

Outline for proposing and leading a walk (Apr 2023)

(to be read with the detailed guide that follows)

Selection of walk

Consider issues such as distance, terrain, surface, time of year

Ideas from past programs 2010–2015

<https://www.npaact.org.au/index.php/publications/bulletin/previous-walks-programs> or

<http://www.johnevens.id.au/wp/>

Walk description for bulletin/website

Brief description, 2–3 sentences usually suffice, giving details such as track surface, terrain, total distance and total climb. Include contact details and deadline (or meeting place and time if no pre-booking required), map (preferably 1:25,000), cost per car (if applicable at 45 c/km), limit of number of walkers (if applicable), NPA grading. See Bulletin for examples.

Taking bookings

Vett for fitness and experience of new prospective walkers if necessary

List participants on attendance form <https://www.npaact.org.au/index.php/bushwalking/guidelines-for-leaders1/forms-for-outings>

Just before the walk

Minimum number (min of 4 required for remote/off-track walks)

Weather check

Send out final details or cancel (cc Check-in Officer and Alternate Check-in Officer if remote area walk)

Leader **must** carry PLB (available for loan from the club - Brian Slee brianslee@iprimus.com.au) **unless** the whole walk has good mobile phone reception.

For cancelled walks where a meeting place and time has been advertised and no pre-registration is required, the leader needs to go to the meeting place in case someone turns up.

On the walk

Briefing of route

Introductions

Choose back marker or 'tail-end Charlie' if necessary

Keep party together and regularly count numbers

Short drink break every hour or so

Morning tea/lunch/afternoon tea

After walk

Remote area walks: inform Check-in Officer (Mike outings@npaact.org.au) of safe return

For all walks, send the attendance form to Alternate Check-in Officer (Brian Slee, brianslee@iprimus.com.au) for stats purposes. Easiest way is to take a photo of the form and email it to both email addresses from a mobile phone soon after the walk.

General questions for experienced leaders, email to:

Mike Bremers mcbremers@gmail.com

Mike Smith msmith@netspeed.com.au

Philip Gatenby philip.gatenby@gmail.com

Brian Slee brianslee@iprimus.com.au

Steven Forst steven.forst@iinet.net.au

GUIDE FOR LEADERS

The National Parks Association of the ACT (NPA ACT) has a program of events for members and guests published online, via email and in the Bulletin. Leaders offer these events for the program and fulfil the role of leader as volunteers. The selection, acceptance and coordination of events is carried out by the Outings Convenor with the assistance of other experienced leaders.

Liabilities and insurance

The NPA ACT has public liability insurance covering officials and leaders. As long as officials and walk leaders act 'reasonably', the public liability insurance will cover NPA ACT events.

Minimum Impact Bushwalking

The NPA ACT supports and encourages minimal impact bushwalking in line with its conservation values. Leaders should encourage all participants to do the same.

Preparation

1. **Walk plan.** Plan your walk. Look at the proposed route on a map and, if necessary, pencil in expected times and compass bearings for key points. Estimate distances and climbs. Maps of popular areas are available on loan from the Outings Convenor. Many are available online. Grade the walk using the NPA's grading system. Walks descriptions should be realistic in describing the difficulty or additional difficulties (which may not be fully reflected in the grading) that are likely to be encountered on the walk.
2. **Park requirements.** Ensure requirements for walking in national parks or nature reserves are met. Camping at some locations may have limits or require a permit. NPWS requires leaders to complete an online trip intention form for remote overnight walks in NSW national parks.
3. **Permissions.** Obtain all necessary permissions with regard to property access. Contact information may be available from managers of adjacent parks or the Outings Convenor if the walk has been held previously.
4. **Participants.** Find out the bushwalking experience and fitness and any medical issues of new walkers. As leader you may exercise **a right not to accept persons** for any reason but the reason should be clearly stated.
5. **Weather.** Note the weather forecast on the morning of the walk. Leaders must cancel or consider alternative walks where Extreme or Catastrophic fire conditions, Total Fire Bans, Widespread Flooding or other severe weather conditions are declared by the BoM or appropriate authority for the relevant area of the walk. If in doubt, seek advice from an appropriate authority, e.g., rangers or police.
6. **Modification or cancellation.** A leader may cancel or modify any walk taking into consideration participants and conditions. If cancelled or modified before the departure date the leader should notify the Check-in Officer (or Alternate Check-in Officer) to arrange notification of the change on the NPA website and, for cancelled walks that do not require bookings, to arrange for someone to be at the meeting point in case people show up.
7. **Minimum number.** The minimum number of people on an NPA ACT walk depends on the nature and conditions of the walk. Unless there are identifiable mitigating circumstances (the walk is all on prepared public trail or mobile phone coverage is known to be available) this should be 4. If fewer than 4 people are available for a walk and there are no mitigating circumstances, the walk cannot proceed as an official activity. The leader may, however, take the walk privately.
8. **Non-Members.** Non-members are allowed to go on a maximum of 3 walks before becoming members.
9. **Immediately before the walk.** Ensure you have all the items you will need as a leader,

including (but not limited to) *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form*, *Risk Waiver for a Child Form*, *Incident Report Form*, a mobile phone with the 'Emergency+' app or phone numbers for emergency services, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), GPS, first aid kit, maps, compass etc.

At the meeting place

1. **Be at least 15 minutes early.** New members are usually early and appreciate a few words with the leader before the regulars arrive.
2. **Walks that do not require bookings.** Talk to new walkers to ascertain their walking experience, fitness and any medical issues. Ensure walkers know the degree of difficulty of the walk and any modifications made to that described in the program. As leader, you may **refuse to accept persons for the walk** but should explain your reasons for doing so. If the number of participants is less than 4 decide either to abandon the walk or go ahead with a private walk.
3. **Equipment.** Ask participants to confirm that they are suitably equipped e.g., adequate clothing and suitable footwear. On a hot day and/or a long or strenuous walk, remind them to carry sufficient water and have sun protection.
4. **Signing on.** Make sure all walkers put their details on and sign the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* and point out any additional hazards that may be encountered. The form should be left in a car at the starting point to provide a list of walkers in case of emergency. Preferably visible but face down with NPA written on the back.
5. **Count the number** in the party and check that it agrees with the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form*.
6. **Introductions.** Ask walkers to form a circle and introduce themselves.
7. **Describe the walk briefly and indicate the route on the map.** Mention any expected hazards or difficult sections, the expected lunch location and anticipated time of return. Stops should be made approximately every hour or less, depending on the terrain, view points, etc.
8. **Car route.** Advise all drivers of the route and starting point of the walk.
9. **Passengers.** Encourage car sharing to reduce the number of cars (in a manner consistent with COVID-19 guidelines).
10. **Count cars** and appoint a tail where there are several cars.
11. **In the case of last-minute changes or cancellations** leave a message for one of the check-in officers.
12. **Start time.** Leave the meeting place within a few minutes of the published start time after allowing a reasonable time for latecomers.

On the walk

1. **Back marker.** Depending on the size of the party and the nature of the walk, consider asking for a reliable volunteer to act as a back marker. Maintain contact with the tail and the head of the party and check on the condition of walkers, especially inexperienced walkers. Maintaining the group's integrity is one of the main responsibilities of the leader.
2. **Discuss 'lost walker' procedures.** If a walker becomes lost, they should stop and listen. Then call out or, preferably, sound three blasts on a whistle, repeating about each minute. Do not stray intentionally off the track that was being followed.
3. **Advise the party on progress** at intervals and encourage all in the party to take an interest in the route. This can help avoid getting off the route inadvertently and meeting unexpected scrub, steep slopes, etc.
4. **Unmarked routes and scrub.** If there is no marked track or if a track divides, or a patch of scrub is encountered, wait until all the party have caught up before you change direction.

5. **Check numbers** after each stop before proceeding.
6. **Note times at key points.** These are useful for future reference and can prove invaluable for coping with unexpected problems.
7. **Be flexible.** If some participants are not coping with the walk and slowing down the party, be prepared to modify the walk, provide more rests, etc. If someone is distressed, be prepared to abandon the walk and return to the cars. Do not allow a distressed person to return alone.
8. **Emergencies (more detail below).** Leaders of outings in remote areas (areas without comprehensive mobile phone coverage) must carry a PLB. The Alternate Check-in Officer has a PLB available for loan. Consider carrying additional emergency supplies (e.g., a torch, waterproof matches, mobile phone, etc). Where practical pre-plan for a quick way back to the cars or to shelter if the weather deteriorates or the party is unexpectedly slow. Mobile phones are useful in emergencies although coverage is not always reliable. Download the mobile phone 'Emergency+' App or obtain and carry a list of useful phone numbers including police (131 444), Access Canberra (13 22 81 8 am-8 pm Mon-Fri and 9 am-5 pm weekends and public holidays) and Namadgi National Park Visitor Centre (02 6237 5307 9 am-4 pm Mon-Fri and 9 am-4:30 pm weekends and public holidays, closed Christmas Day). In life-threatening or serious medical situations contact 000 or use a PLB if phone contact is not possible.

At the end of the walk

1. **Do not leave until all walkers have returned.**
2. **Ensure that all cars get away from the parking area** and that all drivers can find their way back to the meeting point or their home.
3. **If any incidents have occurred** which may cause the authorities to become involved, or the walk has been so delayed that relatives may be worried, contact one of the check-in officers with details as soon as possible.
3. **Update the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form* and return it.** This is important for insurance purposes. Any comments, including details of any accidents, emergencies or unforeseen problems should be included.
4. **Record any injuries or illnesses on the *Incident Report Form*.** Including details of names of injured or ill person(s), time, place, nature of injury, witnesses etc. If in doubt about the extent of injury/illness, you should complete the form. The form is to be sent to the Alternate Check-in Officer.
5. **Return any borrowed club maps, PLB or other materials with the *Attendance Record and Risk Waiver Form*** which is needed for statistical and record keeping purposes.

Checking-in and Emergency Contact Officer

NPA ACT has check-in and emergency contact procedures:

1. **Outings conducted in areas with good mobile phone coverage:** Leaders do not need to check-in at the completion of the outing but they still should send the attendance form to the Alternate Check-in Officer.
2. **Outings conducted in remote areas:** Leaders should check-in as soon as practicable at the completion of the walk. Checking in could simply be a text message to the Check-in Officer (attendance form sent at a later time) or be done by emailing the attendance sheet to both check-in officers with a note that the walk has been completed.
3. **The *Check-in Officer* may contact you if you forget to check-in.** In cases of emergency the assumption will be that the leader will activate the PLB.
4. **Cancelled outings:** If your outing is cancelled for any reason please inform the Check-in Officer and Alternate Check-in Officer.
5. **Before the start of pre-booked outings in remote areas:** Leaders are asked to include the Check-in Officer in the email to participants with the final details. This means that the

Check-in Officer knows the meeting point, travel arrangements and the participants. The Check-in and Emergency contact details are updated on the website under the 'Contact Us' tab. As of September 2022 the details are:

Check-in/emergency contact officer: Mike Bremers 0428 923 408,
mcbremers@gmail.com, outings@npaact.org.au

Alternative check-in/emergency contact officer: Brian Slee, 6281 0719,
brianslee@iprimus.com.au

NPA PLB: Brian Slee, 6281 0719, brianslee@iprimus.com.au

EMERGENCIES

It is not possible to write a procedure for every situation. The following are recommendations only. The leader will need to make judgements at the time, possibly with the assistance from other participants.

Lost walker

1. Stop and plan:

- Check your position on the map with the 'Emergency+ App', a GPS or by checking features;
- Establish when and where the the lost walker was last seen;
- Observe the daylight time available and the distance to get the rest of the party to the safety of a lunch site, campsite or cars;
- Consider splitting the party and appointing a suitable deputy leader;
- Agree on a time for an initial quick search;
- Agree on a course of action for the remaining party, including if the search party fails to return on time. This may include leading the remaining party out and notifying police and one of the check-in officers.

2. Dissuade keen but inexperienced walkers from starting their own searches.

3. Quick search:

- **Retrace the route** to the point where the lost walker was last seen, moving quietly and calling and listening at regular intervals:
 - Walkers are advised not to keep walking if separated from the party and to call out (or blow a whistle) and listen. So lost walkers should be waiting on or close to the route;
- If not found despite calling and listening, the walker is assumed lost and a suitably organised and equipped search party is needed;
- Return to the remaining party.

4. Time-limited search:

- If plenty of daylight is still available, assess whether a further time-limited search is feasible;
- Record the location of the area in which the person was last seen;
- Study the terrain and map, and assess where a lost walker is likely to go and determine a suitable search strategy making use of high points and water courses;
- Agree on a course of action for the remaining party, including if the search party fails to return on time. This may include leading the remaining party out and notifying police and Check-in Officer (or Alternate Check-in Officer).

5. Post search:

- If the group does not have the necessary resources, or cannot be split to mount a search party, or if the search party has been unsuccessful, take measures to arrange a search by a third party;
- Return to the cars;

- If the walker is still lost, notify Police Assistance on 131 444 and ring one of the check-in officers. **Do not dial 000 or use a PLB, as this is not yet a life-threatening incident.**

Immobilising injury

1. Assess the situation:

- Administer first aid;
- Record the location of the injured walker;
- Plan the rescue. Do not leave an injured person unattended. In the case of a death do not move the body. Estimate the time needed for help to arrive. Evaluate resources, food, water, clothing, shelter and equipment. Identify persons with first aid experience.

2. Seek help:

- In the case of serious injury in a remote locality where mobile phone contact is unlikely nearby, the activation of a PLB may be warranted. This is a serious alert and will trigger a ground or helicopter search and rescue;
- In the case of a less serious injury a 'seek-help' group of at least two, led by an experienced walker with a map of the area, should be sent to find help by walking or driving back into mobile telephone range or seeking access to a landline.

3. Call Police Assistance:

- As soon as possible the leader of the 'seek-help' group must contact Police Assistance on 131 444;
- Provide police with following information:
 - The location of the injured person;
 - The nature of the injury;
 - The condition and weight of the person to be carried;
 - One of the 'seek-help' group may be asked to guide the search party to the remaining group.

4. Notify the Check-in Officer (or Alternate Check-in Officer) of the situation:

- As soon as practical the leader of the 'seek-help' group should notify one of the check-in officer of the action taken and whether any other immediate action is **required**.

Mobile injury

- Keep the group together if the injured person is mobile or can be carried and the return can be completed before dark;
- If not, consider stopping, sheltering and splitting the group. See notes on assessing the situation and seeking help, under **Immobilising injury**;
- The leader of the 'seek-help' group must contact a check-in officer as soon as possible. The group may be require to return to assist the delayed group.

Overdue group

- **Make contact.** The leader of a group returning later than expected, or both leaders if the party has been split, must contact a check-in officers as soon as possible. The Check-in Officer (or Alternate Check-in Officer) can then notify those who have made contact to prevent an unnecessary call to the police.

Check-in Officer Actions

1. **Record details** on being advised that a walker or group is overdue, record the caller's telephone number, name and whether any overdue person (or persons) has a medical problem.
2. **Assess possible causes** of a late return from the caller or from other references.
3. **Reassure the caller** as best you can. Indicating that causes for late returns include vehicle breakdowns or stopping for a meal on the way home as well as delays due to minor injuries,

or a lost participant. If a participant is lost or injured there may be a 'seek-help' group walking out to obtain assistance. The leader should be trying to contact one of the check-in officers.

4. **Emergency situations.** After contact with the party, the Check-in Officer and Alternate Check-in Officer should make contact to ensure they both know there is an emergency and to assess the situation.
5. **If the overdue walker has a medical problem,** or if a 'seek help' group has advised of an emergency, immediately telephone Police Assistance on 131 444.
 - The police will need to know:
 - the starting point;
 - the number thought to be in the group;
 - the expected route,
 - the experience of the group;
 - the expected time of return;
 - whether, to your knowledge, any of the group has a health problem; and
 - whether the group has already contacted police.
 - The leader should leave a list of walkers in one of the cars at the start point. Preferably visible but face down with NPA written on the back. From this, searchers can determine the size, composition and membership of the missing group and whether there were any changes, to the route before the party started walking.
6. **Non-emergency situations.** If an overdue walker or party has no known medical problem and weather conditions are benign, allow a reasonable time for the overdue group to return. Reasonable time has to be assessed from the type and length of the walk and the drive back to the meeting point. If in doubt, assume a worst case situation and notify Police Assistance on 131 444.
7. **Stay in contact.** Once contacted, stay by the telephone until the situation is resolved. Contact and delegate a member with experience of the walk to be available to advise police, accepting that police and emergency services do not always seek such advice.