

WEA RAMBLERS

LEADING WALKS

A GUIDE FOR NEW AND EXISTING LEADERS

(This document has been redrafted to comply with the "Leader Guidelines" document of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW Inc.)

Walk leaders are the Club's most valuable resource. Without them there would be no Club and so you, as a leader, are making the single biggest contribution to the Club's success that any member can make. This is something about which you can feel proud. Remember, although you are leading people on your walk, you are doing this as a volunteer and when you lead a walk you have the right to assume that each person on your walk, by signing the sign-on form, assumes responsibility for his/her own health and safety.

Selecting a walk

- Simply choose a walk that you have enjoyed walking. Choose areas and walks that are within your capabilities as a leader.
- As a new leader you may want to consider easier walks that are easy to get to by public transport. Members may be reluctant to go on adventurous activities with leaders who are unknown to them. Once known by members, you may choose to branch out into more adventurous activities.
- Refer to www.wildwalks.com for easy and interesting walks.

Planning a walk

- The pre-walk is a good confidence booster and is useful to determine the approximate walking time and grade of walk. Assess any safety issues/potential risks such as creek crossings, slippery tracks, busy road crossings, etc. Work out suitable spots for morning tea and lunch and add extra time for these and any other activities you may have planned. Check to see if there are any toilets and any taps with drinking water along the way. Check mobile phone coverage especially in thick bushland.
- If possible, pre-walk your walk at the same time and under similar seasonal conditions as your programmed walk. It can make quite a difference to planned stopping points. Also, be aware of tidal variations on coastal walks.
- Think about problems that may arise on the walk such as an injury or illness that may require the walk to be shortened or some walkers to exit before the planned finish. Work out exit routes for these circumstances.
- Have an alternate plan in case of unforeseen circumstances e.g. flash flooding, track erosion or closure, transport changes etc
- Make a note at points where people may get lost.
- Use the WEA Ramblers website (www.wearamblers.org.au) - select "Walk Leaders" in menu; "Forms for Walks Leaders - Walks Submission Sheet", complete and return the form to the Walks Co-ordinator by the due date outlined in the current Walks Programme. Ensure that you describe the walk and clearly identify potential hazards.
- Safety suggestions such as walking poles, gaiters, river shoes/volleyballs or glasses may be included in the Walks Submission Sheet for certain walks.
- Include the walk grade (1-6) and approximate kilometres. If unsure of the grade, nominate the more difficult grade. A full description of each grade is included in the Walks Programme.

A few days before the walk

- Double check all transport arrangements a few days before your walk, particularly trackwork for trains. Also check expected weather conditions, and in summer, fire conditions and park closures (if applicable).
- Contact the following for information on park closures, fire bans and bush hazards:

National Parks & Wildlife Service (Mon-Fri 9.00am to 5.00pm, Sat-Sun 9.30am to 4.30pm)	1300 361 967
Rural Fire Service recorded information	9898 1356
Transport Info Line (for transport times and Trackwork)	131 500 www.131500.com.au

- For bushwalks, leave comprehensive details of the walk with a reliable person, including instructions on what to do if you do not return at the expected time.
- Prospective members need your approval as leader to go on the walk. When they contact you, it is important to determine whether they are capable of doing the walk at a steady pace. The best way of doing this is to ask for examples of their recent walks. Suggest a lesser walk to them if you think they are not capable of doing your walk, e.g., one grade lower. Members' guests also need your approval and it is the responsibility of each member to assess their guest's capability and advise you accordingly.
- If you cannot lead your walk on your designated day, contact one of the substitute leaders listed below: Please find these leaders' phone number in the normal walk program.

Paula Akkari
George Elliott
Michael Pratt
Bronny Niemeyer
(Eastern Suburbs & Harbour)

John Carlson
Joan Gordon
Arthur Cunningham

On the day of the walk

- Ensure that you carry whatever equipment is required (this could include compass, map, first aid kit and any other appropriate items). Leaders should carry a fully charged mobile phone wherever possible.
- Know the weather forecast as the walk may need modification or even cancellation.
- Get to the meeting point early. Make sure that you have any maps and/or track notes that you plan to use.
- Take a copy of the Attendance Sheet (which includes the Risk Waiver) included in your Leaders Pack. Alternatively, this can be downloaded from the Ramblers website or a copy obtained from the Walks Co-ordinator. All walkers, including members and visitors need to fill out the details. Visitors need also complete the back of the form. Check that the emergency contact details are provided by everyone. Don't forget you'll need a pen for this. Add any additional risks not already listed in the space provided on the form.
- Note that if there are not three walkers including the leader, the walk does not proceed as an official club walk.
- Check that first time or inexperienced members and visitors have water, lunch, hats, sunscreen and correct footwear and backpack. It is the leader's right to refuse to take persons who may jeopardise the safety of the group.
- Ensure everyone has adequate food and water, at least one litre for a day walk. In hotter conditions carry two litres or more if there are no taps on the walk.
- Form a circle in a quiet area to welcome everyone and provide the opportunity for everyone to introduce themselves in the traditional way. A special welcome to new members and visitors is customary.
- During the circle, advise details of the walk including expected terrain, distance, possible hazards, expected return time etc and that all participants have the requisite experience, equipment and fitness for the walk. The leader has the right to refuse participation to any persons they consider may present a risk to themselves or other participants or do not have the necessary skills for the walk.
- If appropriate to the walk, ascertain if anyone is carrying a mobile phone, GPS or EPIRB for emergency use and whether any participants have a current first aid certificate and/or medical training.
- Set ground rules assertively and clearly. Walkers must walk behind the leader and ahead of the tail at all times.

- Appoint a tail - either ask for a volunteer or prearrange a fellow walker you are comfortable with as tail. It is better to have a known person who has some experience as a tail. Ask another walker to wait at track junctions to ensure everybody goes the right way. Carry out regular head counts to ensure you have everyone. Instruct people who need to leave the track for a few minutes to let the tail know and to leave their packs on the track.

During the walk

- Give warning of any hazards encountered (low branch, slippery area, car approaching etc) as walk progresses.
- Have regular drink and rest breaks and allow walkers to regroup. Ensure that the slower walkers are given sufficient rest time. People often need to be reminded to drink in all weather conditions. When temperatures are high, be particularly aware if you use a pack hydration system that quite a few walkers will need to stop more often than you think to drink out of bottles.
- Look back frequently to make sure the tail is in sight and if necessary wait for him/her to catch up. This will give you a good idea of the pace of the walk, which is necessarily set by the slowest walker. Don't take off as soon as the tail arrives. Slower or less fit walkers will need time to catch their breath and have a drink.
- Cross roads safely. Cross as a group using traffic lights and pedestrian crossings where available.
- When you stop for morning tea and lunch advise people how long you will be stopping and then give about five minutes warning before you head off again.
- If anyone decides to leave the walk early ensure that they sign the back of the Attendance Sheet to acknowledge their decision.
- At the end of the walk you may wish to have coffee if there is a cafe handy. Let the walkers know and you are likely to get some caffeine addicts but also some people who need to dash off.
- Stop the group in a suitable spot to make any final comments and say farewell. Don't forget to thank those who have acted as 'tail' at the end of the walk. Advise walkers of public transport times if known.

After the walk

- If you have left details of your walk with someone in case of emergency (see above) remember to let that person know as soon as the group has returned.
- Complete the Attendance Sheet and send to the Walks Co-ordinator as advised on the form. This sheet is included in your Leaders Pack.

Accidents or Injuries on the walk

- Whilst it is the individual responsibility of each participant to carry their own first aid equipment, it is important that leaders make sure that they are well equipped in case someone forgets supplies.
- Remember that the role of the leader is that of a manager rather than a first aid expert. Ask the person in the group with the most first aid experience or current qualifications to carry out first aid with your support.
- Administer first aid as soon as possible.
- If necessary, use a mobile phone to call for assistance. 000 will get you through via your service provider and if you are out of range 112 will get you through via any service provider in the area.
- Remember to communicate with the rest of the party and let them know what is happening. If the party needs to be split (e.g. to allow an injured member to walk out slowly) appoint a leader for each group.
- In the event of a significant incident or injury, complete an Incident Report Form (available from website or from Walks Co-ordinator) and return it to the President within 48 hours, with a copy to the Walks Co-ordinator. In the event of serious injury, or if the injured walker indicates a wish to make an insurance claim, inform the President by phone or email as soon as possible.
- Contact the injured/ill walker after the walk to check on his/her health.

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY WALK!