Volunteer Manual

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc.

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare

Coffs Harbour City Council

National Parks & Wildlife Service NSW

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc.

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About Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare

Introduction

The following *Volunteer Manual* is the guiding document for volunteer management at Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc. (CHRL). This document sets out the rights and responsibilities for both CHRL volunteers and CHRL management and sets out the procedure for becoming a volunteer with CHRL. If you have any questions relating to the *Volunteer Manual* please contact the Landcare Project Officer at Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare.

The role of Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc.

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare is an incorporated not-for-profit community organisation acting as the umbrella for approximately 40 land-caring teams and associations in the Coffs Harbour area. Membership with CHRL is open to everyone and the organisation is managed by an elected executive committee.

Many of the members and member teams operate on public land in the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area. These volunteers work on coastal sites within the Coffs Coast Regional Park, on Council Reserves or other public land managed by NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service, by Coffs Harbour City Council or by the Crown Lands Division of the NSW Dept of Primary Industries.

CHRL members at a working bee in Karangi

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare aims to assist and support individuals and teams involved in land, water and vegetation management. This assistance may include help with accessing funding programs, information and training, negotiation

with government agencies, organisation of field days and other training opportunities, lobbying for useful land management assistance, or putting people in contact with others involved in similar activities.

Although CHRL relies upon a range of government funding programs, it operates independently from government and is not politically affiliated or linked to government.

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare works closely with other agencies such as, North Coast Regional Landcare, Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC), NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NSW NPWS) and other groups such as EnviTE and Australian Conservation Volunteers.

Volunteering

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare defines volunteering as an activity that is:

- of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- undertaken for no financial payment

Objectives of the Association

The objectives of the Association are:

- to promote the principles of ecological sustainable development (ESD) and increase the understanding of natural resource degradation issues in the local community and educational institutions
- to identify problems relating to the degradation of natural resources in the local area or district and provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas
- to foster co-operation between local landholders and land managers and others to plan and seek resources for, take action on and monitor the results of preventing, treating and controlling natural resource degradation and managing and using natural resources more sustainably
- to support and encourage Member teams and volunteers at Locality sites in their endeavours to achieve improved environmental outcomes
- to assist in gaining funding and any other assistance for the benefit of any or all the sites it embraces, including making representations to all levels of government and non-government agencies

- to function as a not-for-profit organisation where the assets and income of the Association shall be applied solely in furtherance of its above-mentioned objectives and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Association, except as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the Association
- to establish not-for-profit nurseries, for use by members and the community, for the benefit of the environment
- to employ a Community Support Officer to further the objectives of the Association
- where it furthers the objects of the Association, to amalgamate with any one or more other organisations having similar objects, provided that the other organisation(s) have rules prohibiting the distribution of its (their) assets and income to members; and are exempt from income tax

COFFS HARBOUR REGIONAL LANDCARE VOLUNTEER MANUAL

Introduction

What is Landcare?

Landcare is a unique Australian movement that harnesses individuals and teams under the ethic of caring for the land across the whole landscape from coastal to urban and remote areas of Australia. Landcare teams and Landcare projects are typically identified as being rural, regional or agricultural in nature. Landcare teams characteristically consist of Friends of teams, community environmental teams, land managers or landowners such as farmers or primary producers. The term Landcare also includes dunecare, coastcare, junior landcare and bushcare teams and activities.

Volunteers are an invaluable asset of every Landcare community, and they perform a range of tasks including:

- managing the organisation
- the environmental restoration of degraded sites through assisted natural regeneration
- weed control
- revegetation with native species
- assisting in developing and managing restoration projects
- involvement in awareness raising events

Members of Serenity Beach Landcare

Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program

There are approximately 40 Landcare sites in the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area, most of which operate on publicly owned

land, managed by Coffs Harbour City Council, the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service or the Crown Lands Division of the NSW Dept of Primary Industries.

The volunteers at these sites are members of Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc. These teams are engaged in bush regeneration with the aim of restoring natural bushland.

Other Landcarers operate on private land or farms and are engaged in the protection of local waterways, biodiversity and in sustainable farming practices.

What is bush regeneration?

Bush regeneration aims to rehabilitate the bush from a weed infested or otherwise degraded plant community to a healthy community composed of locally occurring native plants. Bush regeneration programs are long term commitments that require the development of a variety of skills, concepts and techniques. These cannot be obtained overnight; they are developed through a combination of learning, research, observation and practical application.

Bush regeneration is not just weed removal; it is an integrated approach that encourages the bush to 'bounce back' through natural processes. It must also consider other environmental aspects, such as fauna habitat, drainage, weed sources, nutrient levels, disturbance, and the resilience of the native bushland to re-establish itself. Sometimes areas are so badly degraded, that natural regeneration is minimal and revegetation may prove to be the most successful solution.

Weeds can have a major impact on biodiversity.

What is the Coffs Harbour Landcare Volunteer Manual?

The *Volunteer Manual* is the guiding document for volunteering with CHRL. The purpose of this document is to provide a reference tool for the rights and responsibilities for both CHRL volunteers, member teams and CHRL management and describes the procedure for becoming and working as a volunteer with CHRL.

These are intended to provide direction to volunteers and CHRL so that, together they can achieve quality results while fulfilling legislative and financial requirements. These procedures identify sites must be dealt with on their merits and are to account for site and team differences.

If you have any questions relating to the *Volunteer Manual* document please contact the Landcare Officer Officer at CHRL.

Aim of the Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program

The *Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program* aims to increase community awareness and engagement in issues of natural area restoration by providing guidance and support to community members who are interested in their local natural environment.

Guiding Principles

The *Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program* adheres to the following guiding principles:

- The government agencies managing public land have responsibility for the condition of the natural assets they manage, the safety of volunteers working in these areas and for the safety of the general public.
- Volunteers play an important role in the management of these natural areas.
- The volunteer program should be well structured and resourced.
- CHRL and the land managers appreciate the commitment and professionalism offered by volunteers.
- Volunteers should not be coerced or exploited.
- The volunteer program should not be seen as a replacement for government agency Bushland Restoration programs.
- All volunteers need to operate in accordance with existing applicable Workplace Health and Safety Policies (in place for CHRL, NSW NPWS, CHCC and Crown Lands Division of NSW Department of Primary Industries). All volunteers are required to comply with the procedures, guidelines and approved site plans.

Benefits of the Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program

The *Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program* provides benefits to both the general community and the individual volunteer. The benefits to the general community that stem from a volunteer bush regeneration program include the reversal of bushland degradation, the development of community spirit, a sense of pride and achievement, the conservation of biodiversity, raising community awareness, education and the improvement of aesthetic values related to natural bushland.

The individual volunteer also gains a number of benefits from their involvement with the program. These include:

- A great outdoor working environment
- Healthy, active and fun activities.
- Social interaction (meeting other volunteers).
- Training opportunities.
- Learning more about natural ecosystems and environmental processes.
- A sense of personal achievement though community involvement.

Definitions

Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program: The program involves community volunteers in the management and restoration of natural areas under the control of Coffs Harbour City Council, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service or the Crown Lands Division of NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Coffs Harbour Landcare Volunteer: A person who freely contributes their services and skills without coercion or financial reward while registered as a member of Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc.

Site Coordinator: A Landcare volunteer, who acts as contact person and coordinator for the team at a registered work site, communicates activities and incidents to CHRL and the land manager and keeps records of on-site activities. Site coordinators also coordinate compliance with WH&S requirements on site.

Landcare Volunteer Team: A team of registered members of CHRL undertaking bush regeneration and associated works on registered work site/s on publicly owned land or an incorporated Landcare Team that is a team member of CHRL.

CHCC Bush Regeneration Team: Professional bush regenerators employed by Coffs Harbour City Council to work in natural areas under their management.

NPWS Field Officer: A person employed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to carry out bush regeneration and management activities in natural areas under their management.

Bush Regeneration Contractors: A qualified bush regeneration contractor employed by Coffs Harbour City Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service or Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare to undertake site supervision or contract bush regeneration work.

NPWS Volunteer Card: Volunteers working in NSW National Parks are issued a Volunteer Card which entitles them to a discount in National Parks Visitor Centres. After completion of 50 hours voluntary work per year, volunteers can receive one All Parks Pass.

Registered Work Site: Landcare work site, usually on public land, registered with CHRL and the respective land manager, where CHRL volunteers are working according to an approved work plan or under the direction of the land manager.

TERMS OF AGREEMENT

Rights of Volunteers

- Be treated as co-workers. This includes Equal Employment Opportunity, Workplace Health & Safety, anti-discrimination legislation and organisational grievance processes.
- Be asked for their permission before any job-related reference, police or other checks are conducted.
- Be aware of the purpose, the mission and ground rules (ethics) of the organisation.
- Be provided with appropriate orientation and training.
- Be informed of organisational changes and the reasons for the changes.
- Be provided with suitable tools for the job.
- Be heard and be able to make suggestions.
- Be provided with personal accident insurance.
- Be provided with a work reference or statement of service, if appropriate.

CHRL expectation of Volunteers

- Take out membership with CHRL. This will extend accident and injury insurance to the volunteer.
- Be loyal to the CHRL organisation, maintain the reputation of CHRL in the community and abide by the CHRL *Code of Conduct*.
- Complete bush regeneration methods and skills training workshop with CHRL prior to starting work or at the first available opportunity.
- Be committed to their site and follow agreed procedures and workplan, including WH&S procedures.
- Cooperate with other volunteers and agency staff.
- Give notice prior to leaving the program and return any tools and equipment in their possession.
- Commitment to the principles of Equal Opportunity Employment within the CHRL workplace.

CHRL commitment to Volunteers

Support

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare provides a support service for our volunteers and the projects they initiate. CHRL also recognises that project 'ownership' is an essential aspect of successful community natural resource management. The level of support provided therefore reflects the desire of CHRL to support projects that are initiated, developed and implemented by volunteers. We aim to provide support to:

- Assist the existing and growing network of Landcare, Dunecare and other community teams involved in NRM as well as individual landholders with access to funding, information, and training.
- Provide opportunities for training and skills improvement by providing relevant and practical field days and workshops at no or low cost.
- Assist volunteers to develop local projects to meet local needs.

Managers of public land may provide additional support to volunteers while working on public land, in the form of supportive contract work and/or technical oversight, as identified in the *Volunteer Management Agreement* between CHRL, CHCC and NSW NPWS.

Workplace Health & Safety

The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 aims to protect the health and safety of all people in every place of work in New South Wales. Under the Act employers, employees and the self-employed are to meet certain standards of health, safety and welfare.

Failure to comply with WH&S regulations can result in serious penalties for both CHRL and CHRL volunteers. The Committee of Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare has prepared a *Workplace Health and Safety Policy and Procedures Kit* for the safety of volunteer workers and employees. This kit outlines the CHRL WH&S policy and procedures and covers hazard identification and risk assessment procedures as they relate to Landcare activities. The kit also contains a generic *Site Induction Sheet*, a register for recording member details, including any medical conditions that may be relevant to their volunteer work, an *Incident and Injury Report Form* and a *Hazard Report Form* as well as information about the safe use of chemicals.

Volunteers' rights and responsibilities regarding their WH&S obligations to CHRL include:

- Volunteers undertaking activities in association with the organisation have a shared responsibility to maintain high standards of workplace safety.
- Volunteers are to be consulted in relation to any issues that affect their health and safety and will be appropriately inducted to meet requirements under this policy.
- Volunteers are expected to read and acknowledge their understanding of, as well as follow the procedures outlined in the *WH&S Policy and Procedures Kit*.
- Volunteers should immediately report any accident, injury or hazard to the Site Coordinator, who will then inform the Landcare Project Officer or the CHRL Executive Committee.
- Volunteers must wear personal protective equipment as required.

The managers of the public land, where Landcare Volunteers are working have their own WH&S policies and Landcare Volunteers are expected to adhere to those respective policies as directed by the land manager.

Insurance

All CHRL members are covered by the CHRL volunteer accident and injury insurance policy provided that:

- They are a financial member of CHRL.
- They are working on an approved CHRL worksite and are adhering to the Operational Workplan.
- Or they are working on an approved CHRL activity.
- They sign on prior to commencing work.

HOW TO VOLUNTEER WITH CHRL

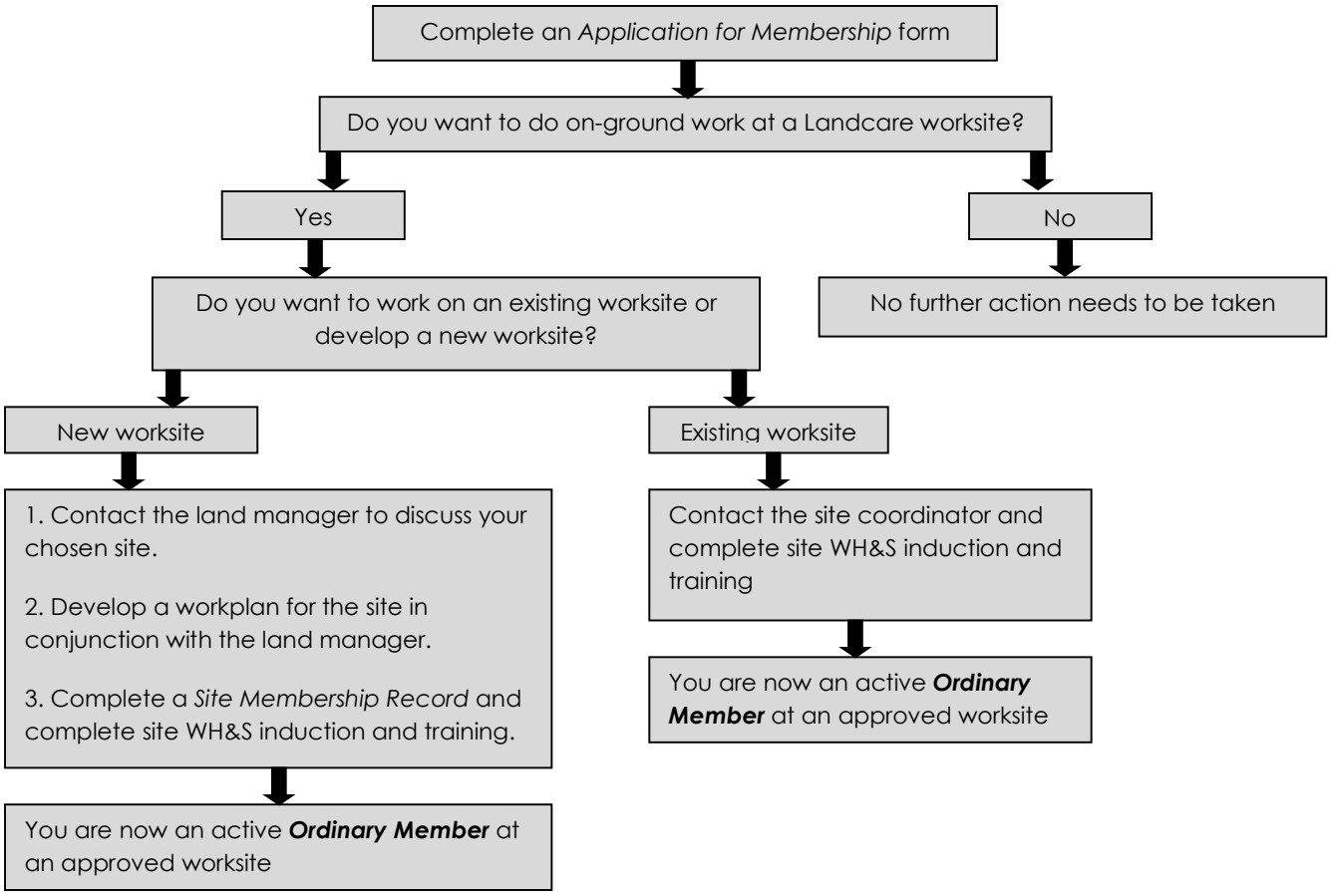
New members are encouraged to join existing CHRL teams. Existing worksites often have established coordinators who are experienced in bush regeneration techniques. Joining these teams will allow you to work on a site with an established workplan and an existing network of volunteers.

When you first contact the CHRL office you will most likely be given the contact details for several worksites in your local area. New volunteers are encouraged to contact these site coordinators prior to joining CHRL. This will give you an opportunity to discuss work times, the current focus of work, and if possible, attend a working bee with the team. Unregistered volunteers are able to attend their first working bee without being a member of CHRL as long as they have signed-on at the start of the work session, are made aware of any hazards at the site (WH&S Induction) and are wearing clothing appropriate to the activity.

If a suitable worksite does not exist in your local area there may be the option of establishing a new worksite. The decision to create a new worksite will be made by the land manager in consultation with CHRL. Due to limits in available resources in CHCC, NPWS and CHRL not all requests to establish new sites will be successful. Please call the CHRL office if you would like to discuss this option further.

After a new volunteer has identified a suitable worksite they are required to complete an *Application for membership* form (included in the Appendices) and return it to the CHRL office. All information collected during the application process will be treated as confidential.

Volunteering Flow Chart



PROGRAM PROCEDURES

Most volunteers working on public land in the Coffs Harbour LGA are Landcare Volunteers and are covered by this manual. Those volunteers who are working independently from CHRL are volunteers of the organisation that manages the land they are working on. They are not covered by this manual. These volunteers may be members of another incorporated Landcare or community team and should refer to the either the volunteer procedure of the team they are a member of or the volunteer policy of the land managing agency.

Membership with CHRL

Members of Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc. are *ordinary team members*.

CHRL keeps a register of membership and of work sites where members are registered to work on public land. Written applications for membership are received any time and memberships are renewed annually. Members of CHRL receive member benefits including training opportunities, access to CHRL resources, including plants from the community nursery, networking and quarterly newsletters. All current members of CHRL working for CHRL at CHRL work sites are covered by insurance for accident and injury. They also receive equipment and materials relevant to their work as well as site-specific training.

Volunteering in bush regeneration work on public land

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare has developed a *Volunteer Agreement* with Coffs Harbour City Council and the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service outlining procedures for CHRL members working on land managed by these agencies.

This agreement defines the responsibilities for the management of the sites and for the volunteers at those sites. The land managers are responsible for the management of the site while CHRL is responsible for the support of the volunteers. A summary of the roles and responsibilities outlined in the agreement are included below.

<u>Site Assessment & Planning</u>

Volunteers and land managers assess the site and develop a work plan together. CHRL provides an agreed template for this. The resulting work plans are working documents and will be reviewed when necessary in consultation with the land managers.

Education & Training

Volunteers intending to work in bush regeneration on public land are to complete a training workshop in methods of bush regeneration with CHRL. The land managers will conduct a site WH&S induction for each team of volunteers.

CHRL will also endeavour to provide members with appropriate training in *Workplace Health and Safety* and *First Aid*. In addition to these courses other training and workshops on a variety NRM issues and management techniques will be provided to all CHRL members when funds are available.

Materials & Equipment

The land managers provide necessary materials and equipment such as plants, mulch, stakes, tree-guards. CHRL provides Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as Permethrin treated workwear, hats, gloves, insect repellent as well as first aid kits. Volunteers provide their own protective foot wear.

Volunteer teams

Usually, there is a team of volunteers working at an approved CHRL worksite on agreed work days. All these volunteers must be members of CHRL in order to receive insurance cover. CHRL provides a Volunteer Logbook for record keeping for each work site and collates the records of team membership, team activities and working hours, achievements and outcomes at these sites. These records are made available to the land managers.

Site Coordinators

- Site Coordinators keep records of volunteer attendance and work hours and activities, including area weeded, trees planted, by adding this information to the logbook at each working bee.
- Site Coordinators also communicate with the office staff/nursery supervisor as necessary about materials required.
- Site Coordinators undertake regular 'toolbox talks' (safety briefings), ensure volunteers work safely and notify CHRL about any hazards and incidents, especially personal injuries.

- Site Coordinators carry out supervision for the implementation of the site work plan and perform a site induction for new team members in the absence of a land manager/CHRL staff member.
- Site Coordinators are responsible for storing, maintaining, and issuing/collecting tools for their team working bees.
- Site Coordinators are responsible for the safe storage and handling of Glyphosate (herbicide) for their team as per *CHRL Volunteer Use of Herbicides Policy*.

On-site work procedures

All Landcare work has to comply with relevant legislation and regulations and must comply with the site-specific work plan. Volunteers are expected to follow the agreed work plan for the site and to follow the directions of the relevant land managing staff member and site coordinator.

Safety Procedures

Safety of all volunteers is of high priority for the *Coffs Harbour Volunteer Landcare Program*. To ensure the safety of the Landcare volunteers, the following minimum work conditions are required:

- Volunteers are encouraged to work with at least one other person on site.
- Volunteers are not permitted to use power tools.
- Volunteers are not permitted to undertake any herbicide spraying.

If volunteers are working alone, please advise the site coordinator and provide the following information:

1. Time of starting
2. Expected finish time
3. At the conclusion of your work contact the site coordinator by text or phone to advise safe completion of your activity

This not only significantly enhances volunteer safety but also allows the site coordinator to record the relevant times in the CHRL logbook.

CHRL will provide safety equipment and Personal Protective Equipment to all volunteers. This includes:

- Permethrin treated work wear
- Gloves
- Sun hat

- Sun screen
- Insect Repellent
- First Aid Kit for each team.

The above PPE will only be issued to financial members who have volunteered for a minimum of 2 sessions with a Landcare team, and with the approval of their Sie Coordinator. Volunteers are required to provide their own closed footwear with good tread.

All volunteers should also be aware of the nearest medical facility to their work site and any injury should be seen by a doctor and reported to CHRL.

It is also the responsibility of the volunteers to avoid any unnecessary risk when working on site (please refer to both the land manager and CHRL WH&S policy).

Conflict Resolution / Grievance Procedures

Conflict and / or grievances amongst team members or between the volunteers and the land manager will be referred to CHRL for mediation. The CHRL constitution outlines the procedure for conflict resolution.

Signage

CHRL has developed signage for volunteer work sites, which can, when available and appropriate, be used by CHRL volunteers. Signage acknowledges the volunteer effort, raises awareness of bush regeneration work and can be encouraging for members of the public to also engage in this type of work. These signs are provided by CHRL when available.

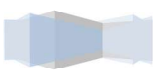
Waste

Considerable amounts of waste can be generated through bush regeneration activities.

Organic waste: Volunteers are expected to deal with organic waste on site. This will be piled into small windrows or used as mulch if possible. Organic waste that could re-grow, such as plant material likely to sucker, tubers & seed heads will be either composted under black plastic, weighted down to prevent light penetration or removed from site, or placed in residential green waste bins.

Inorganic waste: Rubbish found on site, such as bottles, plastic bags or containers, will be removed by volunteers. CHCC will remove rubbish from the Coffs Coast Regional Park and Council reserves, when the amount or nature of the rubbish is too difficult for

volunteers to deal with. The team leader has responsibility for that communication to the designated staff member at CHCC.



APPENDICES LIST

- Contact list
- CHRL Code of Conduct
- CHRL membership form
- CHRL Constitution
- Workplace Health & Safety Policy
- Australian Government Herbicide Permit- Number PER11916
- Ticks and Tick-borne diseases protecting yourself- Brochure

Emergencies

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Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare
Office
contact@coffslandcare.org.au 6651 1308

President
Alison King 0482 988 348

For issues on worksites on Council Managed land, please call
Coffs Harbour City Council
Emergencies 6648 4000
Non-urgent operational matters eg reserve management, weed control etc. 6648 4541
Aaron Hartley (Bush 6648 4883

For issues on worksites within the Coffs Harbour Regional Park please call
NSW National Parks & Wildlife.
Ash Stephenson 6652 0900

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Community Nursery
Newman St, Woolgoolga 0494 023 830

Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Inc
Code of Conduct

All members and staff of, and volunteers and contractors with, Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare will:

- Actively support the objectives of the organisation
- Respect and comply with all of the organisation's policies and procedures
- Act in accordance with all applicable Australian laws
- Work within the boundaries of their respective position descriptions (staff)
- Work according to the procedures set out in the Volunteer Manual (volunteers)
- Work according to the Work Services Agreement provided at the time of engagement (contractors)

General behaviour

- Behave with integrity and honesty in a way that upholds the reputation of the organisation
- Treat everyone with respect and courtesy and without harassment
- Comply with lawful and reasonable requests
- Perform assigned duties as well as possible considering your skills, experience, qualifications and position
- Use resources and equipment in a safe and appropriate manner
- Request assistance when needed to undertake an activity competently and safely
- Participate in meetings and training as required and requested
- Disclose and take steps to avoid any conflict of interest
- Not provide false or misleading information
- Adhere to all accounting procedures and practices of the organisation

Work Health and Safety

- Adhere to all work health and safety procedures and practices of the organisation
- Always act with sufficient care to ensure the safety of all
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while undertaking assigned duties
- **Safety, welfare and well-being of children and young persons**
- Consider child safety risks in event / activity planning to provide a child-safe, child-friendly environment for children and young persons engaged in CHRL activities, keeping children and young persons safe from all forms of harm and creating a trusting environment where they are valued, respected and welcomed.
- Act professionally and maintain a respectful and professional distance around any child or young person while participating in CHRL activities. Avoid being alone with children or young persons.

- Avoid any behaviour around children and young persons which might be considered by a reasonable person as inappropriate, including but not limited to:
    - having a sexual or intimate relationship;
    - using sexual innuendo or inappropriate language;
    - holding conversations involving disclosure of private information about themselves;
    - giving gifts of a personal nature;
    - taking inappropriate photographs; or
    - having contact via social media, text, phone, email or letters in inappropriate circumstances.
- Recognise circumstances that may involve inappropriate behaviours towards a child and report their concerns to the site coordinator or CHRL Child Safety (CSO) in accordance with the Child Safe Reporting requirements outlined in the CHRL Child Safe Policy.
- Ensure that any child that approaches them with a concern or complaint about another member's behaviour towards a child is appropriately supported and the matter immediately reported to the site coordinator or CHRL CSO.
- Report any immediate risk to a child or young person to the NSW Police.

Public comments

- Do not make representation on behalf of or in relation to Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare, including on social media, unless authorised to do so in accordance with the Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Communications and Media Relations Policy.
- Maintain confidentiality and always use appropriately any information obtained whilst undertaking activities on behalf of Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare, ensuring compliance with the Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare Privacy Policy.
- Do not publish or distribute photographs without seeking permission from the people photographed and the photographer.
- Behave in a politically neutral manner while acting on behalf of or in relation to Coffs Harbour Regional Landcare.