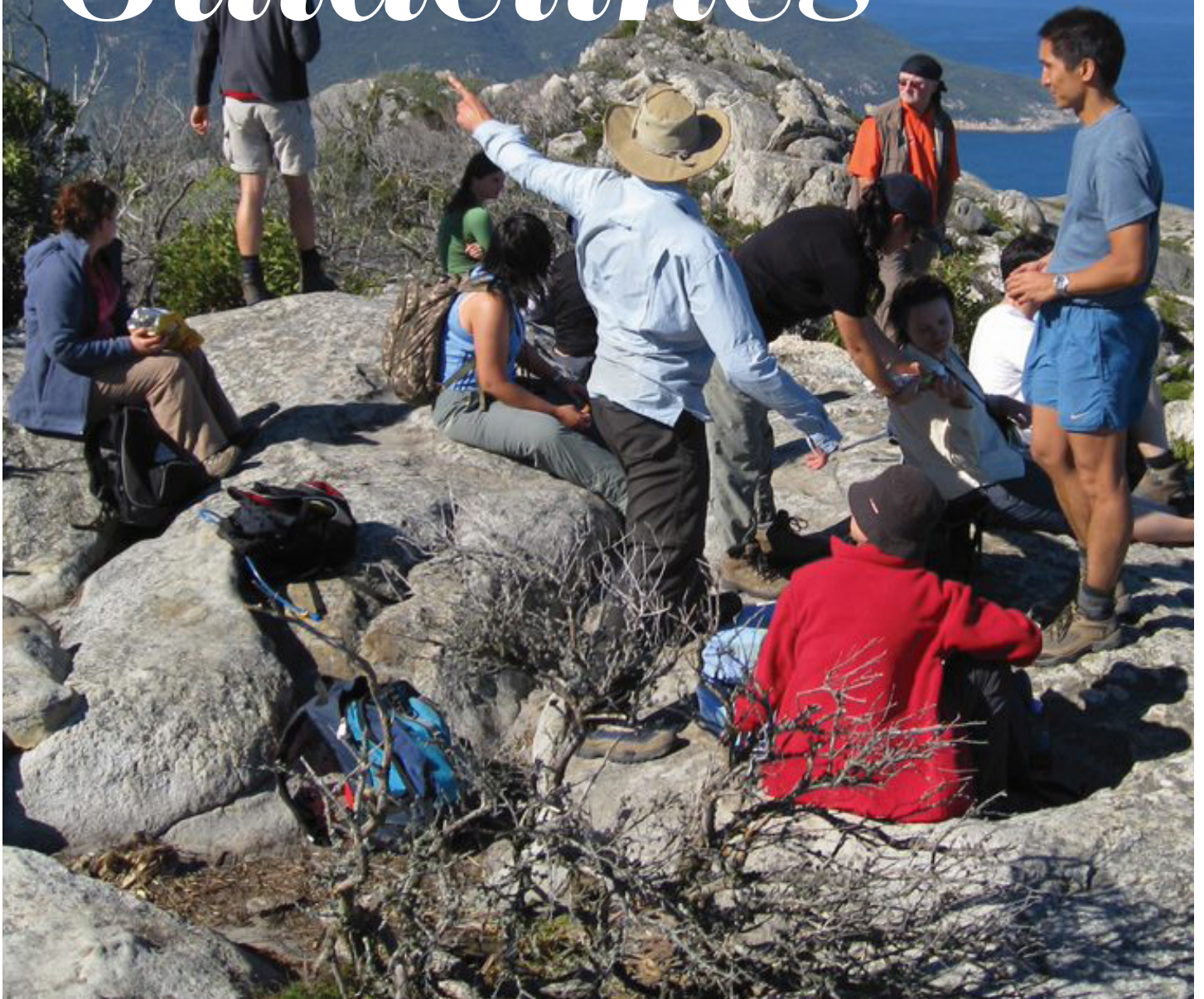


VNPA Bushwalking Program Leader's Guidelines



VICTORIAN
NATIONAL PARKS
ASSOCIATION
Be part of nature

*bush
walking*
program

VNPA Bushwalking Program Leader's Guidelines

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The Victorian National Parks Association is an effective and influential nature conservation organisation.

We've led the creation, oversight and defence of Victoria's natural estate for over 70 years.

VNPA advocates for evidence-based policy to safeguard wildlife, habitat and protected areas. We inspire connections with nature through citizen science, activities, community action and education.

We are an independent, non-profit, non-government, and membership-based charity. We're an incorporated association with membership open to all like-minded people.

Our Vision: Victoria is a place with a diverse and healthy natural environment protected, respected and enjoyed by all.

VNPA acknowledges the many First Peoples of the area now known as Victoria, honours their continuing connection to, and caring for, Country, and supports Traditional Owner joint-management of parks and public land and waters for conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Our office is located on traditional land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We offer our respect to Elders past, present and future.

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1 Introduction

Being a volunteer bushwalking leader is a wonderful contribution to nature and community as it involves bringing people together to get into nature and connect with each other in a positive, enjoyable and supportive way.

Thank you so much for your contribution to nature and to the Victorian National Parks Association.

1.1 Using these guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared to assist you as a VNPA Bushwalking Program leader and other VNPA volunteer activity leaders to organise and lead activities safely and successfully.

As the leader of an organised activity, you have a duty of care to your participants i.e. you must do everything within reason to ensure their safety and well-being.

The more demanding the activity, the greater the need for its proper planning and preparation. However, even for easy day activities, the application of these guidelines will increase the enjoyment for both you as the leader and the participants.

As a volunteer bushwalking leader, it is expected that you are familiar with the details of these guidelines and the Bushwalking Program 'Everything you need to know' webpage. This webpage is available at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/bushwalking-and-activities-everything/>

The 'Everything you need to know' webpage provides further information for activity participants. Please refer to these sections where appropriate, in particular Minimal Impact Bushwalking Policy, Activity Descriptions (gradings) and Equipment.

For any questions about bushwalking leadership or anything in these guidelines, please contact VNPA on (03) 9341 6500 or activities@vnpa.org.au

1.2 VNPA Bushwalking Program

VNPA Bushwalking Program is a program that gets people into nature on bushwalking, base camps and other nature-based adventures in Victoria. Activities are led by trained volunteer bushwalking leaders.

The program has seen thousands of people taking adventures across Victoria including on multi-day hikes through the Grampians-Gariwerd National Park.



2 Becoming a Leader

Bushwalking Program leaders are volunteers and become leaders for a range of reasons. They often begin as passionate bushwalkers who want to share their love for bushwalking and nature with others.

The VNPA Bushwalking Program supports people to become volunteer bushwalking leaders. This is done by:

1. Identifying and encouraging new leaders.
2. Skilling up and approving new leaders.
3. Ongoing support and learning opportunities for existing leaders.
4. Feedback process for leaders.

2.1 Benefits and responsibilities of being a Bushwalking Program volunteer leader

There are many benefits for you when becoming a Bushwalking Program volunteer leader.

Advantages of leadership include:

- Satisfaction of providing an enjoyable day out.
- Supporting VNPA by leading Bushwalking Program activities.
- Supporting VNPA through engaging new people with the organisation.
- Meeting and making new friends.
- Building self-confidence, and leadership and organisational skills.
- Sharing good times and experiences with like-minded people.
- Giving something back to VNPA and nature.
- Appreciation and acknowledgement from activity participants.

There are also responsibilities that go with being an activity leader. These include:

- The possible need for an onsite reconnaissance ('reccie') prior to leading your walk.
- Organising your activity: this includes researching your activity, sourcing maps and information and writing Activity Notes and Activity Reports.
- Incurring non-claimable expenses, such as petrol costs and maps.
- Taking bookings and screening potential participants to ensure that they are suitable for your walk.
- Coordinating a group of unknown people to meet at the right place at the same time
- Ensuring participants are equipped with appropriate gear.
- Using the Emergency Contact (EC) system as needed before and after the activity.
- Ensuring that lunch and other rest breaks are factored into the timing of your activity.
- Providing a comprehensive first aid kit.
- Highlighting relevant VNPA conservation issues about the area.
- Being aware that there is a risk of somebody having an accident on your walk.
- Taking authority in the event that difficulties arise.

2.2 Identifying new leaders

New bushwalking leaders usually become involved as leaders due to their involvement as a participant in the program. They are usually identified by existing leaders as they:

- Have a keen interest in the bushwalking program.
- Show leadership potential.
- Engage well with a diversity of other participants.
- Are someone who expresses that they would like to lead.

Bushwalking Program leaders are required to have:

- A valid Working with Children Check.
- A current VNPA membership.
- Have completed the VNPA Bushwalking Program Leader Mentorship program and VNPA volunteer induction.
- A current 'Provide First Aid HLTAID011' qualification. Please note that up to date qualification is required.*

*Bushwalking leaders are encouraged to update their CPR qualification (a component on Provide First Aid) annually; however, this is not essential. The 'Provide First Aid HLTAID011' must be updated every three years.

2.3 Process to become a new leader

2.3.1 Mentor process

If you are interested in becoming a leader, you will need to go through a mentor process designed to guide and advise new volunteer leaders on how to run activities as part of the Bushwalking Program.

You will need to contact activities@vnpa.org.au to express interest in participating in the VNPA Bushwalking Program as a volunteer bushwalking leader. The mentor process then involves the following:

1. The Bushwalking Program Subcommittee will support you to set up with a mentor who is an experienced and approved Bushwalking Leader mentor.
2. You and the mentor will meet up and talk through the full VNPA Bushwalking Program Leader's Guidelines and Leader's Resources together. This includes clarifying practices and processes for leaders.
3. You will work with your mentor to set up and run your first activity with the mentor using the Bushwalking Program Mentor Checklist* and following these Leader's Guidelines.
4. Your mentor will provide you and the Bushwalking Program sub-committee with feedback on your activity leadership.
5. The Bushwalking Program Subcommittee will set you with a second mentor who is an approved Bushwalking Leader mentor.
6. You will set-up and run a second activity with the support of the second mentor, with the second mentor using the Bushwalking Program Mentor Checklist. *

7. You will need to be mentored once for each type of activity you want to offer in the future, e.g. bushwalk, an overnight hike, a bike ride.

*Leader's resources, including the mentor checklist are all available at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

Once you are deemed to have successfully completed two mentored activities, with satisfactory feedback from the mentor and the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee, you may lead this type of activity as a Bushwalking Program leader. After an initial two mentored sessions, you will only need to be successfully mentored once for each new type of activity to be deemed able to run that type of activity.

The completed mentor checklists need to be provided to the Community Learning and Engagement Manager for approval.

2.3.2 Responsibility as a new leader during the mentorship process

It is your responsibility as the new leader being mentored to work with the Bushwalking Program Sub-Committee to find approved mentors to attend your first two activities and one for each additional type of activity you would like to offer.

Mentors are all experienced Bushwalking Program volunteer leaders. The list of current mentors can be obtained from the Bushwalking Program sub-committee by emailing activities@vnpa.org.au. The mentor should be contacted well in advance of your activity. Please note that the mentor attending the first activity cannot mentor the second activity.

2.3.3 Responsibilities of the mentor during the mentorship process

1. Talk the new leader through the VNPA Bushwalking Program Leader's Guidelines and Leader's Resources.
2. Follow the Bushwalking Program Mentor Checklist* to support new leaders in setting up and running their activity.
3. Step in to support the new leader on the activity as needed.
4. Provide feedback to the new leader to support their learning.
5. Provide feedback to the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee on the progress of the new leader including if the mentor has any concerns about the new leader's capacity to run activities safely.
6. Provide the completed mentor checklist to activities@vnpa.org.au for final approval by the Community Learning and Engagement Manager.

*Leader's resources, including the mentor checklist are all available at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

2.3.4 Responsibilities of the Bushwalking Program Sub-committee for the mentorship of new leaders

The Bushwalking Program sub-committee will:

1. Oversee the new leader mentoring process for the Bushwalking Program.
2. Support the new leader to find suitable mentors.
3. Respond to feedback from the mentor or new leader.
4. Provide ongoing support for leaders, as outlined below.

2.4 Ongoing support and learning opportunities for existing leaders

In addition to providing training and support to new leaders, VNPA and the Bushwalking Program Sub-committee will support the ongoing learning and engagement of existing leaders through the following strategies:

1. Hosting at least one annual opportunity of Bushwalking Program leaders to develop skills related to bushwalking leadership including:
 - a. Opportunities to learn new skills related to bushwalking, e.g. simple birdwatching tips to include in your walk, people skills, updates on VNPA key campaign areas.
 - b. Opportunities to volunteer bushwalking leaders to share ideas and skills with each other.
2. Hosting at least one annual planning activity providing the opportunity to integrate and connect with other VNPA work including opportunities to:
 - a. Connect and coordinate with other bushwalking leaders e.g. run a walk together, coordinate on dates or locations.
 - b. Connect and coordinate with other VNPA programs staff, e.g. run a bushwalk with connection to some VNPA citizen science work.
 - c. Connect and coordinate with VNPA campaign staff, e.g. plan an activity in a key VNPA campaign area and campaign staff members can come to activity or provide resources on the relevant campaign issue.
3. Provide financial support for Bushwalking Program leaders to obtain a first aid qualification.
4. A dedicated VNPA staff member to provide leaders with support including check ins, addressing any questions or issues that arise.
5. Clear processes available for leaders through providing:
 - a. Bushwalking Program Leader Guidelines available to all leaders to guide the process of running an activity (these guidelines).
 - b. Check list for leaders to use when organising and running an activity.
 - c. Leader resources available in one location at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>
 - d. A staff member is available most workdays to contact with any questions.

2.4.1 Feedback process for leaders

As a leader you are encouraged to provide feedback on VNPA processes and support for your role as a volunteer. This feedback is encouraged to give VNPA the opportunity for ongoing learning and continuous improvement. Feedback can be provided by contacting the VNPA office on (03) 9341 6500 or emailing activities@vnpa.org.au.

2.4.2 Expectation of existing leaders to engage with ongoing learning and improvement of the Bushwalking Program processes

- Leaders are required to apply to VNPA processes and meet VNPA standards for leading activities as outlined in the VNPA leader guidelines.
- Leaders are encouraged to engage with ongoing skill development.
- Leaders are encouraged to provide feedback on these guidelines and VNPA Bushwalking Program procedures to the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee.

3 Safety and the law

3.1 Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) involves a team approach. Everyone associated with VNPA has a duty of care that requires each person to be capable and responsible for their own health and safety, as well as for the health and safety of others.

So far as is practicable, VNPA is committed to providing and maintaining an environment that is safe and effectively eliminates or minimises the risks to the health and safety of staff, members, volunteers, contractors and visitors.

3.2 Duty of Care

Duty of care is a legal duty that requires activity leaders to take all reasonable measures to prevent harm to any participants under your care.

Duty of care could be described as 'What a reasonably prudent walk leader would do to take reasonable care to avoid exposing fellow walkers (having regard to their age, experience, skill and other individual matters) to unreasonable risks of injury or loss.'

All activity leaders and participants are subject to VNPA's Code of Conduct. *Refer to Appendix A: VNPA's Code of Conduct*

All volunteers must not be asked to perform activities that are clearly beyond their experience and ability. This applies to leaders, assistant leaders, activity volunteers and participants.

VNPA and/or Bushwalking Program Leaders may be legally liable for negligence in relation to an activity. To prevent this situation, Bushwalking Program Leaders should act with all reasonable care.

3.2.1 First aid qualification

All Bushwalking Program leaders are required to have an up to date first aid qualification (currently called HLTAID011 Provide First Aid). While updating CPR annually is recommended, it is not essential for Bushwalking Leaders.

VNPA can cover the cost of training for a first aid qualification for Bushwalking Leaders. VNPA will also provide support to leaders to find suitable first aid training courses. Please email activities@vnpa.org.au if you would like to organise to attend a first aid course.

New leaders undergoing mentorship are not required to have their first aid qualification, as long as the mentor supervising their activity has a first aid qualification.

3.3 Child Safe Organisation

VNPA is a Child Safe Organisation. All leaders should be familiar with VNPA's Child Safe Policy. *Refer to Appendix B: VNPA's Child Safe Policy.*

VNPA implements appropriate procedures to ensure compliance with VNPA's Child Safe Policy and other regulatory requirements. Here is a summary of general principles.

- VNPA is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

- Children under 18 years old are welcome to participate in VNPA activities if accompanied and supervised by their own parent or carer at all times.
- In the unlikely event that a child cannot be accompanied by their parent/carer for a short period of time (e.g. toilet visit), the child must be supervised by at least two adults. A child should never be supervised alone by a leader (or other participant) who has not completed a Working with Children Check.
- Leaders of all activities must complete a Working with Children Check. This is a requirement from both Parks Victoria and VNPA.

A Working with Children Check can be applied for online at <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/> There is no cost for volunteers.

3.4 Insurance

VNPA is insured by Ansvar Insurance for a range of circumstances under Community Service Organisation Insurance Policy.

The details of our insurance policy are complex. In summary:

- Some high-risk activities are not covered by insurance; hence we don't offer them.
- Any insurance claim will be subject to the policy excess (generally \$1,000). Any lower value claims i.e. less than \$1,000 would not be covered by insurance.
- A key requirement of our insurance policy is that any significant incidents are reported quickly and accurately to our insurance company.

General accidents such as a slip or a fall of a participant are not necessarily covered by insurance. *Refer to section 11.2 Incident Reporting*

4 Activity submission and cancellation

You can submit activities for promotion in the VNPA Activities Calendar at any time. This can be done at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

Leaders are invited via email to submit activities roughly every seven weeks to fit in with timing for promotion of the Activities Calendar. Submitting activities at this time will maximise exposure of the activity to the target audience.

Activities can also be submitted at short notice. Short notice activities are limited to approved, lower risk activities. The activity may be advertised in activities calendar email, depending on timing.

Submitted activities are approved by the Community Learning and Engagement Manager.

4.1 Deciding what to do and where to go

The hardest part of submitting an activity to the Activities Program is often deciding what to do and where to go well in advance. If you need suggestions on suitable locations for a particular type of activity, you can chat to other leaders or check out Parks Victoria, www.parks.vic.gov.au and Victoria Walks www.victoriawalks.org.au.

Other good activity ideas include leading a walk that you have previously enjoyed, going to an area that you like, asking other leaders for ideas, magazine articles and looking through old VNPA Bushwalking and Activities Programs (available on request from the VNPA office).

An Activity Submission Form is required for each activity, and covers the details found in the formal Activities Calendar i.e. activity name, leader, grade, number of participants, and distance from Melbourne.

4.2 Approved activities

To ensure all activities are safe for leaders and participants, a variety of categories of activities have been approved by VNPA Council.

Table 1 provides a list of approved and non-approved categories.

Activities that fall under 'Approved activities' in Table 1 are given final approval by the Community Learning and Engagement Manager for inclusion in the Activities Calendar.

Activities currently listed as 'non-approved' or not listed may be approved by VNPA Council for inclusion in the activities program. The process for gaining approval from VNPA Council is explained in section 4.3 Approval of New Categories of Activities.

Table 1 List of Approved Activities

APPROVED types of activities	NON-APPROVED types of activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushwalks including Walk, Talk & Gawk; Urban Walks; Easy Going Amble. • Easy rock scrambling • Excursions • Overnight/multi-day walks • Cycling • Activities including conservation that do not use power equipment (e.g. chainsaws, brush cutters, lawn mowers etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abseiling/rock climbing • Canoeing/kayaking • Diving • Skiing • Snowshoe walking • Snorkeling • Swimming • Activities located overseas • Activities including conservation

4.3 Approval of new categories of activities

New categories of activities (e.g. snorkeling, skiing etc.) that are currently not approved need to be reviewed and approved by VNPA Council before they can be offered. Approval of a new activity category requires detailed information about the proposed activity to allow full assessment by the Bushwalking Program Sub-committee, the Insurance Company and finally VNPA Council. The information required includes:

- Short description of the activity including the nature of the activity (e.g. skiing, snorkeling etc.) and what will be involved.
- How often the activity will be offered (e.g. 4 events in winter).
- Skill level required by participants (e.g. can steer and stop on skis).
- Specific activity information e.g. date, location, number of participants.
- Short description of how participants will be assessed prior to the activity to ensure that they have the skills, fitness and expectations to participate safely.
- Evidence that the leader has sufficient skills, experience, qualifications to safely coordinate the activity.
- Has the activity been offered previously? Were there any notable incidences? If so, what steps need to be taken to prevent the incident being repeated?
- Completion of a risk assessment. What are the major risks? How will these risks be mitigated?

Approval of a new activity may take time, so you should notify VNPA as soon as possible. VNPA Council generally meets six times a year in February, April, June, July, September and December.

If you would like to submit a new activity category for approval, please contact activities@vnpa.org.au

4.4 Higher risk activities

Most activities offered by VNPA are considered low risk. Higher risk activities require review and approval by the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee and VNPA before they can be delivered. Some activities are not insured under VNPA's insurance policy.

Leaders who wish to run a higher risk activity will be reviewed by the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee as part of the Activity Submission process.

Leaders who have been approved by the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee to run a higher risk activity will need to complete *Appendix C Activity Plan and Risk Assessment* template and have it approved by the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee before it is included in the Activities Calendar. An Activity Plan is only required for the first time that it is run, provided it is the same activity at the same location with no major changes for subsequent events.

VNPA has determined that overseas trips have significant risks and insurance costs to VNPA and are outside the scope of VNPA's geographical focus on Victoria. As such, overseas trips are not offered under the auspice of VNPA and are not covered by VNPA Insurance.

4.5 Cancelled activities

Activities may be cancelled for a number of reasons, including the inability of the leader to attend, a lack of participants, weather conditions or changed location conditions. If your planned activity is cancelled, you must:

- Ring the designated Emergency Contact Person (if relevant) before the date of the activity to advise him or her of the cancellation (if yours is a designated EC activity).
- Notify activities@vnpa.org.au or call the VNPA office on (03)93416500 preferably noting the reason for cancellation.
- Ensure all registered participants are notified.

4.6 Changes to the Activities Calendar

If you need to make changes to your walk/activity in the Activities Calendar, please email activities@vnpa.org.au or call 9341 6500. Check the new dates do not clash with other entries to similar destinations. Be aware there is an email to promote the Activities Calendar every 6-8 weeks.

4.7 Joint activities

It is possible to submit activities that are run jointly with other clubs. If the activity is run jointly with another club, then if it is listed in both the Activities Calendar and the other club's program, leaders and participants must abide by both club's/organisation's rules.

4.8 Linking your activity with other areas of VNPA's work

Throughout our history, VNPA has run both campaigns for nature conservation and trips into nature.

As a leader you may be interested in running a bushwalk in an area relevant to VNPA's campaign or citizen science project work. If this is of interest to you, VNPA would love to support you to do this. Showing people these special areas on bushwalks and providing VNPA resources on your walk location are great ways to support people to develop a love for these places, showcase these areas and demonstrate why we care for them.

You won't need to be a spokesperson on campaigns or other work, as only delegated VNPA staff are able to do this.

Please also note that there is no pressure to do these things if you don't wish to. You are more than welcome to run your activity in these areas as you usually would.

We have active campaigns and projects across most of the state, so there are many opportunities to integrate the Bushwalking Program with campaigns and projects.

Support VNPA is able to provide includes:

1. Providing regular examples of areas we are working in our email call outs for bushwalking submissions such as the example below on the Dandenong Ranges National Park.
2. On request, VNPA can send you some brief information on what we are up to in the area you are interested in with any relevant resources you could provide to participants after the walk.
3. On request VNPA can put you in touch with the relevant VNPA staff members for a chat if they are available and this is of interest to you.
4. A relevant staff member may be able to attend your activity to chat to participants.

4.8.1 Responsibilities of the leader when linking with other VNPA campaign and project work

1. Organise your activity as you usually would.
2. Contact VNPA on activities@vnpa.org.au or (03) 9341 6500 to request relevant resources or to chat with a VNPA staff member about the area you are visiting.
3. You won't be able to be a spokesperson on campaigns or other work, as only delegated VNPA staff are able to do this. You can:
 - a. Inform people we have an active campaign or project in the area.
 - b. Let them know you'll provide them with resources from VNPA.
4. You can provide VNPA resources to people on your activity in follow up emails to participants. VNPA can provide this to you.
5. You can provide participants with information on how to learn more or get more involved in the \ campaign or project using the information VNPA provides.
6. You can invite VNPA staff members to attend your activity, however, please note that they may or may not be able to take part, depending on their other priorities.

4.8.2 Responsibilities of the relevant VNPA staff member (Campaigner or Program Coordinator)

A request to contact a relevant VNPA staff member will be forwarded from the activities@vnpa.org.au or VNPA office. The staff member will Inform Community Learning and Engagement Manager or Communications Engagement Officer if they are able to respond to the Bushwalking Leader. If they can, they will:

- Chat to the leader about any relevant questions, the area etc.
- Provide any relevant resources to the Bushwalking Leader in consultation with the Community Learning and Engagement Manager or Communications Engagement Officer along with relevant text to introduce the relevant resources.

If the relevant staff member is not available, the Community Learning and Engagement Manager or Communications and Engagement Officer will find relevant resources and provide support as needed.

Please note that sometimes relevant staff won't be available to provide this additional support due to time constraints.

4.8.3 Example campaign area: Dandenong Ranges National Park disaster logging

As one example of an area where we are currently active, we have a current campaign to protect the Dandenong Ranges National Park from 'disaster logging'. Forest Fire Management Victoria are planning to log in the Dandenong Ranges National Park, in response to the severe windstorm in June 2021. The forest is slowly recovering from the storm and logging it now will cause a lot of damage, both to the forest and the plants and animals that live there. You can find more information about this campaign here: www.vnpa.org.au/action/dont-log-dandenongs/

If you're interested in leading a walk in the Dandenong Ranges National Park or another area of active VNPA work all you need to do is submit your activity as normal and we'll be in touch to chat further.

5 Activity Planning

Good planning is the key to safe and rewarding activities. This means knowing what to expect before you set out so that you can match participants' expectations and abilities with the difficulty of the activity.

As part of the planning process, you may consider providing participants with pre-visit information about the area, such as notes on plants, animals landscape features, conservation significance and historical sites.

5.1 Managing risks

'A life without adventure is likely to be unsatisfying, but a life in which adventure is allowed to take whatever form it will, is likely to be short.' (Bertrand Russell)

VNPA offers a range of outdoor activities that vary in complexity, skill and challenge. In general, where a higher level of skill/experience is required, a higher level of planning is essential.

All VNPA activities require planning. For low to medium risk activities, the information contained in the VNPA Bushwalking Program Leader's Guide and the Bushwalking Program 'Everything you need to know' webpage www.vnpa.org.au/explore/bushwalking-and-activities-everything/ and your trip notes should be sufficient to demonstrate adequate planning.






A standard activity risk assessment has been prepared that addresses all lower risk activities. *Refer to Appendix D: Standard Risk Assessment for Lower Risk Activities.*

5.2 Higher risk activities

Due to the nature of higher risk activities additional planning is required.

Activities are graded according to risk as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Activity gradings

	Low to Medium Risk	Higher Risk
Bushwalking	 Grade 1 suitable for people with a disability with assistance  Grade 2 suitable for families with young children  Grade 3 recommended for people with some bushwalking experience	 Grade 4 recommended for experienced bushwalkers  Grade 5 recommended for very experienced bushwalkers
Cycling	Easy & intermediate	Difficult & Extreme
Snowshoe Walking, Canoe/Kayaking, Skiing, 4WD	Not currently offered	Not currently offered
Conservation	Activities without power	Activities with power tools

5.2.1 Planning for a Higher Risk Activity

All Bushwalking Program leaders of a higher risk activity (as described in Table 2 above) need to complete an Activity Plan and Risk Assessment. The information from your Activity Notes will be helpful in preparing your Activity Plan.

Refer to Appendix C: Activity Plan and Risk Assessment Template. This form is also available at www.vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/

Send your completed Activity Plan and Risk Assessment to activities@vnpa.org.au for review by the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee.

An Activity Plan only needs to be prepared once. If the activity is repeated but has changed significantly (e.g. different leader, location, nature of the activity etc.) it will need to be updated by the leader and re-reviewed by the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee.

The Bushwalking Program Subcommittee has the final decision on approval of a higher risk activity. However please note that VNPA Council has the final say on approval of ‘non-approved’ activities.

5.3 Key elements of activity planning

The following information should be considered by all leaders in planning an activity and the relevant information is incorporated into *Appendix C Activity Plan and Risk Assessment Template*.

5.4 Activity location

- Starting and ending points, and how to get there (distance and time from Melbourne).
- If mobile phone coverage is not available at the starting point, consider meeting somewhere in range beforehand.
- Activity route.
- Camp sites and facilities (toilets, showers etc.).
- Car parking and car shuttle arrangements, or public transport options.
- Escape routes (direct routes to assistance if something goes wrong).
- Suitability of area for the time of the year.
- Availability of water.
- Nearest medical facilities, highlights and points of interest.

5.5 Weather

- Assess the suitability of the activity based on the weather in the days leading up to the activity and on the morning of the activity.
- Cancel the activity if there is a severe weather warning on the day for that location or weather conditions are unsuitable, e.g. windy, very wet, extreme heat are all conditions to consider the cancellation of the activity.
- Provide participants with a weather forecast for the day of your activity.
- Encourage participants to bring weather-appropriate clothing.
- Allow for all possible conditions (e.g. cold, wet, poor visibility, heat, lightning). For extreme conditions, see the Emergencies section later in this guide.

5.6 Demands upon participants

- Fitness and health requirements (e.g. sustained climbs or descents).
- Required equipment.
- Phobias (e.g. heights, lightning, snakes).

5.7 Timing

- Actual meeting time.
- Time the activity will actually start.
- How long will the activity take.

- When you will get to your destination.
- Time of return home.

5.8 Information

- Emergency contact
- Maps and park information (e.g. web links, Park Notes)
- Activity notes for participants (see later)
- Location of activity, including terrain, land type and conservation status of the land
- Type of activity – e.g. Walk, Talk & Gawk, easy walk, overnight or extended, base camp.
- Condition of tracks, and likely impact of walking on them
- Seasonal and weather considerations
- Local knowledge (personal, local ranger, leaders of recent activities).

5.9 Party size

Four is the minimum number for an official activity to comply with best-practice safety and risk-management guidelines.

Recommended maximum group sizes are as follows:

- Sensitive areas, e.g. alpine areas above 1200m, rainforest, unstable areas in arid and coastal zones and some flora and fauna reserves. Maximum 12
- Stable areas with a primary purpose for conservation, e.g. national and state parks. Maximum 20
- Stable areas with a primary purpose for recreation, e.g. metropolitan parks and gardens. Maximum 30

For activities that may involve off-track walking, consideration should be given to reducing the maximum group size to half the numbers recommended above.

5.10 Route selection

Some routes are excluded from the public for reasons such as legislation, regulation or by-laws. These include reference areas, water catchments and First Nations cultural sites.

Route selection should avoid the following areas:

- Sites of significance for nature conservation
- Sphagnum bogs
- Creek gullies susceptible to damage
- Revegetation areas

- Reference areas
- Private property without permission
- Sites infected with *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (Cinnamon Fungus), Myrtle Rust and other pathogens.
- Recently burnt or flood affected sites.
- Parties must stay on the track and not cut corners even where others have done so.

5.11 Distances and times

We have found the following rule of thumb useful for predicting progress:

<i>Conditions</i>	<i>Walking</i>	<i>Cycling</i>
Vehicle tracks	4 km/hr	15 km/hr
Foot tracks/single track	3 km/hr	10 km/hr

In addition, allow one extra hour of walking time to climb 500m and one extra hour to descend 1000m.

These times do not include lunch, morning and afternoon tea or any other stops. Do not try to do too much in a day. Seven hours is usually plenty.

5.12 Activity grading

Activities must be graded according to the guidelines given in these Leader's Guidelines in Table 2 rather than being determined by the leader's capability and expectations.

5.13 Mobile phones

Where mobile phone coverage does not exist for your service provider (e.g. Telstra, Optus), dialing 112 may provide access to emergency services for any service provider on the same network. Sometimes text messages will be more successful than a phone call when reception is limited. Participants should be encouraged to turn their mobiles phones on silent during the activity.

5.14 Navigation

The degree of navigation experience and skill that is expected of a leader will depend on the type of activity that they lead. A metropolitan walk through the suburban parks will require little navigation skill, but a weekend walk along poorly marked tracks may require advanced navigation skills. Leaders are expected to only undertake activities that are within their capabilities.

Refer to VNPA Navigation Guide at www.vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/

5.15 GPS and PLBs

It is not a requirement that leaders carry or use a GPS (Global Positioning System) device. They are considered as an aid to navigation, not a replacement for good navigation skills and

experience. They must not be relied upon for navigation purposes and leaders need to be aware of GPS problems and limitations.

Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) are considered as optional safety equipment but have known limitations, including false alarms. You may consider carrying one on a remote area activity, but you must know how to operate it and the likely consequences of activating it. Authorities have the power to charge people for the cost of their rescue and may do so in the case of the misuse of PLBs.

5.16 Overnight activities

Overnight activities may require specific equipment and preparation.

Refer to *Beginners Overnight Trip – Gear Notes* at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

5.17 Risks

As an activity leader you must review and enact all relevant risk assessment processes in *Appendix D: Standard Activity Plan and Risk Assessment* for typical low/medium risk VNPA activities and consider if there are any risks that relate to your activity that may not be listed. If there are, consider the potential impact/severity (low, medium or high) and what steps you can take to prevent them from happening (eliminate, isolate or minimise).

You should consider:

- **People** – skills, attitudes, fitness, ratios, experience, health etc.
- **Equipment** – clothing, shelter, transport, activity specific gear, safety gear etc.
- **Environment** – weather, terrain, water, season etc.

6 Emergency Contact System

The Bushwalking Program has an Emergency Contact (EC) System for activities where it is deemed necessary. The purpose of this system is to assist parties that are delayed. The system is used for some activities outside the metropolitan areas, including base camps and extended activities, where the activity is remote and likely to be outside phone reception. Activities requiring the use of the EC system will be determined by the Community Learning and Engagement Manager with advice from the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee and listed as 'EC' in the Activities Calendar.

The Emergency Contact person is a volunteer who acts as a liaison between the activity leader, participants' personal emergency contacts and VNPA. The EC is listed in the Activities Program for relevant activities.

There are three emergency procedures: Emergency Procedures for Leaders; Emergency Procedures for Emergency Contact (EC); Emergency Procedures for VNPA.

- Refer to *Appendix E Emergency Procedures for Leaders*
- Refer to *Appendix F Emergency Procedures for Emergency Contact*
- Refer to *Appendix G Emergency Procedures for Committee*

You must telephone the designated contact person at the earliest opportunity to report the safe return of the group. Do not wait until you have arrived home.

The Emergency Contact is responsible for initiating any action required if a leader fails to report the completion of the activity by the specified time.

If a Leader fails to ring by the specified time, the EC must ring the Leader to see if the Leader has forgotten to telephone. If there is no answer, or those at the leader's home have no information, the EC must telephone the activity attendees and a Bushwalking Program Subcommittee member and, in consultation with others, if necessary, determine the appropriate action under the circumstances.

As the bushwalking leader you must:

- Ring the EC well in advance of the activity to ensure the contact has not changed. For extended activities, ring the EC available at the time of your expected return to town.
- Advise participants of the name and phone number of the EC for your activity
- Remind all participants to leave details of their activity, the expected time of return and the phone number of the Emergency Contact with a relative or friend. Enquiries about the late return of people are to be directed to the Emergency Contact, not to the police.

6.1 Non-metropolitan Day Walks

For activities where an EC is deemed necessary, the leader must provide the following details to the EC:

- Activity notes, including map, route, start and finish points and expected time of return to cars.

- Emergency alert time (The time the EC should take action, allowing sufficient time to cover minor problems).
- Number in the party.
- Registration number, make, model and colour of car used by the leader.
- Name and phone number of all people on the walk.

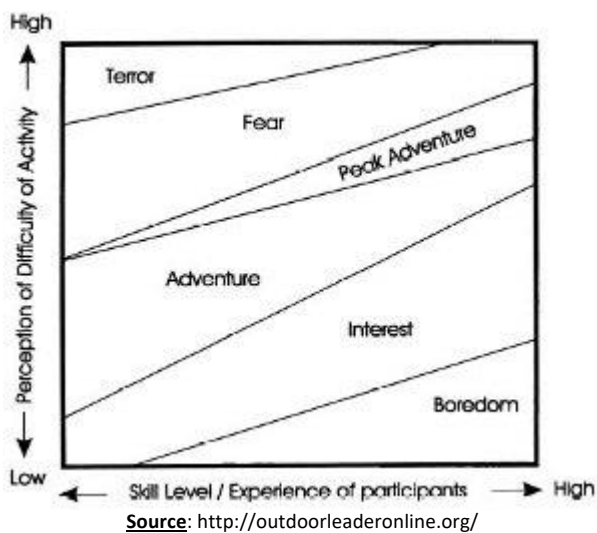
6.2 Overnight and extended walks

For activities where an EC is deemed necessary, the leader must provide the above details (in 6.1) to the EC. In addition, the leader must also provide the name, address and emergency contact phone number of all participants to the Emergency Contact

7 Prior to the activity

7.1 A good match – participants and activities

Matching the skills, experiences and expectations of participants with your activity is important for its success. Correct matching of participant experience and activity difficulty will ensure maximum satisfaction and safety for the participants. Mismatching the participants and or the leader to the difficulty of the activity can lead a group to boredom, fear, terror, or worse, into real risk. In registering participants, it is the leader's responsibility to accept people that have the skills, experience and expectations that are required to successfully complete the activity.



7.2 Accepting and rejecting applicants

Please do not accept bookings more than one month in advance unless otherwise noted in the Activities Calendar.

The registration form asks people about their recent bushwalking experience or exercise. You can use this to determine if potential participants will be suitable for your activity.

If you do not assess the suitability of participants prior to confirming their participation, you may face a very difficult situation. You may have to refuse a participant who has travelled a lengthy distance, involving cancelling other participants' involvement and travel arrangements.

When people register to participate, it is essential you ensure they can satisfactorily complete the activity. If you have someone who isn't coping, the following may happen:

- Your job as leader will be made much harder.
- It will expose the whole group to much greater danger.
- The person not coping will probably have a terrible time.
- The enjoyment of others will be impaired.
- You must know what the activity will require before bookings are opened, and that the people you accept will cope.

If you need to find out more from a person who wishes to register, we suggest that you ask the following questions:

- Have you done many walks/bicycle/canoe activities with VNPA (There may be new members wanting to come on your activity)?
- What activities have you done recently?
- Who was the leader of that activity (The leader's opinion may be invaluable)?
- Are you familiar with the activity gradings? Do you know what a specific activity grade means?
- What of the required equipment do you have?
- What do you do to maintain fitness?
- Do you have any allergies or medical conditions I should know about?
- Can you read a map and use a compass?

If the person is unknown to you or you have any doubts, describe the activity and all possible difficulties (e.g. ledge walking, river crossings, and steep climbs). After a full discussion, if you think the person can probably cope, explain in your own way that: 'From what you say it appears that you would probably be OK, but I don't know you and you must decide if you can cope. You are coming on this activity voluntarily and as such you are taking the responsibility for the decision to participate.' If the person is happy, confirm the booking.

If you have doubts, suggest they undertake an easier VNPA activity beforehand and confirm their booking upon successful completion. If you would like another opinion, contact activities@vnpa.org.au or the VNPA office on 0393416500 to discuss further or put you in touch with a bushwalking leader who have faced these problems before.

Ultimately it is your responsibility. You have the absolute right to accept or reject applicants. If you reject someone as you are authentically concerned about their capacity to undertake the activity, the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee will back your decision. However, if you reject someone, try to suggest a more suitable activity they could join.

You must also record the emergency phone contact for each participant and take this information with you. If they object to giving it, explain that it is to be used if there are any accidents on the activity and that, without this information, they may not participate in the activity.

7.3 Registering participants

Participants register for your walk or activity using an online registration form. When a person fills out a registration form, an email is sent to the leader with the following information:

- First name
- Last name
- Email
- Phone number

- Suburb
- Emergency Contact Name
- Emergency Contact Phone
- Interest in carpooling
- Medical conditions the leader needs to be aware of
- Person's recent bushwalks (or other)
- Participation in sport or exercise
- Any questions from the participant

The person registering is not automatically registered for the walk or activity. As the leader you need to respond by reply email in a timely manner to:

- Confirm their registration or find out more information if there are concerns about the person's suitability for the activity.
- Organise any carpooling.

In the week or days leading up to the activity:

- Provide full activity notes to all participants.

This information, including all email and phone numbers is only to be provided to the VNPA office using *Appendix H – Trip Report Form*. It must be treated as confidential by VNPA and the leader. Leaders must use the BCC column when sending out details to participants in a group.

All medical information is highly confidential.

7.4 Activity Notes

Activity Notes (sample below) are the best way to communicate information to participants. When sending these out by email, it is essential to use 'bcc' for participants' privacy. The important items of information which should be included are:

- Date, location and type of activity.
- Where and when to meet.
- How to get there
- What to bring
- Time of return
- Emergency contact (if needed)
- Relevant map/s
- Activity plan
- Any potential hazards that may be worth noting
- Names and phone numbers of leader

7.4.1 Example Activity Notes

VNPA Bushwalking Program

Mt Macedon Day Walk – Medium 17 km

Sunday 5th March

Please read these notes in conjunction with the 'Everything you need to know' section of the VNPA website - <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/bushwalking-and-activities-everything/> .

Activity Leader: (Leader name and contact details)

Emergency Contact: (EC Name and phone number)

The name and number of the emergency contact should be given to anyone who may become concerned in the event of a delayed return.

Where to Meet:

- Memorial Cross/Tea Rooms carpark, Mt Macedon Regional Park
- 70km NW of Melbourne CBD
- Allow 1.25hr drive time from CBD (without stops)

What Time to Meet: 08:50 Sunday 5th March for 9am start

Costs: Temporarily free

How to get there:

- Drive out the Calder Freeway
- Turn north onto Mt Macedon Rd (C322) from the freeway exit
- Drive a little over 11km, through Mt Macedon township, to the "Memorial Cross" and "Tea Rooms" turnoff.
- Turn left at this junction and drive approx. 4km to the Memorial Cross Car Park

What to Bring:

- Sunblock, hat, sunglasses
- Hiking boots or stout shoes – some of the track is rough and rocky
- At least 3L of water – The outlook for Sunday is WARM to HOT. NOTE that drinking water is not available from the taps at the Tea House, nor along the way, so you must bring your water with you. Have some spare water in the car for when we return
- Packed lunch & high-energy snacks
- Personal first aid kit
- Appropriate wet/cold weather gear if rain or cool weather is forecast

Route:

We will walk in a large loop anticlockwise from the tearooms, starting with a 300m descent into Mt Macedon township then a steady 200m ascent of Mt Towrong. We continue on to Sanatorium Lake, up to The Camels Hump, then return to the tearooms via a western lookout.

Map: The Macedon Ranges Regional Park guide and map is available from the Parks Victoria web site: <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/macedon-regional-park> I will also have a few copies of this map available on the day for participants.

Time of return: We should be finished walking by 4:00-4:30 pm and be back in Melbourne by 6:00.

COVID Guidelines

- Please DO NOT attend this activity if you have any symptoms of Covid-19 including fever, cough and sore throat. Please contact the leader if you are no longer able to make it.
- Please DO NOT attend this activity if you are a household contact of a positive Covid-19 case. Please contact the leader if you are no longer able to make it.
- Please bring your own small bottle of hand sanitiser to the activity.

Notable Hazards:

- As we descend into Mt Macedon township, the path has suffered severe erosion over the last few months and may be unstable. Take care in this section.
- Railing at the lookout has been damaged. Take care near the edge (50m drop).

Minimum impact walking:

VNPA practices minimal impact bushwalking techniques. This includes carrying out all rubbish, not polluting water with soap or detergent, burying all human waste, and not lighting fires in inappropriate areas.

Liability:

Every person participating in a VNPA activity does so at their own risk in all respects and, as such, accepts full responsibility for his/her suitability, fitness and preparedness for the activity and for any injury to him/herself. The Association, its office bearers, organisers, leaders and helpers are absolved of any liability in respect to any injury, loss or damage suffered by the participant while engaged in any VNPA activity to the extent permitted by law.

Any further queries, please contact (leader's name and contact details) or the VNPA office on 03 9341 6500

7.5 Travel and carpooling

To reduce travel costs, encourage participants to carpool. This may be done by giving participants the name and phone number of others on the activity who live in their area or by listing them on the Activity Notes. It is essential to ask permission before giving participants' contact details to others.

The objective of our cost-sharing policy is for costs to be shared between all the occupants of the vehicle. It is suggested that costs be shared according to the following guidelines:

- If only one passenger, the passenger should pay 40c per kilometre. If there is more than one passenger, this cost should be split equally between passengers (not the driver).
- The driver and passengers should agree in advance.

7.6 Use of personal vehicles for VNPA activities

Volunteers and participants are advised that personal vehicles used for VNPA business and activities are not covered under VNPA Public Liability or any other insurance. Volunteers and participants must have Full Comprehensive insurance including Third Party Motor Vehicle insurance when undertaking activities with VNPA.

7.7 Loss/damage of equipment/property

Participants are encouraged not to take any personal property or equipment that is not essential for the activity e.g. cash, jewellery, keys, identification etc.

8 On the activity

It is suggested you do the following on the activity:

- Arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes early to meet and introduce people to each other as they arrive. Try to leave at the nominated departure time. It is unfair to penalise those who arrive on time by waiting for latecomers.
- At the start – collect signatures on the Activity Registration Sheet.
- Encourage visitors to join VNPA and become involved in wider conservation issues. See *Appendix I Activity Registration Sheet*. This document can also be found at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/> This completed registration sheet also needs to be sent to the VNPA office by sending to activities@vnpa.org.au after the activity along with the Trip Notes
- Ensure that everyone has the essential gear. Even at this stage, you can reject anyone inadequately equipped or, if you believe on reasonable grounds, that they will be unable to complete the activity safely or will jeopardise the group. The committee will back your decision.
- Introduce everyone, welcome visitors and count heads.
- VNPA encourages leaders to carry out an Acknowledgement of Country using the Refer to *Appendix J VNPA Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines for Activity Leaders*. This document is also available at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>
- Explain the activity plan, point out the route on the map and encourage members to follow the group's progress and location on the map. Encourage the group to follow Minimal Impact Bushwalking practices, e.g. carry out what you bring, bury toilet waste, no off-track walking.
- Appoint a whip – a person nominated to be the last in the group. Explain who the whip is and their function. Nobody must fall behind the whip.
- The whip can advise on pace, the need for rest breaks, encourage and assist slower members and help keep the group together. Consider alternating the whip during the day.
- Explain that anyone in front of the leader must stop and wait at any track junctions or where the route is not 100% obvious. If necessary, insist that 'racehorses' stay near or behind you. The worst 'racehorse' can usually be controlled by appointment as whip.
- Monitor the group's progress at all times, with particular care for slower or inexperienced walkers. Ask people to call out if they are losing sight of the person in front of them, particularly if off-track. Undertake a head count (discretely) at regular intervals.
- Stop regularly for rests and for scenic attractions. Slower members need rests more than faster members – rest breaks commence when the last person stops. You may need a 'clothing' stop after the first 10 minutes so clothing can be shed as people warm up.

- Request that anyone with minor difficulties, such as sore feet, let you know so that first aid can be administered promptly.
- In difficult sections, be on hand to assist those who may require help and encourage stronger members of your party to do the same.

The leader is responsible for the progress, navigation and all aspects of group management. We encourage you to use the skills of other group members, but the leader is ultimately responsible.

8.1 Tips for a managing a successful activity

Adapted from Outdoor Safety: Risk Management for Outdoor Leaders, New Zealand Mountain Safety Council

Know your group – The better a leader knows their group, the more aware they are of the group's capabilities, individuals' needs and goals, their reactions to stress and much more. Awareness can help a leader avoid putting participants into situations that are beyond them.

Offer challenge by choice – Challenge is a two-edge sword. While it presents the opportunity for change and success, it also lays bare the issues we are afraid of losing face, failure and injury. Challenge by choice offers a participant:

- A chance to try a potentially difficult and/or frightening challenge in an atmosphere of support and caring.
- The opportunity to 'back off' when performance pressures or self-doubt become too strong, know that an opportunity for a future attempt will always be available.
- A chance to try difficult tasks, recognising that the attempt is more significant than performance results.
- Respect for individual ideas and choices.
- Teach by progression means sequenced teaching of a skill by breaking it down into its parts and building on each part to increase the complexity of the task until an eventual goal is reached.

Developing safety consciousness – As an outdoor leader gains more experience there is usually a corresponding increase in their safety consciousness and awareness. It is crucial that the outdoor leaders never stop learning or questioning. This involves acquiring new skills and techniques and maintaining the ones they have.

Capable leaders – One of the keys to reducing risks in outdoor activities is having the personal skills appropriate to the activity. Leaders' capabilities should exceed the level required in the activity, so they have a margin to cope in an emergency.

Disclosing the risk – Tell participants about specific risks, or guide them to identify the risks themselves, highlight hazards they may not be aware of due to lack of experience.

Pre-visiting the site – Leaders should make themselves aware of any likely environmental hazards before they enter an area with their group. Ideally, leaders should complete the activity on their own before taking participants.

Checking equipment – Leaders should ensure that all equipment required for an activity is up to an acceptable standard.

8.2 What to do when there is conflict?

Conflict can happen during an activity, particularly when participants are tired, hungry or stressed.

Tips to manage conflict:

- At the start of the activity remind all participants that they are subject to VNPA's Code of Conduct that requires participants to 'treat everyone with respect and courtesy and without harassment', see *Appendix A*.
- Have a break.
- Discreetly remind the participants in conflict of their obligations under VNPA's Code of Conduct, see *Appendix A*.
- Separate the participants in conflict. Encourage one to move to the front of the group and the other to the back.
- In extreme cases, consider stopping the activity and splitting the group into two smaller groups.
- Don't ignore the situation. Minor disagreements may pass but serious conflict requires leader intervention.

As the leader you have a duty of care to take all reasonable measures to prevent harm to participants. Therefore, you are authorised to take appropriate action to protect the health and safety of all participants.

9 Before departing

- If in an area susceptible to *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (Cinnamon fungus), encourage participants to clean their footwear, walking poles and, where appropriate, tent pegs and other camping equipment, with a 70/30 methylated spirits/water solution to reduce the risk of transferring this pathogen. The Activities 'Everything you need to know' webpage contains details on appropriate hygiene procedures.
- Encourage participants to check clothing, socks and footwear for weed seeds.
- Don't rush off. A short time for discussing the highlights (and lowlights!) of the activity and saying goodbye is very important to ensure that everyone leaves with a good feeling about the activity.
- If there are environmental or management concerns, discuss what participants can do e.g. write letters, send emails etc.
- Ensure all cars start and that there are no flat tyres before you leave, including your own.
- At the first opportunity ring your Emergency Contact (if using this system) to inform them of your safe departure.

10 After the activity

- If a reportable incident occurs complete the VNPA Incident Report Form, See *Appendix K*. This document can also be found at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>
- Within one week, please complete (legibly) an Activity Report Form, which gives VNPA essential information for planning, financial and statistical purposes and email to activities@vnpa.org.au. See *Appendix H*. This document can also be found at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>
- Inform the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee via the Activity Report of any participants who are of concern, and may be unsuitable for inclusion in future activities
- Leaders may choose to claim expenses over and above those of a participant: phone calls, postage, photocopying. Petrol and maps are not a valid claim.
- Send the following to activities@vnpa.org.au within one week of the activity:
 - Completed Activity Report Form Appendix H
 - Completed Activity Registration Sheet Appendix I
 - Completed Incident Report from Appendix K (if necessary)
 - Any photos that can be used for communication purposes.
- Email participants to thank them for coming and encourage them to continue to be involved with VNPA by checking the Activities Calendar and considering becoming a member (if not already).

11 Emergencies

Emergencies may arise at any time as a result of illness or injury, adverse weather conditions, unfavourable terrain, getting lost, missing walkers, being overdue for return and being caught by failing light.

Do not panic. Stop and seek the advice from experienced members present and make a careful assessment of the situation and options available. Make an informed decision and notify the rest of the group. Never leave individual walkers on their own!

11.1 Medical or accident

If you are dealing with injury or illness and require outside assistance, send out at least two (preferably more) of the most capable people to seek help. Make sure they have written confirmation of your location and any details of the group and its problems. Look after the remaining group.

If there has been an evacuation or external help was required, the leader must not leave the area until all participants are out, safe and accounted for.

If the accident or injury is serious, and/or there has been a required evacuation of a participant or external assistance, you must immediately contact the VNPA office on 03 9341 6500. You are also required to complete a detailed written report of the incident using *Appendix K Incident Report Form*, to be forwarded incidents@vnpa.org.au and activities@vnpa.org.au This will be filed for insurance purposes.

11.2 Incident reporting

All incidents should be reported by participants to the activity leader at the time they occur. Serious incidents must be reported by the leader to the VNPA Office:

- verbally on (03) 9341 6500 within 48 hours of the incident and
- in writing (*Appendix K Incident Report Form*) within 7 days.

See *Appendix K Incident Report Form*. This document can also be found at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

Examples of reportable incidents include:

- Any incident requiring first aid.
- An injury requiring medical or dental treatment from a health professional (e.g. doctor, dentist, medical practice, hospital). This does not include treatment of minor injuries by a qualified first aid officer.
- An incident that results in the attendance of emergency services including police, ambulance, fire, SES, Bush Search & Rescue, or similar.
- An incident that results in property damage or loss.
- A motor vehicle accident.
- Any serious misconduct including violence, abuse, neglect, discrimination or harassment.

11.3 Local conditions

Fire, floods, storms and accidents can limit and even prevent access to your proposed activity location. For up-to-date information on local conditions,

contact the land manager (Parks Victoria, local council etc.) prior to your visit. For information about current emergency situations, visit <http://emergency.vic.gov.au>

11.4 Total Fire Bans and other high fire danger days

For public safety, on days of a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Parks Victoria will close parks and forests, including state forests and national parks, in the relevant weather district.

In addition, some parks and picnic areas are regularly closed on days of Total Fire Ban or with a forecast Extreme Fire Danger Rating. For more information on Total Fire Bans or Fire Danger Ratings, visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

In the lead up to the activity, contact the land manager (Parks Victoria, local council etc.) to confirm that your proposed activity area will be open.

If an Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Danger has been declared for the proposed activity area, activities must be cancelled.

If a Total Fire Ban, or High Fire Danger has been declared for the proposed activity area, it is entirely at the discretion of the leader whether or not to continue the activity. Consider the following:

- The effect of heat on participants (exposure, dehydration).
- The risk that fire could quickly block off the walk route or vehicle access.
- Consultation with the local Ranger.
- Some parks or visitor areas judged to be at a lower risk of bushfire may remain open, such as those in inner-urban areas or areas recently burnt.
- The nature of the terrain and vegetation.
- Ensure you comply with fire ban regulations which include camp stoves.
- Deferring or relocating the activity.
- If in doubt, cancel the activity.

Even if it is not a day of Total Fire Ban, you may consider cancelling, deferring or relocating an activity on a day of high heat or fire danger.

11.5 Bushfires

All leaders should have a good idea of where and when to expect bushfires and what to do if you encounter a fire, either on foot or when driving.

Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone areas in the world and fire danger increases over the summer months. Information about current fires can be obtained by calling the

Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 240 667 or by visiting <http://emergency.vic.gov.au>.

Do not attempt to visit a fire affected area until it has been declared safe and be aware that some fire affected parks and access roads may remain closed for several months after the fire for recovery works.

Information about park and road closures can be obtained from the website of the relevant land manager.

11.6 Storms

It is highly recommended not to undertake activities in areas where storm activity has been predicted. Trees and limbs may fall, tracks may become impassable, water levels in waterways may rise sharply and there is an increased risk of lightning strikes. Information on local weather warnings can be found by visiting the Australian Bureau of Meteorology at <http://www.bom.gov.au>

11.7 Lightning strikes

The distance (in kilometres) to a lightning flash may be estimated by dividing the time delay (in seconds) between the flash and the sound of thunder by three.

If you are caught in a thunderstorm with lightning, find shelter urgently. Do not shelter under single or small clumps of trees. If unable to find shelter, ask people to spread out and crouch down with your hands on your feet, ideally in a hollow. Do not lie down as this will increase the conducting surface area.

If you hear or feel local signs of increased electrical activity (hair standing up, electrical buzzing from nearby objects), quickly move away to another area. People struck by lightning rarely die, but may need first aid e.g. for burns, shock.

11.8 Severe Weather Warnings

If the Bureau of Meteorology has declared a Severe Weather Warning for the location of the activity, the activity must be cancelled.

12 Promoting activities

Bushwalks and other activities submitted by volunteer leaders that meet all of the Bushwalking Program procedures, are approved by the Community Learning and Engagement manager for inclusion in the VNPA Activities Calendar at www.vnpa.org.au/explore/bushwalking-and-activities/.

This calendar contains activities and events from across VNPA (not just Bushwalking Program activities) and includes citizen science, activities for families and nature education courses.

This Activities Calendar is promoted by VNPA through:

- At least 8 emails per year to the Activities Calendar email list (approx. every 6-8 weeks).
- Social media posts on VNPA social media pages.

It is also possible to do specific social media posts for particular activities. Leaders can request to have a specific social media post for their walk/activity by emailing activities@vnpa.org.au.

VNPA also has a current account with MeetUp. VNPA bushwalking leaders may wish to post their own walk/activity on VNPA Bushwalking Program MeetUp page. However, this should link back to the listing of the walk/activity on the VNPA Activities Calendar. See below for how to use MeetUp.

13 COVID Safe guidelines

VNPA COVID Safe Plan for nature-based activities involves the following:

- Participants asked not to attend activities if they have any symptoms of Covid-19 including fever, cough and sore throat.
- Participants asked not to attend activity if they are a household contact of a positive Covid-19 case.
- Participants asked to bring their own hand sanitiser.
- Leaders to provide hand sanitiser at activity.
- Hand sanitiser to be available for use alongside shared equipment, e.g. pen, camera etc.

Text to be provided to participants prior to activities can be found in Section 7.5 Activity Notes

14 A final word on leading

Enjoy your activity and your leadership. Remember that:

- Good planning often makes the activity much more enjoyable.
- The best decision may sometimes be to cancel or abort an activity.
- You cannot please all the group all the time.
- The environment is there to be enjoyed, not endured.
- You're never too old to learn new tricks!!

Please contact any of the Bushwalking Program Subcommittee if you would like further information or have ideas that you think might benefit other leaders.

15 Summary of documents

15.1 Available online

VNPA New Bushwalking Leader Mentor Checklist

<https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

VNPA Bushwalking Program Activity Submission Form

<https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

VNPA Activities Calendar <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/bushwalking-and-activities/>

VNPA Bushwalking and Activities Everything you need to know webpage

<https://vnpa.org.au/explore/bushwalking-and-activities-everything/>

VNPA Navigation Guide Ed. 5 <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

VNPA Beginners Overnight Equipment Notes <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

15.2 Summary of Appendices Documents

Appendix A VNPA Code of Conduct

Appendix B VNPA Child Safe Policy

*Appendix C Activity Plan and Risk Assessment Template for Higher Risk Activities

Appendix D Standard Risk Assessment for Lower Risk Activities

*Appendix E Emergency Procedure for Leaders

*Appendix F Emergency Procedures for Emergency Contact

*Appendix G Emergency Procedures for Committee

*Appendix H Trip Report Form

*Appendix I Activity Registration Sheet

*Appendix J Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines for Activity Leaders

*Appendix K Incident Report Form

*These Appendices are also available as separate (and more user-friendly) documents at <https://vnpa.org.au/explore/program/leader-resources/>

APPENDIX A: VNPA Code of Conduct

VNPA members, Councillors, committee members, activity leaders, volunteers and staff must:

- Behave honestly and with integrity.
- Act with care and diligence.
- Treat everyone with respect and courtesy and without harassment.
- At all times behave in a way that upholds VNPA's values and the integrity and good reputation of the VNPA.
- Use VNPA resources in a proper manner.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.
- Disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent).
- Not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes.
- Not make improper use of:
 - inside information, or
 - VNPA duties, status, power or authority, in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for any person(s).
- Respect the operation of any current enterprise bargaining agreement with staff.
- Comply with all applicable Australian laws.
- Comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given with authority of Council.
- Comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the Council.

APPENDIX B: VNPA Child Safe Policy

VNPA is committed to promoting and protecting at all times the best interests of children involved in its programs.

All children, regardless of their gender, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, sexual orientation, or family or social background, have equal rights to protection from abuse.

VNPA has zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at VNPA is responsible for the protection of the children involved with our organisation and reporting information about suspected child abuse.

Child protection is a shared responsibility between VNPA, all employees, workers, contractors, associates, and members of the VNPA community.

VNPA will consider the opinions of children and use their opinions to develop child protection policies.

VNPA supports and respects all children, staff and volunteers. VNPA is committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.

All staff and volunteer leaders of activities for the public are required to have a current Working with Children Check.

If any person believes a child is at immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

APPENDIX C: Activity Plan and Risk Assessment for Higher Risk Activities - example

Activity Details	Activity Name:	Yankee Creek, Wombat State Forest
	Grade:	Hard
	Type of activity	e.g. Walk, Talk & Gawk, easy walk, overnight or extended, base camp
	Description:	An adventurous off trail walk requiring negotiation of scrub and creative navigation. Beautiful forest and gorge views with some walking along one the lesser-known tributaries of the Lerderderg River. Although short in distance, due to the terrain, this walk may take 5 hours to complete.
	Distance:	8 km
	Date:	Sunday 5th March
	No. participants:	Limit 6
	New/repeated activity	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat
	Have you completed a trial of this activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Previous incidents:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Activity Leader:	Name:	Name
	Landline (evening)	(03) 9341 0419
	Email:	name@email.com.au
	Who will supervise the activity? E.g. volunteer leader, qualified instructor from partner group	
	Leader's skills & experience.	e.g. Experienced leader and bushwalker who has completed many walks locally, interstate and overseas. Completed this walk more than 10 times. Led this walk for the past 3 years.
	Leader's qualifications & training.	Completed VNPA mentoring, Navigation and Bush Search & Rescue courses. Completed Certificate IV in Outdoor Recreation (Holmesglen). Holds current First Aid Certificate.

Emergency Contact for activity:	Name:		
	Phone:		
	Escape routes (direct routes to assistance if something goes wrong)		
	Nearest medical facilities (Address, Phone Number)		
Time/Location		Location	Estimated time
	Arrival		
	Activity Start		
	Break 1		
	Break 2		
	Break 3		
	Break 4		
	Activity End		
	Departure (for home)		
	Distance & time from Melbourne		
	How to get there		
	Carpooling?		
	Activity route		
Facilities:	Toilets, showers, tables etc.		
	Availability of water		
	Car parking and car shuttle arrangements, or public transport options		
	Suitability of area for the time of the year	Allow for all possible conditions (e.g. cold, wet, poor visibility, hot, lightning).	
	Highlights and points		

	of interest.	
Demands upon Participants	Fitness and health requirements (e.g. sustained climbs or descents)	
	Phobias (e.g. heights, lightning, snakes)	
	Participant skills required:	
	Participant skills recommended:	
	Will you identify manage any known medical conditions of participants?	Yes No
	Will you assess the participant's skills, experience & expectations to ensure compatibility with those required for the activity.	Yes No
Equipment required:	Leader	e.g. 1 litre water and light snacks Satellite phone Compass/GPS Topo/maps First aid kit Matches Sunscreen
	Participants	e.g. 1 litre water and light snacks Mobile phone Wet weather gear Hat Sunscreen
Sources of other information/	Maps and park information (e.g. web	Yes

resources to assist planning of the activity?	links, Park Notes)	
	Ring Parks Victoria for latest information	Yes
	Activity Notes for participants	Yes
	Trip Notes from previous trips of the same activity (different leader).	Yes
	Local knowledge (personal, local ranger, leaders of recent activities).	Yes
Environment:	Location of activity, including terrain, land type and conservation status of the land	
	Condition of tracks, and likely impact of walking on them	
	Seasonal and weather considerations	
	Navigation requirements	
Other information		

RISK ASSESSMENT

Procedure

Risk management involves five steps:

1. Identifying the hazards or risk threats associated with an activity.
2. Describe the risk threats including possible impact on the organisation, person or environment.
3. Identifying the control measures already in place to mitigate the hazard/risk threat.
4. Assess the risks associated with each hazard/risk threat by identifying the nature of the impact that could be caused by the hazard/risk threat and the likelihood of it happening using the Risk Matrix below.
5. Review hazards and the control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

The risk categories and consequences outlined in the table below are examples of the severity of consequences outlined in the risk matrix and can be used to inform the overall risk rating.

Risk Matrix

	CONSEQUENCE				
LIKELIHOOD	Inconvenient -1	Minor – 2	Moderate – 3	Major– 4	Catastrophic - 5
Almost certain - 5	Low	Medium	High	High	High
Likely - 4	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
50/50 - 3	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
Unlikely - 2	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
Rare – 1	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium

Actions for risk ratings

Low	risks should be recorded, monitored and managed by Program Manager of delegate.
Medium	mitigation to reduce the likelihood and consequences of risks identified and managed by Executive Director or delegate.
High	Mitigation to be approved and monitored in an ongoing manner by Council.

Risk Categories & consequences

	CONSEQUENCE				
CATEGORY	Inconvenient -1	Minor – 2	Moderate – 3	Major– 4	Catastrophic - 5
Financial	\$1000	\$5000	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$250,000
Reputational	One complaint	Minor adverse media attention or complaints	Recurrent adverse media attention or complaints	Significant adverse media attention, complaints and impacts on key funding bodies	Serious adverse media, complaints and impact on key funding bodies.

Injury at work, activities, events	No treatment required	Medical treatment up to one week	Medical treatment up to one month	Medical treatment with long absence	Permanent disablement, death
Time impacts	1 day	1 week	1 month	6 months	Over 12 months
Regulatory	Inconvenient	Minor issues, non-compliances and breach	Breach, report to authority, fine	Significant breach, report, fine	Serious breach, prosecution, fine
Legal	Inconvenient	Minor legal issues	Major legal issues	Litigation, defending, initiating	Losing legal action

RISK ASSESSMENT - example

Describe hazard or threat and possible impact on person/organisation/ environment	Likelihood (1-5)	Consequence (1-5)	Rating	CONTROL MEASURES
Walking on formed paths or bush tracks – trips/falls	2	3	Medium	Remind participants about hazards of terrain. First aid kit amongst the group. People will be in groups of no less than 4 people at any one time so that emergency services can be sought and support can be provided to someone who falls. Highlight any notable risks in the Trip Notes.
Walking on formed paths or bush tracks – cuts/scratches	2	1	Low	Inform participants of appropriate clothing and check they are dressed appropriately prior to starting walking. Participants should carry a personal first aid kit
Walking on formal paths or bush tracks – snakes/spiders	1	4	Medium	Inform participants they are expected to wear appropriate clothing (e.g. boots, long trousers). Avoid obvious hazards e.g. long grass. First aid kit with snake bandage.
Walking on formal paths or tracks – falling trees and limbs	1	5	Medium	Remind participants of the hazards of walking under trees.
Walking on formal paths or tracks – person getting lost, (including children)	2	4	Medium	Stop at all track junctions for group to re-gather. Designated ‘whip’ last person on the track. If leaving the track leave your backpack on the track and notify someone. Inform leader if leaving for an unavoidable reason. Parents/guardians to supervise children. Clear emergency plan prepared in advance of activity.

Exposure to weather – sunburn/dehydration	2	2	Low	Inform participants to bring appropriate clothing for all possible weather conditions (ego sunhat, raincoat). Ensure all participants have appropriate wear at the beginning of day. Advise participants on carrying water and sunscreen.
Exposure to weather – heatstroke/hypothermia	1	4	Low	Inform participants to bring appropriate clothing for all possible weather conditions (e.g. sunhat, raincoat). Ensure all participants have appropriate wear at the beginning of day. Advise participants on carrying water and sunscreen.
Compost/pit toilet – Contamination from use	2	2	Low	Advise on appropriate hand sanitation.
Lack of food/water – Dehydration/effects of low blood sugar etc.	2	2	Low	Inform participants they need to bring adequate water, lunch and snacks.
Medical emergency – Personal medical conditions leading to illness/injury	1	3	low	Ask participants for information on relevant medical conditions prior to the trip. Leader to hold a current first aid certificate and carry an appropriate first aid kit.
Water supply – Contamination	1	2	low	Advise people to boil or purify their drinking water sourced from rivers, creeks or rainwater tanks.
Driving to activity and/or car shuttle – Car accident	1	5	Medium	Participants advised to drive to the conditions. Vehicles to be parked in visible and legal locations. Take care when getting in and out of vehicles.
Extreme weather event, bushfire – burns/injury/death	1	5	Medium	Consult with DEECA/CFA staff. Cancel activity if Extreme or Catastrophic Fire risk declared.
Extreme weather event, storm/lightning	1	5	Medium	Assess situation. If necessary, move group to a safe or protected area. Cancel activity if Bureau of Meteorology issues a severe weather warning for the area
Inadequate experience of participants – slow walking, injury, dissatisfaction	2	1	low	Ask for information from people when they register to ensure they have suitable skills/ability for activity
Conflict/ Dispute/ Harassment - Participant harassing others; won't follow instructions; conflict	2	1	low	Participants to be reminded that they must follow the Leaders instructions during the activity. Harassment; bullying; abuse; aggression; violence or threats of violence etc will not be tolerated.

APPENDIX D: Standard Risk Assessment for Lower Risk Activities

Describe hazard or threat and possible impact on person/organisation/environment	Likelihood (1-5)	Consequence (1-5)	Rating	CONTROL MEASURES
Walking on formed paths or bush tracks – trips/falls	2	3	Medium	Remind participants about hazards of terrain. First aid kit amongst the group. People will be in groups of no less than 4 people at any one time so that emergency services can be sought and support can be provided to someone who falls. Highlight any notable risks in the Trip Notes.
Walking on formed paths or bush tracks – cuts/scratches	2	1	Low	Inform participants of appropriate clothing and check they are dressed appropriately prior to starting walking. Participants should carry a personal first aid kit
Walking on formal paths or bush tracks – snakes/spiders	1	4	Medium	Inform participants they are expected to wear appropriate clothing (e.g. boots, long trousers). Avoid obvious hazards e.g. long grass. First aid kit with snake bandage.
Walking on formal paths or tracks – falling trees and limbs	1	5	Medium	Remind participants of the hazards of walking under trees.
Walking on formal paths or tracks – person getting lost, (including children)	2	4	Medium	Stop at all track junctions for group to re-gather. Designated “whip” last person on the track. If leaving the track leave your backpack on the track and notify someone. Inform leader if leaving for an unavoidable reason. Parents/guardians to supervise children. Clear emergency plan prepared in advance of activity.
Exposure to weather – sunburn/dehydration	2	2	Low	Inform participants to bring appropriate clothing for all possible weather conditions (e.g. sunhat, raincoat). Ensure all participants have appropriate wear at the beginning of day. Advise participants on carrying water and sunscreen.
Exposure to weather – heatstroke/hypothermia	1	4	Low	Inform participants to bring appropriate clothing for all possible weather conditions (e.g. sunhat, raincoat). Ensure all participants have appropriate wear at the beginning of day. Advise participants on carrying water and sunscreen.

Compost/pit toilet – Contamination from use	2	2	Low	Advise on appropriate hand sanitation.
Lack of food/water – Dehydration/effects of low blood sugar etc.	2	2	Low	Inform participants they need to bring adequate water, lunch and snacks.
Medical emergency – Personal medical conditions leading to illness/injury	1	3	low	Ask participants for information on relevant medical conditions prior to the trip. Leader to hold a current first aid certificate and carry an appropriate first aid kit.
Water supply – Contamination	1	2	low	Advise people to boil or purify their drinking water sourced from rivers, creeks or rainwater tanks.
Driving to activity and/or car shuttle – Car accident	1	5	Medium	Participants advised to drive to the conditions. Vehicles to be parked in visible and legal locations. Take care when getting in and out of vehicles.
Extreme weather event, bushfire – burns/injury/death	1	5	Medium	Consult with DEECA/CFA staff. Cancel activity if Extreme or Catastrophic Fire risk declared.
Extreme weather event, storm/lightning	1	5	Medium	Assess situation. If necessary, move group to a safe or protected area. Cancel activity if Bureau of Meteorology issues a severe weather warning for the area
Inadequate experience of participants – slow walking, injury, dissatisfaction	2	1	low	Ask for information from people when they register to ensure they have suitable skills/ability for activity
Conflict/ Dispute/ Harassment - Participant harassing others; won't follow instructions; conflict	2	1	low	Participants to be reminded that they must follow the Leaders instructions during the activity. Harassment; bullying; abuse; aggression; violence or threats of violence; etc. will not be tolerated.

APPENDIX E: Emergency Procedure for Leaders

OUTLINE OF WHAT TO DO IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY REQUIRING OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE, e.g. due to injury, illness, bushfire threat etc. EVERY situation will be different so these are only supplementary notes which must be considered in light of your situation and your common sense.

- 1. DO NOT PANIC. TRY TO STAY CALM AND MAKE CAREFUL, CONSIDERED DECISIONS.**
2. Remember that although you are the Leader and responsible for the decisions in the end, it is usually good counsel to consult with others in the group and your Leadership style may need to change to be more authoritative and autocratic. You will need the group's help and co-operation, e.g. with medical knowledge, pooling food, water, clothing, building a fire, navigation, carrying extra gear. Don't forget that others in the group may need help or that the rest of the group needs your continued leadership.
3. If it is definite that external assistance is required, decide how best and quickest to get to that assistance.
4. If you decide to ring the Police Search and Rescue, ring **000 and ask for Police**. They will coordinate a response.

Be ready to give them:

- your name
 - your exact location
 - the nature of the emergency and assistance required
 - the number in the group
 - the location and number of cars available
 - the relative experience within the group, e.g. any first aiders
 - the relative 'condition' of the group
5. You must also ring your Emergency Contact (EC) ASAP. Keep ringing till you speak to them. If you cannot speak to your EC, call the VNPA office
 6. Stay with your group until the emergency is resolved, even if you are the person coming out for help. Don't leave the area until all walkers are accounted for and safe.
 7. If there has been an emergency of a lesser nature, please complete the section of the trip report form available for minor incidents.
 8. Make sure that if medical treatment was required the Walker knows to contact the VNPA Office for details about the Accident Insurance procedures.
 9. Depending on the situation, you may need to arrange a debrief session for those involved after the event. The **full procedure** for contacting the EC before your trip is as described in the booklet, *Guidelines for Leaders*.

Briefly the details are as follows:

For Non-metropolitan Day Walks

You must give the following details over the phone to the EC:

- starting and finishing points
- name of the relevant map
- approximate route
- expected time of return to the cars
- EMERGENCY ALERT TIME (the time at which the EC should take action, allowing sufficient time to cover any minor problems)
- number in the party
- leader's car registration number
- name & phone number of 1 or 2 people on the walk

For overnight and Extended Walks

You must post or email the following details to the EC in sufficient time to arrive before the activity:

- trip notes - including name and copy of map
- name, address and emergency contact phone number of all participants
- route, marked on a map, and expected time of return to cars
- EMERGENCY ALERT TIME (the time at which the EC should take action, allowing sufficient time to cover any minor problems)
- Leader's car registration number

EC Coordinator

Terese Dalman 0413 234 130

VNPA OFFICE (03) 9341 6500:

THE LEADER MUST TELEPHONE THE EC AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO REPORT SAFE RETURN OF THE GROUP

APPENDIX F: Emergency Procedure for Emergency Contact

1. Availability

- Dates offered for the Emergency Contact (EC) Roster are arranged by the EC Coordinator prior to the program being sent to the printer
- If you are unable to be on duty for your allocated date/s, please ring one of the other ECs to arrange for them to be the contact for that date/s. Ring each Leader for the weekend to notify them of the change.
- If none of the other regular ECs are available, please contact the EC Coordinator so that another EC can be found
- For midweek walks (if Leader is required to use the system) the Leader is to contact the EC nominated for the weekend before their walk

2. Procedure

- The Leader should have rung you well before the specified weekend to check that you are still available as EC or to cancel their activity. If the Leader has not rung you, you are NOT required to ring them to see if they are still doing the trip, but you MAY choose to do so.
- The procedure Leaders are to follow is as described in the green booklet, *Guideline for Leaders* and in the EC Procedures for Leaders:

Briefly the details are as follows:

For Non-metropolitan Day Walks

Leaders must give the following details over the phone to the EC:

- starting and finishing points
- name of the relevant map
- approximate route
- expected time of return to the cars**
- EMERGENCY ALERT TIME** (the time at which the EC should take action, allowing sufficient time to cover any minor problems)
- number in the party
- leader's car registration number
- name & phone number of 1 or 2 people on the walk

For overnight and Extended Walks

Leaders must post the following details to the EC in sufficient time to arrive before the activity:

- Trip notes - including name and copy of map.
- Name, address and emergency contact phone number of all participants.
- Route, marked on a map, and expected time of return to cars.
- EMERGENCY ALERT TIME (EAT) (the time at which the EC should take action, allowing sufficient time to cover any minor problems).
- Leader's car registration number.

** Expected time of finishing = time Leader expects to be back at the cars and is able to ring you

** Emergency Alert Time = time at which the Leader would like you to take action if you have not heard from them.

THE LEADER MUST TELEPHONE THE EC AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO REPORT SAFE RETURN OF THE GROUP.

If the Leader rings late, ask why, and if their explanation is unreasonable explain to them very firmly the subsequent problems and the unfairness to you of the late call. Remind them to ring earlier on future trips.

3. Failure of Leader to ring by the Emergency Alert Time (Eat)

- If the Leader fails to ring by the EAT, RING THE LEADER to see if he/she has forgotten to ring you.
- If you can't reach the leader, ring one of the other walker's home phone numbers or emergency contact numbers. Take care not to alarm people as it may just be a failure to ring in.
- If you are unable to reach the Leader or gain satisfactory information, ring the EC Coordinator who in consultation with Committee members will determine the appropriate action to be taken.
- Should the EC Coordinator NOT be available ring the BUSHWALKING PROGRAM Convenor in the first instance, then other Committee members.

4. Leader rings requesting assistance

- Advise the Leader to ring the Police on 000

If this is not appropriate, the EC will speak through options. It is important to consider how to ring them back, and, as there may be a problem with this, arrange for them to ring you again shortly to confirm whether help is required.

- It **may** be appropriate for you to confirm the following information with the Leader:
 - Leader's name

- the exact location of the group
- the nature of the emergency and assistance required
- the number in the group
- the location and number of cars available
- the relative experience within the group, e.g. any first aiders
- the relative "condition" of the group

5. Leader rings saying that they are to be later than expected

- Note new estimated time of return and inform any concerned relatives who ring you. Assure them that the group is safe and is now expected to return at a later time.
- If you are at all concerned, contact the EC Coordinator or the BUSHWALKING PROGRAM Convenor and let them know the details.

6. Cancelled trips

- If a planned trip is cancelled the Leader is to ring you to let you know before the activity.
- Please ring the EC Coordinator, in the first instance, at any time if there are problems.
- ECs are asked to provide feedback to the EC Coordinator at the end of each program.
- This can be done by clearly marking a spare copy of the Walks Program or presenting in the form of a table the following information for each activity/trip for which you are the EC:
 - No contact by Leader
 - Cancelled and notified
 - Phoned in – OK / Late
 - Paperwork – OK / Late / adequate / inadequate
 - Leader needs more training re EC procedures

The EC Coordinator has available some examples of tables which can be used. Feedback enables the Committee to see if there needs to be further updating or training of Leaders.

APPENDIX G: Emergency Procedures for Committee

What to do when the Emergency Contact (EC) rings you to say that there are problems

Remember that each situation is different and may require different actions. These are guidelines only.

1. No phone call from the leader by the Emergency Alert Time (EAT)

- Discuss the trip and any known details with the EC.
- Note all pertinent details in case further action is required by you.
- Check the EC's list of walkers (if available) to ascertain if there are any other Leaders or experienced walkers on the trip. This may influence your subsequent decisions.
- Decide whether to take action now or wait and get the EC to try ringing the Leader again within another hour.
- Ring another Committee member who is likely to know the leader and/or the area being walked.
- In conjunction with other Committee members or experienced Leaders make the decision when to contact the Police. Depending on the walk, the weather and the Leader, take into account the EAT built in.
- Give the Police **(000)** the known details of the situation and let them decide on the next step. Do not at this stage ask them to take action - they make that decision.

2. Leader asks for assistance

Hopefully, the EC will have arranged for the **Leader to ring the Police S&R direct**. However, if you need to take further action, get all pertinent details from the EC:

- Leader's name
- number in the group
- exact location of the group
- nature of the assistance required
- phone number to be able to ring the Leader with information on action taken
- when the Leader will call again in case you are unable to ring them back
- location and number of cars
- relative experience within the group, e.g. any first aiders
- relative 'condition' of the group.

Ring one of the other Committee members and consult on action to be taken. Keep the EC informed of your decisions. It should be the concerned relative who rings the EC for details. However, if required, get the EC to contact any walker's emergency contact numbers. Give them the details as to what is to be said.

APPENDIX H: Activity Report Form

EMAIL FORM – BUSHWALKING PROGRAM TRIP REPORT

Within ONE week of your trip email this form completed to activities@vnpa.org.au

If the trip is cancelled, please call the VNPA office on (03)93416500 or email activities@vnpa.org.au with the reason why **AND** let the Emergency Contact know if relevant.

Activity title/location: _____

Activity Date: _____

Leader/s: _____ **Activity Grade:** _____

Activity Map and Reference: _____

Please attach Trip Notes so that someone else can lead this trip in the future.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: (List names and phone numbers overleaf)

	Members (including leader)	Non-members	Number turned away	Number with pass
Adults				
Children				
TOTAL				

Please note any items you wish to bring to the attention of VNPA.

e.g. highlights, problems, unfit participants, track condition etc. (First Aid Report, see over).

State of the Park. Please report on any issues concerning what is happening in the park if you traveled in one. e.g. erosion, state of tracks/signs, feral animals, 4WD, mountain bikes, horse riding, shooters etc.

--

Photos were taken by:

MEMBERS

	First Name	Family Name	Phone	Email	Emergency Contact Phone
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

NON-MEMBERS

	First Name	Family Name	Phone	Email	Emergency Contact Phone
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					

FIRST AID INCIDENT REPORT (Anything possibly requiring further action and / or insurance claim but not blisters or scratches etc.)

APPENDIX I: Activity Registration Sheet

Activity Name/Location:			
Activity Leader:			

Please note the VNPA is a not for profit community organisation. We are not a commercial operator. Most of our organisers, leaders and helpers are volunteers. We advise participants to take careful responsibility of themselves and their possessions and exercise care with all participants on this activity.

All participants of a VNPA activity do so at their own risk in all respects and accept full responsibility for their fitness, preparedness for the activity and for any injury. The Association, its office bearers, organisers, leaders and helpers are absolved from any liability in respect of any injury, loss or damage suffered by the participant while engaged in any VNPA activity to the extent permitted by law. While incidents are rare, the great outdoors can throw up challenges.

By signing this sheet, you acknowledge/accept the risks associated with this activity.

	Name	Signature	Emergency contact name	Emergency contact phone
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

APPENDIX J: Acknowledgement of Country guidelines

VNPA Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines for smaller activities (less than 30 people), e.g. small citizen science activity, small campaign activities, bushwalk, education activity, formal meetings.

Leaders are strongly encouraged to carry out an Acknowledgement of Country for all activities, however it is not compulsory. Below are some suggested options for leaders for an Acknowledgement of Country.

To carry out an Acknowledgement of Country, leaders are encouraged to research the location of the activity and note the Traditional Custodians of the land where the activity is planned. This should be used to inform a place-based Acknowledgement of Country for that activity. For information on Traditional Owner groups across Victoria, see <https://achris.vic.gov.au/weave/wca.html>

Option 1: (for when the formally recognised Traditional Owner group is known):

I/we acknowledge the <insert name of people here (e.g. Yorta Yorta)> people, First People of the land/sea on which we <gather/meet/walk/research/learn about/care for> today, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I/we extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be here today.'

Option 2: (for areas where there are no formally recognised Traditional Owner groups):

I/we acknowledge the First People of the land/sea on which we <gather/meet/walk/research/learn about> today, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I/we extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be here today.'

Leaders may also wish to include VNPA's formal Acknowledgement of Country to one of the above two options.

The Victorian National Parks Association also acknowledges the many First People of the area now known as Victoria, honours their continuing care for and connection to Country. VNPA supports Traditional Owner joint-management of parks and public land for conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

APPENDIX K: Incident Report Form



Level 3, 60 Leicester St, Carlton Victoria 3053
 t. (03) 9347 5188 f. (03) 9347 5199
 e. vnpa@vnpa.org.au
 w. www.vnpa.org.au
 ABN 34 217 717 593

VNPA INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name	
Full name:	Date of birth:
Address:	
Contact number:	Email:
<input type="checkbox"/> I was involved in the incident <input type="checkbox"/> I witnessed the incident <input type="checkbox"/> I was at the scene but did not witness the incident	
Relationship to VNPA: <input type="checkbox"/> Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> VNPA Member <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify):	
Details of incident	
Activity:	Activity leader/supervisor:
Location of incident:	Time & date of incident:
Brief description of the circumstances leading up to the incident (nature of the activity, weather at the time of the incident, number of participants, any witnesses to the incident, etc)	
Brief description of the incident :	
Brief description of injuries that occurred:	
Action taken (at the scene of the incident):	Was first aid provided: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No First Aider: _____ Did an emergency service attend the scene? (Tick as appropriate) <input type="checkbox"/> Police – Incident Report Number _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Fire (MFB or CFA) <input type="checkbox"/> Ambulance <input type="checkbox"/> State Emergency Service <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor
Was medical attention sought following the incident? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital – (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor (GP) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ Please provide details, if required.	

Incident feedback

In your opinion, why did the incident occur/what factors contributed?

In your opinion, what action could be taken to prevent such an incident being repeated?

In completing this form, you confirm that the information provided is true and correct.

If you wish to provide any further information or a personal statement – please attach to this form.

Complete and return this form to the VNPA:

Post: Private & Confidential
Finance & Operations Manager
Level 3, 60 Leicester Street
CARLTON VIC 3053

Email: incidents@vnpa.org.au