



Somerset

Outdoor Learning Centre



Newsletter #37 Term 4 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**.

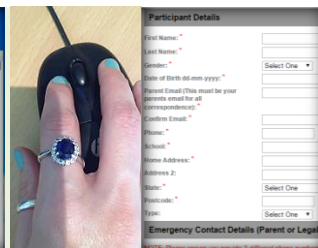
Somerset owns over 600 acres of land in the picturesque Colo River Valley with expeditions extending into the adjacent Wollemi National Park and onto the Hawkesbury River.

SUMMER S's! **Sand** – beach games, **Sun** – long days and fun times, **Swim** – in the gorgeous River, **Splash** – paddles dipping, **Sturp** – a cool cup of cordial, **Sizzle** – a BBQ feast, **Swing** – on the crate stack

Never a Dull Moment - What's New At Somerset

Online Camp Forms and Website Development

Due to the great success we have had with our online registrations for our Duke of Edinburgh courses we have **extended our website capabilities** to accommodate school camps as well. We have a separate login and username for each school and all the camp information for caregivers is readily at hand - medical and personal details to complete, FAQ's, what happens at camp, gear lists, all about Somerset, etc. We have trialled 2 schools on this new **online** system and we will now offer it to our 2015 schools as an alternative to paper forms. We also continually update our **News articles** and content so web-visitors can find out more!



Drinking Water Guidelines

The Colo River is one of the last **pristine** and **wild** rivers in NSW and derives its name from the aboriginal word for koala.

Somerset has always prided itself on the **crisp, clean** and **delicious** nature of the Colo River water, with participants enjoying many a refreshing mouthful!

Somerset has had water treatment programme in place for many years - NSW Health has recently released some **new** guidelines as to the treatment of water provided for drinking.

Somerset's water treatment procedures were looked over by our water specialist - all was in order with only a couple of amendments made to come in-line with the new requirements.



Bushfire Management

As part of our continued review and revision of manuals, procedures and policies we have recently looked over our Bushfire Management Plan to ensure that the safety of our participants is managed accordingly. Our Bushfire Plan is implemented in-line with the declared bushfire danger index released by the NSW Rural Fire Service each day. Our Plan has **provision for changes to programmes and activities** if required – from the conduct of bushwalks on ridges in the morning only, to no camping at remote campsites, to a substitute of hikes for River walks or canoe journeys, etc.

Our General Manager Paul is the **Deputy Captain of the local Brigade** and has achieved Group Leader standing. Paul is also strongly involved in the training and assessing of brigade members from all over the Hawkesbury to achieve their competencies in Crew Leading and Advanced Fire-Fighting. Mick, our Centre Manager is also **actively involved** - completing his Basic, Advanced and Crew Leader competencies.

Such a **wealth of knowledge and experience is invaluable** in programming, assessing of conditions, training of staff in procedures and response, etc as we prepare for the Summer season!



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

Let's hear it from them! – the student's viewpoint

'My favourite part of the camp was the part when we were canoeing in the Colo River. This was a very enjoyable experience due to the scenery and the effort put into it. The development of teamwork was very satisfying, topped off with the beautiful nature and scenery' - Max Yr 9

'The challenge of our canoe journey has rewarded me with a new outlook on physical activities and on mentally challenging situations' Josh – Yr 10

'During my time at camp I had some very memorable moments – doing the Low Rope Course, cooking with my friends and swimming in the River' Stasi – Yr 6

My favourite part of camp was sitting around the campfire and toasting marshmallows and sharing the days experiences' Isabelle – Yr 8



'Jess was a great leader, she was well respected and liked by the group. Her laid back nature was a real treat and made camp more enjoyable, but she was serious when she had to be!' Tom – Yr 9

'I had a great time, I enjoyed all the activities and found out that I am pretty good at throwing the milk crates up to the person standing on them!' Emily – Yr 7

'Abseiling - it was good have a go even though I was scared. Abseiling is one of those activities that you feel good about yourself because you conquered something' Kurt – Yr 8

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 2 - Communications

A **comprehensive, reliable** and well **monitored** communications system is **essential**. From the day-to-day programme logistics, weather, etc, information and updates to and from groups in-the-field to emergency and incident response.

Some points to consider when determining the effectiveness of a communications system;

- **Type** - do the chosen devices cover the programme area? And are these devices complementary? What is the contingency for a device or comms failure?
- **What for** – are the comms for emergency response only? If so, does this suffice?
- **GPS Units** – is the reliance on the 'epirb' function only? If so, does this suffice?
- **Method** – one way or two-way comms. One way comms – is the group self-sufficient with reference to weather, etc updates up until they can check-in? Two way comms – how are battery life, check-in procedures, etc managed to ensure that this is reliable?
- **Monitoring** – what monitoring and response system is in place? - is there someone at the other end? And what capability do they have to respond?
- **Over-reliance on communications** - What are the emergency procedures, training and response of the Leader in the field in the event of comms failure?

Somerset maintains its own licensed UHF Radio repeater system (lic. no. 1189822) across the programme area to ensure regular communications for all groups, and emergency contact if required.

This radio network is supplemented with the use of landline, mobile and satellite phones as appropriate.

Communications are monitored and recorded from Base Camp 24 hours, with designated co-ordinators and duty drivers each night. Our coordinators are onsite at Base, are Somerset experienced, have specific knowledge of each programme and are able to respond accordingly. Our Base Camp lies in the heart of our programme area - ensuring any response is timely, with the back-up of our vehicles, additional staff, etc and with full knowledge of the programme particulars.

We also use of GPS Locator 'Spots' which every Group Leader carries on expeditions, canoeing expeditions and bushwalks and at other times as appropriate. The 'spots' are registered and have been set-up with email notification and map location overviews to allow Base Camp to track the progress of groups on expedition. Our Leaders are able to check-in from designated points and to utilise the spots as a secondary form of emergency communication if required.

Our Group Leaders are briefed in Somerset emergency procedures and back-up contingencies if they are required in the field.



Book Now

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
PO Box 7457 Wilberforce 2756
Email: schools@campsomerset.com.au



Staff Profile

Support Services



Our Support Services works tirelessly to ensure that all gear and food is delivered and served and all grass mowed!

The **Logistics Team** are the behind-the-scenes deliverers of tents and rucksacks and lunches.

The efficient 'set-uppers' of campsites and Uralba teacher tents and My Kampsite Rules kitchens. The happy van drivers of groups to the start and from the finish and in the middle.

The safe loaders of canoes and trailers and gear.

The **Hospitality Team** are the jovial lettuce choppers, nachos cooks and burger-makers.

The careful packers of food eskies – from apple counting to filling cereal containers to choosing dessert treats.

They are also the spotless cleaners and washers of campsite toilets and tea towels.

The **Estate Team** are the capable mowers, slashers, garden and grass 'waterers', pump fixers, vehicle fuellers, leaf blowers and maintenance 'go-tos'.



Dukes Update

Our Bronze Test Expeditions no longer take place on the Great North Walk & camping at Crosslands - they have moved to **Somerset!**

Our decision to run the expeditions at Somerset is to fully benefit from what Camp Somerset has to offer - **private campsites and hiking routes**, more **flexibility** with walks in-cases of weather extremes, or bushfire ratings, etc, **proximity to Base Camp** and our glorious bush and beautiful Colo River.