

VOLUNTEER POLICY

For the Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc.



Version 1 December 2006

*“Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world, indeed it is the only thing that has ever changed it”
Margaret Mead.*

Introduction

Preamble

The contribution of volunteers is vital to MASGs operation, sustenance and longevity.

It is well documented that people change their behaviour through the example and influence of people whom they know and trust, and as such volunteers are a major vehicle for the delivery of social change by their example to their friends and colleagues. MASG will therefore endeavor to empower its volunteers to become agents for the social changes needed to create a more just and sustainable Mount Alexander community.

Purpose

MASG recognizes and values the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the organization and the individual and is committed to a volunteer programme which:

- Recruits and maintains a committed, informed, inspired, well connected group of volunteers who assist the work of MASG;
- Helps MASG achieve its goals;
- Attempts to provide volunteers with the level of responsibilities and involvement that meet their expectations.

Definition

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place through a not for profit organization or project and is:

- Of benefit to community, organization (including paid staff) and volunteers;
- Undertaken of the volunteer’s own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment;
- Underpinned by MASG’s Principles of Volunteering.

Principles of Volunteering

- Volunteering benefits the community, organization (including paid workers) and the volunteer;
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice;
- Volunteering is an activity that is unpaid;
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers;
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.
- Volunteers should not be exploited.
- The opportunity to volunteer time, skills and experience should be regarded as a basic tenet of a democratic society and available to all irrespective of age, gender, ability, race, religion or sexual preference.
- The contribution made by volunteers should be recognized, respected and maximised within MASG.
- MASG also acknowledges the value of all contributions, big and small, from its volunteers. The cumulative impact of many “small” contributions may be great in the long run. We may not know what other commitments a volunteer has therefore we should value and acknowledge all contributions made on behalf of MASG.

Mutual Benefits

MASG clearly benefits from being the recipient of:

- volunteer’s time, skills and knowledge
- community credibility gained by the recruitment/attracting/support of community leaders to particular MASG programmes

Volunteers receive satisfaction through:

- achievement of goals
- working in areas of special interest to them
- gaining new knowledge and skills
- forging new relationships with other like minded people
- being valued as a contributor to, and member of the organization
- working for the wider community.

Committee considerations

Committee members have a specific executive role in the operation of MASG. Part of their role as volunteers is to support and comply with the responsibilities and rights stated in this volunteer policy.

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

Recruitment Policy

Our recruitment policy is driven by our purpose which is to fulfill the needs of our organization and the expectations of our volunteers.

MASG applies the principles of equal opportunity to its recruitment processes and will not withhold a volunteer job on the basis of race, age, gender or religion.

Induction

All prospective volunteers will be welcomed and orientated by a supervisor (the Project Coordinator, relevant Working Group Coordinator or other designated volunteer). They will be informed of the work available or how they may contribute to MASG's goals. This meeting is also a chance to:

- Get to know the volunteer.
- Update them on MASG and its work.
- Determine what brought them to MASG.
- Discuss their expectations and needs and any special needs or limitations.

Prospective volunteers are matched on their interests and for their suitability to existing position descriptions (if appropriate and available).

Placement

Once the volunteer and supervisor have agreed on the preferred available position the supervisor should:

- Clarify days and time of volunteer work
- Make the volunteer aware of their rights and responsibilities and other values enshrined in the volunteer policy.
- Give the volunteer any relevant information on their job.
- Give the volunteer a copy of their job description and let them have access to the *Rules of the Mount Alexander Sustainability Group*.
- Give the volunteer a membership form if not already a member.
- Ensure that the key messages of MASG are understood and appropriately articulated to the broader community.
- If appropriate, give the volunteer a tour of MASG office. This should include:
 - Kitchen facilities;
 - Toilets;
 - Jobs Board;
 - Volunteer Sign -In Book;
 - Incident and Near Misses Book;
 - IT and Communication systems;
 - Fire Escapes;
 - Filing Systems and Pigeon Holes
 - Volunteer work record book.
 - Receipt Book.

Position Descriptions

A Volunteer Position Description is to be formed by the Project Coordinator, Working Group Coordinator or designated volunteer before a volunteer can be assigned to a particular job. This must include:

- The Working Group or area of work for the volunteer.
- Their role.
- A list of basic tasks involved.
- Desirable skills required to carry out the position.
- Duration of position and time commitment.
- Name of supervisor.

Recruitment Strategies

The following strategies may be used to recruit volunteers:

- Issuing personal invitations to skilled people as per roles required within MASG.
- Promoting MASG within the community.
- Campaigns
- Encourage current members to invite their family and friends to join.
- Stalls at specific locations.
- Having membership forms available at all MASG events and in selected community spaces.
- Advertising.

Training

The supervisors are responsible for their volunteers while they are learning to use MASG equipment and must make themselves available to help when needed.

Volunteers are to be encouraged to keep informed on sustainability issues and expand their personal skills to maintain and enhance MASG'S effectiveness.

Specific training for volunteers will be provided where appropriate and financially possible.

Retention of Volunteers

The following strategies may be used to retain volunteers and ensure they don't burn out:

- Organisation wide recognition and celebration of volunteer and organization achievements ;
- Public recognition and celebration of volunteer achievements;
- Maintaining a public profile which makes volunteers want to belong;
- Regular whole of organization social and team building activities;
- Opportunities for advancement, role variation, extra training/PD and time out;

- Consulting with volunteers on a range of operational and planning issues and contributing to policy development;
- Creating and maintaining a workplace environment which encourages a collaborative, collusive and inclusive relationship between all volunteers and paid staff;
- Clarifying and sharing roles;
- Developing mentorship within the group to prepare volunteers to take on new roles;
- Effective use of their skills;
- Identifying clear goals for the volunteer activity and celebrating their attainment.

Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers

Rights of volunteers

MASG volunteers have a right to:

- Receive adequate information on and a clear job description of their job;
- Be assigned a suitable job and to say no to tasks they are unable to do or would rather not do;
- If possible to have on the job supervision provided by Project Coordinator, Working Group Coordinator or designated volunteer;
- Receive respect and support from other volunteers and paid staff as well as recognition and feedback from their supervisor for their work;
- Be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses, providing prior approval is obtained with the supervisor;
- Request a reference from their supervisor when applying for a job, providing the volunteer has worked at MASG for a minimum period of three months;
- Provide feedback, suggestions and recommendations regarding their job or the wider project on which they are involved;
- Have access to dispute resolution procedures and be supported through such a process;
- Have their personal details kept in a confidential manner;
- Work in a safe and healthy environment;
- Be provided with a place to work and suitable tools and materials;
- Be adequately insured;

Responsibilities of Volunteers

MASG ask that our volunteers agree to:

- be a current member of MASG
- be reliable and commit, where possible and appropriate, to regular days/ time of work so tasks can be planned accordingly;
- Keep MASG informed of changes of their contact details;
- Be responsible and consult with their supervisor;

- To ask for support when needed;
- Abide by any MASG policies regarding their work;
- Appreciate and respect the confidential nature of information that may be acquired during their work;
- Discuss any grievances or problems with their supervisor. If they remain unresolved speak to the Project Coordinator;
- Not to spend money or order goods on behalf of MASG without prior approval;
- Notify their supervisor or Project Coordinator if they are no longer able to work with MASG;
- Agree to work in a safe and healthy way and not jeopardize the health and safety of others;
- Inform MASG of any pre-existing medical conditions or special needs that MASG should be aware of that might effect the volunteer's ability to undertake certain tasks;
- Report any injury immediately to their supervisor;
- Volunteers may work in the MASG office unsupervised but only with authorization from their supervisor.
- Not smoke in the MASG building;
- Comply with Meeting Protocols (see appendix)when in MASG meetings and events;
- Communicate with other volunteers and paid staff according to communication; protocols and strategies set out in the MASG Communication Plan;
- Acknowledge any conflict of interest;
- Not to use MASG databases, equipment or events to promote other organizations, causes or events;
- Articulate the key messages of MASG to the broader community in a manner consistent with the Communication Plan;

Confidentiality of work done on behalf of MASG

As with paid work, all voluntary work done for or on behalf of MASG belongs to MASG and cannot be used or sold without the permission of MASG. All confidential records, documents and other papers made or acquired by the volunteer in the course of their work shall be the property of MASG and must be returned to MASG on finishing volunteering with MASG. Where appropriate, with permission of the supervisor, volunteers may take copies of their work with them when they leave.

MASG's Commitment To Volunteers

MASG recognizes that volunteers contribute a vast wealth of skills, knowledge and support to the running of MASG. Paid staff are to treat volunteers with respect and support.

Recognition of Volunteers by paid staff

Volunteers are to be included, where possible, in all relevant meetings, discussions and celebrations. Volunteers should be given every opportunity to develop their skills.

Volunteer Acknowledgement

Volunteer contributions will be highlighted in the volunteer/ membership newsletter, articles in the press and MASG articles sent to like minded organizations.

Each /twice a year a get together of all volunteers will be organized. Volunteers will also be invited to events for National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer's Day.

Confidentiality

All volunteer's personal information will be treated with confidentiality. The volunteer database will be protected and registration forms will be kept in a secure place.

Reimbursement

General Expenses and Travel

Supervisors should advise their volunteers of their budget limitations and must approve any purchases or other expenses before they are committed. Volunteers will then be reimbursed for approved expenses out of supervisor's budget. Receipts must be obtained and the supervisor is to fill out petty cash claim on the volunteer's behalf.

Occupational Health and Safety

MASG is committed to providing a safe workplace for volunteers and in return ask that volunteers accept their responsibility to work safely. All volunteers are asked to fill in the Volunteer's Sign-In Book in the office or at MASG events when they come in and sign out when they leave.

Smoking is not permitted in the MASG office.

Volunteers are to report any injury immediately to their supervisor and record it in the incident and near misses book.

Personal Insurance Cover

MASG must always have a current Voluntary Workers Personal Accident and Public Liability Insurance Policy. The policy will insure all volunteers while engaged in unpaid voluntary work officially organized and under the control of MASG.

Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment

Equal Opportunity

MASG is committed to equal opportunity and its effective implementation. MASG is opposed to discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age, physical or mental disability, religious beliefs, marital status, sexual preference, social and cultural backgrounds.

Harassment

MASG will not tolerate harassment of any kind to paid staff or volunteers. Any harassment claims should be taken to the Project Coordinator as soon as possible. All claims will be treated with confidentiality. See appendix 2 Equal opportunity and sexual harassment Code.

Dispute Resolution Procedures

Dispute Resolution Procedure

Grievance procedures for disputes between:

- Volunteers/members of MASG
- Volunteer(s)/members of MASG and MASG

Are covered in rule 9 in *Rules of the Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc.*

Inappropriate Behaviour and Volunteer Dismissal

Procedures for addressing volunteer's inappropriate behaviour and volunteer dismissal are covered in rule 8 in *Rules of the Mount Alexander Sustainability Group Inc.*

Resignation

MASG asks all volunteers to give as much notice as possible to their supervisor and /or the Project Coordinator before leaving MASG. All volunteers are asked to give their supervisors an update on the progress of their work and to return any books, materials, documents (electronic or otherwise).

All volunteers leaving MASG are encouraged to have an exit interview with the Project Coordinator or Working Group Coordinator, member of the Executive, volunteer of their choice if the PC is not appropriate. MASG is committed to improving the volunteer programme so all feedback regarding the volunteer's experience at MASG would be appreciated. If the volunteer is leaving due to any problem or dissatisfaction with MASG it would be beneficial to MASG if they notified the PC or appropriate person of their reasons. Confidentiality will be respected in all matters relating to this.

Record of the exit interview should be available for the committee. MASG should collate Exit Interview data and use it for planning, review and quality assurance.