

Outdoors WA Position statement on outdoor leadership registration and the National Outdoor Leadership Registration Scheme (NOLRS).

This policy clarifies Outdoors WA position.

Statement

“Outdoors WA is committed to the ongoing development and improvement of the National Outdoor Leadership Registration Scheme as a mechanism to identify outdoor leaders in WA. Registered leaders have demonstrated competency against national standards, have active sector engagement, are committed to ongoing professional development and adhere to a Code of Conduct.”



Background

Outdoors WA has as a key object to “*establish, maintain and develop a quality framework for the delivery of outdoor adventure activities including organisational accreditation, activity standards, leader registration and codes of conduct.*”

In line with the object Outdoors WA supports a process such as registration that identifies those outdoor leaders that aspire towards professionalism and therefore are engaged to increase their own development and the professional standing of outdoor leadership within the community.

Principle of registration

Outdoors WA supports the critical role that experienced, qualified, competent outdoor leaders play in providing for positive outdoor adventure recreation experiences. There is often significant risk involved in leading outdoor activities and the skill of outdoor leaders is essential in ensuring the safety of participants.

Many professions where there is a risk involved such as doctors, nurses, engineers all have registration systems in place. These registration systems identify those within an occupation who undertake to operate within certain ethical and operational standards. This both gives recognition to practitioners and provides a mechanism for both clients and employers to identify those who meet the minimum standards.

Outdoors WA supports leader registration as one mechanism to both identify and give recognition to those within the sector that aspire towards an increase in professionalism and also as a positive voluntary mechanism to manage risk in the outdoors.

Outdoors WA has identified key professional elements for ongoing outdoor leadership development that it supports, these are:

- A commitment towards vocational and leadership currency through ongoing professional development.
- An active engagement in the development of the outdoors industry and support for the peak body.
- Demonstrated benchmarked skill competency against agreed standards.
- Adherence to an ethical Code of Conduct.

Outdoors WA supports the National Outdoor Leadership Registration as it works to meet these key criteria. It has been designed to do this in the following ways:

- It has a clear set of annual professional development benchmarks.
- It has an inbuilt scrutiny test via renewal every 3 years
- It benchmarks to agreed national competencies from the SRO10 Outdoor Recreation training package.
- It contains a Code of Conduct.
- Maintenance of a log book and first aid certification.

Challenges

Whilst Outdoors WA supports leader registration it also recognises that the National Outdoor Leader Registration Scheme is not perfect. The NOLRS is dependent upon a range of factors that require continual support and resourcing such as affordable and accessible training in each state. It also requires a commitment to positioning the value of outdoor leadership within the community and to employers so that they both seek highly trained and registered leaders and provide ongoing professional development to staff.

Drivers

Key drivers within the outdoor industry exist to further promote and strengthen the necessity for a registration scheme to exist within the sector. Drivers of note include the Adventure Activity Standards, nationally recognised training provision including Secondary, Vocational Training and Tertiary Education, policies adopted by land managers and commercial organisational standards. Articulation of standards required of guides, trainers and instructors is demonstrated within the composition of NORLS and also aligns with the current national training package.

Whilst in WA there is no legislative compulsion to be registered, it is clear from recent experience in New Zealand that governments can rapidly introduce costly compulsory compliance systems if they do not identify adequate safety systems in place. (Health and Safety in Employment (Adventure Activities) Regulations 2011) It is much better to have an industry system in place than have one imposed by government.

The resourcing and uptake for the NOLRS has varied in each state, along with varying levels of commitment towards the support for increased outdoor recreation.

Further articulation and support of NOLRS by Outdoors WA, needs to be delivered to the sector to demonstrate the complexity and significance to all aspects of an outdoor profession. Significant personal investment is required to meet the rigors of NOLRS and therefore, as a complete industry, remuneration could be aligned with NOLRS registration.

Outdoors WA supports registration as a key part of an overall Industry Quality Framework and is committed to both support and advocate for changes to any registration scheme to ensure it meets the needs of outdoor leaders in WA.

Adopted: 20 May 2015.