



Somerset

Outdoor Learning Centre



Newsletter #36 Term 3 2014

Your outdoor experience starts here.....

Somerset Outdoor Learning Centre has been offering outdoor involvement to **school students** and **Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme participants** since 1980. As an industry leader with over **30 years of experience**, we offer a unique blend of learning experiences and outdoor facilities and activities delivered in a professionally managed outdoor education programme.

Somerset offers the **distinctive experience of tent camping**, we do not accommodate students in dormitories or cabins, as a Somerset programme is designed to present ample opportunity for **students to engage with their natural surroundings**. We provide a **fun and supportive** framework for students to **appreciate** the value of friendship and teamwork, to **develop** leadership abilities, to **extend** their physical and emotional capabilities, to **explore** the wonder of the out-of-doors, to **enhance** self-confidence and self-reliance and to **express** their spirit of adventure under the supervision of **skilled and qualified outdoor educators**.

Somerset owns over 600 acres of land in the picturesque Colo River Valley with expeditions extending into the adjacent Wollemi National Park and onto the Hawkesbury River.

Springtime Sensations: Enjoy a walk through the bush, an abseil or rock climb on natural rock or a paddle on the Colo River and absorb the sights and sounds as the valley comes to life with wildlife and wildflowers.

What's New At Somerset

Toilets!

In our **commitment to the ongoing improvement to our facilities** - we have recently completed the refurbishment of our campsite toilets.

Most of our campsites now have had their toilets converted to the flushing variety and all are equipped with 'proper' bowls to sit on, securable doors, tiled floors, LED lighting and running water and soap for hand-washing.

On our remote expedition programmes - facilities vary from composting toilets to digging a hole - our Group Leaders carry trowels, toilet paper, soap, a portable 'kitchen sink' and hand sanitiser.



Downstream Campsites

Our 'Cobbs 1 and 2' campsites have moved!

We have just finished re-locating our 2 downstream campsites to a new parcel of land. Alike our other 12 exclusively private campsites the new 'Cobbs' are resplendent with a LED-lit shelter with benches, running water, campfire circle, flushing toilets, delivery dock and a teacher's-tent platform. **Our campsites are an integral and invaluable part of the camping experience and we strive to maintain them at a high standard.**

And the 'Cobbs' campsites ensure our programmes will continue to offer students the ability to enjoy the Colo River on a canoe journey.



Gear for Camps

After more than 36 years in the camping and gear game - Somerset is pleased to be able to source and provide **affordable and good quality equipment** to participants coming to Somerset for school camps or Duke of Edinburgh expeditions.

The gear is ordered prior and is ready-to-go (and named) when students arrive at camp. From raincoats to sleeping bags and from water bottles to rucksacks we have all that your students may need for their time at Somerset.

We also have select gear for teachers to borrow whilst they are on programme.



For more pictures and articles please visit www.campsomerset.com.au

A Numbers Game – let's count!

Over the last 6 months at Somerset

3,731 students on a school camp
928 students on a Duke of Edinburgh expedition
128 dads on a father and child camp
 So, **4,787** smiling faces ☺
16,572 apples and oranges
1,985 canoes paddled with **3,970** paddlers
307 fresh picnic lunches, **1,888** pizza doughs, **1,362** bottles of juice, **760**kgs of cereal,
1,843 dampers on sticks, **282** hikes in the bush, **198** kangaroo & wallaby sightings, **3,888**
 rucksacks packed, **95,740** tent pegs pushed into the ground, **11,760** milk crates stacked



Maintaining a High Standard in the Outdoor Education Industry

A broad range of providers offering different programmes, activities and experiences exist in the outdoor education industry – Somerset encourages schools to look into some **important factors** when **choosing their outdoor provider**. From staffing to campsites and communications to canoes – over the next series of Newsletters we will examine these vital areas of consideration to help schools select a provider that is **compliant** and operating at **best practice**.

Topic 1 - Staffing

The **selection, training, development** and **quality** of staff is critical, not only, to the success of a programme and to meeting the schools desired outcomes but the safety and well-being of the students is in the hands of the Group Leader and the ancillary staff and systems that support them.

- **Qualifications** – do the group leading staff and activity support staff hold the appropriate qualifications and proficiencies for the tasks they are undertaking? roping set-up and rescues, canoeing instruction, navigation and mapping, etc.
- **In-house familiarisation** – are staff briefed, trained and competent in the procedures, policies and practices particular to the organisation?
- **First Aid** – are staff qualified in suitable levels of First Aid and response for the programme? – senior or remote area first aid, CPR currency, emergency response, etc
- **NSW Working with Children Check** - are staff verified according to the requirements of the NSW WWC and does the organisation have child-safe policies in place?
- **Development and Mentoring** – does the organisation invest time and money in staff training, development and mentoring? hard skills revision, soft skills enhancement, etc
- **Staffing Levels** – are staff to student ratios for activities appropriate and with reference to the guidelines set out in the NSW Adventure Activity Standards?
- **Continuity of Staff** – does the organisation have a solid and full-time staff base as opposed to revolving casuals?
- **Support and Coordinating Staff** – are the behind-the-scenes staff trained and competent for their roles – duty drivers, programme coordinators, etc

Somerset is proud of its staff and works to the above points to maintain our camp at the forefront of the industry. Our Group Leaders are tertiary qualified and hold the necessary skills in roping, canoeing etc, are trained in remote area first aid and are verified according to the NSW WWC requirements. Upon arrival at Somerset our Group Leaders participate in an in-house induction concentrating on Somerset procedures, activity particulars etc and throughout a season will be involved in development sessions, recce hikes etc. We work on an average of 18 students with one Group Leader and teacher for school programmes, and an average of 12 students with a Group Leader for Duke of Ed expeditions. Additional support staff will join groups for certain activities such as canoeing and roping. Somerset employs staff on seasonal contracts under our own EBA. Many of our staff return for subsequent seasons. Our coordinating, client liaison, management, logistics, hospitality, etc staff are all experienced and skilled to fulfil their roles and we conduct run familiarisation sessions, driver training, etc for these pivotal positions. If you would like further information please do not hesitate to contact us.



2015 and 2016 Camp Dates

Somerset is locking-in dates for 2015 and 2016. Get in quick - don't miss out

For 1–7 day camps or a Duke of Ed weekend we would love to have you here!

Interested in an outdoor experience for your students? – please contact **Gen** for more information

Tel: 02 4575 5319

Email: schools@campsomerset.com.au

Staff Profile

Cam



Cam is currently in his 4th Season with Somerset as a Group Leader.

Cam has a Diploma in Outdoor Instruction and Management from Aoraki Polytech in New Zealand. Whilst completing his studies Cam worked at an outdoor equipment store before flying to Australia to begin his time at Somerset.

Cam is a quiet and diligent Leader who builds rapport and gains respect from the group from the get-go. A confident, charismatic, caring and competent Leader!

When he is not at Somerset Cam enjoys rock-climbing in the Blue Mountains and white water kayaking.

In the future Cam hopes to further his travels before returning to NZ and continue to work in the outdoors.

