

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEER AND WORK EXPERIENCE EMPLOYMENT.

INTRODUCTION.

Environmental Consultants regularly receive offers of labour for various reasons including work experience, personal interest, as part of formal training programs, and in the hope of obtaining later paid employment.

There are advantages and disadvantages for both the employer and the person offering their labour. Employers also have legal and ethical responsibilities to those persons. This document has been prepared to provide guidelines for the use of volunteers or work experience persons by environmental consultants. It is intended to be used by both parties in the interests of equity.

Advantages to the Employer.

- Cheap but not necessarily free labour.
- A method of delegating jobs which might otherwise not be carried out.
- Access to skills which the employer does not possess.
- An insight into current attitudes to the environment and development.
- Seeing new approaches to methods or techniques.
- A sense of social responsibility through being able to provide a facet of education not covered by formal education.

Disadvantages to the Employer.

- Ramifications in relation to workers' indemnity, public liability and professional indemnity may not be clear.
- Time spent during learning phase which even the most skilled voluntary assistance require.
- Time spent on discussions and education about other issues such as business management, the realities of practical environmental management, contractual necessities, safety and ethics.

Advantages and Disadvantages to the Worker.

- The relationship between volunteer or work experience staff and employers is reciprocal, but the former gain experience which they may not be able to obtain otherwise.
- Volunteers and work experience staff are vulnerable to exploitation.

The potential benefit seen by volunteer or work experience persons is clearly sufficient to cause them to offer their services. The guidelines below have been designed to identify the issues and avoid exploitation.

GUIDELINES.

1. There is a valid role within commercial environmental consulting for the use of volunteers or work experience persons. This role ranges from fulfilling personal interests, gaining experience not available otherwise, and obtaining skills for subsequent employment. Any such workers should be advised of their role and responsibilities as soon as possible.
2. Assistance does not come free. Any consultant using a volunteer or work experience person must consider workers' indemnity, public liability and professional indemnity since the employer may be accountable for any problems which arise. All 'volunteers' should receive some form of monetary compensation to be covered by such policies.
3. A consultant should be clear about the distinction between work experience where the employer has chosen to provide appropriate experience, and voluntary professional work by skilled personnel who may undertake the work for a variety of personal reasons. In both cases at least a nominal monetary reward should be provided to ensure coverage under insurance policies.
4. Consultants using volunteers or work experience persons should consider the cost to themselves and to the worker, and ensure that conditions are fair to both parties.
5. Volunteer or work experience persons should never be used as a means to reduce costs and compete with other consultants. If such workers are to be used this should be clearly stated in any proposal and responsibility accepted.