

# GUIDELINES FOR WALK LEADERS

## LEADER TRAINING

Leaders are an invaluable asset as they volunteer their time and experience to benefit the members of our club. Without their efforts we could not offer the wide range of activities that we do.

The level of skills and understanding of the principles of risk management by club leaders is critical. Walk leaders are not professionals. They are volunteers and many leaders emerge through a desire to share with others their own experiences. They are the experienced walkers who are the backbone of the club.

Consequently setting minimum standards for leaders is an issue that needs to be approached with great sensitivity.

The club acknowledges there is a need for a basic standard to be developed for the training of leaders to minimise the risk of law suits and recommends they have:

- An experienced leader or club member to act as mentor to new or inexperienced leaders;
- Map reading skills appropriate for the style of walk being led. This could range from the ability to follow a simple sketch map or street directory for short well sign posted walks to the ability to navigate with topographic map and compass in more remote areas;
- A current first aid certificate or basic first aid knowledge;
- An ability in people, group, time & incident management & adaptability in changing plans when unexpected circumstances occur;
- An adherence to Bushwalkers' Code for minimal impact bushwalking;
- An understanding that they could be held responsible for incidents during a pre-walk.

**These guidelines are compiled to assist new and current leaders in the safe and enjoyable fulfilment of their leadership role.**

## PREPARATION

- Choose areas and walk levels that are within your capabilities as a leader;
- Download the "Walk Details" from the website and provide an accurate description of the walk, including the activity grade. Check the box if the walk is suitable for members only, and forward the details to the walks coordinator or committee for approval;
- Research information on the area to be visited from Club files, old newsletters, and from previous leaders or participants;
- Obtain permission from landholder (private owner, Forestry, National Parks, Traditional Owners etc) for entry for both pre-walk and scheduled walk;
- Inform club secretary of any planned pre-walk for insurance purposes;
- Pre-walk the area, if possible, taking note of navigational features, reliable sources of water, potential risks and morning tea and lunch spots etc. If the walk is 'exploratory' plan the walk from reference to the map or by reference to other information sources ie Google Earth;
- Determine the maximum size of the party that can safely be taken;
- Read, and possible take with you for others to read, Beginners Information;
- Have an alternate plan in case of unforeseen circumstances. e.g. flash flooding, track erosion, transport changes etc;
- Download the "Walks Nomination Sheet" from the club's website, complete and print out a copy to place beside the phone to record names, contact details, and inform nominees of availability of water, maps, equipment and food requirements, etc, and transport details, eg,

departure time and place, private cars or bus, cost. **Ask appropriate questions** to determine their suitability for the walk. **Tell beginners** to read the information on the website;

- Beginners should not be allowed to go on weekend walks until they have been on at least a day walk with the Club, or a base camp, or it can demonstrate an acceptable level of ability;
- Make arrangements for payment of National Parks' camping fees;
- Download a "Walk Sheet complete, print, and take with you;
- Leave comprehensive details of the walk with a reliable person including instructions on what to do if you do not return at the expected time;
- Ensure a map, compass, first aid kit and any other equipment appropriate for the planned activity are brought on the activity;
- A few days prior to the walk check transport details if applicable, expected weather conditions and in summer, fire information, park closures etc.

### **UPON DEPARTURE**

- Welcome any new members and introduce them to other members. Take the name and address of newcomers who have not received a Newsletter and pass it on to the Secretary;
- All walkers need to read and sign the "Walk Sheet" for insurance purposes. Parents/Guardian must provide the CHILD'S NAME and DATE OF BIRTH, and indicate connection between them by writing "Signing on behalf of (Child)....." in the Signature column, and signing it;
- Remind all walkers the minimum requirements of the walk, eg, hat, sturdy shoes, 2 litres + of water, food, first-aid kit. It is the walk leader's responsibility to ensure that all participants are properly equipped for the walk. The walk leaders have the right to refuse to take any person who does not comply with these requirements, or is not fit enough, or is not considered suitable to participate;
- Arrange for the concentration of passengers in vehicles and **GIVE ALL DRIVERS CLEAR ROAD DIRECTIONS TO THE WALK STARTING POINT. DO NOT** rely on follow-the-leader convoys, as it is easy for vehicles to get behind in traffic. Have catch-up points at intervals/turns. Vehicle lights should be left on while travelling in a convoy;
- Car pooling is recommended and remind all passengers of the need to make a contribution towards the cost of transport;

### **AT THE START OF THE WALK**

- Hold an introductory circle prior to setting out and ensure that all walkers know where they are going, what are the significant navigational features, including expected terrain, distance, possible hazards, expected return time etc. and that all participants have the requisite experience, equipment and fitness for the activity;
- Ascertain if anyone is carrying a mobile phone, GPS or PLB for emergency use and whether any participants have a first aid certificate and/or medical training;
- Nominate a Tail-End-Charlie and ensure that everyone knows who it is. Advise participants not to fall behind this person for any reason without advising the 'tail';
- Appoint an "Understudy" navigator who can learn the route and therefore lead future walks;
- Ensure that all new walkers know the Club rules about correct bush behaviour, eg, no litter, burying toilet waste, minimum disturbance to the environment, etc;
- Try and find a volunteer to write up the walk story;
- Do a final check to ensure that all walkers have sufficient water, etc.

## DURING THE WALK

- The walk leader not only is in charge of navigation, but also has a prime responsibility for the safety and comfort of the members of the group;
- Set a walking pace suitable for the group and be continuously aware of any walkers who are not suited to that pace. Most walkers like to cover a good distance early in the day, so try not to indulge in too much nature study at the start of a walk, unless it is particularly interesting;
- Manage the group, & monitor any unexpected hazards. Ensure everyone is comfortable with the pace and conditions. Remember it is easier for fast walkers to slow down rather than slow walkers to speed up;
- On track walks, appoint a person to wait at track junctions to ensure everyone goes the correct way. Carry out regular head counts to ensure you have everyone;
- Stop every half hour. In the Central Queensland climate, to keep up fluid intake;
- Ensure difficult ascents and descents with or without rope are demonstrated/explained before letting others follow;
- Ensure that the fireplace selected for a boil-up is environmentally suitable. In bushfire prone areas, do not have a fire at all. Do not build fires on bare rock slabs, but choose a place with sand or earth cover. Remember, heating the rocks and turning the moisture inside to steam can cause them to explode. A fuel stove is usually safer, quicker, and more acceptable;
- Before leaving, ensure that the fire is thoroughly extinguished. Endeavour to disguise the fireplace as far as practical by dispersing large pieces of charcoal and unburnt firewood, and covering the area with a light layer of soil;
- Call a group meeting if there is an incident to help decide appropriate measures to take;
- For **emergency assistance, dial 000**. Only dial 112 as an alternative to 000 if you have a GSM digital mobile phone and you are outside your own provider's GSM network coverage. You may not be able to access 112 if you are outside of all network coverage areas.

## FINALLY

- Ensure that all participants have arrived at the finishing point, & that all vehicles will start before anyone leaves;
- Thank any landholders where special permission was obtained, eg, for use of facilities, or to walk on private land;
- Complete the Walk Leader's Report, and if necessary, any Bushwalking Incident Forms and forward it to the records' officer/secretary, along with the completed Walk Sheet signed by all participants;
- Contact the person with whom walk details were left to inform them of return;