

# Bushwalking Policy

## PURPOSE

To ensure consistent acceptable safety standards are maintained for the conduct of the Bushwalking groups.

## POLICY STATEMENT

### 1. Medical Policy

- a. Members are solely responsible for ensuring their medical and physical fitness for this group. If uncertain they should seek medical advice before enrolling or participating at any time. The Group Leader may request verbal confirmation that medical advice has been obtained and is being followed.
- b. Prior to any walk members must be satisfied that they can complete the walk. If uncertain they should not attend.
- c. Members must wear or carry their U3A Knox Inc. identity name tag including up to date details of any emergency contact telephone number, relevant medical condition and vital medication, to alert medical professionals who may be called on their behalf and at their cost.
- d. When participating in walking base camps or trips members must complete a Personal Emergency Information form provided by the Leader and have that on their person or back pack.
- e. When serious injury or illness occurs, an ambulance should be called in accordance with U3A Knox Inc. policy [Calling an Ambulance](#).
- f. Qualified medical or first-aid treatment is **NOT** provided for these groups.
- g. Each member must carry a personal first-aid kit and personal medication appropriate for the walking excursion (e.g. half day or day trip) and suitable for their needs.

#### ***Responsibilities:***

Enrolment in a U3A Knox Inc. walking group means each member of their group acknowledges and accepts the above policy.

### 2. Safety Policy

- a. Each group must appoint two (2) safety representatives.

- b. The safety representatives are to receive appropriate training from the Health and Safety Officer.
- c. The safety representatives are to advise the Group Leader of any safety concerns and possible remedial action for consideration by the Group Leader.
- d. For safety reasons a walk cannot start or continue with less than four (4) people. Should circumstances require (eg injury) the group leader may en route, split the main group ensuring at least 4 people in each sub group.
- e. If more than six (6) members are present on a walk the Group Leader must appoint a whip. The whip is to bring up the rear and keep track of all the group to make sure no-one is left behind. The whip will liaise with the Day Leader to ensure slow walkers get adequate breaks.
- f. Prior to commencement of a walk the Group Leader is to confirm the number of walkers by way of a circle number call and to double check the number of walkers is the same as the attendance sheet. Upon completion of the walk the Group Leader is to ensure all members are accounted for by way of a circle number call.
- g. Known areas of danger must be avoided. Climbing cliffs, rock climbing, abseiling, crossing of fast running and dangerous water is not permitted.
- h. Walks are not to be taken in untracked areas. Overnight hiking is not allowed.
- i. Alcohol is **NOT** to be taken or consumed on any walking excursion.
- j. Animals are not permitted on any walking excursion. **NOTE:** The Group Leader must consult with the Course Coordinator before making any decision in relation to a member with an assistance animal.
- k. Firearms are not permitted on any walking excursion.
- l. The walking excursion must be cancelled or substituted if hunting is scheduled or suspected in the area (where possible) of the walk.
- m. Prior to any walk the Group Leader must on the day and prior to the walk commencing check the websites of Bureau of Meteorology and CFA (Country Fire Authority) for details of any weather warnings for the area of the walk.
- n. A description of all walks in the term or other program must include the start location, start times, destination and details of the walk and a walk grading matrix covering approximate length, track ratings, terrain/hills. The

mobile phone number of the Group Leader and Day Leader is to be available to all walkers.

- o. In an emergency, the Group Leader and Day Leader in conjunction with the safety representatives must contact the relevant Emergency Services. It is highly recommended that walkers download onto their mobile phone, the app "Emergency Plus" as it goes straight through to 3 emergency contacts (000, SES, Police) and automatically gives your exact location to the operator.
- p. The Group Leader must carry a mobile phone and advise the number to each member, the Course Coordinator and the U3A office.
- q. At the Group Leader's discretion, a member may be excluded from participating in a particular walk at any time prior to departure for reasons that include (but are not limited to), having an inadequate level of fitness, physical ability or lacking suitable equipment, clothing or footwear for the particular walk.
- r. At the Group Leader's discretion new members will undertake a probationary/trial two (2) walk status to ascertain their suitability and compatibility with the group requirements and other participants.
- s. Any equipment purchased for or by a bushwalking group must be approved by the Health and Safety Officer prior to purchase.
- t. Members are required to comply with any related and reasonable request from the Group Leader. Group members are responsible for obeying local laws, trail or park rules and showing respect and courtesy to all others.
- u. Members are to bring appropriate equipment suitable for the walk including, but not limited to, warm/wet/cold weather clothing (jeans are not allowed for the Full Day group), sturdy walking footwear (thongs, light runners, sandals, open shoes are not allowed), back pack and optional walking poles. All equipment is to be carried by the member. Members must provide and maintain their equipment, clothing and footwear in good order. Members must bring appropriate food and drink for morning tea, lunch and refreshment.
- v. Members are required to advise the Group Leader if they
  - Are not attending a walk.
  - Intend joining the group at other than the listed starting point.
  - Intend to deviate from the planned route being taken.
  - Intend to leave before the finish of the walk.
- w. Members who deviate from the programmed or planned route, or choose for any reason not to walk within the group between the Leader and the whip,

without the permission from the Group and/or Day Leader, are deemed to be absent from the group for that period.

- x. The Group Leader and Day Leader, in consultation with the safety representative, must determine whether it is safe for a walk to continue when conditions are deemed unsuitable (eg. strong winds, falling limbs, dramatic temperature changes and the like).
- y. The Group Leader must be aware of any applicable Fire Reports before starting a walk. Walks should be cancelled when the forecast temperature (based on Bureau of Meteorology) for Melbourne is 31 degrees Celsius or above. At the discretion of the Group Leader the walk may proceed subject to consideration of temperature for the walk area, walk duration, terrain and any other relevant factors.

Walks are automatically cancelled when

- The CFA (Country Fire Authority) declare a Fire Danger Rating of “Severe” or “Extreme” or “Code Red”.
- At any time on days declared as a Total Fire Ban.

**Responsibilities:** The Group Leader must ensure that

- The *Safety Policy* is implemented.
- The official attendance sheet has been completed prior to each walk.
- Any accidents, injuries or incidents are reported according to the [Health and Safety Policy](#).

### 3. General Policy

- a. In the absence of the Group Leader from a walk, or even if they are in attendance, the Group Leader may appoint a Day Leader. The leadership change must be recorded on the Walk Program and Attendance sheet.
- b. The Day Leader must be made aware of and ensure that the duties and responsibilities of the Group Leader are performed.
- c. The Group Leader may permit an un-enrolled member or a visitor to participate in an introductory group. Children under the age of 18 are not permitted to attend walking groups. The Group Leader is to ensure the invitees are aware, understand and accept the relevant provisions of this policy.
- d. An extension of the term program to participate in community or other public events and or other sessions during the term or between-terms break may only be made by the Group Leader or delegate.

- e. The Course Coordinator is to be advised of any changes, extensions or cancellations to an extension program. If a group or members of a group propose representing U3A Knox Inc. in a community or other public event, prior notice is to be given to the Course Coordinator.
- f. Changes to a walk (before or during the walk) may only be made in consultation with the group by the Group Leader or delegate.
- g. When walking in a National or State park, park rules/codes must be adhered to and must include:
  - The carry in carry out rule in relation to any rubbish.
  - Where provided, all walkers must stay on designated walking tracks.
  - If the planned route includes crossing private land prior permission must be obtained from the owner.
- h. Each group is to appoint a Group Assistant.
- i. At the end of each term the Group Leader or Group Assistant is required to return the completed manual or electronic group attendance sheet to the Course Coordinator or Office Manager.
- j. The Group Assistant is to collect the weekly bulletin and any other relevant information from office and distribute/read to group members.
- k. The Group Assistant is to provide administrative support to the Group Leader as required.
- l. U3A Knox Inc. does **NOT** indemnify ordinary members or provide public liability, personal accident or any other insurance cover whatsoever including loss or theft or damage to personal or other property.

***Responsibilities:***

The Group Leader to ensure the *General Policy* is adhered to.

**APPROVAL**

This policy was reviewed and amended by the U3A Knox Inc. Committee of Management on September 8, 2021.