



## VEHICLE USE POLICY

Policy number	N/A	Version	6
Drafted by	Kàren Zirkler	Approved by	15 April 2026 Board on
Responsible person	Kàren Zirkler	Scheduled review date	Two-yearly, or earlier following any significant change to the organisation's vehicle fleet, insurance arrangements, or relevant legislation

### Background

Southern New England Landcare Ltd provides one or more pool motor vehicles for the use of staff and Board members. For the purposes of this policy, “**pool vehicle(s)**” refers to any motor vehicle owned or leased by Southern New England Landcare Ltd for shared organisational use, including utilities, passenger vehicles and any future vehicles added to the fleet. Unless impracticable the vehicle/s should be used by all employees in preference to their private vehicles. Where use of private vehicles is required, a travel log sheet will need to be submitted (usually monthly) for reimbursement on a per kilometre basis in accordance with the Australian Tax Office standard rates.

### Policy

This policy addresses aspects of motor vehicle usage within Southern New England Landcare Ltd., including:

1. Allocating the use of pool vehicles
2. Garaging and private use of pool vehicles
3. Maintenance responsibilities
4. Prevention of weed seed dispersal
5. Safe driving
6. Accidents
7. Fines and traffic infringements
8. Damage, repairs, and insurance claims procedure.

This policy applies equally to all pool vehicles, regardless of number, type, or configuration. Users of vehicles are required to adhere to these policy guidelines.

#### 1. Allocating the use of pool vehicles

Southern New England Landcare Ltd currently operates one or more pool vehicles. Vehicle types may include utilities, passenger vehicles, or other vehicles appropriate to operational requirements. A vehicle use schedule is maintained via Salesforce online database so that all staff members have access to information about the current and planned usage of the vehicle/s. Where more than one pool vehicle is available, allocation will be based on operational requirements, safety considerations, efficiency, and suitability of the vehicle for the task being undertaken. All vehicle movements are to be recorded in Salesforce prior to use.

If more than one vehicle is available, vehicle use is to be determined by the duties to be performed, the type of goods to be carried, the number of passengers to be carried, and/or the distance and the terrain to be covered as per the table below.

*Table: Hierarchy of use for SNEL Ltd vehicles if more than one available*

<b>Lower clearance 'sedan' type vehicle</b>	<b>4WD Utility type vehicle</b>
Travelling a greater distance on sealed road with multiple passengers	Travelling a greater distance for off-road activities
Travelling the greater distance on sealed road	Travelling a greater distance with load/towing
Travel on sealed road	Travel with load/towing
	Travel on sealed road with passengers
	Travel on sealed road

All staff should be notified of desired changes to car bookings (or cancellations) as soon as possible by updating reservations in Salesforce.

Where there are competing demands for vehicles, negotiations should be entered into between all officers that are impacted upon by changes to vehicle bookings, with a clear resolution agreed on by all effected PRIOR to the day of use if possible. Any dispute is to be taken to the Board of Directors or their representative.

A monthly log sheet of use of the vehicle/s is provided and must be maintained, including recording of trip destination, odometer readings, trip purpose, fuel purchased, initials of driver and any other relevant information. A separate log sheet must be maintained for each pool vehicle. At the end of each month the log sheet for that month is to be returned to the SNEL office.

## **2. Garaging and private use of pool vehicles**

One or more pool vehicles may be garaged at the rear of Southern New England Landcare's office premises at 4/121 Allingham St Armidale. Garaging arrangements may vary depending on the number and type of pool vehicles and operational requirements, as approved by the Board or its delegate. *Be aware that if the vehicle/s are garaged at private residences overnight this could trigger a Fringe Benefits Tax event, as the Tax Office considers that garaging at a private residence makes the vehicle available for private use, whether it is used for this or not.* Goods carrying vehicles (e.g. Utility) are treated differently by the ATO and a Fringe Benefit may not result from such garaging. However, given the situation, all employees who garage the vehicles at their private residence shall not utilize the vehicles for private use without first gaining the permission of the CEO or their nominated representative in writing.

Incidental private use of work vehicle/s is permitted, as per the following general examples only:

1. The vehicle cannot be taken on holidays, but an overnight stay on the way to or from a meeting is permitted if the hours of the meeting demand an early start or late finish.
2. The vehicle cannot be used for a special trip for doing a personal task, however performing a personal task on the way to or from a work trip would be permitted.

If an employee does not reside within a reasonable distance from Armidale, then incidental garaging overnight of the vehicle/s at a private residence may be permitted when the residence is "en route" to the following day's work engagement. For example, if an employee resides in Uralla and was attending an event in Walcha the following day, it would be acceptable to garage the vehicle in Uralla overnight.

### **3. Maintenance responsibilities**

Drivers are responsible for day-to-day cleanliness of vehicles. This responsibility applies to any pool vehicle used by the driver. This means vehicles are to be always kept neat and clean, particularly after events, to ensure that the organisation's image is maintained. A guideline to interior and exterior care is listed below.

Staff are responsible for scheduling six monthly 'detail' for the vehicles if required and for scheduling and booking services in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Maintenance schedules must be managed separately for each pool vehicle, in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.

All staff and board members should ensure that vehicles are returned to the garaging location **with a full tank of fuel**.

### **4. Interior Care**

- Treat vehicle interiors with respect as repairing damage to a vehicle's interior is expensive and time consuming.
- Read the manufacturer's vehicle handbook and fully understand all interior controls and functions.
- If spillages occur, ensure they are cleaned as soon as possible.
- Smoking is not permitted in the vehicle at any time.
- Ensure the cargo, chemicals, and dangerous goods are carried in the boot or cargo area in a safe manner – not in the seating area.
- Animals must not be transported in vehicles.
- Fill out and submit an incident report on all damages.

### **5. Exterior Care**

- Use care when parking close to gutters and in confined spaces.
- Regularly check the vehicle's tyre pressure and condition, oil and water. Refer to the manufacturer's vehicle handbook for the recommended pressures in the front and rear tyres.
- Change tyres with punctures as soon as they occur and get them repaired. Do not drive on deflated tyres. Ensure there is always an inflated spare tyre in the vehicle.
- If an accident occurs, ensure it is reported as soon as possible.
- Avoid parking vehicles where bird and bat droppings are prevalent. If affected, wash immediately to remove the damaging materials from exterior paint.
- Ensure the vehicle is always kept clean and presentable. (Responsibility of all staff on a day-to-day basis, if you dirty it, you clean it – immediately after use).
- Fill out and submit an incident report on all damages.
- Ensure the vehicle is full of fuel when returning to the office. If unable to meet this requirement, ensure all staff are aware that the vehicle needs fuel before the next outing.

### **6. Preventing weed seed dispersal**

- When visiting a landholder's property, drive the vehicle to the landholder's house or other agreed meeting place only.
- Discuss with the landholder whether they would prefer to drive you around the property in their own vehicle to minimise weed seed spread from the lease vehicle onto the property and to avoid picking up seeds around the property.
- If a washdown facility exists on farm, use the facility to remove weed seeds.
- Where this is not possible, use the nearest washdown facility to rid the lease vehicle of weed seeds.

## 7. Safe Driving

Southern New England Landcare Ltd. engenders a culture of safe driving, with the guiding principles being:

- Do not drive when you know you are too tired. Instead, stay overnight and resume your trip the next day.
- Take a 15-minute break after each two hours of driving.
- Avoid driving at night and at dusk and dawn because of the risk of colliding with kangaroos etc.

Any employee requesting the provision of a safe driving course shall be entitled to attend one, at no cost to themselves. It is the employee's responsibility to source a locally available course, and factor the time required for this into their work plan. Prior approval of the cost for attending this course must be obtained from the Board of Directors, or their representative.

Any employee who drives a work vehicle should be aware that the following circumstances may void (either in part or in whole) the Comprehensive Motor Vehicle Insurance Policy.. Further, authorisation to use vehicles may be withdrawn in such circumstances:

- Driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs;
- Contravening a traffic regulation;
- Picking up hitch-hikers;
- Knowingly driving an un-roadworthy vehicle;
- Overloading the vehicle;
- Authorised individuals are Southern New England Landcare staff and Board Members. Allowing unauthorised individuals to drive the vehicle without the prior written consent except where personal safety considerations take priority. That is, if sharing the driving on a long trip is a sensible safety measure.
- Admitting liability in the event of an accident;
- Driving with an invalid driver's license; employees must advise Southern New England Landcare Ltd. if their licence becomes invalid.
- Using a vehicle for the conveyance of passengers for fare, hire or reward.
- Long-term neglect of maintenance & cleaning.
- Repeated poor driving record resulting in several accidents and/or fines.

## 8. Accidents

At the scene of an accident, employees should call an ambulance if any person is seriously injured.

### **Dial 000.**

The police should also be notified immediately in the event of personal injury or fatality, if all drivers do not provide personal details, if any of the motor vehicles need to be towed from the scene of the accident, or if damage to vehicle or property is estimated to be over \$2500. If the police are unable to attend at the scene, the employee should report to the nearest Police Station and make a written statement.

Record the full names, addresses, workplace details, telephone numbers, insurance and registration of all drivers, passengers, witnesses, and the other vehicles involved in the accident. No discussion should be entered into whatsoever as to the negligence of either party. Where the vehicle is to be towed, ensure that the tow truck operator supplies you with documentation confirming the tow and the details of where the vehicle will be taken.

The manager/supervisor of the employee should be advised as soon as possible after the accident so that the necessary insurance arrangements can be made. An Incident Report Form & a Motor Vehicle

Damage / Accident Form must be completed and returned to the Landcare Office as soon as possible. This notification must be made irrespective of which party was at fault.

An insurance claim form must also be completed and returned to the employee's manager/supervisor.

## **9. Fines and traffic infringements**

Parking and other traffic fines associated with the use of company owned vehicles are the responsibility of the employee using the vehicle at the time the infringement occurs. However, if the fine is imposed due to the un-roadworthy condition of the vehicle and the employee was unaware of the vehicle's condition, the employee will not be held liable.

The employee that is driving the vehicle is to admit to any infringement and be responsible for the payment of the fine. Fines unallocated to a specific driver are charged to Southern New England Landcare Ltd. and this is an act subject to disciplinary action.

Any outstanding fines that are paid by the company will be deducted from the employee's pay.

## **10. Damage, repairs and insurance claims procedure**

Any damage caused to vehicles must be immediately reported to the employee's manager or supervisor. Similarly, any repairs that are carried out on the vehicle to rectify such damage must also be reported. In both situations, the communication must be made in writing by completing an Incident Form and a Motor Vehicle Damage/Accident Form.

Immediately following an incident, the employee is required to obtain a quotation for the repair work to be carried out on the vehicle through an Approved Repairer, and liaise with the primary driver about whether a claim should be made through Insurance. Costs may be incurred by the employee where they fail to report damage or repair damage on a vehicle.

Starting from the implementation date of this policy, each employee shall be granted a 'damage limit' of \$500. As this is equivalent to the Insurance Excess amount for one (1) Insurance Claim, the employee will be entitled to their first Insurance Claim without penalty. Where the employee exceeds this acceptable limit of damage to a vehicle, measures will be taken to recoup costs incurred. At the discretion of the Board of Directors, the driver may be required to pay 50% of the first excess, 75% of the second, and thereafter 100% of the excess for damage to a lease vehicle. These costs can be deducted from the employee's pay or made through an agreed arrangement.

Where the employee has repeatedly damaged a lease vehicle either by careless driving or through damage caused by wildlife, an assessment will be made by the Board of Southern New England Landcare Ltd. as to whether the employee should be responsible for or be granted permission to drive a vehicle in the future.

## **Authorisation**



Emeritus Professor Nick Reid  
Chair, Southern New England Landcare Ltd

15<sup>th</sup> April 2026