

## Blurring the boundaries between work and home life

Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc



### Clearly defining work and volunteer roles is essential for the wellbeing of passionate Landcare staff

#### The issue

One of the best things about working for Landcare is that so many of us are genuinely passionate about our work – we love what we do, and are often willing to go above and beyond what's required of us in order to meet the needs of our community. We often head along to Landcare events we have organised as a volunteer, bringing our partner, kids and various other friends and family members, to help local Landcare groups at their working bees and other events. This is fantastic, and demonstrates the genuine love we have for our jobs. But in some cases, it can mean that staff members are classing a weekend event as 'volunteer' when they should actually be on paid work time – creating issues for staff workload and potential WHS risks.

While in theory it should be easy to clearly define work boundaries, in reality the lines can very easily become blurred. How many times might we request assistance from a partner or friend to build an item for a field day? Or how about testing a new workshop activity on your kids to gauge their interest and make changes accordingly? These are small "volunteer" additions to our regular work that we happily take on. But they can add up, which may lead to discontent and burnout in the long term.

#### The solution

So how do we embrace this passion, but keep it at a level that avoids potential issues arising? Clearly defining roles and expectations upfront is vital. If we feel we have to work over the weekend to complete something for the coming week, there needs to be a discussion with your manager. If it is ascertained that it is essential, any additional hours should be agreed on and paid. However, if the additional time is just to make superfluous improvements, it will be noted that any additional work will be your own volunteer contribution. Similarly, constructing an item for a field day or testing a kids workshop activity are tasks that need to be discussed with your manager, or others within your team, to determine whether they are truly essential or just extras that you would like to contribute. These discussions will help you to make a fully informed decision about whether you proceed with the task, with the knowledge of whether it will be paid or voluntary.

#### The impact

Clearly defining roles, boundaries and expected outputs will allow our staff to make informed choices about whether they wish to contribute additional 'voluntary' time to their work. This needs to be done regularly, in relation to specific activities and events, as needs and outcomes will continually change. Embracing the passion which our Landcare community brings to their roles is important and valuable, but it needs to be treated with respect and understanding to ensure it is sustainable in the long term.



This initiative is made possible by the NSW Landcare Enabling Program, a collaboration between Local Land Services and Landcare NSW supported by the NSW Government.