

DEW Volunteer Safety Policy

Question and Answer for Community Volunteers

Q; what is the DEW VSP?

A; the **Volunteer Safety Procedure** (VSP) is a DEW staff safety system implemented whenever a volunteer activity is approved by a DEW manager. As soon as a manager approves of a volunteer(s) working in DEW business, then the Department's 'duty of care' under the Work Health and Safety Act (WHS) commences.

Q; will it affect what volunteer groups do?

A; no, but it will affect how volunteer groups go about their activity – i.e. safely for everyone involved.

Q; is the volunteer group responsible for implementing the VSP?

A; no, DEW staff are responsible for ensuring the safety of all volunteers who are working in DEW business. In the absence of staff being present on site of an activity, it may require a '*volunteer activity team leader*' being present on site to ensure risks are managed, but this is done with support from staff.

Q; does it matter if there is no '*volunteer activity team leader*' on site on the day of the activity?

A; if there is neither staff nor a '*volunteer activity team leader*' present on the day, then the activity does not proceed.

Q; do volunteers have any responsibility when it comes to WHS?

A; yes, but only insofar as volunteers must take reasonable care that their actions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons, and they must comply with reasonable instructions in relation to health and safety.

Q; why does DEW need a WHS VMP?

A; it is a legal requirement of DEW under the WHS Act to ensure that there are standards and processes applied in ensuring that all volunteer's health and safety are managed effectively and consistently.

Q; when is the VSP applied?

A; whenever a volunteer activity is being planned for with staff, an associated risk management process also needs to be undertaken prior to the activity being approved by a manager. This enables the manager to see how the risks are going to be managed once the activity is underway. Once the activity is approved, there may be further 'on-site on the day' risk management requirements until the activity has been completed.

Q; what if a volunteer group have developed their own forms? Do they have to use the VMP?

A; generally, yes - the VSP is the benchmark against which all other forms (and processes) are measured against. There may be instances where a community group has developed its own comprehensive safety forms and processes, in which case staff will then work it into the VSP.

Q; are all volunteer activities covered by the WHS VMP?

A; regardless of what the activity is and the associated land tenure of the location, if a DEW manager approves of the volunteer activity to proceed, then yes, the VMP is enacted.

Q; it seems complicated?

A; there are 3 steps involved which staff are required to implement – activity planning and approval, site risk management and activity, and closeout of activity and reporting. Consultation with community volunteer groups by staff during all 3 steps is required.