

# BUSHCARE

manual



“You learn to appreciate nature better, you get so close to it, so intimate with it, it becomes not just a pretty tree or flower, it becomes the insects that go with that plant, the dragonflies that feed on it.”

PAUL, BUSHCARE VOLUNTEER



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# Glossary

**Active Work Area:** The section in a reserve which is being actively regenerated by a Bushcare Group. This area may change over time and is mapped by the relevant Bushcare Officer each year as an indicator to other sections of Council that the group is a stakeholder in that area.

**Blue Mountains Bushcare:** The program run by Blue Mountains City Council to facilitate the involvement of volunteers in the management of natural areas in the Blue Mountains local government area. Responsible for facilitation of Bushcare, Swampcare and Landcare Groups.

**Blue Mountains Bushcare Network:** A coalition of representatives from Bushcare Groups, Landcare Groups and other BMCC community conservation programs involved in maintaining and restoring the integrity of bushland in the Blue Mountains. It is a forum to exchange ideas and information, comment on issues and initiate strategies. It facilitates communication between conservation groups and Council.

**Bushcare:** The involvement of volunteers in the management of Council managed natural areas.

**Bushcare Group:** A group of volunteers undertaking bush regeneration and/or associated works within an agreed framework on land owned or managed by Council.

**Bushcare Officer:** Appropriately qualified Council staff member who is employed to develop and implement the Bushcare Program and act as project officer for a number of Bushcare or Landcare Groups.

**Bushcare Team Leader:** Co-ordinator of the Bushcare and Landcare Program; supervisor of the Council Bushcare team.

**Catchment Group:** A group of Community Conservation Program volunteers, including Bushcare and Landcare volunteers, cooperatively working towards environmental improvements and integrated bush regeneration in a particular catchment of an identified creek system.

**Child:** Persons under the age of 16 years.

**Child-related work:** Positions in which an employee/self-employed person/volunteer in the course of their duties, is involved in working with, or will have regular contact with children, or access to confidential records regarding children. This includes supervised work.

**Community Conservation Program (CCP):** A program covering BMCC facilitated community networks taking part in on-ground environmental management of assets in natural areas throughout the City. Includes Bushcare, Landcare, Community Water Monitoring, Trackcare and Bush Backyards.

**Council (BMCC):** Blue Mountains City Council.

**Council land:** Land that is either owned by, or under the care control and management of Blue Mountains City Council.

**Duties of workers (as defined by the Act includes volunteers):**

Extract from *WHS Act 2011, Part 2, Division 4, 28*

*Duties of workers*

While at work, a worker must:

- (a) take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety; and
- (b) take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons; and
- (c) comply, so far as the worker is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the person conducting the business or undertaking to allow the person to comply with this Act; and
- (d) co-operate with any reasonable policy or procedure of the person conducting the business or undertaking relating to health or safety at the workplace that has been notified to workers.

**Group Coordinator:** A volunteer who acts as contact person or convenor for a volunteer group.

**Landcare:** The involvement of volunteers in the management of natural areas, on private or other non-Council managed land.

**Landcare Group:** A group of volunteers undertaking bush regeneration and/or associated works within an agreed framework on land not owned or managed by Council.

**Natural Areas Management Program:** A BMCC program covering bushland management, track management and built infrastructure in natural areas.

**Part 5 Assessment:** An assessment of possible environmental, social and cultural impacts of activities proposed by Council staff or volunteers, which is required to ensure Council is meeting its legislative obligations.

**PCBU:** A Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking as defined by the *Work Health and Safety Act, 2011* (WHS Act).

Council is a PCBU for the purposes of Bushcare.

Primary Duty of Care, as defined by the WHS Act:

- (1) A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of:
  - (a) workers engaged, or caused to be engaged by the person; and
  - (b) workers whose activities in carrying out work are influenced or directed by the person, while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking.
- (2) A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of other persons is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.
- (3) Without limiting subsections (1) and (2), a person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable:
  - (a) the provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to health and safety; and
  - (b) the provision and maintenance of safe plant and structures; and
  - (c) the provision and maintenance of safe systems of work; and
  - (d) the safe use, handling, and storage of plant, structures and substances; and
  - (e) the provision of adequate facilities for the welfare at work of workers in carrying out work for the business or undertaking, including ensuring access to those facilities; and
  - (f) the provision of any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking; and
  - (g) that the health of workers and the conditions at the workplace are monitored for the purpose of preventing illness or injury of workers arising from the conduct of the business or undertaking.

**Site and volunteer record book:** A book issued to volunteer groups for the purpose of recording the hours worked, the people who participated and the type of work carried out on a Bushcare site.

**Site strategy:** An annual works program for a Bushcare or Landcare site, developed by Council in consultation with the relevant group, setting out what works are required and how and when they should be undertaken based on a site based technical restoration plan.

**Stakeholder:** Someone who is affected by, is concerned with, etc., an issue or enterprise.

**Swampcare:** The voluntary bush regeneration program of events carried out in the vegetation community identified as Blue Mountains Swamps.

**Swampcare Group:** A Bushcare Group undertaking bush regeneration and/or associated works on land managed by Council and defined as a swamp.

**Volunteer:** A participant in an activity who is not paid or otherwise materially rewarded for their participation in that activity.

**Worker:** BMCC staff and volunteers participating in Council approved activities on Council land as defined by the *Work Health and Safety Act, 2011*.

**Work session:** An occasion where members of a Bushcare Group carry out work on their site — usually held at the same time each month.

**Working With Children Check (WWCC):** Involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct. A WWCC is required by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian for people who work or volunteer in child-related work. BMCC requires volunteers in groups deemed to be doing child related work such as a school-based Landcare Group or groups which aim to actively educate children on a routine basis to undertake a WWCC.

# Acknowledgment of Country

The City of the Blue Mountains is located within the Country of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. The Blue Mountains City Council recognises that Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners have a continuous and deep connection to their Country and that this is of great cultural significance to Aboriginal people, both locally and in the region.

For Darug and Gundungurra People, Ngurra (Country) takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape - landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings, and people: past, present and future.

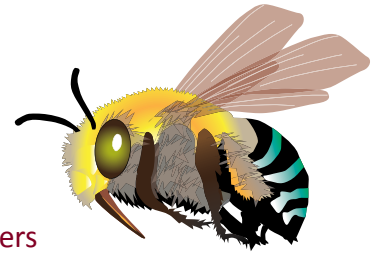
Blue Mountains City Council pays respect to Elders past and present while recognising the strength, capacity and resilience of past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Blue Mountains region.

Council staff and community conservation volunteers are mindful and respectful of the presence of tangible Aboriginal cultural heritage on Bushcare and Landcare sites.

Tangible Aboriginal cultural heritage which is still observable on sites may include:

- Living Places, such as open camps and rock shelters;
- Places of Economy, Livelihood and community activity , such as quarries, stone tool and ochre working, grinding grooves and wells;
- Places of art, culture and spirit, such as rock art, scarred trees, stone arrangements, distinctive landscape features and burial places.

# Introduction



This manual is a guide for Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare volunteers and staff. It sets out the processes and standards to be followed so that there is consistency in service delivery and clarity for participants new to the program. It defines Council and volunteer rights and responsibilities, and outlines relevant Council procedures governing the Bushcare Program.

## BACKGROUND

The Bushcare Program in the Blue Mountains had its origins in 1987 when the early 'Landcare' groups first started. In response to these early community activities Council, in 1992, funded a position to coordinate the activities of these groups and the number of groups quickly and steadily increased.

Currently over 60 Bushcare/Landcare Groups are supported by a team of part-time Bushcare Officers, a full time Bushcare Project's Officer and a full-time Team Leader. The Bushcare Program also manages events-based programs including Swampcare, Seed Collection and Remote Area Bushcare, and several education and promotion events each year.

This significant growth is the result of demand from the community to support new Bushcare Groups on Council managed land. The expansion of the Bushcare Program to encompass Landcare Groups working on high conservation value private lands is indicative of the strength of the Council–community partnership.

The estimated value of the volunteer contribution to bushland management in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area is around \$250,000 annually (volunteer effort is valued at \$30 per hour).

In 2013 Council conducted a review of all community conservation programs, including Bushcare and Landcare, to ensure that resources invested in these programs continue to be well directed, are responsive to community needs, and provide value for money. After extensive community

consultation the Community Conservation Program (CCP) plan 2014 was adopted by Council in November 2014.

This procedures manual provides direction on the delivery of the Bushcare Program to comply with the CCP 2014 and to implement Council's commitment to good governance, EEO and a safe workplace.

## BUSHCARE PROGRAM AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### Aim:

To build community capacity to contribute to natural area management by actively restoring, maintaining and protecting healthy, resilient ecosystems.

### Objectives:

The objectives for Council's Bushcare Program are to:

1. Support Bushcare and Landcare Groups to function on a regular basis;
2. Provide volunteers with the skills and knowledge to maintain and manage bushland effectively;
3. Raise community awareness about invasive weeds and the impacts of living near the bush;
4. Foster community support for bushland management and community conservation programs;
5. Encourage community development by supporting the Blue Mountains Bushcare Network and Catchment Groups;
6. Provide good governance and effective risk management for staff and volunteers; and
7. Improve the quality of community life through increased social interaction and sharing of information.

# How the Bushcare Program works

## WHERE BUSHCARE GROUPS CAN WORK

Bushcare Groups undertake restoration on land owned or managed by Council. The land is generally classified as community land, regional open space, or public recreation reserve. Council Bushcare Groups work on land under Council management. Groups operating within Blue Mountains National Park are managed by the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage (OEH).

Suitable sites for consideration are where:

- There is environmental, cultural and/or community value in conserving and regenerating the area;
- Bush regeneration is achievable by volunteers;
- All volunteers have the common aim of bush regeneration and agreed achievable goals;
- There is a high level of commitment to the site by the local community, with the site likely to be maintained by the volunteer group for a minimum of five years; and
- Council has sufficient resources to allocate a Bushcare Officer to the group.

With Council approval, it may be possible to undertake Bushcare activities on other Council land such as operational land, road reserves or other land categories outside those listed above. Groups working in these areas should be aware that Bushcare activities are subject to changes in the intended land use by Council.

## WHERE LANDCARE GROUPS CAN WORK

Landcare Groups undertake the same types of activities as Bushcare Groups however they are established to enable participants to do Bushcare on privately owned bushland, or bushland managed by agencies other than Council, for example, Sydney Trains or the Department of Education. Council supported Landcare Groups are distinguished from Bushcare Groups only because they work on land not managed by Council.

## PROCEDURES FOR SETTING UP NEW GROUPS

Council's capacity to support Bushcare and Landcare Groups is linked to funding levels, and the number of staff available to attend workdays and manage Bushcare projects.

As resources permit, Council will support all Bushcare and Landcare projects that comply with the criteria set out above. If resources are insufficient, projects will receive support according to the following factors:

- Status and ownership of land (projects on Council land classified for community use would normally receive preference over projects on other classifications such as operational or road reserve);
- Potential of the project to meet its aims and achieve sustainable results (this may depend on the number of people wishing to be part of the group, and the amount of time they are able to commit);
- Potential ecological, educational or other benefits of the project;
- Consistency of the project with local and regional priorities; and
- When the group is available to meet (e.g. weekend versus midweek) and Council resources are available at the corresponding time.

Prospective volunteers contact Council's Bushcare Office to discuss the possibility of forming a new Bushcare or Landcare Group. Information on Council's Bushcare Program, including a copy of the 'Volunteering with Bushcare' booklet, is made available to prospective volunteers.

- For Bushcare Groups, the Bushcare Team Leader checks land tenure and other relevant information to ensure that the land the group wants to work on is owned and/or managed by Council; checks requirements regarding Part 5 assessment;
- For Landcare Groups, the Bushcare Team Leader ensures that all landowners of the land on which the group intends to work have provided consent (it is the responsibility of the group to obtain consent, in writing if required);
- Bushcare Team Leader establishes whether there is scope within the existing schedule of Bushcare and Landcare Groups to accommodate a new group;
- A site inspection is arranged to discuss the potential aims and possible strategies;
- A Council Bushcare Officer is appointed to attend workdays and provide equipment for use on workdays;
- The new group's details are placed on Council's list of Bushcare and Landcare Groups for public use. Workdays are scheduled on the timetable for Bushcare Group workdays;
- A voluntary group coordinator/s is appointed by the group to liaise between Council and the group, and to act as the main contact for the general public;
- Volunteers undertake on-site Bushcare training; and
- The relevant Bushcare Officer produces a site strategy in consultation with the group.

### **EVENT-BASED VOLUNTEERING**

Bushcare also runs an events program to provide opportunities for residents to connect to our bushland by attending educational and practical hands-on activities. These events are designed for those people who may not have the capacity to undertake regular monthly volunteering and for existing volunteers with a special interest in the area.

### **VOLUNTEER APPLICATION PROCESS**

Prospective volunteers can register interest in joining Bushcare:

- Online: go to [www.Bushcarebluemountains.org.au](http://www.Bushcarebluemountains.org.au) and click on the "JOIN" tab. A Bushcare staff member will respond to your request to join; or
- By completing a registration form and submitting to Council before commencing voluntary work on site. Forms can be obtained directly from Bushcare Officers or contacting the Bushcare Office on [Bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au)

A "Joining Bushcare Package" containing a copy of the 'Volunteering with Bushcare' booklet; a registration form; a volunteer agreement; a volunteer position description and a photographic consent form will be provided to the new volunteer.

The volunteer agreement will include acknowledgement of their fitness to perform Bushcare/Landcare tasks and compliance with Bushcare procedures as outlined in the manual.

Once the volunteer signs the BMCC Volunteers agreement, their name and contact details will be added to the group attendance book and the Bushcare mailing list database.

The relevant Bushcare Officer will make contact with the new volunteer to advise where to meet, what time, appropriate clothing, what is planned at the next Bushcare session and wet-weather contingency plans.





# Rights & responsibilities

## WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM VOLUNTEERS

- Provide information requested on the registration form;
- Read and sign off on the Volunteer Position Description and Volunteer Agreement;
- Participate in the on-site induction and training;
- Follow reasonable instructions from the Bushcare Officers and other Council staff;
- Co-operate with other volunteers as appropriate;
- When needed, seek clarification on information and/or instructions;
- Undertake all activities in a safe manner;
- Report hazards, incidents, accidents and near misses affecting either volunteers and/or the general public immediately;
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when volunteering;
- Update your Bushcare Officer or Council staff with medical conditions not previously identified;
- Adhere to relevant legislation, Council policies, Bushcare guidelines and site strategies; and
- Represent Council in a way which complies with Council's Code of Conduct.

Authority to work on Council land as a Bushcare volunteer is conditional on the volunteer complying with Council's Bushcare procedures. If Council determines that a volunteer has acted contrary to procedures as outlined in this manual, they will first be cautioned. If the behaviour continues their authority to work on Council land or as part of a Council supported Landcare Group will be withdrawn, and grievance procedures may be followed.

## Code of Conduct

Bushcare volunteers and staff must comply with Council's Code of Conduct as required by the *Local Government Act, 1993*. The Code of Conduct assists council officials to understand the standards of conduct that are expected of them when representing the Council, and their personal responsibility to comply with the standards of behaviour.

By signing a Volunteer Agreement, a person agrees to abide by the Code of Conduct. You must:

- Conduct yourself in a manner that is respectful, lawful, honest and ethical;
- Exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence;
- Ensure that you use Council resources and equipment ethically, effectively, efficiently and carefully in the course of your council duties, and not for private purposes;

- Never act in a way that is harassing; intimidating; verbally or physically abusive; discriminating or prejudicial, or support others who behave that way. This includes, but is not limited to, harassment and discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, age, race, responsibilities as a carer, marital status, disability, homosexuality, transgender grounds or health status.

A Code of Conduct complaint is one that alleges conduct on the part of a council official acting in their official capacity that on its face, if proven, would constitute a breach of Council's code of conduct. To make a report of suspected wrongdoing under the Code of Conduct, your complaint must be made in writing and addressed to the General Manager via: [Council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au)

## WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM COUNCIL

Council's Volunteer Policy commits to providing the following for all Council volunteers:

- Bushcare Procedures Manual and Bushcare Volunteer Position Description;
- Direction, supervision and support from qualified and trained staff (Bushcare Officers);
- A safety induction and relevant training and skill development on-site;
- Sufficient tools, resources and personal protective equipment including gloves and a sun hat;
- A site plan and work that is suitable for the skills and ability of the group;
- A safe work environment as per the WHS Act;
- Acknowledgement of the rights of volunteer workers and information on your rights and responsibilities;
- Adequate insurance coverage when working on Council land (refer to Part 4 of the Council Volunteer Policy) and liaison with The Greater Sydney Local Land Services to provide insurance for Landcare Groups;
- Encouragement, respect and appreciation of your work and commitment;
- Feedback on work that has been carried out and opportunities to develop skills; and
- Consultation on matters affecting your site or substantive changes to the delivery of the program.

Council is committed to maintaining a team of qualified staff to support individual groups and the ongoing Bushcare Program.

The program maintains a high level of supervision and support for volunteer groups. A Bushcare Officer will be appointed to

each Bushcare or Landcare Group. Whenever possible the Bushcare Officer will attend the group's work sessions.

Authorised groups may work more independently or on additional workdays without Bushcare Officer supervision within agreed guidelines (see p.27).

Council will provide training, supervision, site assessment, planning and documentation, tools, equipment and insurance as outlined in the following sections.

### **Grievance Procedure**

All volunteer grievances will be managed in compliance with Council's grievance policy (see Appendix p.29). The following are general guidelines.

If volunteers or volunteer groups have any grievance associated with the operation of the Bushcare Program, the issue should first be raised with the Bushcare Officer and/or the Bushcare Team Leader.

A meeting between relevant Council Officers and the aggrieved volunteer or group will be held to discuss the grievance or dispute and any remedy sought within 21 working days of notification.

If discussion does not provide a resolution the issue should be clearly outlined in writing together with the proposed remedy sought. This information should be directed to the Coordinator, Bushland Operations in writing either by email or letter. Allow at least 21 days for a response.

If the grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved, the volunteer/group may request that the matter be referred to the Manager, Environment and Culture Branch. Allow 21 days for a response.

If the matter remains unresolved the Council will provide a written response which shall include the reasons for not implementing any proposed remedy.

### **Council Records and Documentation**

As a local government agency, Council must comply with the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act, 1998* when collecting personal information. Amongst other things this means Council must take care that the information collected is up-to-date and kept securely.

More specifically, when collecting 'personal information' from the public, the BMCC Privacy Management Plan requires Council to advise them of the following:

- The fact that the information is being collected;
- The purpose for which the information is collected;
- The intended recipients of the information;
- Whether supply of the information is required by law or is voluntary and the possible consequences of failure to supply the information;
- The existence of any right to access and correct the information; and
- The name, address and contact details of that part of Council collecting the information.

Council will maintain:

1. **A register of general information** — about Bushcare Groups for public use; and
2. **A confidential database** — the Bushcare Mailing-list. This database is managed and updated by the Bushcare Officers in accordance with Council's Privacy Management Plan. It contains names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and training information on Bushcare volunteers.

Council information systems ensure that access to the database is limited to Bushcare staff, their direct managers and relevant human resources staff. Internal access procedures will be reviewed in response to any changes in relevant technologies or Council policy.

This information is primarily used for mailing out the quarterly Bushcare newsletter, 'The Gecko'. Volunteers may request at any time to have their information deleted from the list. The list is also made available to other sections of Council when information relevant to Bushcare volunteers needs to be distributed, e.g. advice of public exhibitions, notification of programs/projects that may be relevant to Bushcare.

3. **Attendance books** — Council provides attendance books for groups to use at each work session for recording the following information:
  - Date of work session;
  - Names of people attending the work session;
  - Volunteer contact and emergency contact information
  - Training and PPE supplied;
  - Hours worked by each person;

- The name of the Bushcare officer and the number of hours they worked;
- The type of work carried out;
- Areas where work was carried out;
- Chemical use on site;
- Other relevant information such as observations about the site and proposed works; and
- The book may be retained by the group but copies of records will be provided to Council when requested, so that the data can be used for planning and reporting.

The information is collected to record total hours worked for reporting purposes as well as for documentation in the event of an insurance claim.

### **Photographs of Bushcare Volunteers**

Photographs of volunteers and Bushcare sites can be valuable historical records. They are used in promotional material including the Gecko newsletter and on Council's website.

At registration, Bushcare volunteers will be asked for their consent to have photos of them taken and used for promotional purposes as part of the Volunteer Agreement (see Appendix for link). The BMCC photographic consent form is at: <http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/yourcouncil/policiesplansandstrategies>



# How groups work

Most Bushcare and Landcare Groups meet on a regular basis, usually on the same morning or afternoon once a month, and work for 3–4 hours. Events-based groups such as Swampcare, Remote Area and Seed Collection group activities are scheduled to occur regularly throughout the year.

Groups work to a site restoration plan which has been developed by the group and the supervising Bushcare Officer and updated annually.

## SUPPORT STRUCTURE

BMCC will support Bushcare and Landcare Groups working within one of the following mechanisms:

- Full supervision — a Bushcare officer will attend all group work sessions
- Part supervision — a Bushcare Officer will attend a minimum of four work sessions annually (see Conditions for Authorised Independent Groups p.27 for more details)

## THE ROLE OF BUSHCARE OFFICERS

A Council Officer (usually a Bushcare Officer) will be appointed to each Bushcare / Landcare Group. The Bushcare Officer will provide for:

- Induction of new volunteers including providing information regarding:
  - Possible workplace hazards;
  - UV Protection;
  - Manual handling;
  - Herbicide safety;
  - Work strategy for the session; and
  - The Bushcare Procedures Manual.
- Development and implementation of a site strategy/work plan and an emergency plan in consultation with the group (see Site Strategies and Assessment p.14);
- On-going technical assistance and guidance, including on-site skills development and adequate training for volunteers so that they can carry out their work safely and effectively;
- Supply and maintain appropriate tools, equipment and materials, including PPE and first aid equipment;
- Compliance with safe working practices (see Work Health & Safety p.18);
- Adherence to Council plans of management and bushland management program strategies;
- Direct and prioritise work for the site to comply with the agreed work plan and achieve optimum on-ground outcomes;
- Foster a positive working relationship between the group, the local community and Council;

- Liaison between other Council teams and the group regarding matters which affect the site; and
- Where possible, arrange for the supply of additional support services to perform tasks and works needed to manage the site, which are outside of the capacity of the volunteers.

## THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS

A member of each Bushcare Group will be appointed by the group to act as Coordinator. The role can be shared if the group wishes, provided it is clear who the primary contact person is.

The Group Coordinator is responsible for:

- Acting as the group's primary contact for Council, other organisations and the general public;
- Liaising between the group members and Council;
- Sending out reminder emails for work sessions (if agreed by the group); and
- Notifying the Bushcare Officer of any relevant information that they are aware of, e.g. potential safety hazards, plans to change the date of a work session and/or the need for extra equipment.

Volunteer coordinators in authorised groups may have additional responsibilities (see Conditions for Authorised Independent Groups p.27)

## PROVISION OF TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Council will provide the necessary tools and equipment for use by volunteers, either on loan or brought to workdays by the Bushcare Officer.

All tools provided remain the property of Council. Groups are responsible for ensuring that equipment is returned to Council in the event of the group disbanding or a volunteer leaving the program.

Volunteers are not to use power tools or machinery on-site other than cordless electric drills. Exceptions may be possible for qualified trades people or WorkCover accredited operators, particularly in the case of landscaping or construction projects. Copies of the relevant licenses and permits will need to be provided to Council.

Individual volunteers will be issued with gloves, hats and personal safety equipment.

Consumables such as gloves, herbicide, saw blades, weed bags, and replacement first aid products will be reissued as required.

Other equipment such as tree injection gear and plant propagating materials will be available as necessary.

To minimise transfer of pathogens between sites, tools should be cleaned on-site prior to departure.

Council will be responsible for maintenance and repair of tools and equipment and replacing equipment that is lost or damaged beyond repair, as necessary.

Additional materials and equipment required for implementation of the site strategy such as planting, erosion control or signage will be supplied via Council's internal purchasing system, via the Bushcare Officer.

### **TRAINING**

All new volunteers will complete basic work, health and safety (WHS) and Bushcare Program induction training which will be delivered by the Bushcare Officer on site before they commence work. Refresher training will be undertaken as required. The Bushcare Officer delivering the training is responsible for maintaining a record of training completed by the volunteers in their group. Volunteers must sign to acknowledge receipt of induction training and personal protective equipment (PPE) provided. Relevant WHS issues will be reinforced at the beginning of each work day by the Bushcare Officer or Volunteer Coordinator as per the Site Safety Checklist.

Further development of volunteers' skills and understanding will be provided by ongoing instruction by the Bushcare Officer at each work session, tailored to the needs of groups and individuals. Topics covered may include safe working practices, plant identification, erosion control techniques, weed removal techniques and principles of bush regeneration and ecology.

More formal refresher and intermediate training will be offered periodically. It will consist of detailed modules on bush regeneration, weed identification and site management issues, and may cover issues beyond the immediate work of the group such as fauna management, sensitive vegetation management, Aboriginal site awareness, wildlife monitoring and preparation of site strategies.

### **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AT BUSHCARE**

Families are encouraged to join the Bushcare Program but on-site supervision of children is the responsibility of their parents or an adult nominated by their parents (an authorised adult).

Children may attend workdays in compliance with the BMCC Volunteer Policy. Young children (under 6 years of age) must be under the constant supervision of a designated adult. The designated supervising adult cannot be working simultaneously as their full attention must be on the safety of the young child. Children between 6 and below 15 years, whilst not working volunteers, may engage in tasks appropriate to their capabilities, under the supervision of their parent or authorised adult.

A parent or designated adult may only be responsible for the supervision of a maximum of two children (0 to 14 years) at any one workday.

Children who are of working age, between 15 and below 18 years, may be engaged as fully participating volunteers without parental supervision. A parent or guardian must co-sign the volunteer registration form of volunteers under 18 years of age.

Child-related work is defined by Council's Human Resources branch. Any groups deemed to be engaged in 'child-related activities' will be notified by the relevant Council Officer and advised of Working with Children Check procedures.

If the work of a Bushcare Group is deemed to be "Child-related" according to BMCC Policy, all those over the age of 18 involved with the group, including volunteers, are required to undergo a Working With Children Check (WWCC). This may include volunteers who will be in contact with members under the age of 18 on more than five occasions each year, or groups which routinely aim to involve and educate children at Bushcare activities.

The Bushcare Team Leader will inform BMCC Human Resources of the intended commencement of any employee, self-employed person, volunteer or work experience applicant prior to them undertaking child-related Bushcare activities.

As required by BMCC Human Resources, relevant volunteers must submit a completed Application Form (for Self-Employed Persons, Volunteers and Work Experience Applicants) to BMCC (Human Resources); and a Working with Children Check clearance or application number where required prior to undertaking work with the group. Council will facilitate and support volunteers to complete this process.

### **PROCEDURES FOR CLOSURE OF GROUPS**

At times a group may become unviable because of the loss of members, the change of land ownership or the declining

capacity of volunteers. Under these circumstances Council reserves the right to wind up the group after a period of discussion with the group.

Given that there is generally greater community demand for support of new groups than Council has the capacity to meet, the closure of unviable groups will allow resources to be redirected to more support of new and existing groups.

Drivers for closure could include:

- Low attendance over an extended period;
- Inability of the group to implement the site strategy; and/or
- Viability of the site for continuing bush regeneration activity.

Closure will be considered on the recommendations of the Bushcare Team Leader and the relevant Bushcare Officer.

Where drivers that may result in the closure of a group are initially identified, then all members and volunteers of the group will as soon as possible be provided with opportunities to discuss the issues with their Bushcare Officer and strategies to overcome identified issues will be explored.

In the event that the issues cannot be resolved the group will be given formal notice of intention to wind up the group at least three months prior to the proposed closure date. Volunteers may then make formal submissions to the Bushcare Team Leader or Bushland Operations Coordinator which will be considered before a final decision is made.

The final decision will be made by the relevant program leader, responsible for management of the Bushcare Program, and will not be subject to any further negotiation.

# Site management

## SITE STRATEGIES AND ASSESSMENT

Work on Bushcare and Landcare sites is to be carried out in accordance with an annual site strategy. The strategy will outline the short and long term goals for the rehabilitation of the site, and the means by which they can be achieved.

The Bushcare Officer has responsibility for developing the site strategy and updating it annually in consultation with the group. The Bushcare Officer must ensure that volunteers are familiar with the plan and how to implement it.

An important element with the site strategies is to ensure that weed infestations are not cleared beyond the group's ability to maintain them.

A site strategy should contain:

- Aims and objectives for the site;
- A map of the area and its major features including topography, land use, stormwater infrastructure, property boundaries and active work areas;
- Reference to flora and fauna (both native and introduced), rare and threatened species or vegetation communities on site;
- Relevant plans of management relating to the site;
- What is required to complete actions (methods and resources);
- An annual works program scheduling remediation work to be undertaken to achieve the objectives; and
- An emergency plan ( see Work Health and Safety p.18)

Consideration should be given to maintenance of existing areas, attendance and future capacity to manage new areas.

All activities need to be in accordance with the land owners' site management objectives. For Council reserves this will include reference to Council's Natural Area Management program strategies and any plans of management or other plan applying to the reserve and approval by the Bushland Operations Coordinator. For Landcare sites this will include adherence to the land managers' guidelines, procedures and plans of management and/or consultation with private landowners.

## SIGNAGE

Council provides standard signs for Bushcare and Landcare sites which include relevant information about meeting times and Council contacts.

All additional signage on Council managed land, including proposals from Bushcare Groups, must be approved by Council. Proposals will be considered on a case by case basis and will be assessed against criteria including compliance with Council policy and procedures, best value for the community and sustainable asset management considerations.

## BUSHCARE SITE MANAGEMENT

### Relationship to Other Parts of Council

It is recognised that Bushcare Groups act as reserve stewards, often having had a long association with the site and spending many hours in its care. This stewardship role is respected by Council.

Council retains ultimate responsibility for all land management decisions, through its Natural Areas Management program.

Bushcare Groups will be consulted and involved whenever possible in any planning for future works that may impact upon their sites and reserves in which they work. This will take place either via the Bushcare Officer or directly from the relevant project manager. Groups may also bring to Council's attention, through their Bushcare Officer, any activity that they witness having an adverse impact on the reserve or within its proximity. Any such matters brought to Council's attention will be respectfully and seriously considered, in accordance with Council policy, procedures and service charters.

Council has limited influence over activities of other agencies impacting on Bushcare sites. However, where appropriate, Council will assist Bushcare participants to negotiate with relevant Council land managers or other land management agencies to resolve issues which affect their sites.

### Part 5 Assessment

Council has an obligation to assess environmental impacts of the work it undertakes or authorises under the *Environment Planning and Assessment Act, 1976*.

A generic Part 5 assessment applies to routine Bushcare activities. Routine Bushcare activities as specified in the generic Bushcare Part 5 assessment are:

- Weed removal using approved bushland weed removal techniques;
- Spreading of mulch around plantings and bare areas to reduce erosion; and
- Planting of local provenance native species.

More major works may require an additional Part 5 assessment to be undertaken before works proceed.

Where a Part 5 Assessment is undertaken for works by other parts of Council on Bushcare sites, the Bushcare Officer is to be advised as part of the Part 5 process.

If those works are planned for an "Active Work Area" as per the Group's work plan, the Bushcare Group should be consulted as stakeholders per BMCC Community Consultation Policy.

### **Site Support and External Grant Management**

During the development and review of site strategies, volunteers and Bushcare officers should identify works on Bushcare sites that are beyond the capacity of the volunteer group to implement.

The Bushland Management Officer will evaluate proposals for site support and, where possible, incorporate works into annual work plans. When the resources needed to implement a project are below \$5,000, it may be more cost effective for Council to include this work in its annual program rather than administer a grant. This is the most efficient procedure to implement small to medium scale works.

Council will maintain a database and map of works required on Bushcare sites, so that suitable projects can be incorporated into internal works programs or selected when applications for grant programs are invited.

Where practical, Council and Bushcare Groups will take advantage of external funding opportunities for the expansion of the Bushcare Program activities. This will often involve forming a partnership between the group and Council to carry out a particular project.

Where work on Council reserves is involved, Bushcare Groups cannot apply for external grants, sponsorship etc. or manage projects independently. Council will act as project manager and financial trustee for all grant projects on Council managed land.

Where works are suitable for external funding, Council will apply for and manage grant projects. For grant programs specifically targeted at community partnerships, Council and the Bushcare Group should develop grant applications jointly.

A grant partnership will be formed with the relevant group where a grant program requires the community group

and Council to be joint applicants and/or when a funding application entails specific works on the group's active work site or inclusion of volunteer hours as part of the applicants in kind contributions to the project.

If a grant partnership is formed, an agreement formulated before the funding application is lodged will clarify where responsibilities lie for various aspects of the project. This should reflect the issues described above.

Grant applications must be approved and signed by an authorised Council Officer. Council will submit applications unless otherwise agreed to.

Council will select projects for funding submissions in consultation with Bushcare Groups according to:

- Suitability of project to the funding program, according to the stated priorities for each program;
- Ability of Council and the group to fulfil commitments;
- Capacity within the Natural Area Management program to manage the project;
- Capacity of Council and the group to maintain and extend the gains achieved on completion of the grant;
- Potential ecological, educational or other benefits of the project; and
- Consistency of the project with local and regional priorities.

## **LANDCARE SITE MANAGEMENT**

### **Relationship with Landowners**

On non-Council managed lands, the landowners retain ultimate responsibility for all land management decisions. Landcare Groups must negotiate with other land managers, such as government authorities or private landowners, to reach consensus on site strategies.

The Bushcare team may be able to support Landcare volunteers in this process, but Landcare Groups must recognise that they can only manage their sites and implement works with the full agreement of the landowners.

### **Permits for Landcare Activities**

On private lands a development application is not required for environment protection works in most areas. However, any works beyond basic bush regeneration on environmentally sensitive land, including waterways and other protected areas, may require Council approval. Refer to LEP 2015 and DCP 2015 for more detail. It is the landowners' responsibility to ensure all relevant approvals are in place before works commence.



### **Site Support and External Grant Management**

Council provides site support to Landcare Groups for identified works which are beyond the capacity of the group to manage through allocations of funding to employ bush regeneration contractors. Council cannot provide site support to Landcare Groups through the internal bushland management program because Council teams cannot work on private lands.

Funding for Landcare site support is generally limited to one day per site of contractor support annually.

Funding of bush regeneration projects on private land is also available through external grant programs. These grants will generally require in kind contributions from the landowner, which may include the hours contributed by the Landcare Group. Council can assist landowners to apply for grant funds to implement larger projects and provide ongoing project management support.

In some cases Council can administer grant funds for Landcare Groups which are not incorporated. Where Council administration or other support is required, Landcare Groups cannot apply for external grants without Council approval prior to the submission of the grant application.

Council's biodiversity conservation objectives include conservation of key vegetation types and habitats across the landscape. This involves achieving weed control and bushland management targets across both public and private land. Where Council is successful in obtaining external funding for these landscape scale projects, Landcare Groups in target areas may be offered bush regeneration contractor support as part of the grant activities.

Allocation of contractor support and/ or Council support for external grant projects on Landcare sites is dependent on

- Capacity within the Natural Area Management program to resource and manage the project;
- Ability of Council and the group to fulfil associated commitments;
- Capacity of the landowner and the group to maintain and extend the gains achieved on completion of the project
- Potential ecological, educational or other benefits of the project; and
- Consistency of the project with Council's local and regional priorities.

# Site hygiene

The movement of tools, volunteers and Bushcare Officers around and between sites can spread weed seed and plant disease. To minimise this risk, Bushcare Officers and volunteers should follow protocols for cleaning of tools and clothing before leaving the work site. Clothing should also be washed between work sessions.

## MANAGING WASTE

Separate all non-vegetative rubbish from vegetation, and recyclable from non-recyclable.

All litter (non-vegetative rubbish) is to be disposed of by Bushcare Officers.

The preferred means of disposing of vegetative waste is to compost on site, using a hot compost method which will safely dispose of weed propagules. Instructions for hot composting can be found at:

<http://weedsbluemountains.org.au/resources/disposing-of-weed-seeds/>

If effective composting is not possible on site, exotic seeds and vegetative material that can reproduce (i.e. contains propagules such as seeds, tubers, and corms) should be put in bags and removed by the Bushcare Officer for depositing in the depot's composting facility, or taken home by volunteers and composted, or deposited in green bins.

Material that does not pose any risk of re-sprouting should be placed in a dry location e.g. piled on branches or logs ("rafted") until it dries out. Small waste piles can provide shelter for small mammals. Such piles should be located so that they do not suppress regeneration.

Larger branches can be used for bank stabilization, erosion control, habitat and for purposes such as track marking or defining boundaries. Native timber should not be placed in piles for removal; it must be left for habitat.

Volunteers are not authorised to burn rubbish heaps on Council reserves. Any planned fires on Council managed reserves require assessment by BMCC Bushfire Management Team and authorisation by the Rural Fire Service and must be conducted according to the *Rural Fires Act, 1997*.

## HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

Volunteers should not attempt to remove any potentially dangerous rubbish, e.g. suspected asbestos, syringes or chemical drums. Alert your Bushcare officer to the presence of any rubbish or material you suspect is hazardous. Bushcare Officers carry sharps disposal containers for syringes.

If you find any material which you think could be asbestos, treat it as asbestos. Material suspected to be asbestos should not be disturbed. Suspected asbestos must always be managed in accordance with Councils Asbestos Management Plan and Standard Operating procedures. (See Asbestos Management p.19 and Appendix p.29 for Asbestos Fact Sheet—NSW Government)

If you detect hazardous material on a Bushcare site when a Council Officer is not present please mark the location clearly if possible and notify the location to the Bushcare Office on 4780 5320 if it is on Council land, or the landowner if it is on non-Council managed land.

If the hazardous material is on Council managed bushland that is not a Bushcare site: mark the location clearly and notify Council on 4780 5000.



# Work health & safety

All employers, employees and volunteers under the *Work Health and Safety Act, 2011* (WHS Act) are regarded as a 'person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU). As a PCBU, Council has responsibilities under the WHS Act, including a primary duty of care to ensure its workers (staff and volunteers) are not exposed to any risk to their health and safety.

## COUNCIL POLICY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All PCBUs and workers, in NSW are covered by the *Work Health and Safety Act, 2011*. The WorkCover Authority administers the Act which aims to protect the health, safety and welfare of people at work. A Bushcare or Landcare site is considered to be a Council workplace when authorised Bushcare activities are being conducted. The Act lays down general requirements that must be met at places of work. Council is required to manage Bushcare and Landcare volunteers and their activities in the same manner as employees involved in any other Council activity.

Council's Work Health and Safety policy states that the safety, health and wellbeing of all Council workers, including volunteers, are of the utmost importance and all levels of management and supervision should regard these issues as their highest priorities.

To ensure the safety of those involved with the Bushcare Program, Council at a minimum will:

- Maintain equipment used by volunteers in a condition that is safe to use;
- Make arrangements to ensure the safe use, handling, storage and transportation of equipment and chemicals;
- Conduct risk assessments on all worksites and implement appropriate controls to address identified hazards;
- Provide required PPE commensurate with identified hazards; and
- Provide information, training and supervision commensurate with hazards identified to ensure the health and safety of volunteers.

## VOLUNTEER DUTIES

A volunteer has the same WHS duties as a worker under the WHS Act (see Glossary p.3 for full definition). This includes:

- Taking reasonable care for their own and others health and safety;
- Taking reasonable care for the health and safety of others;
- Complying with any reasonable instruction by the PCBU; and
- Cooperating with any reasonable WHS policies and procedures of the PCBU.

As per the WHS Act, volunteers must take reasonable care of the health and safety of others and co-operate with Bushcare Officers in their efforts to maintain safety.

## INFORMATION PROVIDED TO VOLUNTEERS

The Bushcare Officer will provide information about:

- *The Work Health and Safety Act, 2011*;
- Workplace hazards associated with the particular work activities and individual site conditions;
- UV Protection;
- Manual handling;
- First aid for snake and spider bites;
- Herbicide safety, including herbicide labels, safety data sheets and other relevant documentation; and
- Evacuation procedures in the emergency plan.

## FIRST AID OFFICERS

In accordance with the provision for workers (including volunteers' supervision) there will be a designated, qualified First Aid Officer in attendance on workdays. This will usually be the Bushcare Officer or a Volunteer Coordinator trained to deliver first aid.

A Council-provided first aid kit will be available on site during Bushcare work sessions. Its location will be made clear at the start of the session. The *Work Health and Safety Act, 2011* specifies the type of kit required in different situations. These kits and replacement materials will be supplied by Council in accordance with relevant risk assessments.

## ACCIDENT PROCEDURE

If an accident occurs, appropriate first aid should be rendered and medical help sought if necessary.

All accidents and near misses should be recorded in a BMCC Accident Incident Report available from the site supervisor and notified to the Bushcare Officer or supervising Volunteer Coordinator. In some circumstances, accidents will have to be reported to WorkCover as a notifiable incident.

Extract from *Work Health and Safety Act, 2011, Part 3, 35*

What is a "notifiable incident". In this Act, notifiable incident means:

- (a) The death of a person; or
- (b) A serious injury or illness of a person; or
- (c) A dangerous incident.

A serious illness or injury and a dangerous incident are defined under Part 3, sections 36 and 37 of the WHS Act, and includes any illness, injury or incident which requires immediate treatment as an inpatient in hospital or a serious risk to a person's health or safety emanating from an immediate or imminent exposure to a dangerous substance or a falling or collapsing structure.

Bushcare Officers or supervising Volunteer Coordinators will carry BMCC accident forms, and will be responsible for ensuring that forms are filled out and forwarded to Councils Risk Management Branch (or the certified insurer on Landcare sites) within 24 hours of an incident. They are also responsible for reporting minor accidents to the BMCC Risk Management Branch when necessary. Volunteers lodging an insurance claim for injury should contact the BMCC Risk Management Coordinator.

#### **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT**

Council recognises the need to provide a safe place of work for all workers, including volunteers, at their place of work and endeavours to eliminate or control hazards of the work environment. Where there is still a danger, personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE) will be issued.

Registered volunteers will be provided with PPE as identified in individual risk assessments including:

- Broad brimmed hats;
- Sun/safety glasses;
- Sunscreen and lipscreen;
- Gloves (to comply with herbicide use and other risks); and
- Safety vest (when necessary, see Road Safety section)

The Bushcare Officer will arrange for these items to be issued and replaced as necessary. It is the responsibility of the Bushcare officer to ensure that volunteers are wearing personal protective equipment when required, and volunteers must comply with Bushcare Officer directions.

Bushcare volunteers must wear suitable protective clothing. Long-sleeved shirt, long trousers and sturdy footwear must be worn at all times when working on site.

Safety boots may be necessary in some circumstances. The Bushcare Officer will identify situations where safety boots are required. An example would be work with rocks or other heavy materials.

#### **PROTECTION FROM ULTRA VIOLET LIGHT**

Council has a UV protection policy, the UV Protection Policy for persons exposed to UV. Safety glasses and sunscreen will be issued along with information about UV protection.

Volunteers are required to comply with the UV policy that states that outdoor workers should wear a hat and use lip screen and sunscreen on all exposed skin. Sunscreen and lip screen should be reapplied at least every two hours. As stated above, Bushcare volunteers must wear long-sleeved shirts and long trousers, in compliance with the UV Protection Policy.

#### **ROAD SAFETY**

Volunteers should avoid working on or near roads wherever possible. Where volunteers need to work on a road reserve or any other place where vehicle traffic is present and may represent a hazard, they must wear a safety vest as supplied by Council at all times.

In some circumstances where work needs to be undertaken near roads it may be necessary to use traffic warning signs or employ traffic control measures. This will be the responsibility of the Bushcare Officer and be carried out in accordance with *Australian Standard 1742.3-1996, Road Safety*.

#### **ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT**

When material on Bushcare or Landcare sites is suspected to be asbestos containing material (ACM) it becomes the responsibility of BMCC to take action into the management of asbestos contamination. Volunteers should stop work, vacate the area and report the issue to the Bushcare Officer.

The Bushcare Officer is to direct volunteer works to be confined to areas away from the suspected asbestos contaminated area and make all volunteers aware of the suspected asbestos location. The Bushcare Officer is responsible for placing a barrier around the suspected asbestos contaminated area. Photographs are then taken of the suspected asbestos location and either a photographic or GPS location is recorded.

The Bushcare Officer is then responsible for providing this information to the Bushcare Team Leader within 24 hours. The Team Leader will follow BMCC Asbestos management protocol in submitting an incident report for the asbestos location. The information is circulated through BMCC relevant parties and forwarded to the Asbestos Management Team for removal or to seek third party removal through a licenced contractor.

If ACM is found on Landcare sites on private land or land not managed by BMCC, BMCC will take responsibility in alerting relevant parties of the issue and advise them to seek professional advice for its management. Landcare Groups working on affected sites will follow BMCC protocols and exclude affected areas from their activities.

Following the investigation and removal of any asbestos on site by the Asbestos Removal Team (ART), the Bushcare Team Leader will be notified by ART when it is safe to return to working in the affected area. The location will remain on the BMCC GIS asbestos layer as a possible contaminated site.

The Bushcare Officers will keep the relevant volunteer groups informed and aware of the Asbestos procedure undertaken by BMCC and ensure works in those areas conform to BMCC protocols.

## **HERBICIDES**

The use of herbicide must be in accordance with Council guidelines and the manufacturer's instructions. Herbicides should only be used by volunteers who have undergone the Bushcare training safety induction. Training will include provision of a Safety Data Sheet (SDS), information about herbicide types, how they work, application methods, and Work Health and Safety. Only herbicide supplied by Council is to be used (glyphosate products).

Spraying by volunteers is not permitted and is only carried out by Council officers with appropriate signage and at a safe distance from volunteers. Protective gloves, as described in the SDS, are to be used at all times when handling herbicides. A dye will be added to herbicide used by volunteers to assist in rapid detection and treatment of any spills.

Trained volunteers can choose not to use herbicides. Volunteers under 18 years of age cannot use herbicides.

The use of herbicides other than glyphosate by Bushcare volunteers may be considered if the need arises. Appropriate training and usage procedures will be implemented in these situations.

### **Applicators and Storage**

Glyphosate can be applied using labelled applicator bottles supplied by the Bushcare Officer. Applicator bottles must be labelled with the name of the product and the relevant safety information.

The Bushcare Officer will supply herbicide to the group in correctly labelled applicators. Filled applicators must be transported and stored in a sealed container, e.g. plastic bucket with lid, and returned to the container after use. Herbicide should not be stored long-term in these applicators.

Herbicides should never be used or stored in other containers, especially those commonly used for food or drink.

## **EMERGENCY PLANS**

Each Bushcare site strategy will include an emergency plan outlining:

1. A planned and identified escape route and emergency evacuation procedure;
2. A reliable means of communication e.g. mobile telephone is provided and mobile range is accessible;
3. Where mobile telephone is not reliable and if the group is more than 30 minutes' walk from the vehicle a Personal Locator Beacon will be carried by the Bushcare Officer;
4. A map of planned route and expected return time; and
5. Vehicles to be parked with an unobstructed exit, preferably facing the direction of travel to exit.

## **FIRE**

Information regarding planned hazard reduction burning, as it becomes available from the Rural Fire Service, will be circulated by BMCC to all Bushcare staff.

During Bush Fire Danger Periods, Bushcare Officers will undertake Rural Fire Service fire warning checks prior to each Bushcare session and assess any additional safety precautions to be implemented. ([www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au))

If there is a risk from either hazard reduction or wild fires, the Bushcare Officer may decide to cancel the scheduled workday or make alternative plans.

On occasions where Total Fire Bans have been implemented, Bushcare activities are to take place on the edges of high visibility bushland reserves where at least two escape routes have been configured and the emergency assembly point is always visible throughout the work day. On sites where this is not feasible the Bushcare Group will be cancelled for that day.

On days of Catastrophic Fire Danger, Bushcare activities will be cancelled. At times of Severe or Extreme Fire Danger Council may decide to close some bushland reserves due to

risk of Bushfire, or a Bushcare Officer may cancel Bushcare or Landcare or limit the distance the group moves from vehicles and residential areas, based on risk assessment.

When a bushland reserve is closed, no Bushcare Group will work on that site. At such times the Bushcare Officer will contact the group's convener and/or members to advise that Bushcare or Landcare is cancelled, or that revised arrangements are in place, at the earliest convenience.

### **ON-SITE SAFETY**

While working in public reserves volunteers should adhere to all regulatory signage. Where permissible, volunteers who bring their dogs to work sessions must ensure that the dogs remain under the owner's control so that they do not impact on other volunteers or the general public.

In the event of members of a group encountering a situation where negative feedback or hostile behaviour from members of the broader community is encountered, the volunteer should

not engage in the situation. The Bushcare Officer should be immediately notified. The Bushcare Officer will then address the situation. In the absence of a Bushcare Officer, volunteers should remove themselves and refer the matter to a Bushcare Officer as soon as possible or, if circumstances warrant, refer to the police.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

If severe weather such as extreme cold or heat, high wind or very heavy rain or unusual conditions such as heavy snow or ice is predicted, the group's Bushcare Officer and/or coordinator may choose to cancel a work session.

Bushcare and Landcare volunteers are never expected to work in adverse weather conditions and the Bushcare Officer will take reasonable care to ensure that volunteers are comfortable while they are undertaking Bushcare or Landcare activities. Alternative tasks or sites may be an option during periods of inclement weather.

# Insurance

Council staff and volunteers are all considered to have a duty of care, i.e. we have a duty to ensure that our actions or lack of action does not cause any reasonably foreseeable harm to others.

Public liability insurance cover is provided by Council for all volunteers and personal accident insurance for all volunteers under 90 years of age, when undertaking Council approved activities. Death benefit applies to all volunteers under 75 years of age.

## **BMCC PERSONAL ACCIDENT POLICY**

The Council personal accident policy for volunteer workers covers the following:

1. Death and total disabilities benefits limited to \$350,000;
2. Weekly Benefits: Temporary Total Disablement 85% of average income up to a maximum of \$2,000 per week for a period of up to 156 weeks subject to a Deductible of 14 Days;
3. Broken Bones \$3,000; and
4. A schedule of benefits provides lump sum payments for permanent injuries and disability to parts of the body forms part of the policy cover.

## **PUBLIC LIABILITY AND LIABILITY INSURANCE**

For Council to be held liable for injury to others or damage to their property, negligence on the part of Council must be proven. Council is liable in relation to the negligent acts or omissions by formally appointed volunteers involved in approved projects on Bushcare and Landcare sites, except in cases of criminal negligence, e.g. whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Definitive answers to questions of liability cannot be given because of the complex legal principles which need to be considered in each case; however, it can be assumed that we all owe some duty of care to each and every person in the community. Where children are concerned, this has been shown to be virtually total responsibility.

Stated simply, this duty of care is, "Each of us has a duty to ensure that the inappropriate action or inaction which we may take does not have the potential to cause reasonably foreseeable harm to others".

**NOTE:** It is important that Council's Risk Manager be immediately advised of any incident which occurs that may give rise to a claim against the Council. Failure to notify may adversely affect Council's insurance cover.



# Communication

## NEWSLETTERS

Bushcare produces a quarterly newsletter called 'Gecko'. It highlights key features of the Bushcare Program and issues of specific interest to Bushcare volunteers. It is distributed to all Bushcare volunteers, other Councils and Councillors and offers an opportunity for individuals and groups to raise matters of importance by contributing articles and advertisements. Ideally, articles should be no longer than 350 words with an accompanying photograph no larger than 2MB.

Gecko*live* is the electronic version of Gecko and it contains the same content. Subscriptions to Gecko*live* are available at: [www.Bushcarebluemountains.org.au](http://www.Bushcarebluemountains.org.au)

## E-MAIL BULLETIN

The Bushcare Team Leader regularly emails a bulletin advising subscribers of up-coming Bushcare-related events. The bulletin is available to community members and other subscribers. It contains a mixture of Bushcare, National Parks and other community events of interest. You can subscribe to the bulletin via the Bushcare website.

## CONSULTATION

All suggestions, issues and concerns about your group and site or the Bushcare Program should be directed initially to your Bushcare Officer or, if necessary, to the Bushcare Team Leader.

As a stimulus for continual improvement, the Bushcare team will seek feedback from volunteers through a biennial survey. Results of the survey will be made available to volunteers through a report in the Gecko.

A Community Conservation Program forum, bringing together participants from all programs every three to five years, will promote development of shared outcomes and encourage input from stakeholders into improvement of program delivery.

## SPOKESPERSONS

The delegated spokespersons for Blue Mountains City Council are the Mayor and the General Manager. Council's Corporate Communications and Marketing staff can also act as a Council spokesperson in response to media enquiries. Other staff or volunteers can only act as a spokesperson of the Council with approval from the General Manager or Council's Corporate Communications and Marketing staff, with prior approval from the relevant Director. Please talk to your Bushcare Officer for further advice.



# Promotion, education & recognition

Council staff will provide assistance with the promotion and publicity of Bushcare Groups wherever possible. Promotion of Bushcare activities should be discussed first with the relevant Bushcare Officer who will ensure that the proposal complies with Council's Brand Manual, Media Policy and 'Consent to photograph/record' Policy before publication to ensure appropriate use of content in Bushcare related promotional activities and material.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/bluemountainscitycouncil>

Bushcare Groups can propose posts for inclusion on Council's corporate Facebook page by emailing content to [Bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au). Ideally, the post will be between 50-100 words with a photo that is less than 2MB in size. A short 30-60 second video is also acceptable. The Bushcare Team Leader will forward it to the Corporate Communications and Marketing Team for consideration and publication.

Council does not support individual Bushcare Group Facebook pages. Council actively protects the Bushcare Program brand, which has been developed by Council and the volunteer community by maintaining the integrity of all communications on authorised digital media.

## **WEBSITE**

Bushcare administers a program specific website at: [www.Bushcarebluemountains.org.au](http://www.Bushcarebluemountains.org.au)

Information about Bushcare and the schedule of groups' workdays is published regularly on the website, to promote the ideals of Bushcare and the Bushcare activities of their group. BMCC reserves the right to review website content and to amend or delete unsuitable material.

Groups are able to contribute to their own webpage on the Bushcare website. The link to enable material to be added to each group's web page can be shared via emails to group members from its coordinator.

## **PRINT MEDIA**

Council will assist groups to use print media for the production of newspaper advertisements and brochures for letter-box drops or hand-outs to inform the local community about the group, or to publicise special events. Planning for special events should allow at least three months' notice.

## **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Council's Bushland Operations Team attends, and displays promotional material at, relevant community events. These events are an opportunity to promote Bushcare and raise awareness about invasive weeds in general and opportunities to be involved in Bushcare.

Displays at community events, in local libraries and other community gathering places are a useful promotional tool for your group. Council will assist where possible with the loan of display boards, and with production of displays including photography, enlargements and laminating.

Bushcare has a static display of generic photographs and generic information promoting Bushcare and invasive plants which can be adapted for different areas.

## **EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL**

The 'Weeds of Blue Mountains Bushland' is a full colour printed booklet published by Council that provides a description of 30 of the Blue Mountains' worst weeds, information on bushland management, and advice about appropriate weed control methods.

The weed booklet continues to be a popular resource and is printed and distributed by Bushcare to:

- Council's Katoomba and Springwood Offices;
- Katoomba, Springwood and Blaxland libraries, and
- Local nurseries.

Council also hosts a "Weeds of the Blue Mountains" website: [weedsbluemountains.org.au](http://weedsbluemountains.org.au). The weeds website is a useful resource for learning to identify and control garden plants that become invasive in Blue Mountains bushland.

Handouts targeting particular local environments and weed species are produced by Council from time to time. This material is distributed to residents in target areas by Council teams to coincide with invasive weed inspections. Groups may also use this material to distribute in their area. Check with your Bushcare Officer if any of these handouts are available for your area and/or weed species your group is targeting.

## **INTERPRETIVE EVENTS AND EVENING TALKS**

Each year Bushcare hosts some special events evenings either free of charge or at minimal cost. A typical format is a presentation by an expert guest speaker on a topic of some interest to Bushcare volunteers. These evenings are well

attended and can be a good source of recruitment of future volunteers. Topics have included:

- The ecology of bats;
- Native bees;
- Blue Mountains Skink research;
- Feral animal control;
- Threatened species management;
- Aboriginal land use;
- Geology of the Blue Mountains;
- Local provenance; and
- Arboreal mammals.

### **THE ANNUAL BUSHCARE PICNIC**

Council funds an annual event as a gesture of thanks to Bushcare and Landcare volunteers. This has historically taken the form of a picnic or barbecue attended by the mayor and/or Councillors and to which all Bushcare volunteers are invited.

The picnic venue is rotated between the upper mountains and the lower mountains each year so that the same volunteers are not expected to travel long distance to attend.

The picnic usually involves a Welcome to Country, an interpretive walk or talk, children's activities and games, as well as the presentation of awards for volunteers who have demonstrated high achievements over the past year. Mayoral Certificates of Merit are presented to Bushcare Groups at their 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 year anniversaries and individual award categories are:

- Bushcare Legend of the Year (The Golden Trowel);
- Landcare Legend of the Year;
- Hard Yakka;
- Masters; and
- Junior Legend of the Year (The Ryan Strathdee Memorial Shield).



# Catchment/landscape groups

Catchment Groups bring together Bushcare and Landcare Groups and other community conservation volunteers within a defined sub-catchment or conservation landscape to promote a shared vision for environmental outcomes in their local area. These groups work with Council and other relevant land managers to identify catchment issues and to achieve actions to address these issues.

This collaboration empowers the various groups within the target area to influence off-site impacts affecting their work and contribute to outcomes beyond their individual sites.

Council will continue to support existing Catchment Groups by regular attendance at meetings and provision of other assistance as required.

Council is committed to supporting this model, but has limited capacity to provide the intensive support required to establish new Catchment Groups. Current capacity provides for Council to support 1–2 new Catchment Groups over each estimated 18 month establishment period.

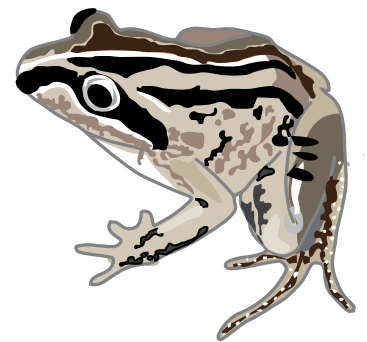
Preference for Council support of Catchment Groups will be based on synchronicity with current targets of Council's bushland management priority sub-catchment and conservation landscapes program.

# Bushcare network

The Blue Mountains Bushcare Network has been established to represent Blue Mountains Bushcare and Landcare volunteer groups and to support the work of the Bushcare Program of Council, but is independent of Council. The network also supports the work of other organisations and individuals throughout the Blue Mountains and beyond that aim to preserve and revegetate public and private lands with the objective to protect and enhance the sustainability of local ecological communities.

The Blue Mountains Bushcare Network has a particular contribution to make to the management of bushland in the Blue Mountains. In this role, it will foster communication on a range of issues between community conservation volunteer groups and Council. The network will conduct this work through regular meetings of the Network Committee.

More information about the activities of the Blue Mountains Bushcare Network is on their webpage at [bushcarenetwork.bushcarebluemountains.org.au](http://bushcarenetwork.bushcarebluemountains.org.au)



As an unincorporated community-based committee working to support Council's Bushcare Program, the Blue Mountains Bushcare Network is supported by Council by the provision of the following:

1. Suitable venues for regular committee meetings and other public events facilitated by the network, that are approved by Council and its Bushcare Program;
2. Maintenance of the network's contact lists, including its committee and the conveners for the volunteer groups the network represents;
3. Copying of and distribution of minutes of the network's meetings;
4. Electronic publishing and distribution of each network meeting agenda and approved minutes; and
5. Provision of assistance for other Bushcare associated activities as negotiated with the committee and approved by Council.

# Conditions for authorised independent groups

## WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT GROUP?

Independent groups are authorised to work under part supervision from a Bushcare Officer. They continue to meet regularly (usually monthly), but a Bushcare Officer does not attend every work session. Bushcare Officers will attend authorised group workdays at least four times per year.

Satellite groups (i.e. groups of experienced volunteers working regularly with minimal supervision on associated sites as off shoots of established groups) and groups who work additional days without supervision will also be covered by the following framework.

## ELIGIBILITY OF GROUPS TO BE AUTHORISED TO WORK REGULARLY WITHOUT SUPERVISION

A group is eligible to become an independent group after working on their site for at least four years. In addition there must be a core group of volunteers in the group who have consistently participated in Bushcare over at least this period.

A group may be considered for authorisation by nomination by their Bushcare Officer and with the support and agreement of the majority of its members. Approval for accreditation of an independent group is subject to approval by the relevant program leader.

In addition there must be at least one person in the group who is willing to take on the additional duties of a coordinator of an independent group when the Bushcare Officer is not present, which include:

- First aid officer and Work Health and Safety supervision;
- Tool and herbicide management;
- Communication including workday arrangements and possible cancellations with all other group members and the Bushcare team;
- General guidance, in consultation with other group members, on tasks and strategies to be followed as per the site management plan; and
- Record keeping.

Coordinator responsibilities can be fulfilled by one person or may be shared by several members, e.g. one member may undertake tool and herbicide management and someone else may provide communication and workday direction.

## ADDITIONAL TRAINING FOR INDEPENDENT GROUPS

All group members will be required to participate in additional training, which will be delivered on-site by a Bushcare Officer:

- Advanced bush regeneration principles and strategy;
- Understanding of the site management plan; and
- Refresher risk assessment and Work Health and Safety to be delivered annually.

Volunteer coordinator(s) will also be provided with training for:

- First aid (at least 2 group members);
- Herbicide management (AQF4 Chemical Risk Management);
- Asbestos awareness; and
- Tool management.

## VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING

Volunteer coordinators of authorised independent groups (those registered to work without Bushcare Officer supervision) will be supplied with additional training commensurate with their additional role as group WHS supervisors in the absence of the Bushcare Officer.

The level of training provided will be a minimum of:

- First Aid Certificate (provided by a registered trainer) AQF4 Chemical Risk Management);
- Safe use and handling of herbicides (provided by a registered trainer);
- Asbestos Management Awareness (provided by a registered trainer);
- Basic on-site risk assessment and risk management (provided by Council staff);
- Accident reporting procedures (provided by Council staff); and
- Procedures concerning bushfire danger, extreme weather risks and asbestos management (provided by Council staff)

NOTE: At least two group members will be required to undertake this training to allow for possible absence of the nominated volunteer coordinator.

## TRAINING DELIVERY

### For all group members:

- One full day or half day training for all group members covering WHS, bush regeneration refresher and risk management procedures (provided for all eligible groups annually); followed by
- Bushcare Officer training on site at the next work day to reinforce training and relate to the site management plan.

**For coordinators:**

- First Aid – offered periodically (when programmed for staff);
- AQF4 Chemical Risk Management (offered periodically when programmed for staff); and
- WHS issues and procedures (offered annually as a Bushcare training module).

**WORKING FRAMEWORK FOR INDEPENDENT GROUPS**

- New volunteers cannot attend the group for the first time until the supervising Bushcare Officer is in attendance. Groups wanting to work independently or on additional workdays will be closed to new untrained volunteers, until those volunteers have undertaken training and gained sufficient experience as determined by Council.
- When working in the absence of the Bushcare Officer independent groups must follow the site management plan and limit activities to familiar tasks and agreed work areas.
- During each quarterly attendance by the Bushcare Officer, the Bushcare Officer and the group will assess the site and discuss possible tasks (based on the site management plan) for workdays when the Bushcare Officer is not there. The Bushcare Officer will also assess if additional support or training is required to maintain the viability of the site.
- Volunteer coordinators will be responsible for work health and safety and reporting of incidents on site in the absence of the Bushcare Officer. The Bushcare Team will retain responsibility to provide timely information to the coordinator regarding closure of sites or suspension of work days in relation to reserve management issues, fire or other extreme weather predictions.

# Appendix

## **BUSHCARE DOCUMENTS**

You can find the following documents on the Bushcare website using the links below:

(NOTE: the final document will have links to the following):

- Volunteering with Bushcare
- Bushcare Manual
- Bushcare Safe Work Method Statement
- Volunteer Registration
- Volunteer Agreement
- Volunteer Position Description

## **RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES**

You can find the following policies on the Bushcare website using the links below:

(NOTE: the final document will have links to the following):

- Code of Conduct
- Community Consultation Policy
- Consent to Photograph Policy
- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Asbestos Fact Sheet — NSW Government
- Grievances Policy
- Part 5 Environmental Assessment Policy
- Privacy Management Plan
- Volunteer Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Working with Children Policy



**KATOOMBA**

2-6 Civic Place  
Katoomba NSW 2780  
Monday to Friday, 8:30am–5:00pm  
T: (02) 4780 5000

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**SPRINGWOOD**

104 Macquarie Rd  
Springwood NSW 2777  
Monday to Friday, 9.00am–5.00pm  
T: (02) 4723 5000

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**POSTAL ADDRESS**

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[www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au)