

CANBERRA BUSHWALKING CLUB LEADER REGISTRATION GUIDELINES

Purpose

The Canberra Bushwalking Club recognises a duty of care to those participating in club activities.

As part of this duty of care, the club requires all leaders of club trips to be registered. The aim of registration is to ensure that leaders have the competence to manage the trips they put on the program.

For many years the club has had an informal registration system, whereby the Walks Secretary has satisfied himself/herself that new leaders were suitable persons to lead before accepting their walks. The committee has decided to document the procedures to be taken into account in the registration procedure, to:

- meet the recommendation of the Confederation of NSW Bushwalking Clubs (of which the Canberra Bushwalking Club is a member body) that such a procedure be documented;
- prepare for any introduction of Adventure Activity Standards; and
- provide prospective leaders, and the club members and prospective members who might accompany them, with a clear and transparent statement of the leadership standards expected.

Principles

In setting out standards for leaders, it needs to be made clear that club leaders are not expected to assume total responsibility for the safety of all walkers and for the successful completion of the objectives of all trips. All participants of club walks are expected to accept an appropriate share of responsibility, as set out in the Guidelines for Participants. Furthermore, bushwalking is an activity in which there are risks and, whilst a leader can to some extent anticipate these risks and take action to minimise them, incidents may occur on even the best-led walks. For these reasons all participants are required to acknowledge their acceptance of risks and obligations by signing a form at the commencement of each walk.

Leaders and participants on club trips alike are volunteers and there is not the same relationship between them as between a guide and a paying client on a commercial trip.

Responsibility for assessment of leadership capability

It is the responsibility of the Walks Secretary to assess whether a club member has the skills and personal qualities to be able to lead a club walk.

In making this judgement, the Walks Secretary may choose to consult with other members of the committee, current club leaders, members who have walked with the prospective leaders, or members of other clubs and organisations.

Registration

The registration survey form is designed to document the skills and experience of new leaders and one should be filled out for each person involved. This will normally be done jointly between the Walks Secretary and the new leader.

Requirements for registration

Club membership

A leader of a Canberra Bushwalking Club trip must be a member of the club.

Understanding of club practices

Leaders are to have read the Guidelines for Leaders so that they understand what is expected of them in terms of responsibilities and procedures.

Bushwalking skills

A leader should have a measure of navigation skills appropriate to the type of walk he/she leads. Where the walk is off-track, the leader should have at least a basic competency in the use of map and compass. Where the walk is in a remote area this competency should be at a high level. It is also desirable for a leader going off track to have some GPS competence, especially being able to locate his/her position on a map and being able to set and navigate to a waypoint.

Leaders should have an awareness of the participant abilities and gear needed for the walk they are leading and should be able to screen and provide appropriate advice to prospective participants. They should have an understanding of potential hazards and be able to help participants to manage these.

First aid

A current first aid certificate is not required but is desirable.

Personal qualities

A leader should have suitable personal qualities – understanding of people, an ability to handle a crisis, flexibility, and good judgement. These may be particularly difficult to judge in the absence of a situation in which they are tested. However, if the Walks Secretary is aware of reports calling these qualities into question he or she may wish to exercise caution in allowing the person to lead club walks.

Co-leading

Where a prospective leader seems to possess appropriate skills and qualities to lead a walk, the Walks Secretary should normally arrange for that person to commence as co-leader along with a person who has more leadership experience. This arrangement allows:

- the more experienced leader to provide guidance where appropriate, or to take over in an emergency;
- for less pressure on leaders who are not yet fully confident;
- for potential party members to be assured that they are not totally reliant on a novice; and
- the Walks Secretary to be given directly relevant information about the new leader's capabilities.

The co-leading arrangement may endure for one or more walks, until the Walks Secretary and the new leader are confident in his/her readiness to lead alone.

Co-leading may be waived for persons with extensive experience as a leader for other clubs.

Maintenance of register

The Walks Secretary is to retain the survey forms and maintain a list of registered leaders.

Once on the register a leader is not required to renew or reapply for registration.

Leaders may submit a new survey form, or update their information, if they believe their skills and capabilities have subsequently changed.

Acceptance of walks from registered leaders

Once a leader is registered, the Walks Secretary would normally accept walks submitted by the leader for the program. However, the Walks Secretary may at his or her discretion query the appropriateness of a proposed walk with the leader, or decline to accept the walk from the leader, if:

- the leader has not led for a considerable time and there is reasonable doubt concerning the leader's fitness or continuing competence to lead the trip;
- the difficulty of a proposed trip is significantly greater than the trip(s) on the basis of which the person was accepted as a leader; or
- incidents have arisen on a previous trip or trips which seriously call into question the leader's competence or personal suitability.

The Walks Secretary may consult with other members of the committee, or other club members on a confidential basis, if considering refusing to accept a proposed walk from a leader.

Removal from register

A leader will be removed from the register:

- on request of the leader;
- on ceasing to be a member of the club; or
- where incidents have arisen on a previous trip or trips which seriously call into question the leader's competence or personal suitability and the committee believes the person should not be permitted to lead any club walk in future.

As with all other decisions of a club officer or the committee, a decision to remove a leader from the register may be referred to a general meeting for a final decision.