

Procedural guide

Visitor management

Remote bushwalking advice and notification

Procedural guides further define complex decision making processes or requirements of the Department of Environment and Resource Management, (incorporating the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service). Procedural guides provide guidance and information to assist staff in the completion of specific tasks or in making certain judgements. Procedural guides are for internal use only.

Policy issue

This procedural guide is provided to assist Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) staff in consistently managing visitors who bushwalk in remote locations. Remote bushwalking locations include class 5 and 6 tracks and off-track areas. For definitions of Australian walking track standards (AS 2156.1), refer to: www.standards.com.au. By observing the procedures outlined in this document, staff can better facilitate search and rescue operations for missing and /or injured bushwalkers and monitor remote bushwalking activities.

Background

Lands managed by QPWS provide extensive opportunities for remote and off-track bushwalking.

In the past, visitors to some areas were advised to complete personal trip details on a *Bushwalking registration form* before undertaking a day or overnight walk. A state wide review found variations in the forms including use, wording and follow-up procedures (where walkers were overdue). In some areas, walkers were also required to advise of their safe return. Some visitors believed this meant that QPWS would respond if a group or an individual walker did not return as stated. Consequently any perceived failure to respond may expose the QPWS to liability.

Issues associated with using the form included:

- QPWS' duty of care in managing and monitoring remote and off-track bushwalking.
- Liability if registration forms were not checked.
- Adequacy of staffing levels to check forms and check on overdue walkers.
- Failure of many walkers to advise of their return.
- No legal obligation for individuals to advise walk intentions.
- The form being used as a risk management strategy.

Public information provided by the QPWS in any form should not imply that the QPWS is responsible for checking the safe return of bushwalkers. Using a *Bushwalking advice form* is primarily for visitor safety and monitoring.

Procedure

Regional offices, park offices and visitor information centres must ensure that the *Bushwalking advice form* (see attached) is modified to reflect local park names, conditions, administrative arrangements (e.g. whether leaving

Remote bushwalking advice and notification

a form at a designated QPWS office is required) and made available to visitors well in advance of the proposed bushwalk. This park-specific form should be published on the relevant sections of the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) website, sent out with bush camping permit applications, displayed at visitor information centres, distributed with other visitor information, or made available at accommodation facilities and tourist information centres near QPWS managed areas as required.

The *Bushwalking advice form* includes a checklist of common safety considerations. This checklist is designed to help bushwalkers determine if they are well equipped and experienced. QPWS can recommend against a planned trip but is not responsible for people who choose to ignore such recommendations.

In all verbal and written advice to the public about the use of the *Bushwalking advice form*, the following points are to be emphasised:

- The group leader (or other responsible person in the group) is responsible for providing all trip details to an independent contact person before a trip and to advise that contact person of the group's safe return. This person might be a friend or relative or a contact at accommodations where the walker is staying. QPWS staff can be the contact on request in certain situations only and if directed by a Regional Manager.
- The independent contact person is responsible for reporting to the Queensland Police Service any incident where walkers are overdue or believed missing.
- QPWS is not responsible for checking the safe return of walkers. Initiating a search is a police responsibility.
- A decision to activate an electronic positioning beacon, such as an EPIRB, should only be made in an emergency such as a life-threatening situation where there is no alternative way to raise assistance.

Completed *Bushwalking advice forms* received from visitors will be kept on file in QPWS offices and given to police in the event of a search and/or rescue operation.

Disclaimer:

While this document has been prepared with care, it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Department of Environment and Resource Management should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

Approved by

Andrea Leverington

Signature

03/08/2011

Date

Andrea Leverington
Assistant Director-General,
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Enquiries:

Tourism and Visitor Services Unit
Ph: 07 3330 5247
Fax: 07 3330 5277

Bushwalking advice form

State managed area State local QPWS office contact detail

Please complete this form if you intend undertaking a bushwalk in a remote location (i.e. class 5 and 6 tracks and/or any off-track areas). *Add any additional information specific to the managed area.*

By completing this form you will provide important information that may be used to assist emergency services in the event of a search and rescue operation. This information will also inform the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service about visitor use in the areas you visit.

You are **strongly advised** to leave these details with a responsible contact person (e.g. friend, relative or a person at the accommodation centre where you are staying). You are responsible for advising this contact person of your safe return. If this person is concerned about your safety, they should contact the police.

A copy of this form should also be left at the relevant the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service office.

Please note: The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service will not check you have returned from your trip. If you are reported overdue, the form can provide important information for search authorities.

USE CAPITAL LETTERS

Name of group leader: _____

Address: _____ **Postcode:** _____

Phone: Daytime _____ A/Hrs: _____ Mobile: _____

Name of group (if applicable): _____

Total number in group: _____

Number by age group: under 10 _____; 11-17 _____; 18-35 _____; 36-50 _____; 50+ _____

Please list all known illnesses/medical conditions of group members:

If you will be away from home, please provide your local address/accommodation details:

_____ **Phone:** _____

Independent contact person: (visitors from overseas must provide an Australian contact)

Name: _____ **Phone:** Daytime _____ A/Hrs: _____

Address: _____ **Postcode:** _____

Phone: Daytime _____ A/Hrs: _____ Mobile: _____

Vehicle registration: _____

Vehicle make and colour: _____

Vehicle parking location: _____

Experience level:

- Beginner / inexperienced Some experience Skilled / very experienced

Proposed route including destinations and camping sites: _____

Start date and time (am/pm): _____

Intended finishing date and time (am/pm): _____

Please use the following checklist to ensure that you are prepared to undertake your trip.

- I am aware that mobile phone reception is unreliable.
- I am not walking alone. (A party of at least three people is desirable.)
- Someone will miss me if I don't return at the expected time. I have notified an independent contact person (details above) and will let them know when I return. They understand they should contact police if I am hours/days overdue.
- I am fully briefed on where I am going and have planned my route.
- I am carrying a map and compass and know how to use them.
- I am carrying an EPIRB (electronic positioning beacon), know how to use it and will activate it only in a life threatening situation or to aid a search that has already commenced.
- I am carrying extra food and water in case of delays.
- A member of my group is carrying a first-aid kit.
- I am capable of providing basic first-aid or there is a first aider in the group.
- All group members have suitable hiking gear including warm and waterproof clothing and sturdy footwear.
- I understand what risks I might encounter by walking in this area and how to avoid these risks. I know that I should:
- avoid snakes (detour around and not provoke them)
 - drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration
 - wear a hat and sunscreen and avoid heat stroke
 - never feed wildlife
 - never jump or dive into water
 - not attempt to cross flooded creeks or rivers
 - keep clear of cliff edges and waterfalls
 - beware of marine stingers in season
 - keep clear of waterways potentially inhabited by crocodiles
 - insert park specific relevant point*
 - insert park specific relevant point*
- As designated leader of the group, I undertake to ensure that all other persons within the bushwalking group have been made aware of the details and physical demands of this walk.

Signature of group leader

Date