Risks and Safety at Camp Cooinda

The camp program is about fun, friends and new experiences in the outdoors. It offers young people opportunities to do something different from their lives at home and school. The following information aims to ensure that parents and campers are aware of the possible risks that are involved in Camp Cooinda's style of outdoor program and to provide information on how Camp Cooinda manages these risks and implements safety procedures.

The likelihood of a risk occurring depends on many factors, including those influenced by the organisation of the camp, the campers themselves and other external causes. Camp Cooinda is pleased that for over 60 years the risks in its camping program have rarely - and in the case of many risks, have never - occurred. A variety of safety measures are put in place to manage risks: for example, wearing a life jacket) in a boat reduces the risk of injury in a boating accident. It is important that campers and parents understand and consider the risks involved in the program to assess whether there is any unacceptable risk for the camper.

Accidents and illness

In the camp setting on the Gippsland Lakes in eastern Victoria there are all the usual outdoor holiday risks of such things as sunburn, insect bites, food allergies, sickness, accidents, snake bite, campfire burns, as well as the possibility of accidents travelling to or from the campsite.

Program activity risks

There are also specific risks that arise from Camp Cooinda's program activities – canoeing, kayaking, sailing, archery, fishing, hiking and overnight camping trips away from the main site.

Campers may fall out of a boat, get blisters on a hike, or become tired from energetic activity particularly from paddling canoes on an overnight trip.

Although it has never happened in the 60 plus years of Camp Cooinda’s operation, with lots of activities in and on the lakes and rivers, there is also the possibility that a serious boating accident could occur (causing severe injury or drowning).

Weather and fire

The weather is not always as forecast so that groups can be exposed to unexpected wind, rain or temperature. The camp is located in an area of high bushfire risk in the summer.

Please see the section on "Safety" below to learn how Camp Cooinda, parents and campers are involved in approaching these program activities safely and minimising the risk of such an event.

Safety

Camp Cooinda Inc. has an outstanding record of safe camping over more than 60 years of operation on the Gippsland Lakes. Camp Cooinda Inc. takes the risks in camp activities into account as far as practicable in

planning the camp.

- Leaders are selected and trained to give priority to the physical, emotional and social welfare and safety of campers.
- Leaders must have a valid Victorian Working with Children Check and are trained in their duty of care towards campers.
- Leaders are trained in first aid and child safety to understand child abuse risks and their obligations in protecting children in our care.
- The ratio of leader to campers in activity groups is one leader for each five campers and in the camp as a whole is not less than one leader for each three campers
- Equipment is bought, monitored and maintained with the minimisation of risks and provision of swift responses to emergencies in mind.
- Campers and leaders always wear lifejackets in water craft and when swimming in rivers, at night or in murky water.
- Campers are trained in boating skills and boating safety.
- There is safety back up from powerboats.
- All activities are supervised.
- Special attention is given to weather conditions and forecasts.
- All campers and leaders participate in an emergency assembly and evacuation briefing soon after arriving at the campsite and again at Cooinda Island.
- Camp Cooinda evacuates from our bush sites to a safe urban destination during the period of a Code Red Fire Danger day.
- Camp Cooinda is an alcohol and drug free environment for both campers and leaders.

Read our Child Safety Commitment for more detail about our zero tolerance for any form of child abuse.

In addition, campers and parents also play a role in safety. Camp Cooinda Inc. has developed a set of requirements for campers about age, swimming ability, health and clothing that contribute to safety:

- All campers must be at least 12 years of age by the first day of the camp they are in. (Both the physical activities and the nature of small group living in our program is designed for campers over the age of 12).
- All campers must be able to swim at least 100 metres. (This is a reasonable standard of swimming ability for young people involved in the boating activities Camp Cooinda offers).
- All campers must be in good general health. (Parents and campers must put on their application and discuss with the Camp Applications Coordinator any health condition that may impact on a camper participating in the program Camp Cooinda offers).
- Parents and campers are provided with a list of essential clothing and equipment for safety and enjoyment of the program, particularly emphasising a windproof and waterproof jacket, sunhat and sunscreen. To ensure easy access to what is an expensive item of clothing, Camp Cooinda arranges low cost hire of a japara jacket for campers who request it.

It is important that parents and campers understand these requirements and are invited to discuss any queries with the Camp Applications Coordinator.

Responding to emergencies

Camp Cooinda Inc. operates three motor boats and uses a UHF radio network and mobile phones for safety backup and to provide activity groups with 24 hour communication channels while camping away from the base site.

Considering risks and safety

These procedures minimise but do not remove risks. After more than 40 years of operating camps on the Gippsland Lakes, Camp Cooinda Inc. continuously reviews and updates the procedures used to manage and minimise risks.

Much of the fun and special enjoyment of the camp come precisely from the activities that involve an element of risk. Co-operation by parents, campers, leaders and the organisation is needed to effectively manage the risks to provide an acceptably safe setting for a great camp experience.

When parents and campers consider applying to participate in the camp, they must decide whether the level of risk is acceptable to them. The application form includes a declaration by a parent or guardian that they understand and accept these risks.

Parents and campers are invited to discuss risks and safety with the Camper Applications Coordinator by contacting the camp office.

This was downloaded from https://www.campcooinda.au/policies/risksandsafety on 5 Nov 2026. Please visit the website for the most recent version.