

## The Royal Historical Society of Queensland

### Commissariat Store Volunteer Program

#### Policy and Procedure

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#### INTRODUCTION

The Volunteer Program endeavours to provide a detailed reference for management of the volunteers at the Commissariat Store.

This Program has been developed in line with, among other sources:

- *Willing and Able: recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers in museums and art galleries*<sup>1</sup>
- *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement*<sup>2</sup>
- *National Standards for Involving Volunteering in Not-for-Profit Organisations*<sup>3</sup>

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RHSQ

The RHSQ was founded in 1913 and is a cultural organisation which exists for the benefit of its members and the greater community. The objectives of the RHSQ are to:

- Promote interest in and advance the study of Queensland history
- Broaden opportunities for the practice and writing of history
- Preserve documents and manuscripts relating to Queensland history
- Preserve and display artefacts illustrating Queensland colonial history.
- Study the history of the Commonwealth of Australia and the adjacent islands of the Pacific

#### THE ROLE OF THE RHSQ COUNCIL

The Council is the ultimate authority for the Volunteer Program. The Council approves all changes to the Volunteer Program and ensures the Manager follows necessary Volunteer Program guidelines for recruitment, training and general supervision.

The Council is responsible for all health and safety issues, and develops policies in relation to these matters. Where management plans regarding the Museum are developed or amended, consideration must be given by the Council to the current volunteers, as well as future volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> 2002, MAQ / RGAQ Partnership Program, (Museums Australia (Qld) / Regional Galleries Association of Queensland) in partnership with Volunteering Queensland, Fortitude Valley Qld.

[http://www.magsq.com.au/dbase\\_upl/w\\_a\\_1-5.pdf](http://www.magsq.com.au/dbase_upl/w_a_1-5.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/resources/national-standards-for-volunteer-involvement>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/VA-National-Standards-for-involving-volunteers-in-not-for-profit-organisations.pdf>.

## **THE MANAGER**

The Manager is responsible for overseeing the volunteers who provide services to the Museum. Among the tasks performed by the Manager are:

- Assessing, at time of recruitment, a volunteer's skills, physical abilities and abilities
- An awareness of, and ability to communicate, the policies and procedures which are in place within the RHSQ regarding risk assessment, insurance, health and safety, training and termination
- A knowledge of the contact details of all volunteers and members of the RHSQ council, as well as other valuable contacts to the RHSQ, including, where applicable, details of next of kin and emergency contacts.

The Manager must hold a current First Aid certificate and ensure that the Museum's first aid kit is sufficient at all times. It is the responsibility of the Manager to ensure all staff and volunteers understand and are competent in evacuation procedures and that emergency contact numbers are in close proximity to telephones within the Museum.

The Manager will ensure that staff and volunteers are familiar with the Emergency Procedures Plan, and that they are aware of their respective roles.

## **DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEERING**

Volunteering Australia has defined formal volunteering as time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain. While volunteering provides substantial benefits to society, importantly it also provides significant benefits to the volunteers themselves. Volunteering Australia's definition now includes entities, as employee time can now be donated as volunteer time.

## **PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEERING**

In order maintain a successful volunteering program, RHSQ must ensure that vital principles of volunteering represent a widespread influence on the Program. Volunteering Australia sets out several principles, including that volunteering should:

- Benefit the community and the volunteer
- Be unpaid
- Be a matter of choice
- Be a vehicle to address human, environmental and social needs
- Performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others.<sup>4</sup>

Any successful volunteer program must be able to accommodate these principles.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Principles of Volunteering: Why have them?* <http://volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/VA-Intent-of-the-Principles-of-Volunteering.pdf>.

## **AIMS AND PURPOSES OF VOLUNTEERING**

The Commissariat Museum will utilise volunteers as guides, researchers and office and reception staff. The volunteers provide a face to the Museum, and a link between the RHSQ and the community, setting up a meaningful dialogue between the two. An enthusiastic and professional team of volunteers can help effect positive change and growth within the Museum. The feedback from the community, combined with the ideas and opinions of the volunteers, will ensure the continued improvement of services to the community and assist the RHSQ to continue advancing its objectives.

## **RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS**

The RHSQ strives to be inclusive in its selection of volunteers. Recruiting volunteers with wide-ranging backgrounds, skills and life experience expands the RHSQ's knowledge base. This knowledge base creates a rich and multi-faceted view of the social history of Queensland that is capable of engaging the interest of a much greater cross-section of the community.

A volunteer's motivation can be as wide-ranging and varied as the person themselves. Individuals may have more than one reason for choosing a particular organisation and position. It is reasonable to assume no one would knowingly become involved with an organisation whose aims and principles were not in accordance with his or her own. As motivation is of paramount importance when selecting volunteers, it is important that RHSQ makes its objectives and ideology clear from the outset.

RHSQ has the right to set standards in regard to the responsibilities of volunteers and expect that they will be met, but volunteers also have expectations of training, support and other benefits. These reciprocal expectations must be recognised within the Program and clearly understood by all parties.

The Manager and/or an appointee of the RHSQ Council will interview all suitable candidates to the Program. All volunteers will be expected to develop a strong team ethic and be mindful of their role in representing the Museum and the RHSQ.

### *Tour Guides*

Knowledgeable, skilled and enthusiastic tour guides who interact with the Museum displays ensure a continued interest by visitors. The tour guides are a vital part of the volunteering community within the Museum, as they personally interact with visitors. A good tour guide will be able to explain the context of the displays to visitors, thereby enabling visitors to appreciate the relevance of the displays to local and national history. The tour guides perform these interpretive roles for the general public and school groups. There is also an expectation that they will engage with and deliver talks to small groups and individuals upon request.

January 2016

Tour guides are expected to provide a high standard of service by continually developing skills that inform and educate visitors to the Museum, including updating of knowledge on the Museum's artefacts displayed and the social history of Queensland.

The RHSQ encourages tour guides to participate in maintenance of the Museum collections. By undertaking research on artefacts, the volunteers will develop skills of interpretation and a larger historical knowledge which can then be translated into improved presentations to visitors.

All tour guides will report to the Manager. There are 108 hours per week (Tuesday to Friday between 10am and 4pm) which require tour guides. Two guides are required per day, however where the Museum has large groups of visitors, extra tour guides may be required. It is anticipated that each guide will work one day per fortnight.

#### *Office Assistants and Receptionists*

The receptionist is usually the first contact person for visitors and callers to the Museum and RHSQ. Therefore, they are instrumental in making a first impression on behalf of the Museum and RHSQ. It is the responsibility of the receptionists and office assistants to learn the necessary procedures outlined in the Office Manual and to become proficient in performing the required duties. Both receptionists and office assistants are required to familiarise themselves with the names and positions of key personnel within the RHSQ, as well as regular contacts.

One receptionist is required to be rostered on for each day (Tuesday to Friday – 10am to 4pm).

### **TRAINING**

The quality of services provided by volunteers will depend on the RHSQ providing appropriate training and support to successful candidates.

#### *Tour Guides*

The Manager will assess applications and there will be an orientation for all new volunteers. Volunteers should be aware that they may be asked to undertake a variety of tasks.

Volunteer training is done through mentoring by other guides.

#### *Office Assistants and Receptionists*

On-the-job training is provided for all volunteers who are undertaking reception and general office duties.

### **WORKPLACE ARRANGEMENTS**

Volunteers are expected to report for their allocated shifts on the roster, and to be appropriately dressed and punctual. Breaks are as follows:

- Lunch – 45 minutes
- Morning/afternoon tea – 15 mins each

January 2016

Breaks should be taken in rotation to ensure that the Museum is not understaffed. Two people must be in attendance at the Museum at all times.

Volunteers are required to sign on at the beginning of each shift and sign off upon completion of shift. At the start of each shift, volunteers should view the diary to confirm their individual roles at the Museum for that day.

If a volunteer is unable to attend a shift, the Manager must be notified as soon as possible.

### **BLUE CARD**

In line with Queensland Government policy all volunteers who work with children and young people require a Blue Card. This will be organised by the Manager.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The RHSQ has a duty of care to volunteers, paid employees and visitors. Risk management involves identifying situations around the Museum which may be a potential hazard to visitors and to those who work and volunteer at the Museum. Within the Museum are a number of displays. All Museum staff and volunteers are to inspect the displays daily for possible hazards that may impact on visitors' safety and enjoyment during their visits. **Any identified hazards must be reported to the Manager for your safety and the safety of others. Please do not attempt to remove the hazard or undertake repairs yourself.**

### **OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Manager must hold a current First Aid certificate and ensure there is a fully stocked first aid kit in the Museum. As part of their duties, the Manager will ensure all paid employees and volunteers understand, and are competent in, evacuation procedures and that emergency contact numbers are in close proximity to telephones within the Museum.

The Manager will ensure that staff and volunteers are familiar with the Disaster Management Plan, and that they are aware of their respective roles.

### **INSURANCE**

The RHSQ is responsible for maintaining at all times appropriate insurance cover for volunteers. Signing in and out in the volunteer logbook during a shift is compulsory.

Volunteers who sustain injuries during their shift must advise the Manager, who will complete an incident form.

### **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The RHSQ has a policy of equal opportunity when recruiting volunteers. In line with the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld) and the various Commonwealth Discrimination Acts, it is unlawful to discriminate against groups or individuals on grounds of:

- gender
- pregnancy
- race
- political beliefs or activities

January 2016

- social origin
- age
- parental status
- religion
- trade union activity

Volunteers are required to respect the RHSQ's policy of anti-discrimination and refrain from activities such as comments, gestures or behaviour which are aimed at or are offensive to any individuals or groups listed above.

### **PRIVACY POLICY**

The RHSQ respects and protects the privacy of paid employees, volunteers, visitors and members. Personal information about or regarding these groups or individuals is held in the strictest confidence, in compliance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009* (Qld).

### **CONDITIONS FOR EXCLUSION**

Volunteers can be excluded from the Volunteer Program for a number of reasons:

- failure to attend a rostered shift without satisfactory explanation or prior notice to the Manager
- evidence of inappropriate behaviour to visitors, other volunteers or paid employees. This may include language, gestures, discrimination etc.
- unreliable attendance over an extended period of time or persistent lateness
- refusal to cooperate with other volunteers, paid employees or visitors
- refusal to take instructions from or cooperate with the Manager
- knowingly working in an unsafe manner which results in a risk to the personal safety of others
- violation of the RHSQ's privacy policy.

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Where there is a conflict between volunteers, or a volunteer and the Manager, the Manager will, in the first instance, attempt to resolve the issue through discussion with the affected parties. If a dispute cannot be resolved in the manner specified above, each party should provide a written statement to the RHSQ Council for consideration, resolution or termination.

### **TERMINATION PROCEDURE**

Where a volunteer is considered for exclusion from the Volunteer Program, there are several steps that may be taken.

Firstly, the Manager will discuss the matter with the volunteer. Secondly, if the problem persists, a written warning will be issued. Finally, if the matter has still not been resolved, it will be handed to the RHSQ Council for consideration and further action.

The Manager must also invite the volunteer concerned to address, in writing, his/her reasons for not being excluded. This request must be made in writing to the volunteer and a reasonable time allowed for the volunteer to reply to the RHSQ Council. A period of not less than seven days must be allowed.

January 2016

The decision to exclude a volunteer is made at an RHSQ Council meeting. The RHSQ Council must be satisfied of the circumstances and reasons for their decision, and all parties are to be afforded an opportunity to be heard. The RHSQ Council's decision is final.

## **VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The RHSQ values its volunteers and acknowledges and upholds their rights.

Volunteers have the right to:

- be informed about the RHSQ, its policies, aims and objectives
- a clear description of the volunteer position, training for the position and the duties it entails
- thoughtfully planned and professionally delivered training
- ongoing guidance and learning opportunities with the possibility of greater responsibility, role development and change in activity, if desired
- a safe working environment
- have a voice - be included in planning, to make suggestions and positive criticism and evaluation in your area of involvement
- a clear and fair grievance policy and procedure
- personal privacy
- a working environment free from discrimination

Volunteers are expected to:

- understand and respect the aims and objectives of the RHSQ
- understand their role description and commit to following it enthusiastically
- be reliable and punctual
- work as a team member
- be willing to undertake training for the position and ongoing training when offered
- participate in work planning and feedback
- respect the privacy of paid staff, other volunteers, members of and visitors to the RHSQ and Museum, and ensure that confidential information remains so
- be mindful and respectful of the cultural and philosophical beliefs of paid employees, volunteers, members of and visitors to the RHSQ and Museum
- be aware of the Emergency Procedures Plan and their responsibilities
- refrain from language or behaviour which could reasonably be interpreted as vulgar or offensive
- maintain a clean and tidy standard of dress
- refrain from smoking in the Museum.

### **RHSQ RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The RHSQ has the right to:

- receive the optimum amount of effort from its volunteers
- expect enthusiasm, punctuality, reliability and solid effort
- expect respect for and belief in the objectives and values of the RHSQ
- expect balanced and fair criticism of the standard of performance of volunteers
- express dissatisfaction with any aspect of a volunteer's performance in a diplomatic way
- expect feedback and open communication from volunteers
- release an unsuitable volunteer
- carry out appropriate reference and police checks on volunteers

The RHSQ has a responsibility to:

- have a clear and workable Volunteer Program before recruiting volunteers
- select the right person for the right volunteer position
- provide suitable orientation and training for volunteers, with possibility of increased responsibility and role flexibility
- provide clear information about the values and objectives of the RHSQ
- clearly communicate feedback, diplomatic criticism and expectations, including acknowledging suggestions made by volunteers, and reasons as to why the suggestion has been accepted or not
- continually evaluate the performance of volunteers
- maintain a clear and workable Disaster Management Plan
- have an effective Grievance policy and procedure
- ensure a safe working environment.