



BALLARAT
RENEWABLE
ENERGY
AND ZERO
EMISSIONS inc

Volunteer Handbook

Valuing people, valuing volunteers

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Part 1 – Background and Context

Valuing People – Valuing Volunteers

“You must be the change you want to see in the world” Mahatma Gandhi

BREAZE was formed by a passionate group of volunteers and volunteer support continues to be vital to achieving our purpose.

Volunteers are involved in almost every area of BREAZE activity. We attract people with a range of backgrounds and skills, a shared commitment to addressing climate change and a desire to help BREAZE achieve its goals.

BREAZE’s volunteer program brings substantial benefit to:

- Our members by providing them with an opportunity for direct involvement in the governance and/or day to day running of BREAZE
- Our organisation by bringing specialist advice and skills into the organisation and by providing additional human resources to particular programs
- The wider community by providing an avenue for community participation in specific campaigns or the organisation as a whole.

This handbook is part of the information and support being developed by BREAZE to promote a positive and supportive environment for volunteers, providing positive outcomes for our members, our partners and the wider community we engage with.

BREAZE History

Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions (BREAZE) is a not-for-profit local community Climate Action Group based around the City of Ballarat and nearby districts. Our goal is to protect and enhance the natural environment and increase environmental sustainability within the region by helping the community embrace carbon neutral and sustainable lifestyles.

We aim to achieve zero emissions in the Ballarat region by 2030. We actively endeavour to reduce energy consumption and increase local renewable energy generation by encouraging and supporting our membership and the local community, organisations and groups to act, and by facilitating further education and empowerment of the community.

BREAZE was formed in December 2006 and has quickly grown in numbers and reputation as a trusted and authoritative voice for the Ballarat community on all climate change issues.

What we do

BREAZE focuses on climate change and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ultimately restore atmospheric balance. We involve our members and the community, local businesses and other organisations in a range of activities, including:

- energy sustainability programs
- education and awareness programs, including community capacity building
- research and development into ways our society can become more energy sustainable
- networking with, and, where appropriate, supporting local, national and international organisations with similar objectives

- supporting locally-based sustainable businesses
- working with media to promote sustainability and sustainable energy practices
- advocacy on energy-related public policy issues

BREAZE operates a number of Action Groups for volunteers who have a passion about a particular area of greenhouse gas emissions reduction, be it sustainable home design, local food production, large scale renewable energy provision or otherwise. These groups meet regularly to discuss and initiate practical ways BREAZE can act to increase the efficiency of our energy use, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, increase the use of renewable energy and generally live in ways that are more sustainable. To learn more, see our website “Get Involved” and “Action Groups” pages.

BREAZE Volunteer Support Coordinator

The Volunteer Support Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the volunteer program within BREAZE, consistent with our volunteer policies. You may also have direct support from a volunteer or staff activity coordinator, depending on your volunteer activities.

The Volunteer Support Coordinator has the responsibility and authority to organise, implement and maintain the policies and procedures of our volunteer management system.

The Committee encourages volunteers and paid staff to take initiative with identify opportunities and issues, and after appropriate consultation to seek ways to fulfil opportunities and rectify those issues.

What you can do

BREAZE recruits volunteers for a range of activities, including:

- Committee and governance activities
- Volunteer support and coordination
- Event administration and coordination
- Newsletters and editorial
- IT and website maintenance
- Project coordination and support
- Research
- Community engagement and presentations
- Media and public relations
- Action group support
- General administration and secretarial
- Business support and management

This list is not complete and BREAZE is open to suggestions of how you would like become involved as a volunteer.

Why Policies and procedures?

Definition

A volunteer is a person who undertakes activities:

- Without monetary reward
- Of their own free will
- Of benefit to BREAZE and the community or to gain work experience
- That complements but does not replace services provided by employees.

Why we need policies and procedures

We have developed and endorsed a range of policies and procedures to ensure that we have a professional and supportive volunteer program. We have also done this to demonstrate that we value you, our volunteers, and the time, effort and skills that you contribute. Policies are useful to:

- Ensure continuity
- Fairness and equity
- Clarify values and beliefs
- Communicate expectations
- Specify standards
- State rules
- Improve risk management
- Reduce liability

BREAZE is committed to having useful, relevant and appropriate policies – please let our Volunteer Support Coordinator know if you have any feedback or suggestions in relation to our policies. A broader range of organisational policies is available on our website under “Policies”.

What are policies and procedures?

Policies are statements or guidelines that say how we intend to operate and how we expect our people to act.

Procedures describe actions and tell people how to do something. Procedures set out what needs to be done, who needs to be involved and the order in which tasks need to be undertaken.

For Volunteers

Our Volunteer Handbook and policies helps our volunteers to understand their rights and responsibilities. It also explains how BREAZE will involve them and how they will be supported.

Policies and procedures help volunteers to understand their role in BREAZE – what they are expected to do, how they should do it and the boundaries they should observe. They are designed to give volunteers the confidence to get on with doing the work they volunteered to do with clear expectations and in a supportive environment.

Good policies also promote fairness and consistency and ensure volunteers know that decisions will be made following the same process, and not in an arbitrary or ad hoc way.

For BREAZE

Policies and procedures help BREAZE to operate efficiently and deliver a quality service to our members and the wider community. They help identify potential risks and put in place the strategies we need to avoid or minimise those risks, and they reduce liability.

Policies and procedures also provide continuity and consistency.

For our Partners and Supporters

Our policies and procedures reflect our commitment to our volunteers and supporters, and our professional approach to how we work.

National Standards

BREAZE's volunteer policies and procedures have been developed in accordance with the: *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-profit Organisations*.

(http://www.volunteering.com.au/working_with_volunteers/national_standards.asp)

The National Standards help to ensure BREAZE delivers a quality volunteer program, one that protects the rights of our volunteers, improves the services volunteers provide and enhances the satisfaction our volunteers gain from their work.

Importantly, policies and procedures need to be understood, implemented and maintained at all levels of the organisation.

We will review and update our policies every 12 months to ensure we meet the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement in Not-for-profit Organisations*.

Part 2 - BREAZE Policies and Prodedures

BREAZE General Volunteer Policy and Principles

General Volunteer Policy

We are a not-for-profit organisation that involves volunteers in our work. We adhere to the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement in Not-for-profit Organisations* and comply with the Australian definition, principles and model code of practice for involving volunteers.

BREAZE involves volunteers at all levels, it is an organisation built on the commitment and efforts of volunteers and acknowledges that maintaining a strong volunteer base is essential to our success as a community-based organisation.

Our volunteers provide advice, leadership, support and action in implementing our programs and activities. Importantly they assist in maintaining a sound organisation and developing BREAZE within the local and wider community as an authoritative voice, with a reputation for well founded, innovative and practical measures by which to combat climate change.

General Principles

BREAZE adheres to the principles of volunteering as defined by Volunteering Victoria (www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au):

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering is an activity that is unpaid and not undertaken for the receipt of salary, pension, government allowance or honorarium
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit sector only
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Unlike paid staff, volunteer staff are not covered by award conditions or work place agreements. Volunteers however, do have rights, some of which are included in legislation, and some of which are the moral obligations of BREAZE.

Volunteer Rights

We will promote and protect the rights of our volunteers who work in and contribute to BREAZE, as set out in Volunteering Australia's statement of *Volunteer Rights*. As a volunteer you have the right to:

- Work in a healthy and safe environment

- Be interviewed and offered a role/tasks in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation
- Be adequately covered by insurance
- Be given accurate and truthful information about BREAZE
- Be briefed on the broader aspects of BREAZE and discuss with your supervisor whether BREAZE is suited to you or whether you are suited to BREAZE
- Be provided with an induction/orientation into the organisation
- Be given a copy of the Volunteer Handbook and any other policy that affects your work
- Be assigned a suitable project, task or job
- Say no to tasks you are unable to do or would rather not do
- Receive clear direction and instructions about the work you are undertaking
- Receive sufficient training if you are undertaking a new job
- ~~Have~~ Have agreed working hours
- Have access to grievance procedures
- Receive respect and support from co-workers and paid staff, and recognition and feedback from your supervisor for your work
- Have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the *Privacy Act 1998*
- Be provided with regular opportunities to review progress
- Be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses, providing prior approval is obtained with the supervisor

Volunteer Responsibilities

We ask you as our volunteers to agree to:

- Accept your duties seriously, be reliable and dependable
- Keep BREAZE informed of any changes in contact details
- Be responsible to and consult with your activity coordinator or Volunteer Support Coordinator, and ask for support when needed
- Abide by BREAZE policies regarding your work
- *Only speak on behalf of BREAZE if authorised to do so*
- Not to spend money or order goods on behalf of BREAZE without prior approval
- Notify the Volunteer Support Coordinator if you are no longer able to work with BREAZE, and give fair notice of resignation when you terminate your voluntary position
- Work with other volunteers and staff as a team member
- Respect the confidentiality of BREAZE and your fellow volunteers and the service user/s to whom you provide service/s
- Be open, honest and understanding
- Discuss any grievances or problems in accordance with our Grievance / Dispute Resolution Policy or discuss the issue with our Volunteer Support Coordinator if required
- Be willing to accept constructive feedback relating to your contribution
- Agree to do job training necessary to carry out duties if required
- Show enthusiasm, loyalty and belief in the work of BREAZE

- Agree to work in a safe and healthy way and not jeopardise the health and safety of yourself and others
- Inform BREAZE of any pre-existing medical conditions or special needs that BREAZE should be aware of that might effect your ability to undertake certain tasks
- Report any injury immediately to your activity coordinator or Volunteer Support Coordinator
- Not smoke, consume or store alcohol or illicit drugs in any building or venue being used by BREAZE

Privacy Policy

Our Commitment to Privacy

Your privacy is important to us and all volunteers' personal information will be treated with confidentiality. The volunteer database is password protected and résumés and registration forms are kept in a locked filing cabinet. Résumés and registration forms can be shown to relevant staff or other volunteers in order to decide a volunteers' suitability for a position.

To prevent unauthorised access, maintain data accuracy, and ensure the correct use of information, we have put in place appropriate physical, electronic, and managerial procedures to safeguard and secure the information we collect online.

The information we collect from our website

On our website you can register as a volunteer, respond to event invitations, order products, make requests, and register to receive materials. The types of personal information collected on these pages are name, address, email, telephone number or area of volunteer interest.

We use the information you provide about yourself to help find a suitable volunteer role. We do not share this information with outside parties.

We use return email addresses to answer some of the emails we receive or to add you to our newsletter email distribution list – should you wish to subscribe.

Should you register for one of our forums, you will be asked to provide a user name and only this information will be visible to other forum users. Such addresses are not used for any other purpose and are not shared with outside parties.

We may use **non-identifying and aggregate** information to better design our website and to share with partners. For example, we may tell a partner that X number of individuals visited a certain area on our website, or that Y number of men and Z number of women filled out our registration form, but we would not disclose anything that could be used to identify those individuals.

Finally, we never use or share the personally identifiable information provided to us online in ways unrelated to the ones described above without also providing you an opportunity to opt-out or otherwise prohibit such unrelated uses.

How you can access or correct your information

You can access and change all your personally identifiable information that we collect online by logging into our website. We use this procedure to better safeguard your information.

You can correct errors in your personally identifiable information by sending us a request. To protect your privacy and security, we will also take reasonable steps to verify your identity before granting access or making corrections.

Police and Reference Checks

If the Volunteer Support Coordinator deems it appropriate, or the role you are undertaking for BREAZE requires it, you may be asked to:

- provide a work or character references before further placement at BREAZE.
- complete a Police clearance. Police clearances are obtained at *no cost to the volunteer* and will be organised by the Volunteer Coordinator.
- undergo a Working with Children check.

Volunteer Recruitment Policy

Our recruitment policy is driven by our purpose which is to fulfil the needs of our organisation and the aspiration of our volunteers in working towards zero emissions.

Our volunteer recruitment strategies are designed to attract volunteers who are interested in supporting local action on climate change and who have attributes suitable to the various volunteer opportunities available through BREAZE.

Prospective volunteers are encouraged to explore roles that match their interest or skills, or they can be supported to find a suitable role. Commitment to the goals, values, policies and procedures of BREAZE is considered important as is the ability to work as part of a team. For some roles, a formal interview processes will be used.

Initial contact

On contacting BREAZE, all potential volunteers will be informed of BREAZE's recruitment policy, the type of voluntary activities generally available, and how an interested volunteer can get involved.

Registration / initial interview

All volunteers must meet with the Volunteer Coordinator to discuss their interest in volunteering and to fill out a registration form. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Discuss your interest in volunteering with BREAZE
- Discuss any particular expectations regarding volunteering
- Get to know you - your background, what you are doing now
- Determine your availability and the hours/times you would like to be involved
- Update you on BREAZE and our work by running through our background of BREAZE and current priorities
- Talk about the areas in which you can volunteer and the type of work you can do
- Talk about the expected commitment from our volunteers
- Ask about any special needs or limitations BREAZE might need to be aware of
- Discuss your suitability for BREAZE and BREAZE's suitability for you

*Reference: Volunteer Registration Form
Volunteer Roles Questionnaire
Volunteer Position Description*

Orientation / Induction

Successful volunteers will be given an orientation/induction at a mutually convenient time prior to commencement of activities. This orientation will provide volunteers with information about our purpose, structure, programs, policies and procedures; and provide initial training and ongoing training where necessary.

The orientation will be based on our orientation checklist. This will include an explanation of volunteer support, legal and work place health and safety issues. Key points from the orientation checklist include:

- Record of volunteer hours as required, e.g. for events
- Process for claiming expenses, including travel. Expenses must be approved by the Volunteer Support Coordinator and receipts must be kept in order for a claim to be made
- Which volunteer activities are covered by BREAZE's insurance policies

Reference: Orientation checklist

Health, safety and environment

A healthy and safe workplace is important to the productivity, effectiveness and sustainability of any organisation. Organisations that employ one or more person also have obligations under Commonwealth and State laws to maintain a safe working environment. While most federal and state laws do not make explicit reference to volunteers in their legislation, this does not exempt volunteer-involving organisations from OH&S obligations.

In most instances, volunteers fall under the category of 'other persons' to whom an organisation owes a duty of care and breaches of this duty of care are just as important and treated as seriously as if the person were an paid employee.

BREAZE is committed to providing and maintaining a safe work environment for the health, safety and welfare of our volunteers and in return ask that volunteers accept their responsibility to work safely. This means using common sense and anticipating potential health and safety problems.

All volunteers are asked to fill in the Volunteer Sign-in book at our office or activity venues to indicate their presence. This is especially important in case of evacuation.

Smoking is not permitted in any BREAZE site.

Volunteers are to report any injury immediately to their supervisor who should then refer the matter to the Volunteer Coordinator.

Reference: Volunteer Hazard Report

Volunteer Incident Report Form

Complaint and dispute resolution

BREAZE is a community organisation and it is hoped that all disputes and complaints can be dealt with promptly and resolved through discussion with concerned parties. Volunteers and paid staff asked to adhere to the same standards of conduct. Employees are also expected to adhere to the procedures stated in the Human Resources Manual.

Grievance / Dispute Resolution Procedure

This procedure is to be used to deal with all disputes between staff and volunteers, except those in relation to equal opportunity, discrimination or harassment when the Complaints Procedure should be used.

Where a dispute or grievance arises between a staff member and a volunteer

The staff member should try to resolve it directly by talking with the volunteer. If this does not resolve the problem or if the staff member is not able to discuss the matter with the volunteer, they should notify the Volunteer Support Coordinator. If the dispute is of a serious nature it should be put in writing and a copy given to the Volunteer Support Coordinator. The Volunteer Support Coordinator's role is to talk with both parties to determine a solution. Where appropriate, the Volunteer Support Coordinator will mediate a meeting between the volunteer and the staff member to discuss the problem openly. If the dispute is of a serious nature, the contribution of the volunteer may require reassessment.

Where a dispute or grievance arises between a volunteer and a staff member

If a volunteer has a grievance with a staff member, they should advise their activity coordinator or Volunteer Support Coordinator as soon as possible to discuss the dispute. If the dispute is unable to be resolved or if the dispute is with the supervisor, the Volunteer Support Coordinator or Executive Officer is to be advised and is to mediate discussions between the two parties. The Volunteer Support Coordinator or Executive Officer may ask the volunteer to put the issue of the dispute in writing. If the dispute continues or is of a serious enough nature, the staff member's manager may be brought in to the process and disciplinary action may be taken.

Where a dispute or grievance arises between volunteers

If a volunteer has a grievance with another volunteer they should try to resolve it directly by talking with the other volunteer. If this does not resolve the problem or if the volunteer is not able to discuss it with the other volunteer, they should notify the Volunteer Support Coordinator. The Volunteer Support Coordinator may ask the volunteer making the claim to put the dispute in writing. Where appropriate, the Volunteer Support Coordinator should mediate a meeting between the volunteers to discuss the problem openly.

If the dispute is of a serious nature, disciplinary action may be taken.

Complaint Procedure

There is no government legislation to cover equal opportunity, discrimination or harassment complaints from volunteers, but BREAZE will strive to ensure that volunteers are not disadvantaged by this.

The complaint procedure is confidential and only the people directly involved in a complaint, or in resolving it, can have access to information about it.

If a volunteer has a complaint:

- The volunteer should try to resolve the problem themselves with the person or people involved as soon as possible
- If the volunteer wants to talk confidentially about the problem with someone and get some more information they are urged to talk to the Volunteer Support Coordinator.
- To get the complaint resolved, the volunteer should see the Volunteer Support Coordinator as soon as possible. The usual result of this step will be an informal mediation process.
- If unhappy with the way the complaint is being, or has been, resolved, the volunteer can make a request for a formal investigation to the Committee of Management.

What will the person who handles the complaint do?

As soon as possible after the volunteer makes contact the Volunteer Support Coordinator will:

- Get full information about the complaint and how the volunteer would like to see it resolved.
- Refer the volunteer to people who can provide them with support or representation, if they need either of these.
- Put the information they've received from the volunteer to the person/people they are complaining about and get their side of the story.
- Speak confidentially to witnesses if they don't have enough information to know whether the matter(s) alleged in the complaint did or didn't happen, or if the allegation or counter allegation is serious enough to be subject to disciplinary action.
- Decide how the complaint should be resolved and let everyone involved know. They will do this by either mediating a mutually satisfactory agreement or, if the complaint involves an allegation of a serious nature, they will make a decision about how the complaint should be resolved. This may well involve a disciplinary measure and discipline may involve an official warning, counselling, or dismissal.

Disciplinary Procedures

Volunteers are to be treated with the same respect as paid employees and the policy for terminating the involvement of volunteers is the same.

Should the unfortunate situation arise that a volunteer or staff member continually breaches behavioural guidelines, and thus jeopardises the reputation and good standing of BREAZE the following standard disciplinary procedure will apply.

The following procedure shall apply with respect to counselling and termination for unsatisfactory voluntary activities performance:

1. On the first occasion, the volunteer will be notified verbally of the reason, and a note made in the appropriate volunteer personnel file.
2. If the problem continues, the matter will be discussed with the volunteer. The volunteer will be advised in writing of the need to improve work performance and that a further period of review has been set.
3. If the problem continues, the volunteer will be interviewed by the Volunteer Coordinator and a final written warning will be given.

Dismissing volunteers

There may be occasions when volunteers need to be dismissed. How this process is handled by the organisation (e.g. appraisal and evaluation, counselling and development programs to improve performance) is vital to good volunteer management. The grounds for dismissal must be made clear to the volunteer and they should have an opportunity to defend the accusation.

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the organisation or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment may be subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be dismissed until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with the Volunteer Support Coordinator. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of organisational equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of members or co-workers, failure to abide by policies and procedures, and failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

Upon resignation or termination, volunteers are to return badges and any other BREAZE property in their possession.

Insurance

BREAZE has a Voluntary Workers Personal Accident insurance policy. The policy insures all volunteers while engaged in unpaid voluntary activities officially organised and under the control of BREAZE including necessary direct travel to, from or during such voluntary activities.

The Personal Accident Insurance only provides limited cover for major personal injury, resulting in loss of income to the volunteer. If you would like to see a copy of our Policy please contact the Volunteer Support Coordinator.

If you have an accident no matter how small, it must be reported immediately to your supervisor or the Volunteer Support Coordinator.

Reference: Volunteer incident report form

Reimbursement of expenses

Volunteers should not be out of pocket because of the work they do on behalf of BREAZE.

If you incur expenses in the normal course of your volunteer work with BREAZE you are eligible for reimbursement (so long as it has been approved in advance).

Reimbursement for travel to and from our sites is not provided. However, additional travel costs incurred while carrying out volunteer work, if approved in advance, will be paid.

The Volunteer Support Coordinator will advise you of the type of expenses that will be reimbursed and the procedure for claiming them.

Appropriate records and receipts must be attached to the claim form and be given to the Volunteer Support Coordinator when submitting a claim for reimbursement.

Reference: Volunteer out-of-pocket expenses claim forms