

# Planning your school camp

## – The perfect outdoor adventure

*For students, there is nothing more exciting than an outdoor learning adventure. Kids of all ages love an excursion and so in this issue, ET has spoken to the experts to get the advice you'll need to plan a successful school camp. Grab your sleeping bag and put on some sun screen because now is the time to step out into the great outdoors*

**D**o you want to organise a school camp they won't forget? From a beachside retreat to a bush adventure, the options for school camps are endless. Whether you have specific curriculum goals in mind or you just want a fun, challenging experience outside the classroom, you need a camp facility that delivers professional programs that meet your specific objectives.

Today, with risk assessments and insurance requirements, few schools have the necessary human resources expertise to run their own school camp and so finding a professional centre is usually the best option.

So where do you go? Mark Young from NSW Sport and Recreation said a good school camp had to be adaptable to suit each group's individual needs.

Sport & Rec has been running school camps since the 1940s and the staff has extensive experience to ensure students learn in a safe environment while they also have fun.

Traditionally, school camps run from two to six days depending on your school's needs and there are camps in a variety of locations across Australia. NSW Sport and Recreation has a variety of centres including Berry, a blissful rural retreat in the heart of dairy farming country on the south coast of NSW through to Broken Bay, a bush and beach setting at the mouth of the Hawkesbury River. If you want a snow experience, Jindabyne is another option and this camp is located at the gateway to the Snowy Mountains.

Other locations include Lake Ainsworth, on the North Coast of NSW or Lake Burrendong which is conveniently located between Orange, Mudgee and Dubbo.

Professional outdoor education staff at the individual camp centres will liaise with teachers in advance to help plan activities which meet specific learning needs.

'Overall the aim is to encourage personal development, promote active and healthy lifestyles and introduce students to outdoor and environmental education,' Mark Young said.

'We work closely with the teachers to find out what they are trying to achieve with their kids. In some cases they might want their group to learn to work better as a team or they may need



Photograph courtesy of NSW Sport and Recreation

to break down some defiant cliques, a small group which could be causing problems for the other children.

'More than anything else, a school camp is all about students taking responsibility, challenging themselves, learning new skills and trying new things. It is a positive life experience. It gives them the opportunity to develop as individuals socially, emotionally and personally.

'They have to cooperate and work together to get things done and be more mature about the decisions they make. Simple things like dressing sensibly for warmth or eating a good dinner all become good learning opportunities.

'Mum is not there to pick up the pieces if they forget something or make a mistake.'

When you are looking for a school camp, it is important to find a centre that offers activities that meet outcomes from the Key Learning Areas.

At NSW Sport and Recreation, activities

meet outcomes from the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus and promote skills associated with syllabus areas for Human Society and Its Environment.

Additionally, secondary school students can participate in outdoor recreational activities while also exploring various aspects of the syllabus particularly in personal development, health and physical education, leadership and study skills.

One of the popular courses is the Equipped for Life personal leadership workshops which develop living skills through experiential learning activities. Underlying themes include the importance of taking responsibility, setting goals and priorities, teamwork, cooperation and effective communication.

'When you are looking for a camp experience you really want to give students the opportunity to discover, interpret, reflect, make observations, solve problems, work together, make new friends

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## sports and outdoors

and build their independence,' Mark Young said, and of course have lots of fun.

'You are best to choose a camp location with modern facilities and state of the art equipment with a choice of programs which are run with imagination, challenge and variety.

'It is also important to find a facility which will provide you with the essential excursion risk assessments. With the NSW Sport and Recreation, these are location-specific and available on request.

'Whether it's canoeing, sailing, fishing, snorkelling, swimming, learning how to surf, exploring native flora and fauna, examining Indigenous culture, aquatic ecosystems or astronomical wonders, there is something for everyone.

'Plus there's the excitement of adventure activities like high and low ropes courses, archery, rock climbing, flying fox, orienteering or canoeing so there is plenty to keep your students busy. It just depends on what your school wants to achieve.

### Your camping checklist

#### Questions to ask:

- ◆ Do your staff members have appropriate qualifications in first aid, resuscitation and child protection?
- ◆ What is the teacher to student ratio? In most cases schools need to send at least one teacher or other staff member for every 20 students attending camp.
- ◆ What is the role of the centre's program staff? Do they run every activity?
- ◆ Are 'visiting teachers' allocated to an activity group?
- ◆ Who will supervise students during free time periods and while students are fulfilling their duties in the dining hall and scullery?
- ◆ Who will organise the excursion risk assessments?
- ◆ What are the costs?
- ◆ Do your school camps aid in the development of social skills and independence?
- ◆ Are your programs designed specifically to meet the outcomes from Key Learning Areas, through activities suitable for primary-aged students?
- ◆ Do they meet the outcomes from the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Syllabus and promote skills associated with syllabus areas for Human Society and Its Environment?
- ◆ What specialised programs are on offer for

- ◆ Is everyone employed at the camp screened for suitability to work in a child-related employment environment?

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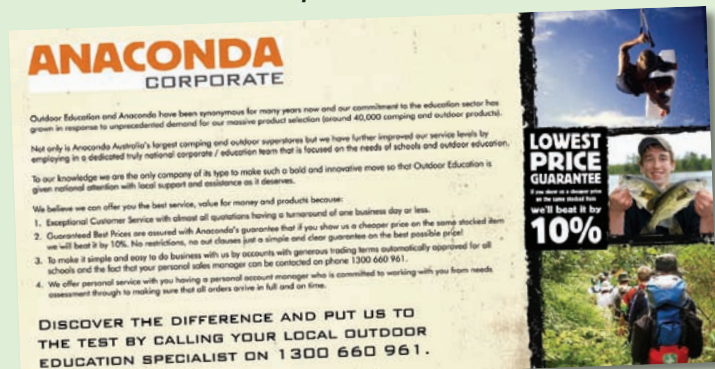
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Human Society in its Environment, Science, History or Geography?

- ◆ Do you have a senior program for students exploring life choices, personal and study skills workshops for high school students?
- ◆ Do your programs include Crossroads, study skills and personal leadership options or sport science programs? (Some centres will also run an HSC outdoor recreation option, three-day experiential learning program for Stage 6 PDHPE students as well as Year 7 orientation experiences).

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