

Bushwalking with the Ramblers

February 2020

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The Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club, Inc is incorporated under the NSW Incorporated Associations Act. Membership applications and lots of other information are available at <http://newcastleramblers.org.au>

Welcome

Firstly, a big welcome to the Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club. We hope you will enjoy meeting new people, learning new skills, and being out in the wonderful natural places of our country.

Our Club seeks to promote bushwalking, camping and related recreational activities, increase the knowledge of members in the art of safe bushwalking, develop leadership skills, and foster an appreciation of our environmental and cultural heritage. While we are primarily a bushwalking club, our members engage in a lot of other activities as befitting their interests and abilities. There are backpack walks, day walks, twilight walks and car camps as well as packrafting, canoeing and cycling. And it's not always in the bush, some trips are social, to big events or are extended trips to other countries.

We place a lot of emphasis on safety. All of our activities involve a combination of skills that are best learned by experience – and by being with experienced Leaders – and include planning and organisation, map reading, navigation, camping, bush cooking, being able to safely negotiate rough terrain or to travel safely in foreign places. Our experienced Leaders and members will help you learn the basics and encourage you to continue to learn and benefit from your experiences with the Club.

The Club is a voluntary organisation. If you decide to join the Ramblers we will welcome your active involvement so that others can benefit from the skills that you have undoubtedly gained over your own lifetime.

The Club has a web site at <http://newcastleramblers.org.au> that has links to useful information. There are also links to download forms and guidelines. The Club has a library of maps, guides and books, and there is a limited amount of equipment available for loan, such as Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs).

Risk Management and Duty of Care

'Duty of Care' is your legal duty to take reasonable care so that others are not harmed.

We take deliberate care to manage the risks of our activities. Over many years the Club has developed and documented a risk management plan to control and minimise those risks. The plan includes a walks grading system, skills training, training talks and some guidelines for leaders and members.

Upon joining the Club, you will be required to sign a 'Risk Waiver Form' accepting responsibility for your own wellbeing and safety. You will also participate in a risk assessment and sign a risk acceptance statement prior to taking part in each activity.

Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or carer, and they remain that person's responsibility during the activity. A specific 'Risk Waiver Form' must also be signed.

The Club has personal accident and public liability insurance coverage through Bushwalking Australia (Inc), which covers financial members. Most of the Club's annual membership fee goes toward the cost of this insurance. Visitors and prospective members are also covered by the insurance policy for their first three walks. Details of the policies are available on request.

The current Bushwalking Australia insurance policy excludes trips to overseas countries other than New Zealand. It is recommended that leaders and participants of any overseas trip self-insure for the trip, choosing a policy that includes public liability coverage as well as medical coverage.

Walk Grading System

All walking trips have a grade of difficulty represented by three numbers: the **terrain**, the **distance** and the **altitude gain**. It will appear as something like **G3/12km/200m**.

The terrain is represented by a Grade Number:

- Grade 1 (G1) On tracks or roads, mostly flat.
- Grade 2 (G2) Mostly on tracks, low gradient, relatively flat terrain.
- Grade 3 (G3) Mostly on tracks, some hilly sections/rougher terrain.
- Grade 4 (G4) Steeper, rougher terrain; may be off track.
- Grade 5 (G5) Mostly off track; difficult terrain.
- Grade 6 (G6) Strenuous off-track walks.

The distance is the number of kilometres to be covered.

The altitude gain is meant to indicate how much 'uphill' there will be. This is the total of all the separate climbs in the walk.

Taking Responsibility

Please understand that with all activities you undertake with the Newcastle Ramblers you must take responsibility for yourself. Please read and understand the waiver/assumption of risk form that you will be asked to sign before each activity. Consult with the Leader if you have any doubts.

Leaders go to a lot of effort to plan and implement an activity for the group and your enjoyment. Please respect these efforts and comply with the Leader's requests. Leaders should not have to worry about individuals in the group not taking responsibility for themselves.

You should check the description and grading of the activity to confirm that it is within your capability. Other aspects of taking responsibility would include being on time, carrying your own First Aid kit, having suitable shoes/boots and clothing, carrying enough water and food, staying with the group by not lagging behind or racing ahead.

Our Leaders are volunteers and do so because they love walking – so please be patient and treat them kindly and express your appreciation at the end of the activity.

Communications

The main forum for communications is the Club Meeting Night held on the first and third Monday of each month (except public holidays and the first Monday in January) at the **Uniting Church Hall, 24 Milson Street, Charlestown**. Meetings commence at 7:30 pm with general business, followed by reports on past activities and information about forthcoming activities, a short training talk, and may include a guest speaker, member's photos, or equipment nights. Supper and a chat round off the evening.

Club nights are important to find out about the wonderful places that the Ramblers go to, the adventure, the excitement and the sense of achievement at the end of a trip.

Email

Email is an essential way for us to remain in touch between meetings and is the means by which the Club distributes the Program and Newsletter and notifies members of new or changed activities in the Program. If you do not provide your email address you will miss out on being kept up to date on aspects of the Club's activities.

Bushwalking with the Ramblers

You are encouraged to make direct contact with any of the Club's committee members or nominated leaders for information, particularly if you may not be certain if an activity is suitable for you.

The Club's email address is newcastle.ramblers@gmail.com

Before a Walk or Activity

Always let a Leader know in advance (preferable at least a week) that you wish to participate in an activity. You can do this by signing on to the Activity Planning Sheet at a Club meeting, or by contacting the nominated Leader directly by telephone, email or text. Always let the Leader know if you change your mind or you can't make it. This has implications for the planning of the activity and is also a courtesy thing. Also don't just turn up – you could be disappointed. The nominated time for the activity is the **actual departure time** so be punctual and ready to go or you could get left behind.

The Leader takes on the responsibility for organising and leading the activity. **Leaders have the right to refuse to take you on an activity** if you don't have the right clothing, equipment, food and water. You may also be refused if the Leader feels your fitness or ability will not allow you to complete the activity safely or might unduly hold up the rest of the group. If you have any doubt, please speak with the Leader beforehand.

If you suffer from a medical condition which could become an issue during an activity, please let the Leader know, discretely.

If you must leave an activity early or before it ends, make sure the Leader knows.

Contact Person

Sometimes groups can be delayed. For major walks or trips a Leader might decide to nominate a contact person to keep track of the activity and to check that the group returns safely at about the appointed time. The contact person will have details of the activity, the contingency plans, and who is on the activity. If you let someone know that you are out on a Club activity, tell them also who the contact person is (if known to you) and their contact details, or alternatively let them know that they can telephone any Club Committee member if they have any concerns.

A list of Committee members and contact telephone numbers are on the top of the Club Program and are also on the Club's web site.

For off-track and remote bushwalking activities Leaders lodge details of their plans with the Committee.

Car Convoys and Shared Travel

Car convoys and shared travel are arranged to reduce the numbers of vehicles involved in activities. It also provides an opportunity for company and social interaction on the sometimes-long drives to and from a walk. Drive at a sensible speed, with headlights on, keeping an eye on the car behind. Pause at turn offs to make sure all vehicles stay together. It is important to have a general idea where you are heading and to carry a mobile phone for contact with the Leader if you get separated.

At the end of the walk, before leaving make sure all vehicles have started and are able to move off. It is not good if your car won't start, everybody else has disappeared and you are left alone in the bush.

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Petrol and other costs such as park entry fees, etc should be shared between the driver and passengers. There is no hard and fast rule for this but be fair and generous as the car owner is bearing the cost of providing the vehicle.

On the Walk

To keep a group together, the group will travel at the pace of the slowest walker. Those up in front should keep the rest of the group in sight and pause if necessary, to let the rest catch up and have a breather before moving on. **Always stop** at a turn off along a track to make sure everyone knows which way to proceed. With larger groups Leaders might appoint a Tail End Charlie to bring up the rear. If you need to stop (for a call of nature or to take a photograph) let the Leader or Tail End Charlie know.

If you are separated from the group — **Stop Where You Are** — as soon as you realise that you are misplaced and wait. Remember your group will come looking for you. Get your safety whistle out and give it three blasts (and repeat) – this is a signal for distress.

Please don't leave any litter about, carry it all out including fruit peelings. Bury toilet waste.

We are out to enjoy our natural surroundings so please leave behind or turn off the modern-day intrusions - mobile phones and I-pods, etc. Others will want to enjoy the quiet and seclusion of the bushland, so please respect this.

Swim and wash downstream from where drinking water is collected, and please don't allow soap and detergents to enter a stream.

Please don't walk upon Aboriginal engravings or touch or mark cave paintings.

First Aid/Emergency Kit

Members should carry their own first aid kit/emergency kit on all activities – don't rely on others to provide first aid items for you. You are encouraged to obtain first aid qualifications for yourself, and the Club arranges regular opportunities for this to occur.

A first aid kit which is not too big, and which would be able to provide for most eventualities in the bush is suggested below:

Emergency Blanket

1x 'Snake Bite' Compression Bandage and a Triangular Bandage

2x Sterile Dressings (10cmx10cm) and a 10cm Crepe Bandage

Scissors, tweezers and several Band Aids

Small roll of Sticking Plaster to treat blisters or fix things

Re-hydration tablets (eg 'Gastrolyte')

Panadol tablets

Water purifying tablets (eg 'Aquatabs')

Matches, in a waterproof container

Personal items that you may need.

A kit of this nature should weigh about 400-500gm. Stow it near the top of your pack – and hope that it will never be used!

Bushwalking with the Ramblers

An emergency contact medical information form has been developed. A copy is in the back of this booklet. You are encouraged to fill it in and have it in your kit should an emergency occur that involves you.

Preparation for a Day Walk

There are a number of basic items required for bushwalking, which will contribute to comfort and safety. For a day walk the following should be considered, with some walks requiring more items and others less. Again, please discuss your needs with the Leader until you develop your own list.

- **A small day pack** of about 35 litres capacity is the most convenient for walking. Since few packs are completely waterproof, things that might be damaged if they get wet should always be protected in plastic bags inside the pack.
- Wear **sensible clothing** – old clothes and items you will not mind getting dirty or damaged. Shorts or long pants are good but **don't wear denim jeans** (they are terrible when wet). Put something warm in your pack in case it turns cold, or you are delayed into the night. Several thin layers are better than a single heavy garment. In very cold conditions gloves and a beanie may be necessary.
- **Raincoat** as rain is always a possibility, even on the finest of mornings. A raincoat is light and can be folded into a small bundle in your pack. Rainwear is also useful for keeping out the cold.
- **Footwear and gaiters.** Good, well fitting, footwear is important. Boots or shoes must be sturdy enough to provide support and protection and comfortable to allow you to enjoy the walk. Don't try walking in new shoes until you are sure they won't cause you discomfort. Good socks are also essential – some people wear two pairs. Sock protectors or gaiters keep those annoying grass seeds from sticking to your socks or loose soil from getting into your boots. Gaiters give a measure of protection to your legs if you walk in shorts. Remember **if you feel any discomfort to your feet when walking don't feel bad about asking the Leader to stop immediately** while you sort the problem out. Don't let it deteriorate into something really painful.
- **Sun protection.** Sun exposure is a major risk while bushwalking. Sunscreen lotion or cream is essential, as is a broad brimmed hat, and wearing a long-sleeved shirt.
- **Map and compass**, and don't forget your **camera** – you might just capture that award-winning shot for the photo competition.

Carry your own Personal and Emergency Supplies

A **whistle** is handy for attracting attention and a small **torch** in case it gets dark. Carry at least **1 litre of water** in a strong plastic or metal bottle for a day walk. You will need a lot more (up to 1 litre an hour) in very hot or strenuous conditions. You may like to have a **change of clothes** and towel in the car for the end of the walk.

Food of course is needed on the walk. We usually stop after about 2 hours of walking, say 10am, for morning tea such as a muesli bar, fruit, dried fruit; and then for lunch about 12.30pm, for example sandwiches, Vitaweats, fruit – even boil the billy. After a few walks you will develop your own ideas about what you need to take.

Longer Walks and Backpacking

Overnight walks and longer walks require more planning and more equipment. When you are ready, do try an overnight walk – these are great experiences and fun. Start talking to more experienced members who will just love to share their knowledge and help you get started or guide you through more challenging adventures.

Additional Calendar Events

Bushwalking with the Ramblers

During each year the Club holds its Annual General Meeting in March, occasional auctions of bushwalking gear, and an annual photographic competition for the Garry Scully Memorial Trophy in November. NavShield and other orienteering and navigation activities are participated in. The Club facilitates regular First Aid Training Courses.

The Newcastle Ramblers supports this Bushwalkers Code, as published by Bushwalking NSW Inc. A PDF copy can be downloaded from the Bushwalking NSW website.

The Bushwalker's Code of Conduct

Minimal Impact Bushwalking

We leave no trace

- We leave campsites better than we found them.
- We use existing fireplaces or carry cooking equipment when possible, and do not scar the landscape with fire rings.
- We comply with fuel-stove only requirements.
- We remove our rubbish from the bush and bury human waste away from watercourses.
- We do not pollute the ground and waterways with soaps and detergents.
- We do not remove plants or rocks from National Parks.
- We do not disturb native wildlife.
- We avoid easily damaged places such as peat bogs, cushion moss, swamps and fragile rock formations.
- We use existing tracks where possible and avoid creating multiple tracks which lead to erosion.

We preserve Australia's bio-security

- We seek to protect the natural environment from the negative impacts of pests, diseases and weeds.
- We clean our clothing, equipment, cars, wheels and vessels to prevent the spread of pathogens and diseases that threaten bio-security.
- We report significant or unusual pests, diseases and weeds.

We mitigate incidents

Because incidents and rescues have the greatest impact on the environment:

- We prepare for, and carefully plan each trip
- We share our trip intentions
- We act safely
- We are self-reliant
- We seek appropriate training in remote area first aid and rescue

We take responsibility for acting safely

- We always carry clothing and equipment appropriate to our planned activity
- We carry first aid kits and are trained in first aid appropriate to our activities.
- We do not rely solely on GPS systems, but carry a map and compass, which we know how to use.
- We do not rely on mobile phone coverage for dealing with an emergency, but carry a Personal Locator Beacon and/or satellite phone when appropriate.
- We prepare an exit plan as part of our emergency planning.
- We check the safety status of our destinations before entering, observe the safety instructions of park rangers, and do not enter closed National Parks.
- We advise appropriate authorities, friends or relatives of our walking plans
- We walk in groups of three or more so that there are sufficient people to summon help in an emergency.
- We keep emergency contact details updated on our club website
- We only light fires when it is safe to do so, and ensure they are fully extinguished.
- We ensure the safety and well-being of all children entrusted to our care on a bushwalk.
- We engage in bushwalking activities unimpaired by the consumption of alcohol or use of drugs.

We are self-reliant

- We carry sufficient food and water in order to survive unexpected delays.
- We wear and carry appropriate clothing and equipment for our comfort and safety in expected weather conditions and carry gear to suit the worst possible conditions we are likely to encounter.
- We ensure we have sufficient training, experience and expertise to safely carry out our planned activity.

We respect fellow bushwalkers

- We welcome people from all walks of life irrespective of gender, age, race, religion, culture, colour, sexuality; and behave in an harmonious manner.
- We appreciate difference and welcome learning from others, building relationships based on mutual respect.
- We do not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination in any form.
- We encourage, respect and support our leaders as competent and motivated leaders are essential to the success of our activities.
- We respect the right of our leaders to accept or reject walker applicants for specific activities based upon the assessed degree of difficulty and the assessed competence of individual walkers.
- We respect the right of bushwalkers to enjoy the peace and quiet of the bush without undue disturbance from technology.
- We help fellow bushwalkers in need, in situations such as: assisting with emergency communications, offering medical aid for which we are qualified, carrying the gear of an injured person, or sharing equipment.

We respect indigenous culture

- We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we walk.
- We treat sites of spiritual or cultural significance with respect.
- We obtain permission from traditional landowners or the relevant land manager to visit sensitive areas.
- We do not damage aboriginal rock art or camp under overhangs that contain aboriginal rock art.

We respect landowners

- We respect landowners and do not trespass on their land.
- We leave farm gates as we find them.
- We respect the rules of National Parks, and other land managers, regarding camping conditions, maximum numbers in wilderness areas, pets, permitted activities and park closures.

Safety Tips

- Plan what you will do in an emergency and maintain a current first aid qualification so that you know how to handle illness and injuries.
- If possible, carry a satellite phone as it has global coverage and will allow you to inform emergency services of your needs. Otherwise, carry a mobile phone, but be aware that it may not have coverage in remote areas or national parks. Consider battery life and take a recharger if necessary.
- Even if you have a GPS, carry a map and compass and Personal Locator Beacon (PLB). Your PLB must be registered with AMSA and is essential in wilderness areas.

Emergency contact

- Before heading off complete a Trip Intention Form and give it to a responsible person who will check that you have returned on time. Register your trip at selected police stations or national park offices.
- Inform your contact when your group has safely returned.
- If in distress contact the emergency services on **Triple Zero (000)**. If you are in distress and need assistance and have no other means of communication, set off your Personal Locator Beacon (PLB). Remain near your PLB and be prepared with food and shelter to wait for a response. This may take several hours, or longer if conditions are not suitable for flying, or if a ground team needs to reach you. Make yourself visible from the air with a brightly coloured sheet of fabric, or if safe, make a smoky fire. Extinguish any fire entirely when the helicopter approaches. Pack up and secure your gear against the helicopter downdraft so your gear is not lost and the rescue site is left as untouched as possible.

Club Guidelines

The Club's Management Committee has issued some guidelines on what members should do in certain circumstances. These cover

Leaders and Participants

Use of Contact Person

Participant Becomes Separated from the Group

A Group Overdue

Emergency Response

Use of Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs)

Water Activities

Child Protection (being prepared)

The guidelines can also be accessed from the Club web site.

Club Guideline — Leaders and Participants – what is the role of the Leader and what are the responsibilities of Participants?

Leaders

- The Leader devises and plans the activity and proposes its grading for inclusion in the Club program.
- The Leader at his or her discretion may limit the number of persons on an activity and may decline to accept a person as a participant.
- The Leader will, before the activity commences, go through the Risk Assessment checklist with all the participants.
- The Leader has the right to decline a person participation in an activity (or if it is a multi phase activity, in part of it) if the Leader
 - a) has concerns about the person's capacity to complete the activity safely, harmoniously and in a timely manner, or
 - b) is of the opinion that the person's involvement will compromise the group's capacity to complete the activity in a safe and timely manner.

Participants

- Anyone wishing to be a Participant in an activity must record their name on the Walks/Activity Sheet at a Club meeting or contact the Leader well in advance to record their wish to participate. If they subsequently decide that they cannot participate, they must notify the Leader promptly.
- Participants must meet at the designated assembly place and be ready to depart on the activity at the time nominated by the Leader for departure.
- Participants are responsible for ensuring that they understand the nature of the activity and its risks, have the necessary equipment, first aid kit and provisions and that on the day are physically fit for the grading of the activity. They must bring with them any medications, such as puffers, that they might need.

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- Participants must inform the Leader if they have any medical conditions, phobias, disabilities or impairments that could affect their capacity to participate or affect the Group's timely completion of the activity. This may be done by private communication with the Leader before the activity commences.

General

- Participants must follow the instructions of the Leader. They must not leave the activity prematurely without the Leader's knowledge and agreement.
- The Leader and all participants are to be treated in a polite and courteous manner. Abuse, threats or harassment are not acceptable.
- If a Participant fails to comply with a reasonable instruction from the Leader, is disruptive, abusive, threatening or offensive, or persistently and willfully acts in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the Club, upon report by the Leader, action may be taken by the Club Management Committee to counsel the person, censure the person, or initiate action under the discipline provisions of the Club Constitution.

Club Guideline — Use of a Contact Person

On some walks and activities, a Leader may decide to nominate an experienced member as the 'home base' contact person. Members also have their own contact persons. It is possible a group may take longer than expected to return due to weather conditions, injury, difficult terrain, or unforeseen circumstances. If a group is in fact delayed **it is essential that it is missed**.

The reverse may also occur, and it is possible that during a trip, the group, or an individual in the group, may need to be contacted because of an urgent personal emergency.

To deal with identified risks the Club has developed safeguards and designated the following contact persons:

- **Member's Emergency Contact Person** – this is usually a friend or relative and is the person(s) nominated by members on their membership form when joining or renewing membership.
- **Leader's Trip Contact Person** – when nominated, this is usually an experienced Club member, not on the activity, who is informed of the group's participants, where they are going, their equipment and resources.

Documentation and records of activities which are referred to in guidelines may include:

- **Walks Intention Form** – this form is normally filled in at a Club Meeting by participants intending to join a future activity. It contains information of the activity, meeting places and times, vehicle registration numbers, and emergency contact persons. The leader takes this form with him on the activity.
- **Sign on/Waiver Form** – Participants sign a waiver form for the activity immediately before the activity commences and after a risk assessment has been conducted by the Leader, to confirm their acceptance of risks inherent in bushwalking and any specifically identified for that activity.

- **Risk Assessment and Incident Report Form** – This form provides a checklist for the Leader to conduct a risk review prior to an activity commencing. At the end of the activity the Leader is required to document any incident, injury or near miss which may have occurred during the activity.

Leader

For any overnight, extended or remote walking trip where telephone communication is not available a Leader is required to nominate a **Trip Contact Person** who should have a good knowledge of the walk and appropriate contingency and overdue actions. In some remote situations this may be a government officer, such as local National Parks officer, visitor's centre, trail logbook, or Police station. In the case of remote area walks the Trip Contact Person should be an experienced bushwalker, not just a non-bushwalking relative/friend.

- The nomination of a Trip Contact Person is optional for trips like twilight walks, bike rides, etc. where mobile phone reception is available.
- The Leader should notify the Trip Contact Person when the walk has been completed.
- In the case of trips where long driving is involved, the Leader should check that all participants have arrived home safely.
- For any overnight, extended or remote walking trip a Leaders should email trip and Trip Contact Person details to the Committee email address – committee@ramblers.groups.io in order to provide the Committee with information in addition to that contained on the Club Walks Program.
- Where appropriate the Leader should advise the name and contact details of the Trip Contact Person and other information to the PLB Officer (if a PLB is carried) at least 24 hours before the trip.

Activity Participants

- Participants should leave details of the Trip Contact Person (if known) and Club Committee members as shown on the top of the Club Program, with their Emergency Contact.
- Participants should make their Emergency Contact Person aware of Club guidelines in the event of a group becoming overdue, and that it is not uncommon for a Club walk to return later than that estimated by the Leader.
- Should an Emergency Contact Person become concerned about a participant on a Club activity, they should contact the Trip Contact Person (if known) or one of the Club Committee, (refer to names on the top of the Club Program) to discuss their concern and seek further advice.

Leader's Trip Contact Person

If it appears that a Group is overdue, attempt to contact the Leader or other members of the Group to check if they have returned, but omitted to report in. If that fails, contact one of the Club Committee (refer to names on the top of the Club Program) to discuss and seek further advice.

Club Guideline – Participant Becomes Separated from the Group – it has happened that a person on a walk has become separated from the group. If this was you, what should you do?

Leader

- Where groups are larger than 12 persons the Leader should nominate a deputy leader and/or ‘Tail End Charlie’ to bring up the rear of a party. The ‘Tail End Charlie’ should always be the last person in the group or have the last person in sight at all times.
- The Risk Assessment conducted prior to the activity commencing should state the need to stay together. The Sign-on Sheet should be filled in completely to include participants’ mobile telephone numbers and the number plate details of those vehicles used in the activity or to get to the meeting point for the activity.
- Do not allow the group to string out or have faster walkers in advance without your knowledge.
- Give instructions for participants to wait at the next intersection or landmark.
- The group should generally walk at the pace of the slowest walker and pause frequently enough to allow slower walkers to catch up and have a rest if necessary.
- Where there is a change in direction or alternate route, check that all participants are on the right track.

Participants

- Keep in sight of the person in front and behind. Do not proceed in advance of the Leader without the Leader’s knowledge and do not proceed past any track intersection without first checking with the Leader. Wait for the group to catch up.
- Do not allow yourself to get too far behind the group through photography or other activities. Tell the Leader or someone if you are going to get behind for toileting or any other reason.
- Take note of people telling you that they are going to fall behind the group.
- In addition to a first aid kit, participants are encouraged to carry a mobile telephone, pen and paper, and to make a note of the Leader’s phone contact details.
- Make sure your personal Contact Person is aware that there are Overdue Guidelines and knows how to contact Committee members

If someone does become separated from the Group:

Leader

- Return to the location where the participant was last seen. Attract attention by calling out, or by blowing your whistle (three times) and listen for a response. Look for signs from the missing person, e.g., paper notes, cairns, arrows or words on the ground.
- In searching from that location there may be several options depending on the group, its size, experience and capability. You may decide to split the group, give explicit instructions and achieve a greater search coverage.
- The duration of the search should be at least one hour. Consider leaving some of the group at the search location and send part of the group for help.
- If the participant has not been located after an hour, it is possible that he or she has decided to find their own way out. On the other hand, the participant may be injured and unable to respond to calls.
- Consider lighting a fire to serve as a beacon for the lost walker.

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- Above all, have regard for the safety of the group. When all reasonable efforts have been made to find the missing person, the group should return to cars/transport, and initiate the Emergency Response Procedure.

Participant

- Return to the location where the group was last seen if that is possible, otherwise stay put in a safe location, and **stay calm**. Turn your mobile phone on. Do not walk around, wait for the group to return and find you.
- **Be aware that if you move on, you may be going in the wrong direction and move out of the initial search area, making it much longer and harder to locate you.** Attract attention by calling out or by blowing your whistle (three times) and listen for a response. Try using your mobile telephone to contact a member of the group.
- If after a reasonable time, or by dusk, you have not been located, you may have to make yourself comfortable and prepare for a longer wait. You may have to light a fire and prepare to stay the night. You may even have to get some form of shelter or set up a camp if your wait is long, towards nightfall or in bad weather.
- If after an hour and you have not been located, and if you have a map and compass and are confident you can find your own way out, leave prominent trail marks for searchers to follow (paper with a stone on it, cairns, arrows etc).
- If you do find your own way out, make sure that you contact the Leader, or other Club officer or the local Police station as soon as possible and tell them you are safe.

Club Guideline - Group Overdue

BACKGROUND

The Club participates regularly in day, overnight and extended bushwalking and other activities. Groups sometimes take longer than expected to return. It is possible that the scheduled completion of an activity may be delayed because of weather conditions, difficult terrain, injury, or becoming lost.

Overnight and extended bushwalking activities are fully self-sufficient and an extra night in the bush should not normally present a problem in terms of shelter and food. Participants on day walks on the other hand are less fully equipped. Because of the training and skills of Club members, it is unlikely that a group will become lost.

If a group becomes delayed it is essential **that it is in fact missed** and that procedures are put in place to inform the members of the Club Committee, Emergency Contact Persons of those in the group as well as relevant authorities, such as the Police or rescue services, and to assist in the group's safe return.

This guideline should be read in conjunction with the Club's guidelines for **Emergency Response and Participant Becomes Separated from the Group**.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the guideline are to:

- Clarify the role and responsibilities of Leaders, Club members, participants and the authorities.
- Ensure that the Club Committee Members become aware that a group is overdue.
- Ensure that participants' Emergency Contact Persons are notified of an overdue incident and that relevant authorities are contacted.
- Provide details of activity participants, their equipment and experience to relevant authorities to facilitate their safe return.
- Provide a basis for ongoing training of Leaders and Club members.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Leader

Before the activity commences

- Nominate a Leader's Trip Contact Person who has knowledge of the walk or activity and a list of the participants. The Trip Contact Person, when nominated, is usually an experienced Club member, not on the activity, who is informed of the group's participants, where they are going, their equipment and resources.
- The nomination of a Trip Contact Person is optional for trips like twilight walks, bike rides, etc where mobile phone reception is available.
- For any overnight, extended or remote walking trip a Leaders should email trip and Trip Contact Person details to the Committee email address – Committee@ramblers.groups.io in order to provide the Committee with information in addition to that contained on the Club Walks Program.
- For remote walking carry a PLB and advise the name and contact details of the Trip Contact Person and other information to the PLB Officer at least 24 hours before the trip.
- In some remote situations, the best contact person may be a government officer, such as a local National Parks officer, a visitor's centre or a Police station.
- Carry a mobile phone.
- Complete the activity Risk Assessment and the Sign-on/Waiver Form.

When the activity has concluded

- Notify the Leader's Trip Contact Person that the activity has been completed.
- In the case of remote or extended trips where long driving or travel is involved, ask participants to email or phone the Leader when they have arrived home safely.

Activity Participants

- Leave details of the activity and contact details of Club Committee Members as shown on the Walks Program with your emergency contact person (a partner, friend or relative). Inform them of the existence of the Club's guideline for an overdue group, and that they should contact a Club Committee Member should they have any concerns.

Leader's Trip Contact Person

- On becoming aware that a Group is overdue, attempt to contact the Leader or other member of the group to check if they have returned, but omitted to report in.
- If that fails, contact a Club Committee Member as shown on the Walks Program to discuss and seek further advice.

Club Committee Members

- Should a Committee Member be contacted in an emergency he/she should contact other members of the Club Committee and discuss possible overdue scenarios. Contact the Police or relevant authorities, if required, to make them aware of the Club's procedures and discuss possible actions.
- Be prepared to implement the **Emergency Response** guideline where death or serious injury is involved or the **Participant Becomes Separated** guideline if a separated participant has not been located after a reasonable period.
- Depending on the circumstances, telephone the participant's Emergency Contact Person to inform them of the situation and actions that are being taken. In serious circumstances, note that the Police are well equipped to undertake this and that Police assistance may be more appropriate.
- Refer any media enquiries to a nominated Club spokesperson (usually the Club President) or to other relevant authorities.
- With death or serious personal injury involving a Club member advise Bushwalking NSW when convenient and seek further advice.

GUIDELINE

- On becoming aware that a group is overdue, the Leader's Trip Contact Person should contact a Club Committee Member as shown on the Walks Program to discuss and seek further advice.
- Discussion between Club Committee Members should occur to understand the group's participants, their equipment and experience and to assess the risks and assistance that may be required. This information will be essential to brief relevant authorities who may be required to assist in locating the group.
- Unless extreme weather conditions or fire have occurred in the area of the activity, wait for the pre-arranged time period to pass before implementing this guideline.
- A concerned member's Emergency Contact Person should contact a Club Committee Member as shown on the Walks Program to discuss and seek further advice.
- If the group is 'well overdue', the Club Committee Member should inform local Police and /or other relevant authorities.
- The Club Committee Member should contact, as far as practicable, all of the Emergency Contact Persons of those on the activity. Depending on the circumstances, it may be more appropriate for the Police to carry this out on behalf of the Club.
- Available experienced members of the Club should liaise with relevant authorities in assisting them to locate the group as required.
- If required, the Club may advise Bushwalking NSW and the Bush Search and Rescue NSW to enlist assistance.

When the group has returned

- The Club President should notify and thank all relevant authorities that have been contacted as part of this procedure immediately the group has been located (if they were not involved in the search).

Club Guideline – Emergency Response – It is possible that during the course of a Club activity there could be a serious emergency. A member of the group could become separated from the group, fall seriously ill, suffer severe injury or die. A group may discover a deceased person or come across evidence of an illegal activity. These events could become the subject of a police investigation and media attention. They could also be the subject of formal enquiry and litigation involving the Leader, other members of the group, and the Club.

Leader (or alternate)

Notify the Leader’s Contact Person for the walk or activity. If unable to do this, and the matter is serious, the Leader should contact one of the other Club Committee, or the Police.

At the first available opportunity or progressively, document what has occurred.

Carry out any other responsibilities as advised by the contact person.

In the situation where a body is found or there is evidence of an illegal activity, do not disturb the site in any way and avoid any person at or near the site. Record details of the location, photograph the site, and report to the Police as soon as possible. Also brief the Club’s President as soon as practicable.

Club Emergency Contact (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer)

Inform all available Club Committee members and discuss the circumstances. Access Club records and ascertain the personal contact details of any members involved.

Brief the member’s personal contact person and arrange assistance and support as required. Depending on the circumstances the Police may be better able to carry this out.

Document details of the emergency and the actions that have been taken. Nominate a spokesperson for the emergency event, normally the Club President. Refer all media enquiries to that spokesperson.

Provide assistance to other members of the activity group. This may include counseling and debriefing.

If a member of the Club is involved, advise the Club insurance broker and Bushwalking NSW, and seek further advice.

Club Members

Refer all media and other inquiries to the nominated Club spokesperson. Refrain from speculation and do not make media statements. Assist as requested by the Club Emergency Contact or Police

Club Spokesperson

Be available to make a statement of facts only. Do not speculate about cause or liability. If the situation is being investigated and the details are unclear at the time, say so.

Offer to provide details when they become available. Take advice from the Police in these matters.

Do not lie or cover up. The true facts will eventually emerge through police inquiries or coronial inquest. This could take some time.

Contact Information

The Club Committee members and PLB Officers are listed on the Club Program and on the Club website (www.newcastleramblers.org.au) and should be contacted in relation to this Guideline.

You may contact Newcastle Police 02 4929 0999 or 000 in the case of an emergency.

The Bush Search and Rescue NSW, now part of the NSW SES may be able to provide advice and assist in any search efforts coordinated by the NSW SES. Contact mobile for emergencies only is 0427455897. For up to date contact details go to the website www.bsar.org.au.

Club Guideline – Use of Personal Locator Beacons (PLB)

Appointed PLB Officers

The responsibilities of the PLB officers include:

- Supervise the maintenance and use of the Club PLBs
- Maintain/update the Club's contact details with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Enter activity details with AMSA when requested by an activity Leader.
- Respond in accordance with Club's Emergency or Overdue Guidelines if AMSA or the police make contact in the event that a Club or personal PLB is activated.

Activity Leader

It is recommended that leaders carry a Club or private PLB on all Club activities undertaken on overnight and/or remote area activities where telephonic communication may not be available. For PLBs not fitted with a mirror it is recommended that a separate mirror be carried.

Trip intention information **MUST** be emailed to the club committee and PLB Officers prior to a remote area activity to ensure prompt and accurate communications with emergency services if a PLB is activated. This information should be accurate with dates, routes and intended campsite locations nominated, and include a list of all participants and wherever possible, their personal emergency contacts names and contact details.

This information ensures AMSA can immediately confirm that activation is genuine and provides the rescue personnel with vital information.

Private Owners of PLBs Used on Club Activities

Private owners of PLBs **MUST** ensure that their PLB is registered and in date. When registering a PLB, owners should include contact details for the Club PLB Officers **AND** an emergency contact who is familiar with Club guidelines and able to inform the Club Committee of any emergency.

Any non-club contact persons should be aware of their responsibilities as outlined below.

It would be advisable to include current committee members in any extra spaces for phone numbers (up to 3 names and 9 phone numbers may be used).

Contact Persons

Nominated PLB contact persons must ensure they are contactable by the nominated phone number and are prepared to answer private number calls as this will be the case with emergency services calls. They need trip intention information ie. the same email as the club committee.

Safety Guidelines for Water Activities

Introduction

While water activities are not included in the principal aims of the Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club, these activities are viewed by the Committee as approved secondary activities that:

- increase the range of experiences available to Club Members.
- provide activities that complement the hot summer conditions that prevail in Australia.

Water activities undertaken by the Club are covered by Bushwalking NSW Insurance.

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to minimise the risks to participants and to the Club. These guidelines, because of the nature of the Club, are not necessarily the same as those of a commercial organisation.

Terms and Definitions

In this guideline the following terms and definitions apply.

Water Activities: refers to canoes, kayaks, liloes, cascading, canyoning, packrafting, or any other water activity that may be included from time to time.

What is Packrafting?

Packrafting is using a small, tough, one-person, lightweight inflatable boat to cross rivers, streams and lakes, even run rapids.

Packrafts are compact yet functional watercraft, light enough to carry in your pack, or on your bike. They can be easily portaged around difficult areas or packed away to traverse a range to another river then paddled again.

The use of a packraft by the bushwalker helps get into and out of otherwise hard to reach areas. They can be used for fun and encourage amphibious travel.

Using a packraft allows the bushwalker access to certain wild landscapes where the only viable path is a river or stream and thus enhances the experience.

A good example is the Colo River Gorge in the Wollemi Wilderness of NSW.

Packrafting is minimal impact, less footprints than a multiday walk. Done correctly, no trace will remain of a packrafters visit.

An Authorised Activity is an activity where the group leader complies with the Club's Risk Management Plan and completes the Club waiver form in accordance with Rambler guidelines. Group size and ratio of participants to experienced paddlers is at the discretion of the leader, with a maximum ratio of 10 inexperienced paddlers to 1 experienced paddler. The physical ability of individuals to complete the activity will be considered by the Leader, and the Leader has the right to refuse any person.

Personal Flotation Device (PFD): is a buoyancy vest or other equipment designed to keep a person afloat.

Planning

The leader in river related activities will check river heights and weather conditions in advance of the activity, and during the activity where practical.

Contingency planning will be undertaken to assess suitable exit locations from a river, should it become necessary to cease the activity.

Skill of Participants:

Participants must be able to swim 50 metres while dressed in canoeing clothes (including PFD and helmet).

If in a canoe, kayak or packraft, a paddler should be able to perform basic strokes, ie paddle forwards, backwards, as well as ferry glide and reverse ferry glide.

A participant must satisfy the Leader that he/she is capable of handling their craft safely in the activity proposed'

Safety Requirements:

Participants must follow the directions of the Leader at ALL times.

Canoes and kayaks must be in a good state of repair with inflatable or fixed buoyancy, sufficient to keep the craft afloat when full of water. Secure end loops and fixed deck lines should be fitted. A bailer or a large sponge must be carried. Kayaks on rivers must have a secure footrest fitted.

The group must stay together.

When in estuaries or tidal waterways, be aware of tidal currents and underwater obstacles.

On rivers beware of snags, rocks, overhangs and trees. Beware of eddies, pressure waves and underwater obstacles.

Clothing requirements:

Suitable footwear must be worn.

When negotiating rapids or whitewater, a safety helmet and a suitable personal flotation device shall always be worn.

A well-equipped day pack should provide sufficient clothing to meet most situations, packed in a waterproof container or dry bags. A wide brimmed hat and long-sleeved shirt are essential.

Essentials to be carried by each participant.

Food, water, sunscreen, first aid kit, repair kit, map and compass (optional) all to be kept dry.

Group Equipment.

If canoeing, a tow line and a spare paddle.

Behaviour on Rivers.

- When shooting rapids allow about 5 canoe lengths between canoes. This will prevent the possibility of collision.
- Do not proceed down any rapid without an experienced paddler first examining the lay of the rapid and explaining the best path.
- An experienced paddler should show the way down the rapid, then wait at the bottom for the rest of the group. This will allow for a rescue should a capsize or difficult situation arise.
- In the event of a capsize float down the rapid feet first.
- An experienced paddler should be Tail-end Charlie.
- Do not paddle out of sight of the paddler behind you.
- If a rapid looks too dangerous for your experience level - portage.

- No litter, damaged equipment will be left behind on the lake, estuary, or river.

River Grading

The policy of the Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club is that activities for kayaking/canoeing/packrafting will be limited to **Grades 1** and **2** for river paddling. If members are keen to pursue more difficult grade activities, we would encourage them to embrace some of the specialist water sport clubs in the region.

Grade 1 Easy Slow to medium flow with very small regular waves or ripples. Relatively few obstacles with an easy path to find and follow. Suitable for novices.

Grade 2 Medium Rapids are straightforward with medium sized and regular waves. The path through rapids can be seen from the water and is often indicated by a well defined chute of water. There are some obstacles which require manoeuvring around, but paddlers with good command of basic strokes can easily miss them.

EMERGENCY CONTACT AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

This form follows the risk management guidelines of Bushwalking Australia. It is suggested that you carry it in your first aid kit in a cliplock plastic envelope in case it is needed in an emergency. Review and update the details if there is a change in your health status.

Your Name:

Home Address:

..... Postcode:

Telephone: Home: Mobile:

Medical Information

Have you any medical Conditions?

.....

Are you taking any current medications?

Do you have any allergies?

Do you have current immunization against tetanus? Yes/No

Medicare Number.Private Health Insurance Fund Name:

Ambulance subscriber: Yes/No

Your Doctor Contact

Name:

Practice Address:

Telephone:

Your Emergency Contact

Contact's Name:

Contact's Home Address:Post Code.....

Telephone: Home: Mobile:

Relationship to you:

Signed: Date: