



## **RESPONSIBLE BUSHWALKING**

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This document incorporates advice from the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service and from Bushwalking NSW's *Bushwalker's Code of Ethics*.

Bushwalking provides opportunities to explore the great diversity of NSW. You can walk through many different environments from eucalypt forests to heathlands or rainforests to mallee, and find features such as Aboriginal or historic sites, lookouts, waterfalls, whales, wildflowers and more.

Parties should follow ethical practices to do with the conservation of flora, fauna, rock formations, water quality and archaeological sites. They should also behave with regard for the quality of experience of other people and groups.

For an enjoyable and safe bushwalking experience, plan ahead and take the following precautions:

### **Preparation**

- Be appropriately dressed and equipped. See the SBC document – *Clothing and Equipment*
- Regardless of the season, always take a windproof/waterproof jacket, and clothing that can keep you warm when wet.
- Take plenty of drinking water, lunch, and snacks.

### **Along the Way**

- Stick to the track if there is one. Avoid taking shortcuts, or deviations around boggy bits.
- Avoid damage to vegetation. No 'twigging' of shrubs to mark your route.
- When walking on rocks with brittle formations, take care not to damage them - this is a safety issue too.
- For hot drinks, use a stove, stick stove or vacuum flask in preference to lighting a fire.
- Don't feed the wildlife (whether native or feral).
- Respect Aboriginal sites. Stone tools and the like must not be 'souvenired'. Never touch or light fires near cave artwork, or scrape grinding grooves.
- Don't bring iPods or Mp3 players, and keep mobile phones switched off (or on vibrate) except in an emergency.

### **Environmental Considerations**

- To defecate in the bush, find a spot as far as practicable from any watercourse, and dig a hole 150mm deep. Bury all waste. Some authorities state that best practice is to carry out toilet paper. (A snap-lock bag and/or double bagging will provide appropriate hygiene). Don't burn toilet paper.
- Similarly, carry out used sanitary pads and tampons - animals will dig them up if you bury them.
- Always carry a lightweight trowel (or other means of digging a hole) for digging a toilet hole.
- Avoid defecating and (as far as possible) urinating in canyon environments. Leaders should provide a suitable toilet break before entering a canyon.

- Don't pollute creeks with soap or food scraps. To wash yourself or your utensils, take water away from the creek and wash there.
- Carry out all rubbish (including apple cores, orange peel and the like - the small amount of nutrients in these can dramatically alter future native vegetation). Where possible, carry out any rubbish generated by others!
- Phytophthora is a microscopic organism that lives in soil and plant roots. It attacks the roots and stems of plants, causing die-back. The extent of the occurrence of phytophthora in NSW is only beginning to emerge, but the pathogen seems to be more widespread than originally thought. The Club is encouraging members to help minimise the spread of phytophthora by washing all soil from their footwear after each walk. This should be done in a sewer drain, not in your garden.

## **Be Water Smart**

- Be self-sufficient with drinking water. Carry in enough water - or ensure you have the equipment and knowledge to make untreated water safe for drinking (boil for 4-5 minutes). Drinking untreated water such as creek water or bore water can lead to illnesses including gastroenteritis.
- Be aware that there is not always water available.

## **If You Become Lost**

- Stay where you are if you become lost - don't keep moving.
- Attract attention with a whistle - 3 blasts for help, long blast for location.

## **Leader's Responsibilities**

- Leaders have a responsibility to instruct inexperienced walkers and provide a role-model of ethical behaviour.
- Ensure that you have researched the walk and planned ahead.
- Respect Club and NPWS recommendations about the maximum size of your group.
- Check weather forecasts and local conditions and modify your plans accordingly – notify two committee members in advance if you change your route.
- Make sure you will have at least three people in your group. If there is an emergency, at least one can go for help, while the other stays with the injured or ill person.
- Don't leave an injured person alone in the bush.
- Keep your walking group together during your trip – unless part of the group must go for help in an emergency. There is safety in numbers.
- Have a compass and a topographic map and know how to use them. Check directional, warning and advisory signs.
- If you have a mobile phone, remember that it may not receive or transmit in some areas – see below for information on emergency beacons (PLBs) which can be used as an added precaution.
- Don't overestimate your abilities or those of the others in the group. Always allow time for the unexpected, like thick scrub or cliff lines.

## **Emergency Beacons**

- Mobile phone network coverage is limited to populated areas and transport corridors. Many parks are out of range.
- If you are planning an activity in a remote area, use a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon – sometimes known as a SPOT beacon, but this is really just one brand of PLB!).
- The club owns a number of PLBs that can be borrowed. Alternatively, you can hire or borrow a PLB.

- If you are planning an activity in Blue Mountains National Park, free PLBs are available for loan when you register your walk with NSW Police or the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). You can pick one up from the NPWS Office in Blackheath between 9am - 4pm or after hours from the Police Stations at Katoomba (phone 02 4782 8199) and Springwood (phone 02 4751 0299).
- Kosciuszko National Park also hires out PLBs to bushwalkers for a small fee - contact the Snowy Region Visitor Centre for more information.
- PLBs are also available for hire from commercial providers and can be purchased at most quality outdoor stores.
- Additional information about PLBs can be found at the Australian Maritime Safety Authority website – <http://beacons.amsa.gov.au/index.html>
- Remember the emergency beacon should be used as a last resort only. Your initial distress alert should still be made by telephone, radio or other direct communication if possible.