

TRAINING OF BUSHWALKERS AND LEADERS

Nuri Chorvat

Confederation's Training officer

1. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Nuri Chorvat (member of SBW, Sutherland, NPA and South Coast Bushwalking Clubs) and have stepped into the saddle as Confederation Training Officer following the resignation of Andy Macqueen (Previous President). Fortunately, Andy remains on the Confederation management committee. With your support, I hope to continue the good work that Andy has set in motion.

2. A recent Confederation workshop on the training needs of clubs, held at Cattai NP on April 12, highlighted several areas of training where Confederation could assist clubs. The workshop followed from a training survey that Andy had sent out to all clubs and it was clear from the responses that many clubs needed assistance. What help could be offered and how it could be delivered was the purpose of the workshop.

A report on the workshop is attached for your information and to promote discussion within your club. Whilst not every affiliated club attended, I hope that the results are indicative of the general responses that would have resulted had all clubs attended. However, please let me know if your club has a view that differs significantly from the responses given at the workshop.

To summarise the general conclusion of the workshop. The feelings of most groups, and the feeling of the majority in the subsequent plenary session, was that Confederation should give priority to helping clubs do their own training, rather than setting up a structure of centralised courses.

Subsequently, a Training sub-committee (consisting of volunteers that attended the workshop) was established to pursue the suggestions which arose from the workshop. At its first meeting, a draft mission statement was proposed - "To facilitate informal and formal training of bushwalkers, particularly leaders, to assist bushwalking clubs in New South Wales conducting their activities in a safe and competent manner."

The sub-committee members are Greg Bridge, Peter Carlin, Nuri Chorvat, John Clark, Tim Fox, George Mawer, Keith Maxwell, Bill Probert, Dave Sheppard. Contact details are shown on the last page. A warm invitation is extended to any club members who may wish to join the Training sub-committee.

It is proposed that Confederation collect and evaluate information on :

1. Training relating to the activities that are conducted by the clubs (Eg. Bushwalking, abseiling, rock climbing, canoeing, cross-country skiing, first aid, navigation, etc).

2. How to set up an operations manual for the above-mentioned activities. Including strategies for risk management, common practices and standards. Eg. TOPS document "Strategies for Risk Management and Experiential Learning"

3. Minimum competency standards that would be expected of bushwalkers, leaders and activity instructors. These minimum standards will probably be guided by the draft "Implementation Guide for the National Activity Standards for Outdoor Recreation" prepared and published by the Outdoor Recreation Council of Australia Inc. (ORCA).

4. Relevant activity courses and instructors. Where can our members go for instruction ?

The objective is to have this training information freely available for the benefit of all affiliated clubs. The distribution methods by which this could be done have yet to be determined, but may include sending text files on floppy disks for clubs to prepare their own operations manuals. Basic documents could be prepared with clubs adding/modifying to suit their particular requirements.

From the above objectives, there is a lot of work to be done. I would invite all clubs to help Confederation and ultimately benefit themselves and other clubs who may just be starting up. The benefits will help to improve the safety and quality of our favourite activities.

I would invite all clubs to send me the following information :

1. Contact details of your club's Training Officer (Name, address, email, phone, fax, computer details). If you don't have a Training Officer, please consider appointing one. It is proposed that these individuals will become the main distribution channels for training information to your club. It would be great (but not essential) if they had access to a computer and modem. Snail mail still works. It is proposed to circulate this list of Training Officers (TOs) to all TOs to encourage interclub networking.

2. Any printed information (such as training manuals, information for new/prospective members, How to read a Compass, How to read a Map, How to Form a Club, Abseiling notes, etc) that you have at present. Also indicate if the information is available on floppy disk.

3. Any other information that you consider relevant to the objectives outlined above.

It will all be gratefully received and filed for reference. The sub-committee members will then study them intensively for many hours/days/weeks. What finally happens with all this information will depend on several factors. The options as I see them at the moment, range from; preparing a generic operations manual from scratch (a great deal of work); to picking the best document(s) and recommending it as a generic document. Clubs can then select what they want to retain for their own members and which hopefully, will also satisfy the minimum competency requirements for each activity. What are your views ? Does your club agree with this approach ? Or is there a better way ? All ideas accepted.

Copyright ? By providing copies of your club's information I would expect that you would allow Confederation the right to photocopy or use the information to achieve the objectives noted above. Please indicate if your documents are subject to copyright and if your club wishes to impose any limitations on their distribution. Like most works of this type - credits will be given to all contributors. Individual efforts will unfortunately blend into a sea of other contributions.

Could you discuss this request for information with your members and ask them for assistance in amassing this information database. It would be great if they could also obtain copies of relevant information (Eg. Operations manuals from the fire brigade, SES, defence forces, training companies, rescue services, ... anywhere at all). The intent is not to copy them but to find out what is in them. We want to find out who has the best training manuals, where they can be obtained by our clubs and how much they cost. If this becomes the best option, then Confederation may be able to assist in enabling bulk purchases to be made to reduce costs to clubs (but based on cash up front with each club order).

Finally, I will keep all clubs informed on the progress towards achieving our training committee's objectives, probably via the internet "Bushwalking home page" at <http://www.bushwalking.org.au>

Kind regards, Nuri Chorvat

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Report on Confederation Training Workshop

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Confederation's Training officer

Forty three representatives from twenty clubs attended the recent workshop, which was held at Cattai National Park on Saturday, April 12 to consider what training strategies may be appropriate for Confederation. The workshop was an important event because it enabled our clubs, in an informal forum, to take the time to reflect on existing training programs and to then consider the future requirements.

Andy Macqueen (Confederation's Training Officer) summarized the results of a recent training survey and outlined various options for the future. "The main conclusion ... is that in most areas of bushwalker competence, most clubs either do not provide training, or provide only informal training during normal activities. Some clubs expressed the view that this situation (in their club) was unsatisfactory. Three clubs mentioned that new members are issued with an instructional handout or guidebook."

He then briefly discussed the new National Competency Standard (relating to various outdoor recreational activities) which was recently received from ORCA. Andy indicated that despite some early concerns, the document was generally a reasonable attempt at defining various levels of competence and training requirements for the various activities. The competencies required are dependent on the level of responsibility and on the level of knowledge required.

For example.

Level of knowledge	Example
Level 1: For beginners requiring a basic knowledge.	Beginners
Level 2: For persons requiring a broader level of general instruction.	General
Level 3: For general instructors or for advanced instruction in techniques and equipment for persons requiring specialist knowledge	Instructors
Level 4: For specialist instructors with expert knowledge.	Specialists

For the higher levels, training requirements cover a multitude of areas, including correct techniques, equipment, safety management, risk/hazard assessment, communications, group dynamics, mental and physical fitness, planning, logistics, first aid, legal responsibilities, etc.

ORCA is proposing a system of industry awards, which would be tailored to suit the needs of all sections of the outdoor industry, including volunteer groups. At this stage however, there is no suggestion that compulsory training or accreditation schemes will be thrust on bushwalking clubs.

Andy made the point that the best way to stave off future imposition of such schemes was to make sure our standards were already high. Therefore, clubs had to look at themselves to make sure their leaders and training systems (informal or otherwise) were adequate.

Andy handed out copies of relevant sections of the document. Members asked for full copies of the new standard from ORCA could be circulated for evaluation and comment. A contact phone number was written on the front of every copy handed out to attendees. The group was then divided into six teams and given two tasks.

Task A

The members were asked to imagine being on the committee of a typical club. The three typical club groups were: a "young adventurers" club, a large "diverse" (broad range of activities and ages) club and a "leisure walkers" club. The groups were asked to consider the following questions:

What sort of capabilities are expected of: (i) members and (ii) leaders?

How will the club ensure that people have these capabilities?

If a training program is needed, what form should it take?

Will the club look to Confederation for support?

Task B

The second task was for each group to then imagine being on Confederation's Training Committee and to consider how it could help the clubs. A range of actions exist:

Option A: Do nothing. Leave clubs to continue own training.

Option B: Internal training (within Confederation using internal resources).

Option C: External training - attending commercial training courses.

The suggestions from each group are attached. The responses have been combined.

Summary of Task A Results

There was much in common between the three typical club groups.

There was a general acceptance that leaders should be better trained and qualified than general members.

That clubs generally did not provide adequate training, especially for newer members.

That training standards varied greatly between the clubs, depending on availability of funding or resources and supportive individuals.

Financial support from Confederation was limited so clubs would have to fund their own training. Confederation could possibly coordinate the resources (instructors) and to help share the burden of training efforts.

Clubs will continue to do the majority of their own training.

Clubs need Confederation to develop material that could assist all clubs. No need to reinvent the wheel. If the best of the existing information could be combined this would save a lot of time and effort.

Summary of Task B Results

A full list of suggestions arising from this session is shown on Page 3

The feelings of most groups, and the feeling of the majority in the subsequent plenary session, was that Confederation should give priority to helping clubs do their own training, rather than setting up a structure of centralized courses.

Some of the ways Confederation could help included:

Encourage clubs to look at training in a structured way – by appointing a training officer, etc.

Distribute relevant parts of the national ORCA competency standards, for guidance of clubs in considering their own training.

Draw up and circulate a model "Code of Practice" document (operations manual). An existing document by TOP could be used as a starting point

Networking clubs to share expertise/courses/training/handouts/ presentation materials, etc

Provide a database of trainers/instructors and venues

Developing course guidelines/content

Articles on training in "The Bushwalker"

Promote and co-ordinate first-aid training by Confederation (as per Dave Sheppard et al).

Cautiously look at Confederation courses in other subject areas

Conclusion:

The workshop was very successful. The discussions between members during morning and afternoon tea provided a gauge of the high interest shown. There seemed to be a general consensus that clubs would continue with their own training but recognised that a minimum basic level of knowledge was appropriate for various activities. There was a view that the existing club training was not adequate and further efforts were necessary to improve the knowledge and skill levels of the members. The members considered that Confederation could offer some

guidance, coordination and support.

The information and suggestions provided by the participants was substantial and will provide the Training sub-committee with sufficient ideas to take the next step in preparing recommendations for Confederation's management committee. Six people volunteered to become members on the new sub-committee. An open invitation was extended to any individual who could assist in what is likely to become a major project. We will need many helpers and resources. Please spread the word.

Andy did an excellent job of facilitating the workshop and many thanks also to John and Sylvia Clark and helpers who provided the group with a magnificent BBQ lunch and morning/afternoon teas. The catering was excellent. Finally, a thank you to all of the workshop participants.

TASK A

Group A - A young adventurers club

What sort of capabilities are expected of:

(i) members ?

- Level of fitness for the activities
- Self reliance
- Cooperative towards other members and leaders
- Willingness to undertake training to improve skills
- Basic first aid knowledge
- Navigation skills
- Bushwalking skills

(ii) leaders ?

- Navigation skills / certificate
- First Aid qualification - Senior FA or Remote Area FA

Certificate

- Roping skills / abseiling qualifications
- Leadership skills and ability
- Fitness for activity level being attempted
- Minimal Impact Bushwalking techniques
- Responsible for training
- Final say as to whom may attend an activity
- Ongoing training in leadership skills
- Set levels of physical and mental fitness
- Equipment knowledge

How will the club ensure that people have these capabilities ?

- Observations by members on qualifying activities
- Ie. Must complete the qualifying activity
- Information Ie. Skills obtained / other interests / from other

members

- Code of Ethics
- Questionnaire
- Observations of potential leaders on other walks

Devise a checklist of competencies for leaders and use members

observations to check performance

- Form a sub-committee to assess a leaders suitability
- Have a leaders competency standard

If a training program is needed, what form should it take ?

Members:

In-house training Eg. Basic bush skills, survival skills, rope skills/ techniques, navigation, leadership training, "Train the Trainer", white water skills (liloing, canoeing, rafting, white water safety), MIB techniques.

Leaders:

- Specific training - paid for if necessary
- Train the Trainers course

Will the club look to Confederation for support ?

Yes.

Plus in-house training support (if available)

Supplemented by professional trainers where necessary

Train the Trainer courses

Assist in setting competency standards

Group B - A broadly based club (both ages and activities)

What sort of capabilities are expected of:

(i) members ?

- Self sufficiency - water, food, gear, shelter, first aid kit
- Reasonable fitness level
- Prior experience
- Take directions from leader

(ii) leaders ?

- First aid certificate,
- Navigation adequate for trip / map reading
- Minimal Impact Bushwalking skills
- Ability to change trip to suit changed circumstances
- Additional skills appropriate to activity
- Eg. canoeing, abseiling, rock climbing, water rescue, etc...
- Organisational skills
- Communications
- Bushcraft

Inspires confidence / authority

How will the club ensure that people have these capabilities ?

New members:

- Qualifying walks / activities
- Nomination by trip leader

Leaders:

- Informal assessment by experienced leaders
- + short training course
- + comply with club's standards

If a training program is needed, what form should it take ?

- Weekend training only
- "In house" training / workshops
- Mentors for prospective leaders
- Certificate courses for leaders

Will the club look to Confederation for support ?

- Yes.
- For guidelines. Eg TOP training curriculum
- Newsletter
- Training manual
- Best Practice manual
- Equipment manual
- Specialised training courses
- Resource manual (skills)

Group C - A leisure walkers club

What sort of capabilities are expected of:

(i) members ?

- Complete easy day walks unassisted
- Fitness
- Health
- Navigation
- First Aid

(ii) leaders ?

- First Aid certificate
- Communication skills
- Awareness of group dynamics and safety
- Navigation skills (although mainly track walks)
- Risk assessment skills - awareness of area and potential

problems

People management

Mishap management

How will the club ensure that people have these capabilities ?

Members:

- Meetings and introductory nights
- Start on an easy grade and work up
- References from other members
- Take people out and assess them (by leader)

Leaders:

- Sight first aid certificate
- Peer assessment
- Sight any qualifications

If a training program is needed, what form should it take ?

Members:

- Introductory sessions i.e. Demonstration
- Basic bushcraft
- Basic navigation (graded to suit the walks)

Leaders:

- Training Eg First Aid

Will the club look to Confederation for support ?

- Yes
- Gear information
- Walk venues
- Help required

TASK B**Q1. What should Confederation do ?**

We may need to comply with ORCA's training certification requirements.

Option A: Do nothing. Leave clubs to do their own training.

Option B: Internal training (within Confederation using internal resources).

Option C: External training - attending commercial training courses.

Most clubs considered that Option A was not acceptable. The most realistic option was Option B with a minimal amount of external training (if required by government bodies for certification by an approved body). Option C was too expensive and could not be paid for within club budgets. Whilst the voluntary efforts of our existing club instructors and trainers (who have conducted training courses for their own clubs for free or at cost) has been greatly appreciated, it is

recognised that to then ask them to train other Confederation club members would be unreasonable in terms of the significant additional workload and/or travelling that would be required. Thus individual clubs may need to pay for some external training. It was considered that Confederation could act as a coordinator of these external courses by arranging sufficient numbers of club attendees at each training courses to keep the individual costs low.

Keith Maxwell commented that if the training could be carried out under the auspices of the Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA), then some costs may be able to be reduced and that the attendees could be covered by insurance.

Q2. How could Confederation help our clubs with training ?

Note: This is a full, unedited and unprioritised list of suggestions emerging from the workshop groups.

Develop a general policy on training, which provides support for the clubs.

Develop guidelines for specific activities Eg. Abseiling, walking, rock climbing,

(These should be modular to provide "steps" of knowledge and skill levels)

Develop a resource library/database of suitable instructors / equipment / training materials

Provide certificates of attainment for attendees as a record (proof) that they had successfully passed that particular training module.

Arrange courses that charge "at cost" or minimal profit.

Run a pilot training course to determine if suitable/acceptable to members/government. Preferably, the trainers would be sought from within Confederation. Good trainers only.

Run regional "Train the Trainer" courses for specific activities.

Clubs to subsidise members attending. This may involve provide training professionals to "Train the Trainers" for members to pass on the information/skills to other members within their club and/or other clubs

Policy "To provide a voluntary training program for Confederation clubs to raise competency levels".

Policy to encourage interclub cooperation and interchange of skills and knowledge.

Provide a framework for training club members. Catering for varying levels of experience.

Establish deals with trainers to provide discounted training at reasonable fees.

Identify clubs strengths.

Develop course guidelines (content)

Provide weekend courses (on skills, MIB, ethics, code of practice, etc)

Clubs to pay instructors for all course materials and out-of-pocket expenses

Strongly recommend that clubs appoint training officers

Prepare a roster of courses and publish 6 months in advance.

Please fill in and post to Nuri Chorvat Training Officer Bushwalkers NSW PO Box 2090 GPO Sydney 1043

Club name.....

Address.....

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Training Officer.....

Phone.....

Fax.....

Email.....