

NEWCASTLE RAMBLERS BUSHWALKING CLUB

PO Box 719, Charlestown 2290 - <http://www.bushwalking.org.au/newcastleramblers>

Safety Guidelines for Water Activities

Introduction

While water activities do not conform to the principal aims of the Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking Club, these activities are viewed by the Committee as approved secondary activities that:

- increase the range of experiences available to Club Members.
- provide activities that complement the hot summer conditions that prevail in Australia.

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to minimise the risks to participants and to the Club. These guidelines, due to the nature of the Club, are not necessarily the same as those of a commercial organisation.

Terms and Definitions

In this guideline the following terms and definitions apply.

Water Activities: refers to canoes, kayaks, liloes, cascading, canyoning, or any other water activity that may be included from time to time.

Authorized Activity: is an activity where the group leader complies with the Club's Risk Management Strategy and files the Club waiver form in accordance with Rambler guidelines. Group size and ratio of participants to experienced paddlers is at the discretion of the leader, with a maximum ratio of 10 inexperienced paddlers to 1 experienced paddler.

Personal Flotation Device (PFD): is a buoyancy vest or other equipment designed to keep a person afloat.

Skill of Participants:

- Participants must be able to swim 50 metres while dressed in canoeing clothes (including PFD and helmet).
- If in a canoe or kayak, a paddler should be able to perform basic strokes, ie paddle forwards, backwards, as well as ferry glide and reverse ferry glide.
- A period of 30 minutes basic instruction and skills practice should precede each water activity day for the benefit of the participants and to allow the leader to assess those taking part in the activity.
- This instruction period should apply to all water activities.

Safety Requirements:

- Participants must follow the directions of the leader at ALL times.
- Canoes and kayaks must be in a good state of repair with inflatable or fixed buoyancy, sufficient to keep the craft afloat when full of water. Secure end loops and fixed deck lines should be fitted. A bailer or a large sponge must be carried. Kayaks on rivers must have a secure foot rest fitted.
- The group must stay together.
- When in estuaries or tidal waterways, be aware of tidal currents and underwater obstacles.

- On rivers beware of snags, rocks, overhangs and trees. Beware of eddies, pressure waves and underwater obstacles.

Clothing requirements:

- Suitable footwear must be worn. A crash helmet must be worn when negotiating rapids or when near rocks. A flotation device must also be worn.
- A well equipped day pack should provide sufficient clothing to meet most situations, packed in a waterproof container. A wide brimmed hat and long sleeved shirt are essential.

Essentials to be carried by each participant.

Food , water, sunscreen, first aid kit, repair kit, map and compass (optional) all to be kept dry.

Group Equipment.

If canoeing, a tow line and a spare paddle.

Behaviour on Rivers.

- When shooting rapids allow about 5 canoe lengths between canoes. This will prevent the possibility of collision.
- Do not proceed down any rapid without an experienced paddler first examining the lay of the rapid and explaining the best path.
- An experienced paddler should show the way down the rapid, then wait at the bottom for the rest of the group. This will allow for a rescue should a capsize or difficult situation arise.
- In the event of a capsize float down the rapid feet first.
- An experienced paddler should be Tail-end Charlie.
- Do not paddle out of sight of the paddler behind you.
- If a rapid looks too dangerous for your experience level - portage.

River Grading

The policy of the Newcastle Ramblers Bushwalking club is that activities for kayaking/canoeing will be limited to Grades 1 and 2 for river paddling. If members are keen to pursue more difficult grade activities we would encourage them to embrace some of the specialist water sport clubs in the region.

Grade 1	Easy	Slow to medium flow with very small regular waves or ripples. Relatively few obstacles with an easy path to find and follow. Suitable for novices.
Grade 2	Medium	Rapids are straightforward with medium sized and regular waves. The path through rapids can be seen from the water and is often indicated by a well defined chute of water. There are some obstacles which require manoeuvring around, but paddlers with good command of basic strokes can easily miss them.