Northern Rivers Outdoor Adventure Club (NROAC)

Child Safe Policy and Guidelines

Children are accepted on NROAC activities under certain conditions – primarily that each child is accompanied by a responsible adult taking responsibility for their care during the whole NRBC activity; and that the trip leader gives permission for their attendance.

NROAC has a duty of care to protect children from mental, physical or sexual abuse while they are engaged in Club activities. Any and all allegations of abuse must be dealt with promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially and reported to the police without delay.

NROAC endorses Bushwalking NSW's Safeguarding Children and Young People document; and is aware of NSW legislation requirements for child safety. Accordingly, NROAC has developed these guidelines for Child Safe Policy and Procedures.

Definitions:

Child	a person under the age of 18
Adult	person 18 years and older
Guardian	legal guardian under the law
Carer	an adult to whom permission is given by the parent/legal guardian to supervise and take responsibility for their child on a particular day or activity
Trip/activity leader	volunteer who leads an approved NRBC activity (as listed on the NRBC calendar of events)
Child abuse	is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

Physical Abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns and biting.

Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.

Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest and pornography.

Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

INSURANCE FOR CHILDREN ON NRBC ACTIVITIES

Waiver of Rights

Children cannot enter into contracts, so a legal guardian must sign the Acknowledgement of Risks and Obligations form on behalf of the child. The waiver is to acknowledge risks and acknowledge the person will minimise those risks. *Some Clubs may wish to use a waiver signed by the child's parent or guardian, waiving all the parent's or guardian's rights against the club, as well as a separate form to be signed by the person in charge of the child on the day of the activity, taking responsibility for the child on the day. The waiver signed by the parent or guardian could be a once-off form, signed before the child's first activity with the Club, or a form signed before each activity.*

A child is covered in the same way as an adult under Bushwalking Australia's insurance policies with the only difference being that, since children generally do not earn income, the Personal Accident policy only provides loss of income benefit to claimants earning an income

RESPONSIBILITIES and PROCEDURES:

BEFORE A CHILD ATTENDS A NROAC ACTIVITY

1. The leader of an activity has total discretion to approve or refuse the attendance of a child and/or to determine the maximum number of children that can attend an activity. If a leader has any questions about this policy, they are to contact the Activity Coordinator for further details or clarification. The leader may choose to notify other participants prior to the activity that children will be attending;

2. The parents should always ask the leader's permission prior to bringing a child on an NBOAC activity;

3. Children must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian or carer (in loco parentis) The parent, guardian or carer must be a financial member of NROAC;

4. If a child wishes to attend an activity, the parent/legal guardian or carer must, prior to the activity, contact the activity leader to discuss the child's attendance and obtain the leader's permission for the child to attend, and COMPLETE THE RISK WAIVER FORM FOR A CHILD (Appendix 1);

5. If a child is to be accompanied by a carer, prior to the activity, the parent/legal guardian: **a**. must complete the risk waiver (Appendix 1), and **b**. it is recommended that they contact the activity leader to find out details of the activity;

6. The carer must: **a.** contact the activity leader to discuss the child's attendance and obtain the leader's permission for the child to attend, and **b**. complete and sign a risk waiver form taking responsibility for the child on the day (Appendix 2);

7. The activity leader, as part of the pre-activity safety and risk management briefing must:

   a. Introduce child/parent/legal guardian/carer to activity participants;

   b. Explain the child supervision responsibilities of parent/legal guardian/carer to all activity participants.

FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS OF NRBC ACTIVITIES WHERE CHILDREN ARE INCLUDED

1. A pre-walk briefing to all participants, including children participating, should be given, that clearly identifies the activity organiser as a person to go to for help or assistance or if you feel unsafe during the walk;

2. It should be advised that participants should seek permission for the child and their accompanying adult before taking pictures of the child;

3. Participants should behave appropriately around children, including the use of language and avoiding dismissing children's concerns or objections;

4. Participants should notify the activity leader if you become aware of anything that makes you feel uncomfortable concerning a child that is participating, including interactions between other participants;

5. Leaders should ensure physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.

LEADERS of NROAC ACTIVITIES WHICH INCLUDE CHILDREN – ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Ensure all documentation has been completed prior to activity starting – namely waiver forms;

2. Ensure all activity participants are aware of the responsibility of the supervising adult;

3. Be aware of guidelines for the reporting of an incident;

4. If an incident occurs, the leader is to follow club guidelines and inform the NROAC Committee and/or coordinator for the activity, for example Walks Coordinator, Kayaking Coordinator, Cycling Coordinator, Abseiling Coordinator etc.

6. Assess risk of Injury: Leaders of Club activities have a high duty of care to children because children cannot fully understand the risks of an activity and therefore can't minimise them. To carry out risk management, leaders must keep in mind that there will be a significant range of physical ability, fitness, experience and common sense across a range of different minors. Leaders should gain an understanding before commencing any activity of the level of experience, fitness etc. of any child undertaking the walk or activity.

   If any issues are identified in respect to the child's suitability for a particular activity then either the child should not be allowed to participate, or additional risk mitigation measures should be taken to protect the child. For example, on a particularly challenging section, an experienced walker might walk in front and another behind the child. Or if a child is accepted on a lilo trip, the leader should establish that the child has swimming ability, has suitable equipment and food. These measures need to be specific to the situation to mitigate the risks as far as possible.

ACTION AND REPORTING GUIDELINES – FOR A CHILD SAFETY INCIDENT

If a Child Safety Incident is reported to you on a Club Event:

Under no circumstances should you investigate or ask questions regarding a child protection incident on a club activity. This includes all sexual assault & serious physical assault allegations. Instead, as soon as possible, cease the activity where the incident has occurred and report the information you have received to police.

Recommended actions if a sexual or serious physical assault allegation is made during a club activity:

1. Listen to the complainant or person acting for the complainant. Take the complaint seriously;

2. Record date and time of complaint;

3. Cease the activity & exit the activity as quickly as possible;

4. As far as possible ensure the separation of the victim and alleged perpetrator for the remainder of the activity;

5. Call the police ASAP and act on their advice;

6. If unable to call police immediately, call from an area with mobile reception as soon as possible;

7. Without disclosing any confidential details, inform other participants that an incident has occurred which will require the activity to be shortened. They should not ask questions about this. If they do, tell them you cannot disclose information;

8. Return to vehicles;

9. Other participants leave;

10. Leader awaits the police.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD LEADER OR OTHER PARTICIPANTS INVESTIGATE OR QUESTION SUCH AN INCIDENT.

Other forms of Incidents

Other forms of incidents concerning children may occur, such as:

a. Allegations from children against leaders or participants in club activities or other persons outside of a club event;

b. Child on child incidents;

c. Allegations after an event;

d. Incidents via online communications. The procedure to deal with these is the same:

(a) Do not investigate;

(b) Report the information to the police as soon as practicable.

Recommendations if a Minor Child Safety Incident Occurs during a Club Activity:

Minor incident examples are:

• bullying;

• child is hit, but not physically injured, by another child;

• lack of supervision by nominated adult.

1. Listen to the complainant or person acting for the complainant. Take complaints seriously;

2. Record date and time of complaint;

3. As far as possible, ensure the separation of victim and alleged perpetrator for remainder of activity;

4. On return the leader should contact a NROAC committee member and/or coordinator for the activity, for example Walks Coordinator, Kayaking Coordinator, Cycling Coordinator, Abseiling Coordinator;

5. The NROAC Committee would then enact the club's incident and support framework. Bushwalking NSW Inc. has harassment guidelines with which to address bullying and harassment.

NROAC COMMITTEE PROCEDURES for Child Safety

1. Annual review of policy and procedures for Child Safety. NROAC management committee must keep up to date with any changes to NSW child protection guidelines and inform membership of any subsequent changes;

3. Any and all allegations of abuse must be dealt with promptly, seriously, sensitively and confidentially and reported to the police without delay – and act on their advice;

4. For **insurance purposes**, the Committee will inform Bushwalking NSW Inc. and our insurance broker of the generalities as soon as possible. For example, "Allegation made by x person on [activity name], run by y club on z date and whether a claim might arise";

5. When a child safety incident occurs, the NRBC Committee will nominate a suitable person (not necessarily a Committee member) to liaise with the affected club members – if appropriate. A report should also be made by the activity leader;

6. NRBC has guidelines for leaders about action and reporting in the event of a Child Safety incident. These are available on the NROAC website;

7. Paper or scanned copies of all permission (Waiver) forms must be held indefinitely as part of club records;

8. NROAC will provide information about the Child Safety Policy and Procedures – at club meetings, and/or the AGM. Additionally it will be accessible on the NROAC website and mentioned in the NTBC Club Newsletter

FORMS

Appendix 1. - Acknowledgement of Risk and Obligations for a Child (to be completed by the parent/guardian)

Appendix 2. - Acknowledgement of Risk and Obligation for a Child and Authorisation of responsible adult (to be completed by parent / guardian)

Appendix 1: Acknowledgement of Risks and Obligations for a Child

For use when a child/children are participating in Club activities. This waiver should be signed by a parent or guardian. This is to be completed each time that the child attends a club activity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISKS AND OBLIGATIONS - NORTHERN RIVERS OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CLUB

I am the parent/guardian of:

Name of child _____ born on____/____/____

Name of child _____ born on____/____/____

I consent to the above-named child or children participating in the activities of the Northern Rivers Outdoor Adventure Club.

I am aware that this child or children, in voluntarily participating in the activities of this Club, is/are risking injury, illness, death and loss of, or damage to, their property.

Typical risks may include but are not limited to hyperthermia, hypothermia, slipping on loose or icy surfaces, slipping on rocks, falling rocks, exposure, snake bite, bee stings and other insect attacks, burns, drownings, stepping into unseen holes, accidents during vehicle travel to walks, navigation errors and becoming lost.

To minimise risks I will:

• inform myself of the nature of the activities and ensure that they are within the child(ren)'s capabilities;

• ensure the child(ren) carry food, water, clothing and equipment appropriate for the activity;

• advise the leader of any physical or other limitation, or any dependence on medication, that may require urgent attention during the activity;

• explain to the child(ren) the need to: make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity; advise the leader of any concerns they are having; and to comply with all reasonable instructions of the leader.

I understand these risks and requirements. My consent is binding on the above-named child/children.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

• Signed form to be given to the activity leader before commencement of activity;

• Leader to attach this permission form to activity report sheets and returned to club activity coordinator for filing;

• Paper or scanned copies of this permission form should be filed indefinitely as part of the club records.

Appendix 2: Acknowledgement of Risks and Obligations for a Child and Authorisation of a Responsible Adult. For use when children are allowed to participate in a club activity with an assigned responsible adult. This form is to be signed by a parent or guardian - prior to an activity for which a parent or close relative of the child is not accompanying the child.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RISKS AND OBLIGATIONS - NORTHERN RIVERS OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CLUB

I am the parent/guardian of

Name of child _____ born on ____/____/ ____

Name of child _____ born on ____/____/ ____

I consent to the above-named child or children participating in the activities of the Northern Rivers Outdoor Adventure Club.

I am unable to attend the activity with the child on _____ (date)

at _____ (location) and hereby authorise

Name_____

Address_____

to be responsible for supervision and care of my child for the duration of the activity.

I am aware that this child or children, in voluntarily participating in the activities of this Club, is/are risking injury, illness, death and loss of, or damage to, their property. Typical risks may include but are not limited to hyperthermia, hypothermia, slipping on loose or icy surfaces, slipping on rocks, falling rocks, exposure, snake bite, bee stings and other insect attacks, burns, drownings, stepping into unseen holes, accidents during vehicle travel to walks, navigation errors and becoming lost. To minimise risks I will:

• inform myself of the nature of the activities and ensure that they are within the child(ren)'s capabilities;

• ensure the child(ren) carry food, water, clothing and equipment appropriate for the activity;

• advise the leader of any physical or other limitation, or any dependence on medication, that may require urgent attention during the activity;

• explain to the child(ren) the need to: make every effort to remain with the rest of the party during the activity; advise the leader of any concerns they are having; and comply with all reasonable instructions of the leader.

I understand these risks and requirements. My consent is binding on the above named child/children

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Signed form to be given to the activity leader before commencement of activity; leader is to attach this permission form to activity report sheets and return it to the club activity coordinator for filing; paper or scanned copies of this permission form should be filed indefinitely as part of the club records.