

Starting and Running a Bushwalking Club



Bushwalking Victoria
towards better bushwalking

Bushwalking Victoria Inc.

A0002548Y
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Starting and Running a Bushwalking Club

A Guide

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The assistance provided by clubs and individual members
in the preparation of this document is appreciated.

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Introduction

This document has been prepared by Bushwalking Victoria Inc to assist in the formation of new bushwalking clubs and the administration of existing clubs. The information is in no way prescriptive. At all times clubs are free to operate in whatever manner they believe best. This information aims to assist clubs, especially new ones, to consider important steps, and it suggests possible options. Some steps, such as incorporation and insurance are strongly recommended. Others are included for consideration and information only.

Starting a Club

It is important to always keep in mind the original purpose of the club. It is easy to get bogged down in rules and administration, and to forget that the original idea was probably to get together and enjoy walking in a social atmosphere.

Clubs generally have an aim that says something like: “To bring together people who enjoy walking and related outdoor activities. To organise walks and promote social activities and awareness of the environment.” This is usually the preamble to any club’s rules, purposes and constitution.

Initial Actions

A few key things are required to get a club started. A minimum of five people will be needed to perform the following:

- Organise an initial club meeting (if this has not already been done)
- Arrange an initial Annual General Meeting and decide the following:
 - Club name
 - Conditions of membership
 - Committee structure
 - Committee members
- Set up a bank account

Note: It is a legal requirement that only incorporated associations can open bank accounts in the name of the club.

Name

Sometimes a name for a club is obvious, e.g. the name of the town or suburb. At other times it is not so obvious. If so, consider using the name of a region, or of a geographical feature, e.g. a mountain or river. Check that another group does not already use your chosen name - it is not possible to register two organisations with the same name. Go to <https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-not-for-profits/incorporated-associations> and click on Search for an incorporated association. Your chosen name may have been selected by an organisation that is in the process of being registered. We strongly recommend clubs become incorporated (see section below on Incorporation).

Formalising

Having decided to start a club, any initial discussions and decisions need to be put in writing, setting out the club's aims and agreed rules. Although seemingly bureaucratic, record keeping avoids confusion and possible disputes. Records can be in different formats. Initially, a club can easily keep meeting minutes, which is recommended. Once more established, its objectives, philosophy and rules generally become more formalised in a Constitution or Rules, and By-Laws. Bushwalking Victoria has a recommended set of rules for clubs, which have been derived from the (model) rules provided by [Consumer Affairs Victoria](#) for clubs considering incorporation. Contact Bushwalking Victoria if you would like a copy. Otherwise, existing clubs have their own rules, which they may be happy to share.

Membership

Who can become a member? It is possible to have categories of membership such as family membership, junior membership, and associate membership for non-walking members, or temporary membership for potential members and visitors.

Many clubs ask potential members to do a certain number of walks as visitors, usually three, before allowing membership. This ensures that the person is capable of doing the walks, and is prepared to observe the club's etiquette and rules before being granted membership. It also gives the potential member an opportunity to check out the club before having to pay for a full membership. Some clubs charge non-members a small visitor's fee for each walk as a visitor, to help cover costs and prevent people continually doing walks but never paying for membership. Visitors should be enrolled as Temporary Members of the club for each event, thus allowing cover under the club insurance.

It is appropriate to decline membership to someone who is not capable of participating in the club's activities. However, ensure that membership is not declined without a valid reason, and that within reason, the club's activities are made available to all eligible people. Natural justice requires that the applicant be told the reason why membership was refused.

Consider the circumstances under which membership lapses or a person can be expelled from the club. For more information on memberships, clubs can also refer to [Model Rules for an Incorporated Association](#) on the Consumer Affairs Victoria website.

A membership list needs to be created and maintained. It should contain basic details such as name, address, telephone number, email address and emergency contact details. Additional information such as age of members can be useful, but some people may decline to provide such detail. Generally, only the information necessary to run the club and its activities should be collected. In all cases, clubs must ensure that membership information collected is kept confidential, with access only allowed in accordance with club rules.

A club needs a Privacy Policy that details the personal information it will collect from members, the purpose for collection, and the circumstances and process by which information can be accessed. The policy should define what membership information will be published, e.g. many clubs distribute a list of members and contact information, however some members may decline to allow publication of certain personal information. Members and people applying for club membership will need to be informed about the club's Privacy Policy.

It is important to retain members once they have joined the club, so it may be necessary to remind them when membership renewals are due. This is typically the duty of a club's Secretary or Treasurer who will send initial notices and then follow up if required (see section below on Committee).

Administration

Committee

Initially, an interim committee of perhaps three or four people can start by arranging a club meeting place, sending out an initial newsletter, arranging an initial walks program, and proposing a name and conditions of membership at the first Annual General Meeting. After this, an elected committee should be formed.

A committee usually comprises of the following key positions:

- President
- Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Walks Coordinator
- Editor (if the club is to produce a newsletter)

It is possible for a person to simultaneously hold two or more of these positions, but it is wise to have separate people handle the club's finances and the club's correspondence.

As the club grows, consider adding additional positions as appropriate, such as:

- Membership Secretary/Officer
- Social Secretary/Coordinator
- Equipment Officer
- Webmaster
- General committee members

Positions may be committee positions or not, as appropriate. In general, having too many committee members can make decision-making and meeting management harder.

Committee Meetings

Committee meetings need to be held often enough to ensure the smooth running of the club. Some club committees meet monthly while others meet less frequently, e.g. quarterly, with special meetings when required. Some clubs use email, telephone conferencing, or even Facebook, to make decisions on club issues.

Minutes of committee meetings should be kept, especially of any resolutions passed (see section above on Formalising). Usually the Secretary takes minutes. Where decisions are made electronically by email, Facebook or other similar means, these should also be recorded and confirmed at the following committee meeting.

Club Meetings

Club meetings can be both informal and formal. Informal meetings generally give members information about walks and other activities, to book onto walks, and to socialise. Meetings can be held as often as required, or not at all if electronic communication is used.

Formal meetings are held for official purposes, e.g. presentation of annual reports and election of office bearers. Generally only one per year is necessary (Annual General Meeting), and this is a requirement for clubs that are incorporated associations. Some clubs hold half yearly meetings as well, and usually provision exists in club rules to hold Extraordinary General Meetings if required. Proceedings at formal meetings should be recorded.

Promoting Your Club and Attracting Members

A successful club needs more than just a name, administrative structure and walks program. A successful club also needs strategies for promoting and attracting new members.

As most clubs are geographically based, using local community facilities and media is probably the best way to start. Marketing approaches to try include:

- Direct communication such as a brochure letterbox drop.
- Advertising in a local newspaper or community newsletter, or on noticeboards at community facilities. Local newspapers often welcome local stories for publication, so also consider writing regularly about club activities and submit them for publication.
- Setting up a table at the local shops.
- Presentations to senior school students, community groups and retiree groups.
- Community directories from local councils that list recreational clubs

If the intention is to seek members from a wider area, things to try could include:

- Creating a website (this can also be used as a means of communicating with members). Bushwalking Victoria can provide advice and assistance here.
- Using local and community radio or even TV.
- Attendance and displays at specific events.

- Using Facebook pages or creating ads.

All of these approaches will achieve some degree of success, and can be discussed with Bushwalking Victoria representatives if required.

When a potential member contacts your club it is important to welcome them. That first contact when they ring up, walk through the door or attend their first walk provides a very significant impression of your club. Therefore, they need to be greeted promptly and helpfully, and in a friendly manner. It is also important to extend that extra effort to their first couple of club activities until they find their feet. Many clubs assign specific members to greet visitors and introduce them to other club members.

Incorporation

Under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012, certain associations, including bushwalking clubs, are able to become Incorporated Associations.

Incorporation is a process in which the club becomes a legal identity, which is separate and distinct from its members. While there is an increased administration requirement with running an incorporated entity, and additional costs, the benefits are:

- the club can hold bank accounts and own assets, such as land or equipment, in its own name regardless of changes in its membership
- members and office bearers are not personally liable for the debts or legal obligations of the club.

Bushwalking Victoria considers that these two factors are powerful reasons for a club to incorporate.

An incorporated association is required to lodge an Annual Statement and notify of any changes in office-bearers via an online process.

Consumer Affairs Victoria provides a summary of the benefits and disadvantages of incorporation, plus information on how to incorporate and what is required of incorporated associations. Visit their website at:

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/clubs-and-not-for-profits>.

Forms

A number of forms are required to assist a club in running smoothly - Membership Application/Renewal Form and the Walk Registration form, Temporary Member Acknowledgement of Risk (for visitors), and a Medical Condition form.

The Membership Application/Renewal Form should set out the information required for a person to become a member: full name and address, contact details, medication required and contact person/s in case of emergencies. If the club has membership eligibility requirements, such as the completion of a minimum number of walks, include this also. Other information, such as how an applicant heard about the club, may be

useful. Information that is not required for the administration and running of the club should be avoided. Clubs that participate in the national insurance scheme administered through Bushwalking Australia are required to include an 'Acknowledgement of Risk' statement on the Membership Application/Renewal Form.

The Walk Registration form allows the Walk Leader to know whom to expect on a walk, and makes it easy to check the attendees during, and at the conclusion of, the walk. It also provides a simple way to obtain the address and telephone number of visitors. It enables the leader to arrange transport, advise people of any changes prior to the walk, and limit the numbers on a walk.

The Medical Condition form should be completed by members of the club, in order to record information about their current medical conditions, types of insurance they use, where they keep their medications during walks, etc. Each member should keep a copy of this form in a sealed zip lock bag or similar, and carry it with them in an outside pocket of their pack on each activity they participate in. Club members with specific medical conditions that have the potential to impact on their participation (e.g. asthma, heart condition, arthritis, diabetes) should advise the leader each time they participate in an activity.

Examples of key forms are included as appendices below.

Other forms may include:

- Temporary Membership Form (which should include an 'Acknowledgement of Risk' statement, available from the Insurance & Risk section of the Bushwalking Australia website)
- Nomination for committee
- Emergency Contact (carried with the Medical Condition form on each activity)
- Walk report
- Proxy form for general meetings.

Fees

There are usually administrative expenses to be met, e.g. postage, printing of a newsletter, venue hire, Bushwalking Victoria fees, insurance, etc. The most common and equitable way to cover expenses is to set an annual membership fee.

The membership fee needs to be enough to meet the running costs of the club, and will need to be estimated until a club is up and running, when previous years' costs can be used to forecast expenditures. A budget should be set and followed to ensure the ongoing financial viability of the club. Accordingly, it is wise to budget for a small surplus so that the club has a little in hand for unexpected costs and emergencies.

Clubs just starting up can apply to Bushwalking Victoria for a grant to cover initial set-up costs such as hiring a meeting venue, advertising, first newsletters, etc. Clubs must remain aware that any free or cheap resources such as printing or donated stationery, or

cheap venue rental, may require payment in future. Free or cheap benefits need to be budgeted for if they are suddenly no longer available.

The amount of the membership fee, usually collected annually, will depend upon the club's requirements. At the time of writing (2016) annual membership fees for most clubs range between \$40-\$60 per member.

Many clubs also ask visitors on their walks to pay a nominal fee to contribute towards the cost of insurance. This fee may encourage visitors to join the club, especially if all or part of the visitor fees can be offset from the first year's membership fee. The amount charged varies widely between clubs but is usually no more than \$5 per walk. Clubs may set a maximum number of walks a visitor may attend after which they will be required to become a member.

Finances

Unless a club is very small, it will almost certainly need a bank account. Club funds need to be placed somewhere safe and a process needs to be available to make payments when required (e.g. cheques or EFT payments). All banks now have accounts that provide security, cheques, and some interest, often with reduced fees for clubs, which are very workable. Other higher interest bearing options such as fixed term deposits are also available, and provide very good security should you have spare funds available at any time. Most clubs will maintain reserves to allow unforeseen expenses to be covered.

Clubs are reasonably free to handle their finances as they see fit. However, always remember that you are looking after members' funds and this carries certain responsibilities. Where possible, ensure that the following is done:

- Funds are kept secure, in an account in the club's name
- Banking is done regularly
- Regular accounting reports are provided, generally at each committee meeting, and at each Annual General Meeting. This can also be presented as a report in a monthly newsletter.
- An independent check of the accounts is completed at least once per year.
- Two signatures are required for any bank withdrawals, cheques or payments.

To open an account in the name an association or club, or to change the signatories for an account, the bank will usually require minutes of a meeting or a letter on club letterhead with the following information noted:

- Date
- Who the signatories are to be (must use full legal names when adding signatories)
- Full legal name of the President, Secretary and Treasurer
- Which account/s the new signatories are to operate on
- What type of access signatories are to have (phone or internet banking etc)
- If internet banking is required, will a security token be purchased, and if so, how
- Signatures by the committee (minimum of two signatures by existing account signatories).

All new signatories will need to present themselves to the branch and have their identification sighted and verified. A passport or Australian driver's licence is acceptable primary identification.

Taxation, GST and the ABN

It is unlikely that a club will be required to obtain an ABN or register for GST as these requirements only apply where turnover (revenue) is more than \$150,000pa or they have paid employees.

The ATO has developed an induction package for administrators, which provides detailed information on taxation obligations for not-for-profit entities, and key tasks to complete when setting up and running a club. It may be accessed at:

<https://www.ato.gov.au/Non-profit/Getting-started/In-detail/Induction-package/Induction-package-for-not-for-profit-administrators/>

In some instances, you may be asked by some suppliers or customers to provide an ABN, but advising of your not-for-profit status and registered entity number should satisfy their request.

Walks Program

The most vital part of a club is usually a Walks or Activities Program. It enables members to plan their activities and attend walks. Most clubs issue their program at least three months in advance, and some up to twelve months. Expeditions and trips of longer duration may require even more notice for preparation because many people will need to arrange leave. Some clubs, especially those in rural or regional areas, often coordinate and share their programs with other nearby clubs to allow members the opportunity of a more varied program.

The program needs to be made readily available to members by including the details in the club newsletter, on a club website, by email or by regular mail. It should include some details of the proposed walks so that members can decide whether it is suitable for them. Basic details normally include the date/s, place, route, length, difficulty of the walk, and contact details of the leader. Check the websites of other clubs to see how they advertise their Walks or Activities Programs.

Because of the importance of the Walks Program to the success of club walks, and ultimately the club, most clubs appoint an experienced walker as a Walks Secretary whose responsibilities include coordinating the program, identifying leaders, and sourcing potential walks, etc.

If a new club has difficulty in finding suitable walks for their program, they can try:

- Where2walk on the Bushwalking Victoria website
- Books available from map and outdoor shops listing a variety of walks
- Other bushwalking clubs for ideas from their programs
- Websites of other clubs

- [Parks Victoria](#) website.

Walk Gradings

Most clubs grade walks to give an indication of the level of difficulty, which is often not obvious from limited information such as just the distance alone. One method of grading is: Easy, Easy/Medium, Medium, Medium/Hard, and Hard. The gradings are usually based upon factors such as distance to be covered, extent of climbs and descents and their steepness, the presence or absence of tracks, the quality of tracks, and the type of vegetation if there are no tracks.

A suggested set of gradings for day walks, based upon what clubs generally practice is as follows:

Easy – 10 to 14km of walking tracks, gentle undulations.

Easy/Medium – 12 to 16km with more sustained hills, some off track.

Medium – 15 to 20km with several climbs, scrub, rock-hopping.

Medium/Hard – 18 to 25km consistently off track, steep climbs, scrub.

Hard – strenuous long distance walking in difficult terrain.

Additional categories or sub-categories to consider: Easy Family, Easy Adult, and Tough.

Note:

- These are guides only and clubs are free to adopt whatever system they prefer. However, for the sake of consistency, it is suggested that these be used as a basis.
- For overnight walks, apply the above but with shorter daily distances.

A detailed description of the grading of tracks is presented in Australian Walking Track Grading System available at:

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/forestry-and-land-use/visiting-parks-and-forests/visiting-state-forests/activities/australian-walking-track-grading-system>.

Walk Leaders

A bushwalking club cannot exist without Walk Leaders. Although not all people are cut out to be Walk Leaders, sharing the leading of walks amongst club members is more likely to lead to the establishment of a successful club.

The level of skill, experience and knowledge required will depend upon the walk being undertaken. However, the skills required include: navigation, bushcraft, ability to organise people, some first aid, and general “common sense”. Clearly the skills required for an extended walk in the wilderness will be much higher than for a day walk in the metropolitan area, or on well-marked and signposted tracks in a national or state park.

A club needs to ensure that leaders have the necessary skills and experience to undertake the walk they plan to organise and lead.

Providing opportunities for members to improve their walking and leadership skills can be achieved by providing formal training within your own club, or with another club. Another training option is to encourage experienced leaders to mentor potential leaders by allowing them to co-lead on their walks, to assist with researching a walk and to act as a co-leader on the new leader's initial walks. Bushwalking Victoria has also developed Walk Leader training resources and information, which is available in the Members Only section of its website. Contact Bushwalking Victoria for access.

People are often reticent about volunteering. They also often don't feel confident about leading a walk although they may be quite capable of doing so. A part of the Walk Secretary's role therefore typically includes seeking and encouraging people to lead walks.

Guidelines for Leaders, Walks, and Walkers

Many clubs issue written guidelines for conducting walks. They can be anything from a couple of pages to a small booklet. The information provided can cover a very wide range of items, but basically are designed to give members guidance in good recommended bushwalking practices, and hence improve the standard of all club walks. Subjects usually include walk etiquette, navigation, environmental matters, equipment, club procedures, first aid, emergency procedures, welcoming new members, etc.

Walkers and walk leaders should be encouraged to undertake first-aid training. Ideally, there should be at least one trained first-aider on every walk, and especially on multi-day and remote area walks.

For examples look at what other clubs have produced, or at books available from map and bushwalking stores, (e.g. *Bushwalking and Mountaineering Leadership*, which is also available online at www.outdoorleaderonline.org).

Bushwalking Victoria has useful reference materials that are available either on its website and/or as printed versions. These include:

- *Bushwalking, Making a Start*
- *Tread Softly*
- *Walk Safe*
- *Hut Etiquette*

Booking on Walks

A system of booking onto walks needs to be devised. This includes making a list of all the people attending a walk, so that:

- the leader of the walk knows whom to expect on the walk
- each person is covered by the club's insurance
- names, addresses and contact numbers of visitors for emergency purposes are available (member's details will already be on record)

- leaders are aware of any relevant medical information (e.g. asthma, fear of heights)
- the leader knows who to contact should they need to cancel the walk (e.g. due to fire/flood/severe weather).

Booking procedures that best suit the needs of the club and its members need to be decided upon. Bookings could be taken in person at a club meeting, by email, or by telephone. Advise all members and visitors of guidelines for bookings, including when bookings can be made.

All non-club members (i.e. visitors and prospective members) should sign on as a Temporary Member and complete an Acknowledgement of Risk Form – Temporary Members. (The Bushwalking Australia website has an example copy which can be customised for your club).

Leaders need to be given sufficient notice of participants on a walk, in order to plan properly. For a day walk this might only be two days, but for a weekend or extended walk this might be longer. Also, walkers must ensure that they advise the leader if they cancel. A latest time for contacting leaders should also be set (e.g. 9.30pm) to avoid them being telephoned at all hours.

Walk Reports

After a walk it is worthwhile to have a walk report (including photographs) prepared by the leader or a designated participant filed in the club records, published in the club newsletter, on the club Facebook page or on the club website. In this way a club can build up a library of useful information for subsequent leaders to follow.

Walk reports should in general show:

- walk location, date, leader/s, attendees
- description of the route taken
- specific comments about the walk/route (e.g. condition, how it could be improved, any route problems)
- a narrative of the walk that can be used in the club newsletter.

Note that it is generally easier if a template is available to compile all of this information.

In the event of any accident or incident on the walk, an Incident Report Form should be completed and delivered to the designated club official, usually the club Secretary. The Bushwalking Victoria website has a copy of such a form which can be customised for your club. This is especially important because disputes and/or insurance claims may arise from incidents.

Emergency Contacts

In the interests of safety, it is best bushwalking practice to leave detailed trip intention information with a responsible person/s. This will allow suitable action to be taken in the event of a serious accident or unexpected delay in a party's return from a walk.

Bushwalking Victoria recommends that all clubs have in place an efficient emergency contact system for all official club trips. A suitable system should ensure that the club creates a roster of volunteers to act as club emergency contacts, each of whom is advised of procedures for alerting police when a search or assistance is judged to be needed.

Before a trip:

- walkers on a club trip are advised of the name and phone number of the rostered emergency contact and the expected time of return by the leader
- each walker forwards this information to a personal contact with the advice to ring the club contact for information if concerned about an unexpected delay in return
- the leader provides the rostered club contact with a trip itinerary and expected time of a phone call notification of safe return*

On return:

- the leader advises the club contact as soon as possible of a safe return
- walkers advise their personal contact person of safe return
- if no contact is made within a reasonable time of the arranged return call by the leader, the club contact establishes that the call has not simply been forgotten, and begins the established procedure which will usually include alerting police of a possible need for assistance.

* This is the minimum of information required with respect to safety of the walking group as a whole. Additional information that involves more paperwork but could in certain circumstances be useful includes:

- names and personal contact details for all group members
- vehicle registration numbers
- special conditions with respect to weather, terrain or equipment expected
- confidential details of medical conditions or special requirements of members

Transport

For most clubs almost all walks involve transport by private vehicles. Ultimately this will entail organising car pooling and/or shuffling, and this duty normally falls upon the Walk Leader. Clubs should set a policy for sharing the costs of using private vehicles. There are various ways of setting rates but the options to consider include a set rate per kilometre, or petrol costs plus an additional factor to contribute to wear and tear. If a toll road is used, the cost of the toll needs to be divided among the people in the vehicle. Such systems acknowledge that there are additional costs above just petrol consumed and often also recognise that costs vary with distance travelled.

Other factors that may be considered in calculating rates are the number of passengers per vehicle, the fuel used, distance travelled on rough roads, whether car usage is shared,

etc. Each club needs to set policies that suit them. Bushwalking Victoria encourages carpooling as it reduces environmental impact and costs. It is also possible to plan some walks based on public transport e.g., see:

<https://www.vline.com.au/getattachment/f8a1e2c3-5d60-4abe-b608-2bc18e9f8197/V-Line-Network-Map>

Dispute among members or clubs

Disputes within a club or between clubs may happen due to number of reasons including personal misunderstandings, cultural differences, breaching privacy, etc.

In case of a dispute between members and depending on the nature of dispute, clubs may use various methods to solve the problem. If there is conflict between walkers on a walk, it is the leader's responsibility to manage the situation by calming those involved and if possible resolving the issue. Later if needed, the committee should try to resolve the issue in a fair and reasonable manner. All clubs should have a dispute resolution process set out in their Rules of Association.

When there is a conflict of interest between two or more clubs, it is advised that clubs try to resolve the conflict in a meeting involving appropriate club representatives. If needed, Bushwalking Victoria can (if the Board agrees) appoint someone who acts as a mediator to help resolve the issue. Where the issue is not resolved, clubs should act in accordance with the Act or law. For more information, you can refer to Model Rules for an Incorporated Association or Bushwalking Victoria's Rules of Association under the sections 'Disciplinary Action' and 'Grievance'.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is an important meeting where the club decides the next committee members and office bearers. Also, previous office bearers and committee members report on their activities and performance. The Treasurer is required to report on the financial affairs of the club. The report should be published in the following newsletter after the AGM. President and Secretary of the club should also report on club activities and membership, and advise of membership fees for the coming year.

According to the model rules, each club should hold their first AGM not more than 18 months after registration. In general, it is advised that the AGM be held each year by the end of the financial year.

There are specific requirements that incorporated associations are required to follow for organising and running an AGM, including a requirement to submit an annual statement to Consumer Affairs Victoria within one month of the AGM. For more information, refer to the Clubs and Not-for-Profits section of the [Consumer Affairs website](#).

Bushwalking Peak Bodies

Bushwalking Victoria Membership

All clubs are encouraged to join Bushwalking Victoria which is the peak body for all bushwalkers and [bushwalking clubs](#) in Victoria. Bushwalking Victoria promotes bushwalking, engages in activities that add value to the community and proactively represents the interests of all recreational bushwalkers.

Bushwalking Victoria is able to provide services and benefits such as economical insurance and the Bush Search and Rescue service. Bushwalking Victoria also provides an excellent avenue for the efficient exchange of information between clubs and to the general public.

Seventy clubs, representing around 7,000 walkers, are now members of Bushwalking Victoria. These clubs recognise the great benefits of Bushwalking Victoria and support it both through membership and active participation.

Details of the services and benefits of Bushwalking Victoria are provided in Appendix 1.

Bushwalking Australia

Bushwalking Victoria is a member of Bushwalking Australia (BA), the national body for bushwalking comprising each of the state bodies. Bushwalking Australia operates to share information, resources, ideas and initiatives. The main activity undertaken by BA is arranging insurance cover for its members and their affiliate member clubs.

Insurance

There are three types of insurance available under the policies organised by BA: Public Liability, Personal Accident, and Associations Liability. Only clubs affiliated with their state peak body (e.g. Bushwalking Victoria) and that are Incorporated Associations can access these insurances. The liability and accident insurances are optional and the Associations Liability Insurance cover automatically covers all clubs affiliated with their state peak body.

Public Liability

Public Liability insurance covers a club and its members in the event of being sued for injury or damages resulting from the actions or carelessness of a member. This insurance not only helps protect clubs, but also benefits the potential claimant, who, in the event of a successful claim, would have potentially significantly more funds to claim against if needed. Bushwalking Australia currently organises this insurance. Any club affiliated with Bushwalking Victoria can participate.

Some land managers require that before they will grant walkers permission to use their land they must be covered by an adequate (at least \$10m) public liability insurance policy. The insurance offered by Bushwalking Australia provides such cover.

Personal Accident

Personal Accident Insurance covers a person for the cost of extra expenses (such as physiotherapy, ambulance costs, income compensation, but not including medical expenses) in the event of injury. Bushwalking Australia organises an optional Personal Injury Insurance scheme, which many clubs have joined.

Bushwalking Australia's Personal Accident Insurance offers limited cover for ambulance costs but this limit can easily be exceeded, especially if a helicopter evacuation from a remote location is needed. Individual walkers need to consider their own needs for Ambulance Insurance. It costs considerably more than the insurances which Bushwalking Victoria organises and many clubs recommend that their individual members have an Ambulance subscription or insurance scheme. It is therefore strongly recommended that clubs ask their members to have ambulance insurance (e.g. see <http://ambulance.vic.gov.au/>).

Associations Liability

The Bushwalking Australia Associations Liability policy protects office bearers, committee members and general members of incorporated organisations (i.e. clubs, state peak bodies and Bushwalking Australia) from being personally pursued for 'wrongful acts' that lead to claims against either the affiliate member organisation, the member/office bearer personally, or both. There have been considerable claims made in Australia against individuals for wrongful acts made in running of an association, which have seen personal assets of members and office bearers put at risk. The Associations Liability cover gives members peace of mind that should they make a financial decision in carrying out their official duties which results in an action against them, they will be covered subject always to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the policy. The office bearers, committee members and general members of an incorporated club affiliated with their state peak bushwalking body are automatically covered by this policy. The cost of this policy is met from Bushwalking Australia annual affiliation fees paid by Bushwalking Victoria.

Comprehensive information on the above insurance arrangements is available on the insurance pages of the Bushwalking Australia web site at www.bushwalkingaustralia.org

OTHER MATTERS

Newsletter

Most clubs use a newsletter as the primary method of disseminating information. As well as the above walk programs, newsletters are an excellent way of communicating other information including:

- club and committee meetings and decision
- previews of upcoming walks
- reports on past walks
- social events

- general bushwalking information and advice

Small clubs, especially if members are well known to each other or are able to meet regularly, may not need a newsletter, but in most circumstances a regular newsletter (even one page) keeps members informed. Newsletters can form a very important and interesting part of the history of a club.

Where a newsletter is produced there is a legal requirement that a copy be provided (free of charge) to the State Library of Victoria. Where a printed newsletter is produced a printed copy should be sent to Legal Deposit - Serials Section, State Library of Victoria, 328 Swanston St, Melbourne, 3000. Where only an electronic newsletter is produced a copy should be emailed to serials@slv.vic.gov.au. For more information on this requirement, go to: <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/help/copyright-legal-deposit/legal-deposit>

Social

Because bushwalking is a social as well as a physical and environmental activity, an important part of any successful club is an active social calendar. People want to get together to talk about their shared experiences and to socialise. Activities such as meals, photography evenings, BBQ, etc., can be arranged by anybody, and this is often by people who do not normally lead walks. Larger clubs will usually appoint a social convener to co-ordinate and/or arrange these events. Even without a social convener, a volunteer can be encouraged to arrange an outing or activity.

Other Activities

Clubs need not restrict themselves to just bushwalking and social activities (although for Bushwalking Victoria membership and coverage by its insurance policies they must remain essentially bushwalking clubs). A variety of outdoor activities will enhance members' experiences and enjoyment. Many clubs include several other types of activities such as cross-country skiing, cycle touring, climbing, caving, canoeing, and liloing. Care needs to be taken to ensure safety on more adventurous activities. Clubs should also be aware of their duty of care to participants on their trips. For information on which activities are covered by club insurance, you can refer to [Bushwalking Australia](#)'s website.

Other Printed Materials

Clubs may also consider producing other printed materials such as an introduction to the club for new members, and/or any guidelines on walking that the club feels would be useful. Information on walking is also available from other sources. Bushwalking Victoria has the following pamphlets available:

- *Bushwalking, Make a Start*
- *Tread Softly*
- *Walksafe*
- *Are you going walking in the Mountains?*
- *Hut Etiquette*

Bushwalking Victoria also produces other publications which clubs may find useful:

- Sample Club Rules
- Search and Rescue Manual
- Conservation, Tracks and Huts Policies

Equipment

Many clubs purchase some items of bushwalking equipment for members to hire or use. These might include one or more of: a small tent, sleeping bag (with inner sheet for health reasons), backpack, daypack, stove, etc.

These items are generally for those who are new to bushwalking, to give them an opportunity to try out the activity without having to purchase expensive equipment and to see what suits them best. Hire rates are generally aimed to simply break even.

Some clubs also maintain a library of maps, books and items of bushwalking equipment (such as GPS, compass, etc). While some members prefer to buy their own, many members do not, and it makes sense for the club to purchase these for leaders and members to borrow. With due care, maps can be re-used for many years. Compasses can also be purchased for club use, although generally it is better if leaders have their own. Ultimately, most clubs expect members to purchase their own equipment, rather than continue to hire the club equipment.

Retention of Records

Club records should generally be retained for a reasonable period of time. Financial records are required to be retained for at least seven years under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. Walk lists and reports need to be retained for several years in the event of an insurance claim. Walk reports should be retained for many years because of their value to future leaders. Walk reports, copies of minutes, newsletters, etc., should be retained as long as possible, at least for several years, for historical purposes. One day, the history of the club may be written. It is recommended that a committee member be appointed to manage all club information and establish the rules for information retention.

Acknowledgement

This document was prepared by the Bushwalking Victoria Board to assist with the formation and administration of new and existing bushwalking clubs. The board would like to thank the following people for their comments and useful discussion contributing to the document. This manual could not have been completed without their assistance.

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Bushwalking Victoria, 2016

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Appendix 1

Services offered by Bushwalking Victoria

- ✓ Unites all affiliated and associated Victorian bushwalking clubs and other clubs having like interests.
- ✓ Provides staffed office (part time) to provide a point of contact between bushwalking clubs, public, media, government and other Victorian and Australian agencies.
- ✓ Provides advice on administrative matters such as incorporation for new bushwalking organisations.
- ✓ In cooperation with Bushwalking Australia organises public liability, and association liability insurance for member clubs and personal accident insurance for club members when participating in club activities.
- ✓ Enables club and individual BWV members to join Bush Search & Rescue (BSAR) to participate in search and rescue activities for persons lost in the bush.
- ✓ Enables clubs and individual members to contribute to the maintenance of walking tracks and participate in conservation activities.
- ✓ Provides leadership training material and support to help clubs train new walk leaders.
- ✓ Facilitates interchange of ideas about bushwalking and promotes the flow of information between clubs.
- ✓ Gives information about walking in general in the form of pamphlets and downloadable material.
- ✓ Provides a large online library of documented, mapped walks available to the bushwalking public.
- ✓ Encourages minimum impact bushwalking practices.
- ✓ Provides submissions and other input on behalf of bushwalkers to government agencies such as Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), the Department of Infrastructure, Parks Victoria, the Alpine Resort boards, Sport and Recreation Victoria, and other bodies in matters such as national parks, forests, conservation, logging, the Australian Alps Walking Track, camping restrictions in parks, huts, and access for walkers over leased land, river frontages and private land.
- ✓ Encourages shire and municipal councils to preserve or create suitable environments for walking.