately trained; and
- Always ensure the safety of yourself and others.

4.16

Rest breaks and exercises

The key to preventing overuse injuries is to break repetitive work with non-repetitive tasks or exercises and/or rest breaks. Volunteers need to move around and reduce the effects of fatigue by doing different tasks.

4.17

No Smoking Policy

All Council buildings, offices and worksites are “Smoke Free Areas.” Volunteers are permitted to smoke outside these areas.



Alcohol and drugs

Volunteers shall not possess, consume, or be under the effect of alcohol or illicit drugs while at work. If a volunteer is concerned that a person on Council premises or worksites is impaired, they should report their suspicion to their Council Responsible Officer. Any volunteer that is required to take prescription drugs whilst at work, or may be affected by such drugs whilst at work, should notify your site supervisor in case assistance may be required.

Body stressing

Body stressing can be caused by poor manual handling, working with repetitive movement, as well as adopting constrained or awkward postures.

Some examples of actions that may cause manual handling injuries are:

- work involving sudden, jerky or hard to control movements;
- work involving too much bending, reaching or twisting; and
- work where a long time is spent holding the same posture or position;

The correct lifting and carrying techniques are:

- do not overload yourself;
- have good footing and balance;
- stand as close as possible to the load.
- get a firm secure grip;
- bend at the knees - keep back in a straight plane;
- use your strong leg muscles;
- keep load close to body; and
- when turning, turn whole body - not just at the waist.

Warning and danger signs

Any warning or danger signs displayed provide directions and identify hazards. They must be observed and should not be removed, covered or defaced.

4.21

Danger and out of service tags

Remember ...

- A Danger Tag may be attached to the main isolating switch, valve or other positive isolating device of the unit whenever danger to you or other persons could arise from the operation of machinery, electricity, gas or liquids.
- Out-of-Service tags are designed to place faulty or unsafe equipment or machinery out of service and to prevent damage to plant.
- Never remove an Out-of-Service tag or a danger Tag.

4.22

Electrical equipment

Volunteers are not permitted to work on any electrical equipment. Electrical equipment and wiring must at all times be assumed to be live and therefore dangerous. All electrical leads and appliances shall be tested and tagged by an Authorised Person in accordance with Australian Standard AS3760:2003.

Check all leads/tools/appliances for current “Inspection Tags” before use.



Blood and bodily fluid spills

Blood and bodily fluid spills should be attended to immediately and managed as follows:

- Impervious disposable gloves must be worn;
- Absorbent material such as paper towels, cloth or sawdust should be used to absorb the bulk of the blood or body fluid spill; and
- Thoroughly clean the area with detergent and water.

In the event of personal exposure to blood or bodily fluids, the following actions should be taken:

- Wash away the blood or body fluid with soap and water;
- If the eyes are contaminated, rinse the eyes while open with water or saline solution;
- If blood gets into the mouth, spit it out and then rinse the mouth repeatedly;
- Blood contaminated clothing should be removed immediately;
- The incident should be reported immediately to an appropriate person in the workplace, e.g. Site Supervisor or Council Responsible Officer; and
- An Incident/Hazard report should also be completed and forwarded to your Council Responsible Officer.



Physical violence

Here are some suggestions when confronted by someone damaging property:

- walk away and contact police;
- try to reason with them and ask them to stop;
- do not attempt to physically stop them by stepping in between them and the property they are attacking; and
- do not attempt to restrain a person unless it is life-threatening or there are no other options.

There is a temptation to react to threatening behaviour by adopting the same confrontational body language in response. This may inflame the situation, so instead:

- take a step back to create space;
- raise the hands in front to waist level (as if warming them in front of a fire);
- continue eye to eye contact but blinking every few seconds;
- continue to use non-confrontational language and do not touch the aggressive person;
- leave if all attempts to defuse the violence have failed and there is a real threat of physical damage or lives are at risk; and
- call the police.



Verbal threats

In most cases violence will not escalate past verbal threats. Verbal threats can lead to physical violence or be a part of a deliberate attempt to harass and intimidate. If you are being verbally attacked you should:

- walk away;
- assess the emotional/mental state of the attacker - i.e. frustrated, disturbed, under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- try to accommodate their needs if reasonable and appropriate;
- use assertive, non-aggressive language;
- assess the potential for the situation to become physically violent; and
- seek the presence of another person.



Summary

Remember, safety does not just happen, it is the result of good planning and a shared responsibility. Accidents can be prevented if you follow standard operating procedures.

So, if you see any condition, practice or method that appears hazardous, report it to your committee and/or your Council Responsible Officer immediately.

It is Council's sincere wish that every volunteer accepts the safety rules willingly and with enthusiasm as an essential aid to their own safety and for the safety of fellow volunteers.



Work Health and Safety Statement of Commitment

Our safety beliefs:

At Port Stephens Council, safety is a core value. We believe in providing a safety focused workplace that will ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, their families and the community.

We expect our staff, contractors, volunteers and visitors to:

- Work safely at all times;
- Take responsibility for the safety of others as well as themselves;
- Speak up and report unsafe acts;
- Use our Integrated Risk Management System to create an even safer workplace.

It is unacceptable to:

- Continue with a job or task if we feel unsafe;
- Use equipment that we are not trained, or competent to use;
- Take short cuts because we are busy, or pressed to do so;
- Take risks that compromise the safety and welfare of staff, volunteers, contractors and/or members of the public.

Our actions:

The cooperation and involvement of all workers, at every level, is required to achieve and model our health and safety objectives. We are committed to ensuring we comply with the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2017 and applicable Codes of Practice and Australian Standards as far as possible.

Our senior managers will ensure that:

- Work, health and safety management systems are developed, implemented and continuously reviewed for effectiveness;
- Resources including safe plant, equipment and training are provided to manage safety;

- Risks are eliminated at design stage wherever possible;
- Consultation is undertaken with management and workers on the development, implementation and refinement of our WHS systems and programs;
- Safety management systems are audited;
- Appropriate records are established and maintained.

Our managers and supervisors will:

- Assist in the development, implementation and continuous improvement of work, health and safety management systems;
- Provide and maintain a safe work environment for their workers including contractors, volunteers and visitors;
- Implement policies and procedures effectively;
- Consult with workers on all issues that will impact on their health, safety and wellbeing;
- Investigate and report on all incidents, including near misses;
- Monitor their team's WHS performance and strive for continuous improvement.

Our workers will:

- Work safely at all times to protect themselves and those working with them;
- Participate in WHS training, consultation and initiatives to improve health and safety;
- Report all hazards and incidents, including near misses, to their supervisor and assist with actions to reduce and eliminate risks.
- Our contractors, volunteers and visitors will:
- Comply with all WHS requirements set out by Port Stephens Council;
- Work safely at all times to protect themselves and those working with them;
- Report all hazards and incidents, including near misses, to Port Stephens Council.

Our performance:

- We will actively monitor and review our organisation's performance to ensure that we succeed in meeting our health and safety objectives.



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