



## Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance

# Community gardens policy and procedure

### 1. Purpose and objectives

This policy aims to:

- Support Sustainable Neighbourhood groups to develop and operate community garden projects.
- Clarify requirements for a community garden project to be auspiced by the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance (the Alliance).
- Ensure that community gardens managed by Sustainable Neighbourhood groups have adequate and effective management processes.

### 2. Benefits of community gardens

Most Sustainable Neighbourhood groups identify community gardening as a priority for their group. The Alliance recognises that community gardens can provide significant benefits to participants and the wider community, including through:

- Increased community connection and social capital;
- Health benefits associated with increased access to fresh food, and increased physical activity;
- Site improvements and activating community spaces;
- Development of education and learning hubs; and
- Spreading waste awareness messages and reducing resource consumption behaviours.

### 3. Relationship with Sustainable Neighbourhood group

- The community garden must be an approved project of the Sustainable Neighbourhood group.
- All members of the garden project team must be formal members of the Sustainable Neighbourhood group, and therefore of the Alliance.
- The garden project team must seek approval from the Sustainable Neighbourhood group for major decisions regarding the management of the community garden. For example, changes to the Agreed Action Plan, initiation of a new construction stage, changes to governance arrangements, or holding a major event.
- The garden project team must provide regular progress updates to the Sustainable Neighbourhood group, eg attendance at Sustainable Neighbourhood group meetings, and regular reports submitted to Sustainable Neighbourhood group meetings.

## 4. Establishing a community garden

The Alliance requires the following conditions to be in place prior to approving a request to auspice a community garden project.

- Project team
  - Establish a project and volunteer team with agreement of local Sustainable Neighbourhood group.
  - Designate at least one individual as the team leader.
- Land owner approval
  - The land owner must provide written approval for a community garden on their site.
- Agreed Action Plan
  - An Agreed Action Plan must be developed with agreement from the garden project team, land owner, Sustainable Neighbourhood Group, and the Alliance Board.
  - The Agreed Action Plan should detail the garden objectives, concept plan, planned structures and landscaping, scope of activities, and any project partners.
- Risk management plan developed
  - A risk management plan must be developed in consultation with the garden project team, land owner, Sustainable Neighbourhood Group, and the Alliance Board.
- Team leader training completed
  - The designated garden project leader(s) must complete Team leader training.

Work on the garden site cannot start before documentation of these activities is submitted to and approved by the Alliance board.

## 5. Operating a community garden

The Alliance will provide two books to guide the operation of the community garden site, and document activities and participation.

- Blue book: Site induction and risk management plan
- Green book: Garden work diary

### 5.1 Site induction procedure

All volunteers, including casual participants, must be inducted before they start work in the garden.

The induction includes discussion of:

- Conditions of participation;
- Standard garden volunteer duties;
- Health and safety information, hazards and controls;
- Environmental hazards and controls;
- Incident, accident or near miss reporting; and
- Completion of the Site Induction Record.

Only people who have been inducted to the site are permitted to work on the garden site. The site induction record must be completed for each new volunteer, and repeated annually for all volunteers.

## **5.2 Risk management plan**

A comprehensive risk management plan is developed for each garden site, in consultation with the garden project team, land owner, Sustainable Neighbourhood Group, and the Alliance Board.

The risk management plan is detailed in the Blue Book and included as part of the induction process. Garden team leaders must regularly refer to and update the risk management plan, and ensure it is relevant for all gardening activities and changes on the site.

## **5.3 Formal membership and volunteering**

- **Garden project team.** This is the group of people who are responsible for planning and leading activities at the garden. All members of the garden project team must be formal members of the Sustainable Neighbourhood group, and therefore of the Alliance. This ensures that gardening activities are covered by the Alliance's insurance.
- **Regular and casual volunteers.** All people who attend and participate in garden activities should be encouraged to register as formal members of the Sustainable Neighbourhood group, and therefore of the Alliance. It is not compulsory, but is recommended.

The garden project team, regular, and casual volunteers all need to be inducted to the site, and record their details on the Site Induction Record.

## **5.4 Garden work diary**

The Garden Work Diary must be completed for every occasion that work takes place on the garden site, including:

- Who is present on the site, to ensure they are covered by insurance should an accident or incident occur;
- That the risks associated with the day's activities have been considered and measures taken to reduce the risks;
- What activities were undertaken on the day; and
- How many hours your group has worked.

The top copies of the Work Diary form must be returned to the Alliance so that the progress can be recorded and updated.

## **5.5 Community garden activities**

The following activities are allowable at a community garden site, provided they are consistent with the garden's Agreed Action Plan and risk management plan.

- Building and maintenance of garden beds and signage
- Manual handling including lifting and moving soil, mulch and other materials; digging and bending over

- Planting, weeding, fertilising, composting and mulching
- Pest control using non-toxic, naturally occurring pesticides such as capsicum spray
- Working outdoors
- Equipment use and maintenance (eg shovels, hand tools, wheel barrows)
- Hand held electric drills or small power saws are allowed
- Barbeque or on-site food preparation

Other activities may be considered, on application to the Alliance Board.

The following activities are not allowed at a community garden site.

- Use of synthetic chemicals. All community gardens must be managed with environmentally sound practices, without the use of synthetic chemicals.
- Power tools. Use of power tools is not permitted, with the exception of a hand held electric drill or small power saw.

## **5.6 Special events**

Community garden groups may want to hold special events, or allow other organisations to hold an event at their site. For example, an educational workshop, guest presenter, or community gathering.

In this case, an event-specific risk assessment must be submitted to the Alliance for review 3 weeks prior to the event.