Guidelines for Leaders of Trips Away

So you are considering leading a trip away for BBC club members? Thank you so much. Trips away are greatly enjoyed and appreciated by club members, and while they can be quite an effort to organise, the rewards can be great. Make sure you enjoy yourself in your efforts to provide a wonderful experience for your fellow club members.

Preamble

1. These guidelines are aimed at assisting club members who take on the role of organising and leading multi-day walking trips. They cover trips that are accommodated, either in car-based camping or in formal accommodation, in Australia or overseas, where the walks comprise a series of day walks. The guidelines also apply to pack walks; however they do not cover all the issues that a leader of pack walks will need to consider.

2. The guidelines assume you have chosen a destination and a set of walks.

3. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with BBC Guidelines for Leaders, which cover issues to be considered in leading day walks.

4. Note that these are for the most part guidelines only, aimed to help leaders manage issues that may arise. They do not cover all the aspects of organising a trip away, only those aspects that may require some help.

Participants

1. It is club policy that participants on a multi-day trip away must be BBC club members; this is an extension of the policy that a visitor can attend only 3 walks. You may ask applicants if they are current club members, but it's best check with the membership secretary as well. Some applicants forget to renew their membership.

2. It is good to have an idea of the maximum number of walkers you'd like. If this number is exceeded, keep a waitlist as it is very common for people to withdraw before the trip. When numbers are low, or when people drop out at the last minute and you can't fill the vacancy from a waitlist, you may wish to invite CBC or NPA members to make up numbers. It's a good idea to ask them to join BBC it they are not already members. At the 2025 membership rate of $20 per annum, this is often a minor expense in comparison with the cost of the trip. If you still can't fill the numbers, consider opening it up to members who can't attend the full trip.

3. Can non-walkers, usually accompanying a partner, join a trip? If so, when is it appropriate? This is your decision. However, if spaces are limited and you have a waitlist it may not be appropriate. It's best to give priority to those keen to walk, unless, of course, you think non-walkers will be useful in helping with transport etc. Given that non-walkers will be participating in non-walking club activities, they should also be BBC members.

4. What of joint club trips, for leaders who are members of more than one bushwalking club? Joint club trips have been held in the past and have caused much angst as many people

may miss out. After this, an inter-club decision was made to disallow such trips. However, if you'd like to lead a joint club trip, discuss the matter first with each club's Walks Officer.

5. Don't fill your trip before it is advertised to club members. Everyone should have an equal chance of applying, and advertising a full trip can suggest the trip is private.

6. When advertising the trip, set a "register by" date so there's a date by which you'll know what interest you have. As leader, you can decide who may come and there is no requirement to accept people in the order in which they apply. In making your decision, you may consider the participant's fitness, experience, and ability to contribute to the well-being of the group.

7. Acknowledge applications and tell people when they'll know if they are accepted or not. You may choose to wait until the "register by" date before deciding who may come. Make sure to tell those who didn't make the cut and ask if they'd like to be kept on a waitlist.

8. You may also set a "register after" date, so that you don't have to manage applications earlier than you want to.

9. It's quite likely you won't know some applicants, however, for a successful trip, you need to be confident they will fit in with the group and be of a suitable walking standard and fitness. Your initial trip description should make clear the level of walks. To determine if an applicant is suitable, you may:
    a. Ask them to quote two BBC walks and leaders of recent walks they've participated in.
    b. Ask the Walks Officer or other trip leaders if they have any experience of that person.
    c. Confirm that they understand that we aim to walk as a group, not a loose collection of independent walkers. This is important for the wellbeing of all, especially as the walks will most likely be in unfamiliar territory.
    d. Encourage them to read and be familiar with the clubs "Rules for Walkers", which will be further reinforced prior to commencement of the walk.

10. On receiving an expression of interest or registration for a trip, you may wish to send applicants the relevant guidelines: *Guidelines for Trip Participants.*

11. Set an early date for receipt of deposits. People often drop out at that point, leaving you with a more accurate view of likely numbers.

Accommodation

1. Cabins, guest houses, convention facilities, units.

This is usually a more comfortable but more expensive option for accommodation. Costs can be kept down by sharing rooms or cabins, but not everyone is willing to share a room. While you will aim to keep costs reasonable, some people are willing to pay more for a single room. A range of accommodation options can be helpful.

Cabins and other accommodation will often require an initial deposit then full payment before the trip. It is not unusual for walkers to withdraw at the last minute but still hope for a refund. Hence you need to be very clear up-front what monies will be lost should they withdraw. Even if

you hold a waitlist, not many people can come at short notice. Accommodation can be quite a headache for leaders if a significant up-front deposit is required.

Where common kitchens exist, you may consider organising shared meals versus independent meal preparation. In both cases consider whether facilities are adequate. There will be frustration if 15 people must share one microwave. If meals are catered or shared, ensure you ask people to advise any dietary requirements and set a date by which this must be done. Shared meals foster group togetherness and cut back individual effort in planning but can be an organising headache for the leader.

It has happened in the past that, when a trip was over-subscribed, some members who weren't accepted have booked their own accommodation, expecting to be able to participate in the daily activities. If this happens it will greatly complicate your daily organising efforts, so be firm upfront and tell them they will not be part of the group.

2. Campgrounds, cabins and car-camping. Participants usually make their own bookings hence wear the cost if they cancel. This is less effort for the organiser; however not all members are willing to, or have the equipment, to camp.

3. It is helpful to give walkers, and campers in particular, information about expected temperatures and weather conditions. Those who rarely camp may not be prepared for low over-night temperatures. You need to be sure walkers and campers are fully prepared for adverse weather.

Other matters to consider beforehand

1. It is not unknown for a leader to become incapacitated on a trip away. When this happens, the leader must appoint a fill-in leader to take their place. So it's a good idea, before the trip, to consider who your back-up leader (2IC) will be. Consider this when accepting applicants.

2. It's a good idea to have the final list of participants, with personal and emergency contact details available, before the trip. This is important as the leader may have some necessary last-minute information to be provided to participants such as road closures, or someone may be lost or late travelling to the starting location. On the trip always keep the list with you. Make a laminated version of it, keep it in your backpack and tell your 2IC where it is.

3. The list of participants with personal and emergency details should also be made available to the Walks Officer in case, should the leader be incapacitated, the club needs to make contact with trip participants or their emergency contacts.

4. Make yourself familiar with and print the Trip Report form. This form is used instead of the Walks Report form. It needs to be signed only once by each walker. The leader uses the form to record each of the daily walks, and to record which walks each person participates in.

5. Car-pooling monies. Ensure you are familiar with car-pooling protocols, especially where car-shuffles are required. You may choose to have walkers pay daily or keep records and

have an end-of-trip wrap-up. Remind participants to bring cash or be prepared with other means to pay during or at the end of the trip.

6. If you plan to hold evening pre-dinner drinks, tell walkers beforehand so they are prepared.

7. Also remind walkers, particularly newish members, of the need for the usual walking equipment: hat, sunscreen, day pack, water bottles, poles, gloves, torch (etc). Refer to the club's *Rules for Walkers*.

8. If you don't own a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon) borrow one from the club PLB holders (see front page of the Program). It is club policy that leaders carry a PLB on trips away. As PLBs can be activated only once, the potential back-up leader should also carry a PLB.

On the trip

1. If it's possible, consider having an easier walk on the first day. This will help you gauge walking abilities before walkers are tested (or exhausted!) on a harder walk.

2. As leader, you have the discretion to make decisions in the best interests of the group. Some participants may wish to do a different walk that may impact your plans for the day. It is your decision as to whether this is appropriate, especially if it could be risky or inconvenient. If they do so, remind them they are no longer club trip participants for that day.

3. It is likely you will not have done a reconnoitre ('reccy') of all planned walks; overseas walks will probably not have been reccied at all. Your unfamiliarity with routes and terrain brings increased risk and a greater need for walk discipline. If you do allow stronger walkers to go ahead, be very clear on when they must stop and wait and emphasise that these walkers must stay together. Otherwise, make it very clear the group must stay together. Appoint a tailender who is a strong walker who can easily catch up with the group if help is needed.

4. If you allow the group to separate (such as when slower walkers choose to turn back) and you have phone coverage, make sure walkers have your phone number and remind them to keep their phones turned on, so you can make contact.

5. On any day, if you are confident of their experience and ability to lead, you may appoint someone else to lead the walk. If you have a wide range of walking abilities and a suitable leader, you may offer a second harder/easier walk.

6. Leaders often find it convenient to hold a meeting late each afternoon to discuss arrangements for the following day. It is usual to hold a meet-and-greet on the arrival day, so participants can meet each other and be briefed about the trip in general. If you plan on an evening get-together, tell walkers beforehand so they know to bring something to share. If there are new club walkers, consider briefing them on walking protocols as outlined in "Rules for Walkers" in the Club program.

7. Consider setting up a WhatsApp group for the trip, especially on overseas trips where not everyone will have an international SIM card. This is useful for sharing photos and keeping in touch when Wi-Fi is available.

After the trip

As usual, send the completed Trip Report form to the Walks Officer at walks@brindabellabushwalking.org.au.

It is customary for an article, accompanied by photographs, to be prepared for the club newsletter, as well as for a brief report to be posted to the BBC Facebook page. Consider designating participants from the trip to do this. You may ask different volunteers to write-up each day.

If an incident occurs such that a walker needs to be rescued, an ambulance is called, park rangers or police are involved, or medical treatment is necessary, complete an Incident Report form, again sending it to the Walks Officer.

In summary

No doubt these guidelines don't cover all the issues you might face. But we hope they have helped you avoid some of the common issues that arise.

Have a great trip!