

## Minimal Impact Bushwalking Code

If you enjoy the pleasures of bushwalking, and other related self reliant outdoor activities, you have a responsibility to preserve and protect our natural areas for future generations. This guide will help you enjoy the bush without leaving your mark.

### **Be self reliant**

Enjoy the natural landscape and only carry with you the items you need for comfort and safety. For shelter, always carry a lightweight tent or fly sheet. Do not rely on using caves or huts for camping.

The downside of cave camping under a rock overhang is no longer desirable. This practice has led to the deterioration of cultural and environmental values at many popular destinations.

### **Overhangs should not be used for camping for the following reasons**

loss of the significant vegetation through cutting plants for bedding and through disturbance around the overhang ; e.g. erosion .

Problems associated with the disposal of human faeces in the shallow rocky soils in the vicinity.

The vulnerability of Aboriginal rock art to fire and the build up of dust from the floor of the shelter.

The potential to disturb ancient Aboriginal occupation deposits by digging to level the floor.

The possibility to disturb hydrated spores where overhangs have been used as lairs for dingoes and foxes. This can cause disease in humans.

### **Tread Softly**

Avoid popular areas at peak times when campsites are crowded. Keep walking parties' small; four to six people is ideal. On zig zag tracks don't cut corners as this causes unsightly damage that can promote erosion.

In trackless country be conscious of the damage to pristine areas. Avoid sensitive places such as cushion moss, swamps and fragile rock formations and sites containing rare or threatened species.

Wade through waterlogged section of track; don't create a skein of new tracks around them.

Become proficient at bush navigation. Building cairns, blazing trees etc as route markers disturbs habitat and may destroy objects of cultural importance. It is also against the principles and interests of wilderness protection.

Preferable do not use negotiable route shown on sketch maps. These are routes where no recognised or formal track exists. They are often unpredictable due to the nature of terrain and changes in vegetation making walking times difficult to adhere to. In protected areas negotiable routes and bushbashing are strongly in conflict with management strategies intended to facilitate sustainable use and protect wild places.

### **Watch your safety**

Wear walking shoes that are lightweight, robust, providing sure footing with minimum impact on the ground and vegetation.

Always carry the appropriate map and know how to use it.

Always be prepared for adverse weather conditions. Waterproof garments are essential plus thermal clothing and a good sleeping bag for body warmth.

### **The downside of campfires**

Firewood collection, and clearing the area to prevent the escape of fire, causes considerable environmental disturbance. These impacts are long term. Many small animals live amongst the deadwood on the ground. Felling vegetation for future use adds to the disturbed area. Escaping campfires have caused bushfires.

The use of fuel stoves is essential to minimising the impact of the visit by the bushwalker. Fuel stoves are preferable for cooking they are light weight and efficient. In Australia there are seasons when fires are banned and there are many habitats where their use is particularly undesirable, e.g. rainforest and alpine regions.

### **Always remember**

Avoid the use of containers and wrappings that may become excess baggage on the way out. There are a range of containers and utensils that are lightweight and recyclable. Carry out all rubbish e.g. glass, cans, paper, aluminium foil and food scraps.

Don't burn or bury rubbish. Burning creates pollution and buried rubbish may be dug up and scattered by animals. Digging also disturbs the soil, causing erosion and encouraging weeds. Carry a plastic bag for rubbish. If you find litter left by others, please remove it. Show you care even when others don't.

When in camp and on the track be considerate and courteous to others. In camp promote and demonstrate behavior that will minimise the impact and maximise the satisfaction of the experience.

Do not disturb the ground to improve a tent site.

Offer what is required if others need help. Recognise that some individuals that need help will rarely ask for it. Volunteer it.

Do your share of water collection.

Don't step over other people's food.

The sound of CD players, mobile phones and similar devices are out of place in the natural environment, Always ensure that your behaviour and activities are not offensive to others. Camp as far away from others as conditions will allow.

Respect the rights of landowners and managers. Don't enter private property without seeking permission. In National Parks, and other protected areas abide by regulations and encourage others to do the same.

Leave slip rails and gates as you find them. Make sure when you open a gate the last person through knows it must be closed.

Be hygienic

The accumulation of faeces is a threat to quality of the outdoor remote natural area experience and risk to the health of the visiting public. In shallow soils, the rate of build up of waste due to

frequency of use and the inability of waste to decompose make this a critical issue.

Remove the waste from the bush altogether as you would with any other rubbish. In sensitive locations consideration should be given to avoid camping.

### **Keep water pure**

Wash cooking utensils well back from the edge of lakes and streams.

Always prevent soap, detergent toothpaste, oils and food scraps from getting into natural water systems. Always swim downstream from your source of drinking water.

### **Protect plants and animals**

Watch where you put your feet; walk around delicate plants. Try not to disturb wildlife particularly if breeding is occurring.

Give snakes a wide berth and leave them alone as they will leave you alone.

Feeding native wildlife around the campsite can turn them into pests and unnatural foods may harm native animals.

### **Respect of Aboriginal Heritage**

The Australian landscape is rich in Aboriginal heritage. Many places and natural features are important to Aboriginal communities.

The spiritual well being of the land is a central part of Aboriginal culture as much today, as it has been in the past. Treating the natural landscape with respect and consideration is a central aspect of our own enjoyment and experience of the natural environment and the enjoyment of future generations.

Leave Aboriginal relics where you find them. Relics that are not in the situation as they are discovered lose their value as part of the cultural record.

Do not touch paintings or rock engravings.

Do not interfere with stone arrangements.

The increasing number of bushwalkers visiting national parks, wilderness areas, nature reserves and other natural areas has the potential to cause serious damage to the natural environment

By adopting the code for Minimal Impact Bushwalking we can reduce the restrictions on bushwalkers and enhance our own experience. This is the challenge for the bushwalker.