



# GUIDE FOR CHURCH WORKING BEES!

There are lots of good reasons to hold a Working Bee! With many hands, you can do things that aren't possible alone, you get a lot of results in a short period of time, you have the benefit of a multitude of skills and ideas and it's a great way to build relationships! And hopefully your church property looks better at end as well!

If you are looking to organise a Working Bee on your property, here are some things you will need to consider:

## Projects could include:

- General weeding
- Paving
- Lawn mowing & edge trimming
- Hazard Inspections
- Sweeping of pathways
- Window cleaning
- Housekeeping
- Office tidy up
- General rubbish pick-up
- Painting
- Basic repairs & maintenance
- Painting
- Mulching
- Planting trees
- Water tanks & grey water systems
- Clean up of playground equipment and ground surfaces
- And many more!

## A Plan for the day:

You'll need a well thought out sequence of activities for the day, with clear tasks and steps to completion. It's a shame to have willing workers around and nothing for them to do!

Decide on the tasks that need to be completed but also work out exactly what tools and materials will be needed so that everything can go smoothly, and check with your church family to see what they can bring themselves.

Establish what the various skills and areas of interest people have and allocate tasks accordingly. It may seem obvious, but getting the gardeners into the garden and the handymen working on the fence will make for a much better result and for much happier people!

It's important that there is work that is simple enough for anyone to do, but it also needs to be fun and stimulating. Plan break times as well as work times!

Once you have a rough plan for the day, let your church know it's coming up and do lots of advertising!

## Bad Weather Plan:

Give some thought to what you will do if the weather turns bad (i.e. too cold, hot, wet or windy). Are there jobs that can be done inside? At what point would you consider cancelling the day? How would you let people know? If you have given some thought to a backup plan, it will be far less stressful if it needs to be implemented!

# GUIDE FOR CHURCH WORKING BEES!

## What should people bring?

If people know what tasks they will be doing beforehand, it is easier for them to bring the right gear. Some basic items include:

- Sun Protection i.e. hat, sunglasses, long sleeves and sunscreen
- Work Gloves
- Wear sturdy shoes
- Your favourite garden shears or gardening tools etc
- Water bottle

You may also require people to bring tools from home for use by others. Coordinate this so that you get a good selection that is relevant to the tasks planned. These may include:

- Wheel barrows
- Spades
- Mattocks
- Pitch forks
- Brooms
- Hammers
- Paint brushes/rollers
- Mops
- pruning shears (secateurs)
- Buckets/bins etc

If people are using power tools or are performing tasks that require Personal Protective Equipment or clothing, such as chainsaws, welding, or working with chemicals they must bring these too. These may include:

- Goggles/visor
- Helmets
- Steel capped boots
- Ear Protection
- Kevlar trousers/chaps etc

Remember: Only let people who have the right training, the right equipment and the right skills work with power tools. The BUV recommends that Working Bee attendees only use their own power tools and no one else's.

## Important Health & Safety Information:

A Working Bee provides many opportunities for injuries and accidents. But it also provides an opportunity to make your property a safer place to worship and participate in the many ministries you undoubtedly run each week!

The church has a Duty of Care and a legal obligation to provide a safe working environment for staff and volunteers. Those attending the Working Bee also have obligations with regards to how they work and how they behave.

Church obligations:

- To provide a safe physical environment for employees and others
- To provide safe systems of work
- To provide safe plant and equipment
- To provide adequate facilities e.g. first aid, lighting, space etc
- To provide suitable and adequate information, instruction and training for any duties required to be performed
- To provide for safe handling and storage of hazardous substances
- To provide personal protective equipment where necessary e.g. gloves, caps, glasses etc

Employee/Volunteer obligations:

- To comply with lawful instructions
- Not to behave in a wilful and reckless manner
- To use any protective equipment provided/required
- To follow all Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures
- Report all hazards to the designated Occupational Health and Safety Officer or other responsible person

## Hazard prevention and management

If your church completes the Redbook Housekeeping checklist regularly each month, there may not be many hazard areas of concern. If you are having a Working Bee, this is an excellent time to do an annual review for hazards and address some of the bigger preventative measures that can be taken to make your church a safe place.

Prior to running your Working Bee, it is worth noting some of the more common causes and locations of slips and falls and other accidents within church property so that they can be included on the list of tasks:

- Playgrounds
- Slippery weather conditions
- Loose carpeting or runners
- Wet floors
- Waxed floors
- Dark stairways or uneven steps
- Obstructed walkways
- Unsafe use of ladders
- Cords across floors
- People falling out of windows
- Obstructions
- Uneven pavement or holes in parking lots

Any hazards identified should be ranked in order of their injury or damage potential. Those with the potential to cause the greatest injury or damage should be rectified first.

All staff and other members of the congregation should be encouraged to report any potential or perceived hazards to the Occupational Health and Safety officer or relevant person. Your church should design a simple 'Incident/Hazard Report Form' for this reporting that may be available from a central point, or adapt the sample provided by the BUV.

## Supervision:

Appoint a supervisor to oversee the activities of the day. Depending on numbers, you may like to have multiple people in this role, but there should be at least one person whose sole responsibility is to make sure that people are working safely, **within their skill set**, with the right tools and the right protective equipment.

## First Aid:

Make sure you have a qualified First Aid person attending your Working Bee and that they have the right resources to be able to help in an emergency, i.e. First Aid Kit, mobile phone, contact numbers for emergency services etc. And make sure everyone knows who that person is!

## Working at Heights:

Particular care should be taken where people are required to perform work at heights.

If your roof is made of fragile material (asbestos cement sheeting or tin), you should not allow unqualified persons to access it and you should make sure that appropriate signage is in place as required by Occupational Health and Safety regulations.

You are required under Occupational Health and Safety regulations to ensure that everything possible is done to prevent falls. This is particularly relevant where people are working on roofs, changing light globes or performing other work with buildings that have high ceilings.

**You are required to provide safe, suitable and stable ladders and working platforms that meet Australian Standards.** If people bring ladders from home, it is the churches responsibility to make sure that each one is inspected prior to use and that they meet the requirements. Don't be afraid to ask someone to take their rickety old ladder back to their car!

For some jobs, you may need to provide a safety harness or a pole safety belt that attaches to a secure structural support. In many cases, this is probably not a Working Bee-friendly activity and it may be best to **hire a professional with the right skills and equipment** to come and do that particular job!

## Food Safety

Many churches like to provide morning tea, lunch or afternoon tea at Working Bees. It is great to be able to share a meal together but you must consider the extra work this will involve and the legal requirements regarding Food Safety.

If your church receives *any* money for food provided, such as holding a fundraising BBQ or charging a token amount just to cover costs, you will need to have a Food Safety Program in place and have designated people responsible for its implementation.

It is important to note the following:

- In May 2001, the Food Act was amended to include compulsory Food Safety Programs (FSPs) for...organisations preparing and selling food. This includes all events held by voluntary groups and community organisations.<sup>1</sup>
- You will need an Event Co-ordinator at every event where the Church will be selling food. The job of the Event Co-ordinator is to ensure that all workers understand food safety and they are also responsible for all operations, including food safety supervision.
- Food Regulations are governed by Local Government and requirements will therefore differ from church to church. Each Church is responsible for preparing its own Food Safety Program depending on its own individual needs. Churches should contact their Local Council to determine the relevant requirements. Your Council may also provide you with an example of a Food Safety Program or you can download the template from the Victorian Government Health Information website at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety>.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/downloads/events\\_template.pdf](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/downloads/events_template.pdf)

# GUIDE FOR CHURCH WORKING BEES!

You may decide that it is easier to just provide drinks and ask people to bring a packed lunch!

Either way, please ensure you have adequate refrigeration, food preparation areas, hand washing/drying facilities and rubbish disposal!

## OH&S Checklist:

Before conducting your Working Bee, you should be able to tick off all of these questions:

- Does the church have an occupational health and safety policy?
- Are there some safety rules in place within the church?
- Are leaders/relevant people provided with training in, and a copy of the church's occupational health and safety policy?
- Is there a person qualified in First Aid attending the Working Bee?
- Is there a First Aid Kit on site and is it stocked with the appropriate contents?
- Does the church have a documented emergency evacuation plan?
- Is there a defined procedure to report a hazard or an incident?
- If relevant, does the church have a register to record work performed by external contractors?
- Is there someone supervising your 'Working Bee' so that people do not attempt to perform work they are not qualified to?
- Is all work carried out at heights carried out by properly qualified personnel?
- Is there an appropriate Food Safety Program and Event Co-ordinator if you are selling food?

## Further information:

For further information on how to run a successful, safe and productive Working Bee, please call the Baptist Union of Victoria Administration Department on 9880 6111 or see these websites:

[www.buv.com.au](http://www.buv.com.au)

[www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

[www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety)