

# Operational policy

## Visitor Management

### Remote bushwalking advice and notification

*Operational policies provide a framework for consistent application and interpretation of legislation and for the management of non-legislative matters by the Department of Environment and Science. Operational policies are not intended to be applied inflexibly in all circumstances. Individual circumstances may require a modified application of policy.*

#### Purpose

The purpose of this operational policy is to:

- provide a mechanism for visitors to formally consider and record their level of preparedness for bushwalking in remote and off-track areas;
- minimise the likelihood of searches for lost bushwalkers;
- enhance emergency procedures in instances of rescuing walkers; and
- facilitate visitor monitoring information for Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) staff managing sensitive environments.

#### Background

In many QPWS managed areas it is not necessary for bushwalkers to get approval before bushwalking in a remote area (although a permit to camp is required if people intend to stay overnight). These environments are often hazardous and require high level navigation skills. As bushwalker experience and skill can vary greatly, some walkers may place themselves in potentially hazardous situations. Remote or off-track bushwalking is inherently risky because the hazards in a bush environment are part of the place and its' setting and cannot be removed. The setting may be the reason a person chooses to bushwalk in that area and can be used as a guide to the level of risk a person assumes.

Because approval is not required to undertake remote bushwalking, opportunities to inform walkers and gather valuable data on numbers of bushwalkers and intended destinations are often lost. Therefore the practice of providing and encouraging the use of a *Bushwalking advice form* has been introduced in areas where day and overnight off-track bushwalking on unmarked trails is undertaken.

Search and rescue operations in protected areas are the responsibility of the Queensland Police Service. In an emergency situation the police will require information about a bushwalkers planned activities including the proposed dates, times and route to be taken. As QPWS offices are often not attended on weekends or after hours, an advice system is required that is independent of the QPWS, such as leaving details with a relative or other responsible contact person. Where QPWS staff receive advice prior to a bushwalking activity, they may pass this information on to the police in an emergency; however, this cannot be guaranteed. **QPWS does not check if bushwalkers have returned from a trip.**

The primary objective for QPWS is to inform bushwalkers of the potential hazards and the equipment/skill level required to walk in remote areas. A secondary objective is to gather visitor information for the management of remote areas.

## **Policy statement**

QPWS encourages the use of a *Bushwalking advice form* in all areas where day and overnight remote, off-track bushwalking occurs.

QPWS will not use these forms to check the safe return of walkers.

Where possible, QPWS will recommend that people intending to undertake a remote or off-track bushwalk call the local QPWS office at least ten days prior to leaving and explain details of the planned walk. This is both a courtesy call and a chance for QPWS staff to pass on relevant information.

Persons voluntarily undertaking remote or off-track bushwalking assume responsibility for their own personal safety and well-being. This includes being mindful of the risks they may encounter in the area through which they are walking.

Where a copy of a completed *Bushwalking advice form* is received at a QPWS office, it is to be kept on file and made available to police in the event of a search and/or rescue operation.

Information in this policy statement and a link to a *Bushwalking advice form* to suit local conditions will be included on the relevant park and walking track websites.

## **Human Rights Act 2019 compatibility**

The department is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Under the [Human Rights Act 2019](#), the department has an obligation to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights. When acting or making a decision under this operational policy, officers must comply with that obligation (refer to [Comply with Human Rights Act](#)).

## **Disclaimer**

While this document has been prepared with care, it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Department of Environment and Science should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

## **Approved By**

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Signature

3 August 2011

Date

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