



Health and Safety

for Sustainable Neighbourhood Activities

Safety is everyone's responsibility

Work health and safety is about protecting the health and safety of people at work or who may be affected by your work. This includes volunteers.

Work Health and Safety (WHS) Legislation

Under Work Health and Safety (WHS) legislation (2001), volunteers are given the same status and therefore the same protection, as all other workers.

WHS legislation specifically covers 'Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking' (PCBU) or organisations that employ one or more paid workers. Volunteer Associations are not covered by the WHS laws. The definition of a Volunteer Association for this purpose is 'A group of people working together for one or more community purposes that do not employ anyone'.

The Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance and WHS Laws

Under the above definition, the Alliance is a Volunteer Association, as there are no paid employees. However, to ensure the highest levels of safety for volunteers, and assuming that the Alliance will directly employ support staff in future, the Alliance is implementing best practice risk management, which aligns with the responsibilities of a PCBU / organisation.

Communities working together



Health and Safety Responsibilities

The Alliance

In order to fulfil its duty of care, the Alliance must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure your health and safety when you are carrying out work, by:

- Providing reasonable work health and safety policies and procedures for Sustainable Neighbourhood groups and activities
- Communicating with volunteers about work health and safety matters that affect volunteers, and providing opportunity for volunteers to contribute ideas to make their tasks and activities safer.

Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteers

As a volunteer undertaking work on behalf of your Sustainable Neighbourhood group, you must:

- Take reasonable care for your own health and safety
- Take reasonable care to ensure you don't affect the health and safety of others
- Carry out your tasks in a safe way
- Follow the reasonable work health and safety instructions given to you, and
- Cooperate with the Alliance's health and safety policies and procedures.

Resources, policies, and guides for Sustainable Neighbourhood groups

Refer to the Sustainable Neighbourhoods – Community Resource Toolkit for the complete set of Alliance policy, procedures, and guides.

The Toolkit is available at www.sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au under the 'Resources' tab.

The following documents have particular relevance to Health and Safety. They are found here: www.sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au/planning-and-implementing.

- How to Plan and Manage Sustainable Neighbourhood Activities – Guide and Template
- Process for Activity Notifications and Requests
- Activities Notification and Risk Assessment Form
- Incident, Accident, or Near Miss Report

Alliance members will be notified of updates to the Toolkit via email.

communities working together



Risk Assessment and Management for Sustainable Neighbourhood Activities

Completing a risk assessment is essential for any activity your group undertakes.

A risk assessment helps to ensure that you have identified, considered and managed any risks that might be associated with your activity. Effective risk management ensures your activity runs smoothly, participants are safe, and you are fulfilling your legal requirements.

A risk assessment involves the following steps:

1. Identify all potential risks associated with your site, venue, activity, or event

- a. Consider the activities or tasks that are involved in your activity. Think through the steps involved and how you will implement them.
- b. Consider the site, the people involved, actual tasks, and equipment required.
- c. On your [Risk Assessment form](#), consider each of the common risks listed, and add notes about the specific risks for your site or activity.

2. Rate each risk

- a. Use the Risk Rating Matrix (at the bottom of the Risk Assessment Form) to rate the 'Likelihood' and 'Consequence' of each risk you have identified.
- b. If any risk is rated Extreme (E), or High (H) do not proceed with the activity. Control measures must be put in place to reduce any risks to Moderate (M) or lower.

3. Document the control measures you will put in place

- a. For each risk, document what you will do to eliminate or reduce the risk of it occurring.

Adhere to the 'Hierarchy of Control Measures' as below:

Communities working together



Hierarchy of control measures

The first control considered must be **elimination** of the risk. If a risk cannot be eliminated, then you can consider the next controls on the list. In most cases a combination of controls are used to effectively control risks.

1. **Eliminate** – Completely remove the risk. Eg Move indoors to eliminate risks associated with working outdoors.
2. **Substitute** – Replace material or process with a less hazardous one. Eg Substitute mercury thermometers with spirit ones.
3. **Isolate** – Place a barrier between the hazard and people. Eg Fence off a pothole.
4. **Engineering** – Use mechanical or other aids to control a risk. Eg Use a wheelbarrow to move mulch rather than by hand.
5. **Administrative** – Implement safe work practices, procedures and policies. Eg. Always give new volunteers a site induction
6. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – Cover and protect people from hazards. Eg Ensure participants are wearing covered shoes and a sun hat.

- b. Some common risks and control measures encountered by Sustainable Neighbourhood groups are listed on the back of the Risk Assessment form. Note: This list is not exhaustive. Each group is required to consider site and activity specific hazards, risks and controls for each event or activity.

4. Submit your Risk Assessment for approval

- a. The completed '[Activity Notification and Risk Assessment](#)' Form needs to be submitted to the Alliance Board via admin@sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au at least 3 weeks prior to the date of the activity. This allows the Board to meet and properly consider activities.
- b. The Board will respond to your notification as soon as practical following the relevant Board meeting. In some cases, the Board may suggest amendments to your risk assessment and/or activities in consultation with your local group. In some cases, the insurer will also be consulted.
- c. Where the Board decides that any activity has inherent risks that are unacceptable, they will direct the local group to suspend a project, or that component which is the source of concern, until such time as the risk can be satisfactorily controlled.
- d. At no time should the achievement of work outcomes be allowed to compromise safety.
- e. All activities undertaken need to be approved by the Alliance Board before commencement.

Communities working together



5. Implementing your activity

- a. Once your activity is approved, it is important that all control measures be put into place.
- b. Before beginning work, review the risk assessment with all volunteers, highlight all hazards, and discuss the agreed control measures. Nominate a person responsible for reviewing and enforcing the implementation of the control measures throughout the activity or project.

Accident, Incident or Near Miss Reporting

If something happens at your Sustainable Neighbourhood activity or in the course of your volunteer work, where an injury or illness:

- requires first aid or professional medical attention
- renders a person incapable of working on the next day after the injury
- causes property loss or damage
- or where a near miss occurs

an [Incident, Accident, or Near Miss Report](#) must be completed, and submitted to the Alliance Board, as soon as is practical following the incident.

Content for this guide has been developed with reference to these resources:

- Safe Work Australia, www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- In Safe Hands, A Safety Management Toolkit for Community Groups in Practical Conservation. Conservation Volunteers Australia. www.conservationvolunteers.com.au



Sustainable Neighbourhoods is an initiative of Lake Macquarie City Council

communities working together

