



Guiding Community Involvement

In Volunteering Programs at the Department of
Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

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Vision

To assist and support community care for Tasmania's unique places, delivering significant environmental, asset maintenance and conservation outcomes, while providing opportunities for individual social connection and improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

Background

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) has a long history of volunteer involvement that includes collaboration with a diverse range of community groups.

Community groups include those who are members of Volunteer Service Organisations, such as Wildcare and Landcare Tasmania, but also include independent organisations, such as community associations, progress groups, historical and preservation societies and sporting clubs.

Community groups contribute to a diverse range of programs and projects across the public and private sector, including local and State Government departments, environmental and conservation organisations, and private landowners.

NRE Tas existing partnership with over 100 community groups cannot be underestimated. Volunteers complement our existing workforce, but do not replace paid positions. Volunteers provide significant value and skilled contributions to support environmental and conservation outcomes that support the work of NRE Tas and benefit all Tasmanians. NRE Tas volunteers are a respected and valued part of our workforce.

NRE Tas is a Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO)

Volunteer activity within a NRE Tas program or on land managed by the Department cannot be undertaken without appropriate approvals and authorisation in place. NRE Tas as a VIO, is the responsible entity for managing and supporting volunteer engagements in accordance with relevant legislation, including the provision of appropriate volunteer insurance cover.

Volunteer Service Organisations (VSO)

Volunteer Service Organisations provide support to community groups as branches or members, with financial management, advocacy and at times, access to grant funds. As VSO's, both Wildcare and Landcare Tasmania play an important role in supporting communities to connect and find opportunities to volunteer.

Importantly however, a VSO is not the responsible entity for managing community group involvement when part of a NRE Tas program or on land managed by the Department. This remains the responsibility of NRE Tas, and individuals must be registered as volunteers with NRE Tas, including members of Wildcare and Landcare groups.

For information on service provision or insurance cover for activities that fall outside of the NRE Tas managed program, for example member meetings or fundraising activities, group members should contact the relevant VSO directly.

NRE Tas Community Engagement

To support community involvement with sound governance, the Department has developed the NRE Tas Volunteer Management Framework. The framework supports appropriate governance and connections between existing and new community groups and NRE Tas.

Community groups seeking to work within a NRE Tas program or on land managed by the Department, must discuss any proposed activities with NRE Tas and collaborate with the Department to develop an approved volunteer program plan.

To develop a volunteer arrangement with the Department, a community group must have a formal structure in place, that is, either be a branch or member of a VSO, or be an independent incorporated association.

To support effective communication and planning between the group and NRE Tas, the group's 'President' or 'Convenor' acts as the key conduit for communication between group members and the Department.

The Department recognises that social media is often utilised as an effective platform to drive interest in community projects. However, the Department is unable to support and develop volunteer programs with a group that does not have formal structure.

However, a new program may be developed by NRE Tas where general community interest and support, aligns with the Department's objectives and resources required to manage and support volunteer involvement. New NRE Tas volunteering program opportunities are made available to the general public to get involved.

Assessing a volunteer opportunity

The Department's role is to assess a proposed community group engagement to ensure the objectives and activities not only support community interest, but also align with Government priorities, resourcing and work programs. All volunteer programs are assessed against existing NRE Tas management plans, including, conservation, heritage, environmental or biodiversity plans, along with other strategies and policies.

As part of the assessment process, the Department collaborates with the relevant community group to develop a Volunteer Program Plan (VPP). The VPP is developed to ensure a successful program is planned and managed in accordance with relevant legislation, including (but not limited to):

- *The Work, Health and Safety Act (2012)*;
- *Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens Act (2002)*;
- *The National Parks and Reserves Management Act (2002)*;
- *Nature Conservation Act (2002)*; and
- *The Crown Lands Act (1976)*.

The VPP also assists to:

- Foster community spirit, connection and responsibility for special places;
- Clarify volunteering roles and responsibilities;
- Document approved work tasks and activities;
- Provide assessment and information relating to any natural, cultural or heritage values;
- Deliver safe and effective volunteer engagement; and
- Ensure members of community groups participating in an activity, are registered as NRE Tas volunteers.

Schedule of volunteering works and supervision

Following the development and approval of the VPP, group members wishing to volunteer must register with the Department. Groups are then authorised to attend a schedule of regular works, in accordance with an approved VPP.

Where authorised, a community group Volunteer Team Leader (normally, the President or Convenor) may at times manage and supervise the volunteer activity on behalf of the Department.

Where this appointment occurs, the Volunteer Team Leader signs the VPP and acknowledges responsibility for managing activities in accordance with the NRE Tas volunteer management framework, including:

- Ensuring group members have read program information, including the NRE Tas Volunteer Induction and Participation Handbook, the VPP and any supporting documentation.
- Ensuring any member participating has registered as a NRE Tas volunteer.
- Ensure volunteers have undertaken any mandatory training prior to participation.
- Ensuring volunteer attendance is recorded for each volunteer activity.
- Leading the activity in accordance with NRE Tas Work, Health, Safety and Wellbeing policies and procedures, including the provision of an authorised safety and orientation briefing, and reporting any near misses, incidents, hazards, or breaches of the volunteer code of conduct.
- Managing effective communication strategies between the group and Department employees.

Monitoring the VPP

The success of a community volunteer program, is reliant on a collaborative approach, including effective communication between the community group and NRE Tas. VPP's are reviewed by the Department and the group President or Convenor annually and usually during the winter period.

A VPP is only valid in accordance with the appointment period outlined within the plan. Volunteer activity is not authorised or subject to the provision of insurance cover if the plan has expired.

Declining an engagement

The Department currently partners with over 100 community volunteer groups across Tasmania. At times where it has been determined that a new or existing program does not align with current priorities, management plans, legislation or available resources, a request may be declined. Where this occurs, we recommend that the community group considers joining an existing volunteer program. To find a local community group or activity in your area, contact [Wildcare](#) or [Landcare Tasmania](#) or review the NRE Tas volunteering opportunities available on our website.

Further information

For further information, contact your NRE Tas Representative, local Parks and Wildlife Field Office or email volunteering@nre.tas.gov.au



Tasmanian
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Volunteer Management Framework

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