



# Volunteer Handbook

## WELCOME!

Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways on which you are volunteering. We pay our respects to their elders past and present.

Thank you for volunteering at the Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre (HBWC). Your contribution is greatly appreciated and essential to our efforts in reconnecting people with nature. Your efforts will also make a positive difference in preserving, enhancing, and protecting the wildlife that relies on these unique wetland environments. The wetlands that we support are home to a diverse range of flora and fauna, including rare and threatened species. Your help can make a significant impact on their survival.

***Our volunteers are an essential part of our organization, without you, we could not operate***

At the HBWC, we offer our volunteers a wide range of opportunities to get involved, including citizen science, social media management, supporting workshops, wetland walks and Open Days. We hold Open Days twice a year when we recognize the importance of World Wetlands Day, World Migratory Bird Day and World Mental Health Day. We promote HBWC at public events such as the Hobsons Bay City Council (HBCC) Volunteer Expo and local festivals. Other volunteer opportunities focus on our fundraising and administrative duties.

To get started, we encourage you to read this Volunteer Handbook, which provides essential information about volunteering with us. We have something for everyone who wants to help others reconnect with nature.

## Our Organisation

HBWC Inc. is a not-for-profit community group and charity which is passionate about reconnecting people with nature.

Our organisation is overseen by a dedicated Committee of Management, which is composed of volunteers. They meet regularly to share information and discuss our progress towards our goals. New Committee members are always welcomed by nominating at our AGM.

Formed in 2018, HBWC is driven by the knowledge that spending time in nature is vital for health and happiness and also promotes environmentally responsible behaviour. Promoting regular physical exercise has become a public health priority worldwide, and as the population of Melbourne's west increases, there is a compelling reason for encouraging well-managed access to natural settings such as the vast wetlands in the area. We are supported by a number of strategic partners and key organisations who, like us, understand the important role played by wetlands.

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To further our development, we have established partnerships with several government and non-government organizations. We also receive support from the local community, all levels of government, philanthropic trusts, and business organisations. We are grateful for the support of all our partners and volunteers, without whom we would not be able to achieve our mission of promoting nature connections in the community.

We are proud to be supported by a diverse group of members and volunteers with experience in various sectors, including business, education, environmental management, and community engagement.

## Our Values

At our organisation, we hold five core values that guide us in our mission to protect and conserve wetland environments, while also reconnecting people with nature. We believe in:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Inclusivity</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We respect indigenous culture and heritage and people from all cultures, identities and abilities</li> <li>▪ We care for people, community and the natural environment</li> <li>▪ We connect with members, volunteers, participants and partners</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Integrity</b>      | <p>We commit ourselves to being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Honest and accountable</li> <li>▪ Fair and ethical</li> <li>▪ Transparent and open</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Innovation</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We learn from the past, embracing new ideas and adapting to change</li> <li>▪ We are courageous</li> <li>▪ We demonstrate best practice in pursuit of excellence</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Stewardship</b>    | <p>We aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nurture healthy, sustainable ecosystems, biodiversity and protection of species</li> <li>▪ Promote the wellbeing and hopes of the community through the natural environment</li> <li>▪ Deliver careful, ethical and professional governance of the organisation</li> <li>▪ Create a legacy for future generations</li> </ul> |
| <b>Joy and wonder</b> | <p>We aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create a sense of fun, awe, curiosity and inquiry</li> <li>▪ Open people's eyes to the natural world</li> <li>▪ Inspire people to explore and appreciate nature and the rich tapestry of ecosystems, particularly across Hobsons Bay</li> </ul>  |



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## Managing Volunteer Involvement

HBWC plans and manages programs that comply with Australia's National Guidelines for Volunteer Involvement (2015) to deliver successful, rewarding, and safe volunteering programs.

This approach guides how we plan and manage programs to comply with relevant legislation and assess potential hazards, risks, and impacts on the environment, including cultural and heritage sites.

## Induction

This Volunteer Handbook provides essential information about an introduction to the available volunteering roles and information about your role. We refer you to the Volunteer Policy and Procedures Manual, which is available on our website ([hobsonsbaywetlandscentre.org.au](http://hobsonsbaywetlandscentre.org.au)), for detailed information about the organisation and practical information about volunteering with us.

We require all volunteers to complete a registration form with their contact details and emergency contact information, as well as their areas of interest.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to us through the Volunteer Supervisors and/or the Committee members. Our goal is to provide a rewarding volunteer experience and to work together to help protect and conserve the wetlands.

## Our Commitment to Volunteers

At HBWC we are committed to supporting our volunteers in a variety of ways, including:

- Providing competent leadership and comprehensive on-the-job training
- Respecting the values of volunteer rights and responsibilities in balance with the organisation's rights and responsibilities.
- Recognising the important contributions made by our volunteers as they work alongside HBWC employees, contractors, or Volunteer Supervisors to deliver both government and community programs.
- Providing a safe work environment, with appropriate orientation and training, as available.
- Upholding equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation in our volunteer engagements
- Providing a volunteer handbook and volunteer policies and procedures. Additional information about HBWC and the wetlands will be provided as required.
- Welcoming the opportunity for feedback from volunteers.

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We believe that these commitments help to support our volunteers as they contribute their time and energy to the vital work of the Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre.

## Volunteers have the responsibility to:

- Be a part of the team and collaborate with others in a friendly, helpful, and courteous manner, respecting other volunteer and employee contributions and differences.
- Show respect for fellow volunteers and their rights.
- Follow all HBWC policies and procedures.
- Participate in required induction, training, and orientation activities.
- Watch out for each other, and report incidents, hazards, and any medical conditions that could impact personal welfare.
- Take reasonable care to protect their own health and safety as well as that of fellow volunteers.
- Follow any reasonable instructions given by HBWC in relation to health and safety
- Handle HBWC equipment with care
- Uphold HBWC values in working towards our vision and undertaking tasks with professionalism.
- Undergo any necessary security checks and abide by HBWC policies and procedures.
- Adhere to the HBWC advice provided by the Volunteer Supervisor to dress appropriately for the activity in accordance with OH&S requirements.
- Wear identification when carrying out activities.
- Contribute their time, unique skills, and knowledge.
- Provide honest feedback to ensure ongoing improvement of HBWC volunteer programs.

## Volunteer Application Process

1. To apply to become a volunteer, please check out our website and attend one of our activities to familiarise yourself with our organisation and meet other volunteers.
2. Complete our volunteer registration form and email it to [hbwcgroup@email.com](mailto:hbwcgroup@email.com). Often, HBWC events offer the opportunity to complete this form and hand it to the Volunteer Supervisor at the time. Be sure to specify the activities you are interested in volunteering for and when you would be available.
3. After we receive your application, the relevant Volunteer Supervisor will contact you about the role you're interested in. Please be aware that it may take a few days for us to get in touch with you.
4. We will then add you to our volunteer register and keep you informed of future volunteering opportunities.

## Volunteer Opportunities

There are many ways volunteers can get involved with the HBWC:

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## **Citizen Science:**

Our Citizen Science opportunities enable members of the public to assist in collecting information about our natural world and contribute to conservation efforts. Volunteers will help run and participate in programs like wildlife monitoring, which plays a vital role in protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Regular monitoring of multiple sites can also help us build a better understanding of the natural world and how it is changing.

## **Conservation:**

HBWC is the Guardian of the Key Biodiversity Area of the Altona and Cheetham Wetlands. Volunteers with experience in bird identification and survey methods help us monitor the health of birds in the wetlands in partnership with Birdlife Australia.

## **Visitor Information & Event Hosts**

Our volunteers play a critical role in organising and running events, such as Open Days, that promote environmental awareness and education. As a volunteer, you might help with setting up displays and assisting visitors with information. Volunteers with knowledge of local flora and fauna, answer questions about our wetland ecosystems and the unique wildlife that call it home.

## **Nature Guides**

HBWC volunteers have the opportunity to work as nature guides and lead nature walks, sharing their knowledge and enthusiasm for the local flora and fauna with visitors. Your role as a guide is to educate and inspire visitors, encouraging them to appreciate the natural world and its importance to our ecosystem. By volunteering as a nature guide at our wetlands centre, you can share your passion for nature and make a positive impact on the community by promoting environmental awareness and education. All our walks have volunteer support if you want to learn more about being a guide and helping participants.

## **Educational Activities**

Volunteers at our wetlands centre will help deliver educational activities that teach visitors about the environment and help reconnect people with nature. As a volunteer, you might help with planning and leading workshops, developing educational materials, or delivering talks on topics related to wetlands conservation and ecosystem management that encourage visitors to become active participants in environmental conservation and preservation efforts.

## **Fundraising**

HBWC is reliant on grants for some of its projects, and as a volunteer with research and writing skills, you will identify relevant grants, plan our application schedule for the year and develop proposals that will help us deliver our programs.

## **Public Relations and Communication**

HBWC volunteers handle our Public Relations and communications, including public speaking to community groups, radio interviews, researching and writing articles for publication across various media, newsletters, social media and keeping our website up to date.

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## Committee and Office Administration

Our Committee is always looking for volunteers who can also help with administrative and office duties, which might include assisting with data entry and record keeping, answering phones, and responding to emails, filing, assisting with event planning and coordination and providing support to staff members with various tasks as needed. Our Committee of Management is also made up of volunteers who are elected at our AGMs.

## Training and Development

At the Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre, we are dedicated to the training and development of our volunteers. We believe that volunteering is a mutually beneficial process, and we aim to provide support and training for all volunteer tasks. As we are a volunteer organisation, we rely on Volunteer Supervisors to provide on-the-job training. The Committee welcomes input at any time from all volunteers about training content and potential delivery.

## Workplace Health and Safety

As a volunteer organisation that conducts conservation and environment workshops for the general public, it is important to prioritize the health and safety of our volunteers, staff, and participants. We are committed to complying with all relevant health and safety legislation, regulations, and standards, as well as implementing our own internal policies and procedures.

We provide training to our volunteers and staff on relevant health and safety topics to ensure they are aware of potential hazards and risks and how to mitigate them. We will also conduct risk assessments for all activities and events and implement appropriate control measures to minimize risks.

It is essential to prioritise your safety when working as a volunteer in our organisation, especially during conservation and environment workshops. In any activity, always have access to a mobile phone if at all possible or be aware of the location of the nearest telephone in case of an emergency. Additionally, if you are unsure about the safe method of performing any task, don't hesitate to ask for assistance from your Volunteer Supervisor.

We strongly encourage volunteers to wear clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather and the location. Be cautious about the possible presence of snakes in the area.

Inform HBWC immediately and stop working if you feel unwell. We will provide safety equipment when appropriate and it is mandatory to wear it while performing certain tasks.

Please report any accident to the HBWC Committee, Volunteer Supervisors, or staff so you can obtain first aid and we will file an incident report.

Smoking and alcohol consumption are not permitted inside or around the perimeter of any HBWC buildings. If volunteers feel uncomfortable, they should leave the area immediately and contact the HBWC Committee, Volunteer Coordinators, or staff.

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Volunteers must not bring their pets while volunteering in the interest of the local wildlife.

## Our Policies

Our Volunteer Policies and Procedures document is available on our website:

[www.hobsonsbaywetlandscentre.org.au](http://www.hobsonsbaywetlandscentre.org.au)

### Child Safety Policy

HBWC also has a Child Safety Policy, which will be made available to volunteers who undertake activities involving children. HBWC community activities are provided for all ages, however, children are to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Where activities are specially designed for children, accompanying adults are not mandated. Volunteers assisting at these events must hold a current Working With Children Check and acknowledge that they have read the HBWC Child Safety Policy.

## THANK YOU!

We hope this handbook has provided you with the necessary information to make the most of your volunteering experience with us. We look forward to working alongside you and creating a positive impact on our community and the wetlands.

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