

NEWSLETTER

of the

BUSHWALKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

The Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, N.S.W.

G.P.O. Box 2090, Sydney, 2001

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S&R PRACTICES - PAST AND FUTURE

S&R are planning a S&R practice in the Camden region over the weekend October 20th and 21st. The practice will be located on the Nattai and Hilltop 1:25,000 maps and the camp will be located near the main fire road that heads north from Hilltop towards Starlights Track (if you get to Starlights Track you've gone too far). The S&R signs will be posted on the road near map coordinates 402708 and will direct you to the camp. A night search and rescue practice is planned so you should come prepared with the appropriate gear.

For the driver the road is in good condition and no trouble should be experienced in getting into the site (I know of taxis going out to beyond Starlights Track to take people out to the start of walks).

This practice is located in the south to even up the travelling for participants. The previous practice was held near Mellong Swamp halfway along the Putty Road. Over 60 people attended and experience with the radios, dipoles and the equipment was the main part of the weekend. Also a practice search was conducted with the "lost" party almost doing just that. They went up the wrong spur and were only just on the edge of the assigned search areas. Despite some reluctance of the lost party to be found they were successfully located. With the arrival of the search parties at the site of the lost party a stretcher carry was demonstrated (including a short trip down a cliff) and most people had a go at bearing the stretcher.

THE BUSHWALKERS BALL - A GALA EVENT

The Bushwalkers Ball was held at the Lane Cove Town Hall on Friday, 20th of September and what an excellent night it was with people dancing almost before the band had started to warm up. The band was Cambage Spire again and their performance was superb to say the least. Although the amplifier cut-out problem reared its head again this year it did not seem to be as much of a problem as last year and everybody just kept on dancing.

Although I have not spoken to Gordon Lee, who did his usual excellent job at organising the Ball, (and a vote of thanks to Gordon from everybody who attended) it seemed that there were considerably more people in the hall this year compared to last year. Indeed the tables were all full and the dance floor was even more crowded (if that is possible).

Once again The Ramblers won the Boot for the best decorated people/table which is getting to be a bit monotonous as I seem to remember them winning last year as well. It was a fitting way to celebrate their 50th year of active bushwalking as a club (as are CMW for that matter but there can only be one winner).

Once again thanks must go to Gordon Lee and Cambage Spire for providing such an excellent night's entertainment.

SEARCH AND RESCUE CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP

The Search and Rescue Committee of F.B.W. (and indeed all the bushwalkers of New South Wales) would like to thank Fergus Bell, on his retirement as Director for all his years of excellent service. He joined S&R in the 60's, became Rock Rescue Officer in the 70's and was elected Director in 1980. His input has been immense in moulding S&R to its present level of equipment, expertise and community respect and he is synonymous with S&R to many. For this reason, so that you can quickly contact S&R, we ask all bushwalkers to erase his telephone numbers from their lists and note the following numbers:

Director	Keith Maxwell	622 0049 (h)
Assistant Director	Peter Treseder	88 9231 (w)
		48 4182 (h)
		808 2011 (w)

A new committee list will be published shortly.

THE VOLUNTEER RESCUE ASSOCIATION

In New South Wales there are many trained professional emergency services eg. Ambulance, Fire Brigades and the Police Rescue Squad (PRS). In major urban centres such as Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong there are enough incidents to keep these services fully occupied.

For less densely populated areas these services are only infrequently used and trained volunteers are the best solution eg. Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades. For civil emergency disasters, which are again rare, eg. floods, we have the State Emergency Services (SES) consisting of volunteers with a professional core of personnel.

As an extension of the role of the NSW Police in investigating death from suspicious circumstances via the Coroners Court, the NSW Parliament has chosen to vest 'the charter for life and limb' in them.

'It is, and shall be deemed always to have been, the duty of a member of the Police Force to protect persons from injury or death and property from damage whether the persons are, or the property is, endangered by criminal act or otherwise' Section 7A(i) Police Regulation Act

So, even while there may not be sufficient Police to do these functions they still have responsibility for them.

In the same way that the Federation is a parent body to bushwalking clubs so the VRA is a parent body to volunteer organisations. That is, it speaks for them as a group, liaises with government departments, and allows the Police a mechanism whereby they can share and monitor this responsibility of life and limb.

Thus in order to operate Bushwalkers Search and Rescue (S&R) must be an active and accepted part of the VRA. Also the S&R committee must be readily recognisable to both Police and other VRA Squads ie. some sort of standard dress. We have tried to pick an outfit as inoffensive to bushwalkers as possible.

Several consequences flow from being part of the VRA and under the control of the Police. Whilst all member squads of the VRA gratefully accept donations they cannot make any charge for their services.

Bushwalkers S&R is a community service. It is good to be able to say that bushwalkers are not a drain on the community because of S&R. However as part of the VRA we must answer all calls for assistance from the community.

All VRA Squads must train regularly. For Bushwalkers S&R an absolute minimum would be attendance at one practice per year.

In the first half of 1984 our radios have suffered some damage through inexperienced operators. Our present packsets are virtually irreplaceable and must be treated with care. An inoperative packset in the field reflects badly on the whole organisation since we cannot supply to the Police details of where every search party is at any one time.

Whenever S&R is called in by anxious friends of overdue persons we must inform the Police. The Police are under no reciprocal obligation though. Thus the S&R committee recommends that you contact them first. If we are not the best group to handle the callout we readily hand it onto the Police (as we have often done in the past).

Similarly we cannot invite ourselves to a search. Until the Police officially called us in on Thursday 7th June 1984 for a party overdue in the Wild Dogs for four days we were merely spectators on the sideline like every other member of the public.

NSW is divided into 40 autonomous Police districts. Bushwalkers S&R can only be called out in a district by a Police officer from that district. For incidents in districts where we are less well known the most that the Sydney Police can generally do is to advise their colleagues of our specialised skills.

An individual Policeman cannot and should not instruct an individual member of a VRA squad. The pattern of command is quite clear. Within a VRA Squad all members of the squad are responsible to the squad leader, in our case the Field Officer, who in turn is responsible to the Police Officer in charge. Please remember to be tactful if a policeman tries to override this system.

The majority of VRA Squads are a country town equivalent of the Police Rescue Squad and nearly always include some local police eg. Aibury, Kingscliffe, Parkes, Nyngan etc. 68 squads in all. They thus cover road accidents, inland waterways (including diving) and farm accidents etc. S&R is one of the specialist squads which also include WICEN (radio amateurs), Cave Rescue Squad, CREST (CB radio operators), Volunteer Air Patrol, Ski Patrol Association of NSW and some coastal rescue groups.

In all there over 4000 trained personnel and over \$8.5 million of assets. Naturally such a resource is integrated into the major disasters plans.

Indicative of our standing is that the VRA executive includes retired and serving police officers. In particular the patron and director of training Ray Tyson served as a sergeant in the PRS. His experience and contacts helps the VRA to standardise its equipment and maintain a high standard of training. He is also a strong supporter of Bushwalkers S&R.

There are two other major positive benefits from being in the VRA. The NSW Government through the Department of Sport and Recreation provides grants on a dollar for dollar basis for some types of equipment. Rescue trucks are not included but S&R's current radios were purchased this way.

Secondly, the NSW Government pays the premium for the VRA's insurance. This gives us public liability cover for \$1 million as well as workers compensation style and conditions of cover for injury. A special condition of the policy is that all personnel must have a First Aid Certificate. In order that as many walkers as possible have a certificate we can arrange through the VRA

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Finally the VRA is represented on the Rescue Emergency Services Consultative Committee (RESCC) for overseeing rescue services to aid intergration and avoid duplication of services.

In conclusion, I apologise if this seems to be legalistic but some of the conditions under which we operate have to be spelt out. I trust that you now have an appreciation of the broader picture of rescue services and of the S&R's small but significant part of it.

professionals who will organise a bushwalking party, perform an educational function as a mobile teacher/lecturer/demonstrator and be responsible for the health, safety and welfare of the party'. This follows representations from the local community concerned over the level of unemployed youth and the lack of employment opportunities in the area.

Whilst the course is free of charge, all participants will be receiving a stipend under the P.E.P. Scheme. The pilot program is for a full time day course over 36 weeks which includes both classroom and in-the-field training. It is proposed that the teacher in charge will be Mr. Smith who has published a couple of books on the Blue Mountains.

Whilst the concept appears worthwhile, TAFE will not be able to guarantee jobs upon completion of the course. Obvious avenues would be NPWS and commercial operators with restrictions on both of the former, and (usually) a family concern on the latter will mean the avenues of employment will be few.

The States of Victoria and Tasmania have accredited Mountain Leadership Courses with the required endorsements before any teacher or youth leader can take parties out. If this element was introduced into NSW then the viability of these course participants would be assured. Unfortunately this could mean opposition from bushwalkers, Scouts, D. of E. organisers, who could have their activities imposed upon. Certainly the Federation has some interest in the course and hopefully will play some part in its development. If successful, the course could be introduced to other TAFE colleges situated near national parks. Some suggestion was made that the Federation could participate by having some post certificate training culminating in a "badge" (or some other recognition).

LIABILITY AND THE BUSHWALKER

It is often thought that injuries incurred during a bushwalk by participants (or even spectators) are outside the scope of the law in-so-far-as the nature of the activity being such that they have consented to whatever might happen during the activity. In other words, a person implicitly agrees to (the possibility of) being injured on the journey.

Unfortunately this is not so, and there are several areas where damages can be recovered through Court action. Someone who is injured because of the actions of another may be able to sue either of both categories of negligence or trespass to the person.

Trespass to the person involves an element of injury by force which generally was intentional on behalf of the player (eg. in football, an elbow to the head). In such cases the onus lies on the player who caused the injury to prove that he was neither negligent nor that he caused the injury deliberately.

If an injured person sues in negligence then he/she has to prove that the other bushwalker(s) failed to exercise reasonable care for the plaintiff's protection and as a result injury occurred. Clubs or organisers of the activity may also find themselves liable if negligent organisation, shoddy gear (eg. ropes), or poor safety and conditions can be proved.

If a club pays a fee for the hire of a meeting room, then there is said to be a contract between the club and the owner/hirer. By accepting payment, the owner/hirer is under a higher duty to take steps to ensure that the premises are safe than if the rooms were available free of charge. If there is not alleged to be a contract, then the owner/hirer has a duty to use reasonable care to prevent damage or injury from any unusual danger of which they know or ought to know.

Bushwalkers also have a duty of care not to cause any injury to spectators (where this may occur) which could be reasonably foreseen might occur by their (ie. the bushwalkers) negligent acts. One example of this would be to practise abseiling in public view where the terrain is irregular and no guard rails were installed. (Some consideration would have to be determined just how much the spectator contributed to his/her own negligence).

In short it is important that both individuals and clubs realise that whilst it is a sporting event, it does not mean they are protected from any legal action to recover damages from injuries. That it is a question of the facts and circumstances surrounding the injury rather than adherence to any strict principle of law which ultimately decides whether there is a liability. The principles of negligence and trespass apply to bushwalking as to other activities of life.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCORPORATION

In 1982 the Law Reform Committee proposed that small social/sports/common interest clubs should be offered protection and legal recognition in the form of incorporation. In November this year it is hoped that a Bill will be introduced into parliament called The Associations Incorporation Act.

At the moment, if someone was to sue a club for some reason, the officers of that club at the time of the incident would be individually and/or jointly liable and could forfeit their personal assets. As the club has no legal standing, the funds of the club could not be included in the action.

Incorporation creates a corporation or an artificial body recognised by the law and therefore able to do things that an individual could do. Incorporation will:

- a) eliminate personal liability for club officers;
- b) mean only the organisation's funds could be liable for seizure,
- c) enable a club to hold land, make contracts, take out leases for club rooms, sue or be sued - in its own name.

Incorporation will also mean:

- a) some constitutional changes to conform with the comparable Articles of Association (for companies),
- b) perhaps some tightening of accounting procedures and other regulated requirements,

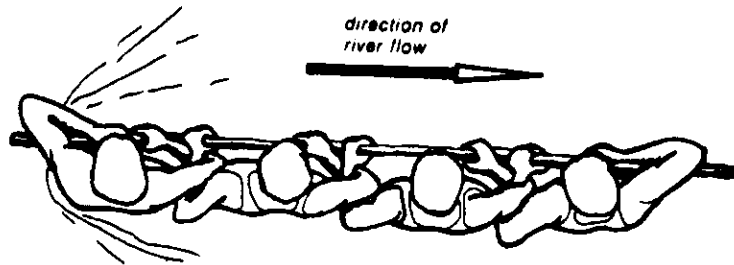
RIVER CROSSINGS (Continued)

In a previous newsletter the first half of an article on river crossings by John Atkinson was published. This article completes the advice for walkers on how to cross rivers safely.

River crossing methods

For straightforward crossings a pole 1.5 to 2 metres long is useful for support as a third leg on the upstream side of the body. Better, several people can cross in line parallel to the flow and holding on to each other, the upstream person with a pole in his upstream hand and perhaps the downstream one with one in his downstream hand.

For difficult crossings, the party can use a long pole or log to give each other mutual support. The arms are interlocked as shown :



MUTUAL SUPPORT WITH A POLE.

The person with the best combination of weight, experience and confidence is placed at the upstream end of the pole, to break the force of the water and generally guide the party. The next strongest person is at the other end and braces the pole, sometimes having to push upstream. The others occupy middle positions. The pole must be kept parallel to the current to present the least resistance to the water. If the crossing cannot be completed the party walks out backwards until safe water is reached. (This method sounds clumsy but is remarkably effective and fairly foolproof. For parties of three or more and water no more than chest deep I highly recommend it.)

The use of the rope for crossing is dangerous, whether you are fording or swimming. Many deaths have been caused by ropes snagging on boulders or legs and the force of the water on a rope can pull a person off their feet and draw them under. Personally I would recommend that ropes be used only in the following circumstances :

- 1) For testing a ford, a person can use the rope to swing him back to the bank if he loses his footing. The belayer on the bank should not tie the rope to himself or any other object (tree or rock) and the forder should not tie it to himself but hold onto a small loop. If the ford goes the rest of the party should cross together, not using the rope.
- 2) To bring packs over after swimming across. Ideally the rope should be long enough so the pack can be tied in the middle so that it is necessary to swim the end of the rope across only once - or it may be possible to throw a stick across attached to a cord and pull the rope over. Weak swimmers can over on a pack which is being pulled across on the rope - but have someone ready to jump in after them in case they come off.

Precautions

Don't wear excessive clothing during a crossing. Shorts are preferable to trousers, which increase resistance to the water. Take parkas off if swimming or if there is a chance of losing footing while fording as they fill with water. Always keep the pack on while fording a river because the extra weight assists stability. However, the waist band should be undone so that the pack can be removed quickly if necessary and shoulder straps should not be too tight. After a river crossing in cold weather the chance of exposure is increased. Stop after a cold crossing for food, a change of clothing and perhaps a fire and a hot drink.

Just in case it's wise to be familiar with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and external heart massage.

Van'däl·ışm,
malicious or ignorant
destruction, especially
of that which is of
beauty or value.



Save the Wilderness

HELP SAVE THE WAINWILLE RAINFOREST
THIS CHRISTMAS BY SHOPPING AT THE
WILDERNESS SHOP.

GREAT GIFT IDEAS:

1995 Dobrovskis Calendars.
1995 Wilderness Diaries.
New Summer WAINWILLE T-shirts.

Could I please have back the originals
of the last Newsletter which somebody
has accidentally taken.

Thanks.
The Ed.

Small articles are always
appreciated to fill spaces such as
these.