

Natural Area Volunteers Group - Terms of Reference

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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Natural Area Volunteers Group is to act as an advisory and representative group on all matters relating to the future directions of the Natural Areas Volunteers Policy and Program (refer MIN10.1461).

2. ROLE

To meet the 'Purpose' above, the Natural Area Volunteers Group will advise Council on strategic matters pertaining to the Natural Area Volunteers Program. This will include policies, procedures, resourcing, natural resources management, environmental restoration and preservation techniques and plans and community and volunteer stakeholder engagement.

3. MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Natural Area Volunteers Group includes:

- All available Councillors
- Nine (9) Natural Area Volunteers Group representatives
- South-east Local Land Services representative
- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment representative
- Council's CEO or his representative/s

Council will seek to appoint Natural Area Volunteers Group representatives from across the entire region

4. NATURAL AREA VOLUNTEER GROUP REPRESENTATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Where possible, a minimum of three (3) representatives are to be appointed from each of the northern, central and southern program delivery areas. In the event where nominations for vacancies are insufficient to support three (3) members from one (1) area, the membership can include more than three (3) members from other areas.
- Vacancies for the Community Natural Area Volunteers representatives be advertised to the volunteer groups throughout the relevant areas by the Bushcare Coordinator

- Natural Area Volunteer community representatives must be a current active member of a Natural Area Volunteer Group
- Any casual vacancies will be addressed at the following meeting with the intention to keep the membership at sufficient level to reach quorum
- Council will manage the application process in consultation with the Bushcare Coordinator
- An interview panel will consist of the Bushcare Coordinator, Chair of the Natural Area Volunteers Group and one (1) Natural Area Volunteers independent representative to assess the applications and make recommendations on appointments to the Group.
- The criteria for selection of representatives are:
 - Experience and skills in community-based volunteering
 - Ability to represent a cross-section of volunteers that work within Natural Areas
 - Ability in knowledge-sharing and communication
 - Ability in strategic, program-level thinking
- Resignations should be lodged in writing to Council

5. MEETING PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

- The administrative provisions of Council's adopted Code of Meeting Practice shall apply subject to any amendment by the Natural Area Volunteers Group.
- The Chair of the Natural Area Volunteers Group will be determined annually by Council.
- Natural Area Volunteers Group Committee members who are absent for three (3) consecutive meetings of the Natural Area Volunteers Group without tendering an apology will be requested in formal correspondence from Council to confirm their intention regarding their membership of the committee. Failure to respond may result in removal from this committee.
- Formal meetings will be held twice a year, or as required.
- Meetings should alternate between the Nowra and Ulladulla, or other various locations across the region to encourage participation from members throughout the Shoalhaven Local Government Area.
- A quorum will consist of five (5) members of the Natural Area Volunteers Group.
- No proxy votes are permitted
- If a quorum is not present within 30 minutes of the time appointed for the commencement of the Natural Area Volunteers Group meeting, the meeting shall lapse.
- Each meeting shall be properly recorded by the taking of minutes by the Governance Unit.
- Recommendations from the minutes requiring resolution will be submitted to the next available Council Meeting
- Where possible, members are encouraged to reach a consensus; decisions will normally be made through modified consensus.
- The Chair of the Committee should facilitate a meeting that is run on a consensus decision making model rather than rely on the formal structures of a simple majority plus one.
- If, however there are times when a position cannot be reached, despite open and thorough exploration of the issues and options, the Chairperson will ask for a vote.
- All formal members of the committee are entitled to a vote
- In the event of a tied vote, the Chair can exercise a casting vote.

- Agenda and minutes from previous Natural Area Volunteers Group meetings will be circulated to members at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.
- Group members must declare in writing any interest in any report tabled at the meeting covered by the Code of Conduct and Pecuniary Interest.
- Informal Group meetings or special meetings that may discuss specific portfolio matters will be held as and when required or set by the Group.
- Planning and costs associated with conducting meetings will be borne by Council.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT

Meetings be conducted in an informal manner, but still within Council's 'Code of Conduct' Policy which all members are required to observe.

- Natural Area Volunteers Group members should act in a professional, responsible and respectful manner with the information they obtain as a member, as the Group requires openness and honesty to function well.
- Natural Area Volunteers Group members must at all times respect other members when expressing their opinions and views. Members should feel free to express their opinions and views without fear of recrimination.
- It is essential for Group members to accept collective responsibility, and remain loyal to decisions of the Group, even where they may not have agreed with the final decision.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Members may have contact with confidential or personal information retained by Council. If so, members are required to maintain the security of any confidential or personal information and not access, use or remove any information, unless the member is authorised to do so.

8. COMMUNICATION

- All issues must be clearly communicated including priorities, limitations and benefits to community.
- Care needs to be undertaken to ensure that all participants fully understand mutual issues under discussion and that there are no false expectations created. It is important that all members' views are given weight during discussions.
- Members of the Group are not permitted to speak to the media as representatives of the Group unless approved by the chairperson
- Where approval has been given by the Chairperson, views and opinions expressed are those of the Group and not of Shoalhaven City Council.
- Where endorsement is required from Shoalhaven City Council, approval must be sought through the formal processes.
- The Chair of the Group is the point of contact for communication between Group members and Council staff.

9. COUNCIL STAFF ATTENDANCE

Shoalhaven City Council will provide administrative Council staff who are normally required to attend the meetings of the Natural Area Volunteers Group to carry out the following tasks:

- Collate and distribute Business Papers.
- Organise meetings.
- Minute taking, storage and distribution of minutes and associated documents.

Other staff at the relevant Group Directors' discretion or at the Group's request can attend meetings as required. Staff have no voting privileges.

10. EXPECTATION OF NATURAL AREA VOLUNTEER GROUP MEMBERS

- Natural Area Volunteers Group members will undertake the prescribed induction process.
- Pecuniary Interest Returns may be required on appointment and annually as required by the Office of Local Government and Council.

11. RESPONSIBILITY OF COUNCIL

- Council at its discretion may review and change the Terms of Reference, role and structure of the Natural Area Volunteers Group.

12. REVIEW

After every Council election.