



Department of  
**Education**

## **BUSHWALKING**

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## BUSHWALKING

**This document contains specific requirements related to bushwalking and must be read in conjunction with *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures*.**

### 1. BACKGROUND

Students participate in bushwalking as a short (hour or two) walk, a day walk, long or multi day walk, outdoor education expedition, or as part of an overnight hike. Bushwalking can occur in a diverse range of environments/natural areas including but not limited to, coastal, plains, forest, arid or outback, tropical, mountain or alpine.

Separate advice provided in the *Camping* activity specific document must be consulted if this activity is to be included as a part of the bushwalking program.

### DEFINITIONS

#### ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR

Assists the qualified supervisor and or Department teacher-in-charge. May or may not have relevant qualification or experience.

#### BUSHWALKING

Walking in natural areas.

#### DAY WALK

A walking excursion, usually on defined tracks, normally in a natural setting and for the duration of a day or part thereof.

#### OVERNIGHT AND MULTI-DAY WALK

A walk that incorporates an overnight stay.

#### QUALIFIED SUPERVISOR

Has the required qualifications, skill, experience and technical knowledge to instruct the activity.

#### REMOTE OR ISOLATED AREAS

Includes any location where medical emergency assistance is more than one hour away by road and/or air.

#### SUPERVISORY TEAM

A pair or group of people who have a supervisory role at the activity.

#### TEACHER-IN-CHARGE

The member of the teaching staff who is authorised by the Department of Education to manage a school activity.

## 2. ENVIRONMENT

The suitability of an activity location is determined after considering the:

- skills, experience and capacity of each student, the planned activities and supervision required;
- objective dangers (e.g. river crossings, exposed areas, slippery rocks, cliff and rock faces); and
- level of access to paths, roads and communication.

Many walking trails have been graded according to the *Australian Walking Track Grading System*, a voluntary industry standard:

<b>Grade of walk</b>	<b>Gradient</b>	<b>Quality of path</b>	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Experience required</b>
<b>1</b>	Flat	Well-formed track. Universal accessibility.	< 5km	None
<b>2</b>	Gentle hills	Formed track	< 10km	None
<b>3</b>	Short steep hills	Formed track, some obstacles	< 20km	Some. Moderate level of fitness.
<b>4</b>	Very steep sections	Rough track, many obstacles	N/A	Experienced
<b>5</b>	Very steep and difficult	Rough, unformed track	N/A	Very experienced with specialist skills including navigation and emergency first aid.

School groups using the Bibbulmun Track or Cape to Cape Track (or other such areas) should consult the *Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)* regarding fire bans, smoke, park closure alerts and updates that may affect their proposed activity.

When assessing the suitability of a location, access to resources, services and facilities also need to be considered (e.g. toilets, water, external communication and assistance).

Students must only be exposed to environments or locations that have been assessed and deemed appropriate by the Department teacher-in-charge for the students' capacity, skills and experience.

Research should be conducted around desired locations well in advance to ensure sites are suitable for group size and competency levels.

Many sites have access restrictions. Written permission must be gained from the relevant authority (Parks and Wildlife Services, regional office, local land management body, lease holders or private property owner). These organisations/owners can also be consulted for information about:

- route planning (including evacuation);
- alternative routes in the event of restricted access;
- shelter, toilets, drinking water (etc.) availability at the location/venue; and
- procedures to follow when there is a risk of bad weather, storms, bushfires and/or other changes to the environment.

### **Weather considerations**

Weather conditions need to be assessed and monitored in the days leading up to the activity, on the day of the activity and throughout the activity, to assess conditions and comply with fire ban regulations. The supervisory team may need to modify, relocate or cancel the activity at any time. Check the [Bureau of Meteorology](#) for up to date conditions and weather warnings.

Bushwalking and bushcraft activities are not to be undertaken in any area where high alert weather conditions are forecast and or any area where the fire danger rating is very high or above. Refer to [Department of Fire and Emergency Services](#) and/or [EmergencyWA](#) for fire alerts or fire danger ratings or contact the local shire as part of an environmental check.

If bushwalking or camping during the fire restriction season, plan a route that allows for evacuation and confirm that the group has access to up to date fire information via radio, mobile or satellite phones providing bulletins from a manned base.

### **Guidance**

*The qualified supervisor should have first-hand knowledge of the location. Other sources of information may include:*

- *the venue manager;*
- *Western Australian Police;*
- *the local ranger, lease holder, private property owner or land manager;*
- *Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions;*
- *experienced bushwalkers and rogainers;*
- *orienteeing or rogaining clubs or associations;*
- *other schools which have conducted similar activities at that location;*
- *Outdoors WA; or*
- *external providers.*

*Possession of a map does not confer the right of entry to private property on some public reserves. Prior permission to use an area should always be obtained.*

*A member of the supervisory team should survey the area to update the map, where necessary.*

*Minimal impact practices are observed at all times, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas as some walking areas cannot sustain frequent usage by groups (dunes, caves).*

*The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions consider school activities as non-commercial events and requires the relevant application form ([Non-commercial Government organisations application form \(including state schools\)](#)) to be submitted and approved by the relevant*

*Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions district office.*

*Groups using the Bibbulmun Track, and the Cape to Cape Track will need to complete a notification of intent form. See the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and for trail updates, maps and conditions.*

*A fire danger rating of Very High or above may trigger the closure of DBCA trails and facilities.*

*Fires can only be lit in approved areas or in existing fireplaces. Fuel stoves are used wherever possible (for further information about stoves and fires, refer to Camping).*

*For overnight or multi-day walks, the selection of venues should also take into account:*

- *campsite/shelter availability;*
- *access to facilities;*
- *weather conditions;*
- *emergency procedures;*
- *access to communication;*
- *age, fitness and medical condition of the students;*
- *requirements of Camping for overnight stays; and*
- *advice from local rangers, land managers and other sources.*

*It is recommended that when available, serviced camp sites should be used for students who are inexperienced at camping.*

### 3. CAPACITY OF STUDENTS

Prior to commencing the program, the Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that each student has the capacity to participate safely.

Students may require additional skills if they are to participate safely in navigating, hiking, camping, and swimming activities. See the relevant activity specific document for further information, qualifications and supervision requirements that may apply.

Alternative, modified or adjusted activities should be provided for students who have limited capacity to participate.

Students with an impairment may participate in desired activities provided adequate safety and control measures are implemented. Specific consideration is given to:

- the type and level of impairment;
- location and access; and
- curriculum adjustments so that the student can access the curriculum activity on the same basis as their peers.

Students who have a medical condition that may impact on their safety must be cleared by a medical practitioner before they can participate.

The Department teacher-in-charge must be aware of health care maintenance and/or any intensive health care needs of students, particularly allergic reactions to stings or bites. Protective clothing should be considered for students who are susceptible.

A re-assessment of students' capacity is undertaken if any circumstances surrounding the activity change. This includes any change in the condition of the environment, their medical fitness, or their capacity to undertake the activity.

#### 4. STUDENT HEALTH CARE

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

#### 5. ACTIVITIES

The full range of proposed activities (e.g. bushwalking, camping, swimming, cycling etc.) is assessed to determine whether students have the required skills to safely participate.

Qualifications and supervision requirements for those various activities apply (refer to the relevant activity specific document).

Route planning takes into account the availability of shelter, adequate and safe water supplies, and an escape route.

The speed and strength of the weakest member of the group is taken into consideration at all times. The group must be constantly monitored for fatigue and dehydration.

Extra time should be allocated at the beginning of the walk for the adjustment of clothing, footwear and backpacks.

River crossings can be extremely hazardous. Groups must not attempt a river crossing if the location or other elements are considered to be dangerous (e.g. during periods of flooding; where the depth, speed, bottom load or ability of the group is unknown; or in an estuarine crocodile habitat). Where possible, planned routes should avoid river crossings that require students to enter the water.

**Guidance****River crossings**

*River and creek crossings require careful planning and assessment of a number of factors on the day. The decision to cross, and the way in which the crossing might be made, is determined after consideration of:*

- *access points;*
- *the nature of the river bottom;*
- *the depth and current;*
- *the energy, capacity and swimming ability of group members;*
- *weather;*
- *obstructions/obstacles; and*
- *the time of day.*

*Rivers can be crossed using a bridge, various craft, rafts and/or Tyrolean Traverses (using a fixed line to cross from one point to another). Tyrolean Traverses should only be attempted if a supervisor is a qualified supervisor with required knowledge and experience in this activity.*

*The following strategies should be considered when assisting students as they cross a river or creek. Consideration should include:*

- *line astern (single file), wedge formation, circle of support, or one person with support (e.g. stick or paddle);*
- *the use of stronger participants to carry backpacks and other equipment;*
- *the placement of stronger participants at strategic points across the river;*
- *the placement of upstream spotters for hazards floating downstream;*
- *downstream back-ups with a rope to aid distressed students;*
- *buddying less able students with those who are more capable (in groups of two or three);*
- *establishing a safety rope; and/or*
- *finding another crossing.*

## 6. EQUIPMENT

All equipment must be checked by the qualified supervisor to confirm that it is appropriate for the activity, safe and in working order.

**Guidance**

*For further information, refer to*

*Australian Adventure Activity Good Practice Guide: Bushwalking.*

*If carrying backpacks, equipment may need to be shared amongst the group to manage weight limits. As part of the briefing for an extended bushwalk, students should be instructed how to organise belongings in their back pack so that their centre of gravity and comfort is not affected.*

Prior to the commencement of the activity, the Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that participants have easy access to the following items:

- Highly visible clothing that's appropriate in bush settings and potential weather conditions, with a particular emphasis on protection from sun, wind, rain, cold and heat conditions (woollen or thermal synthetic garments provide more warmth in cold or wet conditions. Shorts are better than long trousers for bushwalking, except in off-trail, scratchy bush).
- A broad rimmed or Legionnaire style hat.
- A backpack (if necessary) that ideally, does not exceed one quarter of the body weight of students, and one third of the body weight of adults.
- A broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen, applied as per manufacturer's instructions.

- Insect repellent.
- Safe, sturdy footwear that is appropriate for the duration of the activity (e.g. walking shoes, joggers or sandshoes; thongs, sandals and clogs are not appropriate).
- Sufficient drinking water for the duration of the activity (and/or supplied at control points if possible).
- A watch or alternative time telling device.
- A waterproof map of the planned route or GPS coordinates.
- An emergency whistle and/or torch, as relevant.

*Supervisors require:*

- a waterproof copy of the route plan, map and compass;
- a copy of the risk management and emergency response plans;
- emergency communication equipment as appropriate to the location, such as a mobile or satellite phone, radio, Emergency Position Indicator Radio Beacon (EPIRB) or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) and details of the nearest landline numbers;
- readily accessible emergency equipment (e.g. whistle, torch, fire-lighting equipment);
- readily accessible first aid equipment (preferably carried by the supervisor at the rear of the group). The first aid kit must include items appropriate to the type of training, location, duration, size and needs of the group. For larger groups, two kits may need to be carried;
- knowledge of where shelter, toilets, drinking water etc. might be found at the location; and
- tools for proper waste disposal (e.g. a trowel).

First aid equipment must be readily accessible. It must include items appropriate to the activity, environment, size and needs of the party and duration of the activity. First aid equipment should be carried by a supervisor, preferably at the rear of the group.

Students should be encouraged to wear brightly coloured, highly visible clothing that suits the weather conditions.

Mobile phones must be available for use in an emergency situation (with allowance made for the fact that they do not operate in all localities). Where there is no mobile phone coverage, UHF radios should be used. A satellite phone is an alternative option.

**Guidance**

*For extended/overnight walks, the following recommended items include:*

- a map, a route plan, whistles and compasses (students should know how to use these items);
- a comfortable, well-fitting backpack;
- a warm sleeping bag appropriate for the conditions, and a sleeping mat;
- a suitable hiking tent and waterproof ground sheet;
- fire starting equipment, cooking and eating utensils;
- food, including supplementary energy food for emergencies;
- water - at least two litres per person per day;
- a stove with fuel (in some areas);
- a waterproof pack-liner (e.g. a strong garbage bag);
- a mirror (for signalling purposes if lost);
- a torch with spare batteries and globe;
- a plastic bag for carrying rubbish;
- a small plastic trowel for burying faeces;
- a waterproof rain jacket with a hood, a change of clothes in a waterproof bag, socks, gloves; and
- a toiletry bag.

Reference: Specific Sport and Physical Activity Guidelines, 2020.



## 7. THE SUPERVISORY TEAM

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

## 8. EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

## 9. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPETENCIES

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in navigation and bushcraft, and have the appropriate experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during bushwalking activities.

If undertaking an extended overnight and multi-day walk, all members of the supervisory team must:

- be experienced and competent bushwalkers;
- have recent and recorded experience in camping;
- be proficient in the use of maps and compasses; and
- have knowledge of search, rescue and emergency procedures.

Supervisors may maintain evidence of their qualifications and experience in bushwalking activities through the use of a log book, or similar.

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for mandated:

- first aid qualifications; and
- evidence requirements for all qualifications and competencies.

*Minimum qualifications and/or formal training accreditations:*

A qualified supervisor must hold a current relevant first aid certificate including current cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) accreditation. In the case where the group is in an isolated or remote area, a member of the supervisory team must have the appropriate first aid qualifications for the location (Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures*). Remote or isolated areas may include any location where medical emergency assistance might be more than one hour away, by road and/or air.

Refer to the *Swimming and Water Based Activities* document for qualifications and supervision requirements that apply if the students will be going into water, or if water is likely to be an inherent risk.

Refer to the *Camping* activity document for qualifications and supervision requirements that apply if students will be camping overnight.

*Skills and experience*

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team:

- has experience in the activity at the level being offered to students;
- has the relevant qualifications;
- has current First Aid and CPR qualifications; and
- understands the emergency responses and supervision responsibilities.

All members of the supervisory team must have skills, personal experience in the particular activity and current knowledge of the location to be used, as well as knowledge of:

- common injuries associated with this activity; and
- first aid experience in dealing with those injuries.

## 10. MINIMUM LEVEL OF SUPERVISION

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that the supervisory team members possess skills in the relevant activities and have the appropriate experience, knowledge and skills to identify and manage potential risks at any stage during the activities.

Supervisory requirements must take into consideration the:

- purpose of the activity;
- age, capacity, experience and skills of each student;
- qualifications, capacity and experience of the supervisor(s);
- types of activities to be undertaken;
- students' medical conditions or disabilities;
- characteristics of the route;
- location and nature of the environment (e.g. local or remote, school, parkland, unfamiliar bushland); and
- weather conditions.

Greater supervision must be provided for beginners, primary aged or less able students who are participating in activities off school grounds.

Students not directly involved in activities must be supervised.

Inexperienced students should work in pairs or small groups of greater ability.

Different levels of supervision are required for those activities:

- requiring an overnight stay; or
- undertaken in controlled and uncontrolled environments.

The group size is determined after considering route characteristics, land manager restrictions and environmental factors.

Students must be within the line of sight of the qualified supervisor at all times. If the activity goes outside of this line of sight, additional supervisors are required to maintain adequate supervision.

## DAY WALKS (OFF SCHOOL SITE GRADE 1)

### Kindergarten

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 20 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 10 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

### Pre-primary - Year 3

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 11 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

### Year 4 - 6

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 11 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

### Year 7 - 12

Recommended minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof.

## DAY WALKS (OFF SCHOOL SITE GRADE 2 - 3)

### Kindergarten - Year 3

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

### Year 4 - 6

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 11 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

### Year 7 - 12

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 11 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

## OVERNIGHT/MULTIDAY WALKS

### Kindergarten - Year 6

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

### Year 7 - 12

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one supervisor for every 11 students or part thereof (including the qualified supervisor).

**BUSHWALKS IN FRAGILE, UNTRACKED, PHYSICALLY DEMANDING, REMOTE OR ISOLATED ENVIRONMENTS (GRADE 4+)**

Bushwalks in these areas require a higher level of planning, student preparation, and staff supervision. The minimum level of supervision is:

**Kindergarten - Year 6**

- This activity is not recommended for students in this age group.

**Year 7 - 12**

Must have a minimum of two supervisors at all times:

- one qualified supervisor for every 22 students or part thereof; and
- one experienced supervisor for every 8 students or part thereof (inclusive of the qualified supervisor).

The table below illustrates the supervision requirements for common group sizes. Groups may be larger than those indicated here but must remain within the prescribed supervision ratios and any limits set out earlier in this document.

<b>Bushwalking type</b>	<b>Year level</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Qualified supervisor</b>	<b>Assistant supervisor</b>	<b>Total supervisory team</b>
<b>Day walks</b> (off school site: Grade 1)	<b>K</b>	1 - 20	1	1	2
	<b>P - 3</b>	1 - 22	1	1	2
		23 - 33	2	1	3
	<b>4 - 6</b>	1 - 22	1	1	2
		23 - 33	2	1	3
	<b>7 - 12</b>	1 - 22	1	0	1
23 - 44		2	0	2	
<b>Day walks</b> (off school site: Grades 2 - 3)	<b>K - 3</b>	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 22	1	2	3
		23 - 24	2	1	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4
	<b>4 - 6</b>	1 - 22	1	1	2
		23 - 33	2	1	3
	<b>7 - 12</b>	1 - 22	1	1	2
		23 - 33	2	1	3
<b>Overnight/ Multiday walks</b>	<b>K - 6</b>	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 22	1	2	3
		23 - 24	2	1	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4
	<b>7 - 12</b>	1 - 22	1	1	2
		23 - 33	2	1	3
<b>Bushwalks in fragile, untracked, physically demanding, remote or isolated environments</b> (Grade 4+)	<b>K - 3</b>	Not Recommended			
	<b>4 - 6</b>				
	<b>7 - 12</b>	1 - 16	1	1	2
		17 - 22	1	2	3
		23 - 24	2	1	3
		25 - 32	2	2	4

### **Bushwalks in fragile, untracked, physically demanding, remote or isolated environments**

In such environments, participants must be organised into subgroups of up to eight (8) students with at least one supervisor.

A qualified supervisor should be with the student group at the front; a strong or experienced walker should remain at the rear of the group to provide supervision and support for slower walkers.

The Department teacher-in-charge for the whole group should make regular checks on group numbers and confirm that contact between all supervisors is maintained.

The skills and experience of the supervisors and contingency plans for this strategy must be documented within the risk management plan (this information may be provided to parents, guardians or carers beforehand).

Except in emergency situations, the group should stay together unless the teaching of a particular skill requires the group to be split. In this case, the required level of supervision of all students must be maintained.

### **Guidance**

*It is recommended for bushwalks in fragile, untracked, physically demanding, remote or isolated environments, an additional qualified or experienced supervisor should be available to support one or more of the subgroups.*

*If land managers or government agencies stipulate maximum numbers of participants, schools must adhere to these requirements.*

### **Overnight stays**

Refer to the *Camping* activity specific document for further requirements for overnight stays.

## **11. SUPERVISION STRATEGIES**

The Department teacher-in-charge must establish supervision strategies to confirm that the safety and wellbeing of students is maintained at all times.

Supervision strategies must address the circumstance when students are not in clear view of the supervisors.

For bushwalking, it is recommended that:

- the walking pace be restricted to accommodate the slowest member of the group;
- all participants maintain a line of sight with the person in front and behind them. If the person behind them is not visible, they slow down or stop to allow that person to catch up. They also advise the person in front that they are stopping or slowing down;
- no participant leaves the group for any reason (including comfort stops) without advising the lead or tail end supervisor;
- supervisors conduct regular head counts of the group, particularly at track junctions and/or in difficult conditions;
- a pre-designated distance is kept between the front and back supervisor; and
- pre-determined stops are arranged en route.

If other schools or groups are using the same venue, potential risks must be identified, and supervisory strategies put in place to deal with the nature and number of those groups, and any risks that might arise from that situation.

**Guidance**

*It is recommended that:*

- *a supervisor with a current first aid qualification travels at the rear of the group;*
- *a buddy system is established so that students can monitor and check the safety and wellbeing of their partner;*
- *a regular head count of all participants is conducted;*
- *rules are established for all students to remain in close proximity to supervisors (the distance can vary in accordance with student capacity, experience, the terrain and the weather);*
- *the group will be constantly monitored for fatigue and hydration;*
- *a whip system of travel should be put in place (e.g. a lead supervisor who is aware of the planned route and is able to direct the group to scheduled stops and a tail supervisor are designated, and all walkers are to remain in sight of each other);*
- *a buddy system will be established so that students can monitor and check the safety and wellbeing of a partner; and*
- *lost buddy procedures are outlined to all participants.*

## 12. IDENTIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

In bushland settings, students should always be clearly visible.

The Department teacher-in-charge must employ systems for identifying students that may include the wearing of school shirts, uniforms, school hats, other hats, vests, sashes, armbands, name tags and/or stickers.

Each identification system may be used in combination with others.

Supervisors should carry brightly coloured equipment and/or wear coloured clothing that promotes visibility.

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

## 13. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

## 14. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

## 15. EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.

## 16. BRIEFING STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS

The Department teacher-in-charge must confirm that all participants are briefed about:

- the educational purpose and the cooperative nature of the activity;
- the activity itinerary;
- required skills appropriate to the activity;
- participants' roles and responsibilities, including standards of acceptable behaviour and activity rules;
- the role and location of supervisors;
- the system for identifying students and supervisors;
- food and water requirements;
- procedures that will be followed if members of the party are overdue, or become lost or separated from the group;
- potential hazards and safety procedures appropriate to the activity and venue;
- buddy practices and lost buddy procedures;
- health and hygiene protocols;
- areas demarcated and identified specifically for student groups;
- communication strategies that will be used throughout the activity, including a signal to gain the attention of the whole group, and a signal to be used if assistance is required;
- emergency and evacuation procedures, signals and location of emergency equipment;
- appropriate clothing for the activity and weather conditions, including thermal and sun protection;
- minimal impact principles for that location (see *Leave No Trace* principles);
- aspects of the environment and expected weather conditions (if appropriate); and
- the route to be followed including pre-determined stops and/or meeting points along the way (if applicable).

Special information sessions must be arranged for students absent from preparatory briefings.

### **Guidance**

*Supervisors are briefed about the management of dehydration, hyperthermia, hypothermia and other relevant factors (e.g. geographical position, weather patterns etc.).*

*For extended walks that involve an overnight hike, all participants are briefed about:*

- *the use of camping equipment (see Camping);*
- *food preparation;*
- *personal hygiene in the bush;*
- *navigating and route planning;*
- *safety practices;*
- *first aid;*
- *care of the environment; and*
- *group communication skills.*

## 17. INFORMED CONSENT

Refer to *Appendix A: General Requirements in the Recreation and Outdoor Education Activities for Public Schools Procedures* for further requirements.



## **APPENDIX 1: IN THE EVENT OF SEPARATION INFORMATION FOR THE SUPERVISORY TEAM**

### **If the whole group is lost**

If the group is lost, the students must remain together in one place. One supervisor takes responsibility for maintaining morale, while the Department teacher-in-charge or a qualified supervisor attempts to locate the group's position. Possible strategies include:

- using cross-bearings;
- retracing the route to the last known bearing;
- if on a track, clearly marking a set position before walking approximately a kilometre in either direction; or
- if not on a track, walking in a fixed direction and keeping a written record of all bearings.

The qualified supervisor leading the group marks the route by breaking twigs or building rock cairns, and avoids moving to lower ground.

A cut-off time is set. At this time, steps will be taken to notify outside support services and initiate the communications system, as per the *Emergency Response* plan for the activity.

### **If the whole group remains lost**

- Where the group remains unclear about its position, the Department teacher-in-charge or qualified supervisor locates a sheltered campsite and sets up camp.
- The group attempts to attract attention using known forms of distress signals such as SOS signals, whistle blasts, flashing mirrors or torches, or by lighting a smoky fire by day and/or a bright fire at night.
- The group listens for voices, shouts, and/or whistles.
- Water, food and energy are conserved.

### **If an individual group or sub-group becomes lost**

- Stop and establish a base.
- Question the group as to who is missing, how long they have been missing, what their intentions might have been, and what equipment they have with them. Use this information to assess what might have happened and how large an area might have to be searched based on the students' skills and possible actions they may take.
- Send two lookouts (including one supervisor) to the nearest prominent high point with instructions on using caution and communication signals.
- Confirm that the two lookouts have food and water.
- Send a group of three (including, and under the direction of, another supervisor) to:
  - retrace steps to the point where the missing person/s was last seen;
  - look for clues of other groups along the way;
  - signal, call and listen for replies;
  - leave a note at the point last seen (instructing the lost party to remain where they are, should they return); and
  - check other possible points they might have gone to.
- This group is given a time limit for reporting back to the Department teacher-in-charge.
- Should resources and other factors permit, the base camp and lookout are maintained, lookouts relieved, and efforts made to be as visible and observant as possible.

At this point, a large number of variables are considered, depending on the:

- time of day;
- abilities and maturity of the students;
- equipment and food carried by the students;
- any relevant medical/psychological information;
- information collected by gathering evidence from the retracing party and other group members;
- the terrain; and
- weather.

Where specific situations have the potential to worsen, the Department teacher-in-charge reviews the cut-off time at which steps will be taken to notify outside support services and initiate the communications system.

All relevant information is gathered, and the emergency response plan to call in outside help is set in motion - whether that be the immediate notification of the police, Department site manager or principal, office of the external provider (which might have its own procedures to follow), or some other previously documented strategy.

The implementation of the emergency response plan is delayed only if the supervisory team is confident that no imminent danger exists and that there is a reasonable expectation that the students will soon be found.

### **ADVICE FOR INDIVIDUAL GROUP MEMBERS**

Prior to the bushwalking activity, students should be made aware of the following procedures that will be followed should they and/or others become lost, or separated from the group.

They need to:

- stop, as continuing to walk will make it more difficult for searchers to locate them;
- try to attract attention of the group by blowing their whistle, or shouting;
- listen for a reply or signals from the rest of the walking group and/or searchers;
- make themselves comfortable in a sheltered area; and
- mark their position with brightly-coloured articles or broken branches placed in a conspicuous location.