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## RESPONSIBLE CANYONING

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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*.

Canyons are unique and special places to visit and explore however they have their own unique challenges. 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 canyoning experience, plan ahead and take the following precautions:

### Preparation

- Take responsibility for your own safety and be self-reliant.
- Know the route, and have adequate food, water, safety and first aid gear, maps and clothing.
- Know how to swim and self-rescue on ropes.
- Don't climb alone.
- Hypothermia is a real risk — wetsuits and spare warm clothes are advisable.
- Avoid peak use times in well-known canyons if possible. This especially applies to Claustral in the Blue Mountains, where overcrowding can cause delays and safety problems.

### Along the Way

- Protect your skin from sunburn by using sunscreen and wearing protective clothing and a hat.
- Give way to faster groups.
- Ring 000 in case of emergency.

### Environmental Considerations

- Keep your group to a small and manageable size (4-8 people).
- Don't place bolts, or alter rock surfaces in any way.
- Avoid leaving unnecessary slings and remove old slings.
- Keep to creek channels, to avoid sensitive creek banks and soft vegetation.
- Avoid establishing new abseil routes or footpads - keep to existing paths, or spread out in trackless terrain.
- Walk carefully in rocky pagoda areas - flaky rocks and thin ledges can break easily.
- Do not mark tracks (signs, cairns, broken branches). Each group should have at least one competent navigator.
- Don't publicise 'new' canyons or those in wilderness areas, to preserve opportunities for discovery and to minimise impacts.
- Use fuel stoves - fires scars are unsightly, attract rubbish and encourage vegetation damage.
- Avoid camping in canyon environments.
- Avoid defecating and (as far as possible) urinating in canyon environments.

- Go to the toilet before you enter the canyon.
- Carry out any human waste, used toilet paper & sanitary items in plastic zip-lock bags and dispose away from the canyon.
- Don't pollute creeks with soap or food scraps. To wash yourself or your cooking and eating utensils, take water away from the creek and wash there.
- Leave crayfish and other wildlife alone.
- Carry out any rubbish.

### **Leader's Responsibilities**

- Avoid canyoning if rain is forecast or if the weather looks changeable. Unexpected and dangerous conditions are likely when water flows are above normal or when heavy rain is forecast.
- Test the water depth before entering.
- Teach beginner abseilers prior to canyon trips, rather than in canyons.
- Leave details of your group, route and expected return time with a responsible person.