

BRINDABELLA BUSHWALKING CLUB INCORPORATED GUIDELINES FOR LEADERS - UPDATED October 2023

Related documents and information (available on the BBC Website)

The BBC website has details of Walk Gradings and Walk Descriptions, the Walk Report form and the Incident Report form.

Check out the Car Shuffle calculator on the Resources for Members page and also the Links Page for links to further information on other websites, including “The Bushwalking Manual” and local emergency and advisory services.

Further Information

Further copies and information on these notes can be obtained from the Walks Officer or the Training & Development Officer (see the current Walks and Social Program for contact details).

Leading for BBC

The Club wishes to encourage new leaders. The best place to start is to go on lots of walks, get a feel for how the walks grading works and observe other leaders. The Club offers navigation and first aid training (details are advised by email). An experienced leader may let you practice navigation under their guidance. The Club also aims to have an experienced leader accompany you on the first walks that you lead.

Insurance in relation to leadership and the application of first aid

1 From the Bushwalking Australia website: “Sometimes, due to unfavourable weather or unforeseen circumstances an accident may occur, and if a person, whether a member of the general public or a club member, suffers an injury or damage to their property and they feel that this is the fault of the club or its members, they may take legal action against the club or the members involved.” BBC carries Public Liability Insurance to protect the Club, including office bearers, walks leaders and members.

2 “Nearly all Australian states and territories (including the ACT and NSW) have in place good Samaritan legislation to ensure that people who step forward to provide emergency medical assistance are not held legally liable for their actions provided they act in good faith” - see <https://emergencylaw.wordpress.com/2015/03/27/good-samaritan-legislation-and-scope-of-practice/>

The Programming Process

1 BBC produces a six-monthly ‘Walks and Social Program’ for the first and second half of the year. This process is managed by the Walks Officer with the help of the Walks Sub-Committee. A couple of months before the end of the current program, an email is sent out requesting leaders, and potential leaders, to submit proposals for walks and social activities for the next 6-month period, including possible dates. You need to provide walks descriptions in the correct format (see Walk Gradings and Walk Descriptions on the website) – the Walks Sub-Committee can help if needed. A Walks Program meeting is held and the program is put together with a bit of negotiation with leaders over dates to get a good balance of walks. **When the new program is released, make sure you check the dates of your walks and put them in your personal calendar.**

2 Short notice walks. Any leader can put a walk on at short notice with the concurrence of the Walks Officer, provided it doesn't coincide with any programmed walk (however, a different grade might be approved). This may be for a special occasion (e.g. to a waterfall after heavy rain) or in lieu of a programmed walk that was cancelled because of weather (e.g. 40 degrees on Sunday, but 20 degrees on Monday).

Preparation

1 Plan your walk. Check your map and identify the proposed route. For harder off-track walks, it is useful to pencil in the route and add expected times and compass bearings for key points (way points). Maps of popular areas are available on loan from the Walks Officer and can also be found at <https://maps.six.nsw.gov.au>. The BBC website has guidance on how to use this site. A reconnoitre is strongly recommended. Contact the Walks Officer if you need help with this.

2 Permissions. Obtain all necessary permissions, e.g., to cross private property. Check with the Walks Officer who may be able to provide you with a contact name if the walk has been held previously

3 Emergencies. Study the **Emergencies** section below. Carry a torch, waterproof matches, and a good first aid kit. Where practicable, plan for a quick way back to the cars or to shelter if the weather deteriorates or the party is unexpectedly slow. Download the **Emergency Plus App** onto your phone and record other emergency numbers in your phone or at hand. BBC owns two **Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs)** which are available to leaders. They are for use in life-threatening situations or serious medical emergencies in areas where there may be no phone coverage. Phone the Walks Officer to book one for your walk.

4 Weather. Note the weather forecast on the morning of the walk. Walks **must** be cancelled if a day of **catastrophic fire danger** has been declared. Leaders may also cancel walks during total fire ban periods or if severe thunderstorms or heavy rain are forecast.

5 Road and reserve closures. Check the relevant websites for notices about closures of roads, nature reserves and national parks or other advice. Further contacts for the ACT are: **Namadgi Visitor Centre 6237 5307** 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4:30pm Sat-Sun and public holidays; **Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre 6207 7921** 9am-5pm daily.

6 Change of destination. If it is necessary to substantially change the programmed walk, e.g., because of floods, fires or road closures, send details of the revised walk to all members a few days beforehand (if you are not authorised, the Walks Officer can do this). If it is a last-minute change, contact a BBC Emergency Officer to let them know. Note the change clearly on the Walk Report form.

7 GPS receivers. A GPS receiver is now a common piece of bushwalking gear, relatively cheap, getting smaller and becoming more "user friendly". When used properly they can pinpoint your position on a map to within 10 metres. Keeping a "way-point" log of significant points along your route is very useful in an emergency. GPS receivers are very handy if you think you are lost. The BBC Training Officer can organise instruction if necessary.

8 Navigation apps. Some leaders and walkers now use mobile phone apps like BackCountry Navigator.

9 Assistant leaders. The Club needs more leaders. Experienced leaders can help train potential leaders by allowing an assistant to navigate. Plan the walk with the assistant at least a day before the walk is scheduled. Let the assistant leader lead. As the leader, you should maintain overall control of the walk.

10 Safeguarding Children and Young People. Brindabella Bushwalking Club adheres to the Bushwalking NSW policy, which can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/3zkszhhw>. Advice for leaders and parents can be found on the Home Page of the Club's website.

The day before the walk

Prepare the **Walk Report form**. The form is available on the website. Fill in your description in the box at the top of the form. The easiest way is to find your walk in the BBC 'Walks and Social Program', copy your description and paste it into the box. Then print the form. Ensure you have all the items you will need as a leader – walk report, first aid kit, maps, compass, emergency numbers etc. If a car shuffle will be necessary, plan for it by using the calculator at the Resources for Members page of the website.

At the meeting place

1 Be at least 10-15 minutes early. New members are usually early and appreciate a few words with the leader before the regulars arrive.

2 At the Meeting Point, **talk to new walkers** to ascertain their walking experience, fitness, medical history. Make sure they understand the risk waiver. **Visitors** are to supply a contact phone number. They are allowed to go on a maximum of three walks before becoming members; leaders are to remind them of this.

3 Walkers. As leader, you may exercise a **right not to accept persons** for any reason.

4 Equipment. Check that walkers are adequately clothed and have suitable footwear. Check that they have sufficient food and water.

5 Modification or Cancellation. The leader may cancel, abort or modify, any walk either before or during the walk.

6 Minimum number. The minimum number of people on a BBC walk is four. If fewer than four people are available for a walk, the walk cannot proceed as an official Club activity. The leader may take the walk privately at their own discretion but don't feel pressured to do this.

7 Signing on. Make sure all walkers put their details on the Walk Report form and sign. Point out any additional hazards that may be encountered

8 Cars. Encourage and organise car sharing to reduce the number of cars. Advise all drivers of the route and starting point of the walk. Count cars and appoint a tail where there are several cars. Advise against travelling in convoy and ask that cars leave sufficient room for other traffic to overtake. Arrange waiting points if the route is difficult.

9 Start time. Try to leave the meeting place within a few minutes of the published start time.

At the starting point of the walk

1 Signing on. Make sure all walkers have put their names on the Walk Report form. Leave the form in your car but you are advised not to display it in case it invites a break-in. You can take a photo of the front page with your phone so that you have a list of walkers with you.

2 Introduction. Ask walkers to form a circle and introduce themselves by first name. Describe the walk briefly. Count the number in the party and check that the Walk Report form agrees.

3 Back marker. Depending on the size of the party and the nature of the walk, consider asking for a reliable volunteer to act as a back marker (tail).

On the walk

1 Leaders must ensure that the **Rules for Walkers** set out in the 'Walks and Social Program' (and also displayed on the Club's website) are observed, but without conveying a sense of regimentation.

2 Maintain contact with the tail and the head of the party and regularly check on the condition of walkers.

3 Divided track. If you are following a track and it divides, or you leave the track for an unmarked route through the bush, wait until all the party have caught up before you change direction.

4 Check numbers of walkers after each stop before proceeding.

5 Note times at key points. These are useful for future reference and can prove invaluable for coping with unexpected problems.

6 Breaks. It is usual to stop for morning tea within an hour of starting the walk or between about 10.00 and 10.45 (with a break of about 20 minutes). The lunch stop should start between about 12.00 and 1.00 (with a break of about 30-40 minutes).

7 Be flexible. If some members are not coping with the walk and slowing down the party, be prepared to modify the walk, provide more rests, etc. If others have had to wait for a slow walker, make sure they wait a bit longer so the slow walker can rest and have time for a drink or snack. If someone is distressed, be prepared to abandon the walk and return to the cars. Do not allow any person to return alone.

At the end of the walk

1 Walkers finishing. Do not leave until all walkers have returned. Encourage walkers to have a cup of tea or coffee to help ensure drivers are rested before the drive home. It is a nice touch for leaders to bring some biscuits or cake to share (home-baked or commercial).

2 Ensure that all cars get away from the parking area and that all drivers can find their way back to the meeting point.

3 If any incidents have occurred which may cause the authorities to become involved, or the walk has been so delayed that relatives may be worried, contact a BBC Emergency Officer with details as soon as possible.

4 Complete the Walk Report form and return it promptly to the Walks Officer. Either scan and email, or post. This is important for Club records and insurance purposes. Any comments, including details of any accidents, emergencies or unforeseen problems should be included.

5 Record any injuries or illnesses on an Incident Report form (available on the website) including details of names of injured or ill person(s), time, place, nature of injury, witnesses, etc. If in doubt about the extent of injury/illness, you should complete the form. The form is to be sent promptly to the Walks Officer. Any incident involving a child should be reported immediately to the President and the Walks Officer

6 Return any borrowed Club maps, PLB or other material.

Leading Wednesday walks (Easy/Medium and Medium/Hard)

1 These walks are conducted in cooperation with the Canberra Bushwalking Club and the National Parks Association (see details on the website). There is a BBC coordinator for each set of walks and they determine who will be leading for BBC as part of the six-monthly 'Walks and Social Program'. You may have some walks in mind, but you do not have to provide descriptions in the Program.

2 Closer to the walk date, taking into account other recent Wednesday walks and the weather forecast, decide on the walk you wish to lead and plan the route.

3 A few days before the walk (preferably by Sunday evening, Monday evening at the latest), prepare an email to include: a header with the walk type (e.g. Easy/Medium Wednesday Walk), date and walk name; walk description (including any particular features, difficulties or recommended clothing); distance, climb, BBC level, map); cars (distance, BBC cost per passenger), meeting point and departure time; weather forecast. At the bottom add: **Those doing their first Wednesday walk and also prospective walkers who are not members of the NPA, BBC or CBC clubs must contact the leader to discuss the level of difficulty of the walk.** You can use previous notices sent out by other Wednesday walk leaders as a guide.

4 If you have authorisation, post the email to the Wednesday walks list – otherwise send it to the Walks Officer to post. Check that it goes out to the list – i.e. you should receive the email from [Wed.Walks].

5 You must still prepare the BBC Walk Report form. If you have a long walk description, you may need to condense it somewhat before you copy & paste into the box on the form.

6 Be prepared for more walkers than on a weekend BBC walk. In the past, Easy/Medium walks have had up to 30 participants.

7 Walkers from other clubs do not usually want to have a cup of tea at the end of a walk and will want to drive straight off. Sometimes BBC members will have a quick cuppa.

EMERGENCIES

It is not possible to write a procedure for every situation. The following are recommendations. The leader will need to make judgements at the time, possibly with assistance from other members of the group. Often the group will contain other BBC leaders with relevant experience to assist you.

Who to contact and when

1 BBC Emergency Officer. One of the Club's Emergency Officers should be contacted as soon as possible during an incident or to report it afterwards. Their phone numbers are shown on the front page of the program - try one of these first. They can also be reached at emergency@brindabellabushwalking.org.au

2 Police Assistance on 131 444. This is for incidents which are not life-threatening. If you are not sure if it is an emergency, you are best to contact emergency services as in Point 3 below – they will be able to advise.

3 For life-threatening incidents when you have phone contact: Emergency Plus app (which allows your phone to send your location to emergency services) or 000.

4 For life-threatening incidents when you do not have phone contact, activate a PLB. **Note on PLB use:** If there is a serious injury in a remote locality, the activation of a PLB may be warranted. A life may be in danger. Internal and back injuries may become more complicated. This is a serious alert and emergency status. It will trigger a ground or helicopter search and rescue.

Lost walker

1 Stop. Check your position on the map with a GPS or by checking features.

2 Appoint a deputy, observe the daylight time available. Agree on a time for the search group to return and the action the deputy is to take if the return time is not met (action may include leading the remaining party out and notifying Police Assistance and a BBC Emergency Officer).

3 Retrace the route to the last head count point with at least two other experienced and fit walkers.

4 Discourage all other walkers from starting their own searches.

Immobilising injury

1 Assess the situation and attend to first aid. Depending on the injury, call Police Assistance, Emergency Plus App, or 000. In remote areas with no phone reception, consider activating a PLB. Notify a BBC Emergency Officer.

2 Splitting the group. If the injured walker cannot be moved, and the group cannot wait (getting dark, bad weather), leave at least three experienced people with the injured walker. Do not leave the injured walker unattended. Record the map grid reference for the location of the injured walker. Estimate the time needed for help to arrive. Leave food, water, clothing and equipment for the remaining group if the likely delay warrants it.

3 Seek help. The group walking out should be led by an experienced walker (with compass and map) and should make further contact with emergency services as soon as possible.

Mobile injury

If the injured person is mobile or can be carried and the return can be completed before dark, keep the group together. If not, consider stopping, sheltering and splitting the group. The leader of the seek-help group must contact a **BBC Emergency Officer** as soon as possible.

First aid

Leaders are not required to hold a current first aid certificate. However, first aid courses, which are oriented towards the kinds of emergencies likely to be encountered by bushwalkers, are organised by the Club. Recommended treatments are constantly under review and it is not considered desirable to attempt to set out a summary here. For further information see the Emergency Section of the Bushwalking Manual at <https://bushwalkingmanual.org.au/emergencies/>

Late return from a walk

The leader of a group returning later than expected, and both leaders if the party has been split, must contact a BBC Emergency Officer as soon as possible. The Emergency Officer can then notify those who have made contact to prevent a panic call to the police.