Adventure Activity Standards (AAS)
Update Number 26
May 2006

Introduction

This update comes after some interesting developments for the AAS. Wild Magazine has published another article by Mr. Rod Costigan; we respond to below. The AAS have been pivotal in discussions with the Victorian Workcover Authority in demonstrating that providers of adventurous activities are working towards a consistent and accessible "state of knowledge". Meanwhile the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee is referring to the AAS so that, for the first time, they can measure the procedures of an operator in a near miss scenario against agreed industry standards.

This report covers;

- **AAS for Snow Activities and Wild Scroggin**
- **AAS Review Committee**
- **VWA High ropes harness and procedures**
- **Torquay Kayaking incident**

- **Additional information**
  - **ORC Response– Public Land Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licence Reform Project**
  - **2006 Conferences**
    - **ACA National Conference**
    - **VOEA Conference**
    - **TAV Conference**

Please pass this report on to all members, staff, committee members or individuals who you believe will have an interest in the continued development of the Victorian AAS.

News at a flash
AAS for Snow Activities and Wild Scroggin

This is to provide an update on the status of the AAS for snow activities and to clarify some rumours that you may have read in the recent edition of Wild Magazine (Rod Costigan keeps us in the loop – Info Page 17).

The facts are that Mr. Costigan has not spoken to any of the AAS management team for longer than a year and as such, the extent to which the article is keeping us "in the loop" is questionable. To our knowledge Mr Costigan has acquired several funding contracts and government documents through freedom of information requests. That he has no knowledge of the discussions among the project steering committee, the ORC committee of management or any of the working groups leaves clear gaps in his ability to explain this project.

Industry and Government in Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland are in various stages of developing their versions of the AAS. Some are in draft stage, while some are merely discussing the option. It is important to note that these processes are independent of the process in Victoria so the extent to which the AAS are adopted in these states is entirely based upon the fact that industry developed standards are a preferable model to government regulation. I acknowledge that Mr Costigan does stop before suggesting that the project management team also have an influence over the Adventure Recreation Association (South Africa - www.ara.org.za).

Regarding Mr. Costigan's comments on the snow AAS; the original plan for snow activities, was to split into disciplines such as downhill, nordic and snowboarding. The working group (that included ski patrol, ski touring leaders, police search and rescue and APSI among others) decided that the AAS are more likely to be relevant and useful, by addressing the environment rather than the discipline.

At that stage, the AAS project responded to the requests from the working group and developed a resort based AAS and a non-resort based AAS. The resort based AAS is currently in draft 2.4 and is based upon communicating the availability of patrols, first aid, lifts and many other useful resources. The resort AAS has been delayed for several reasons. One of which was a request that the Australian Ski Areas Association (ASAA) have a greater level of involvement in the consultation process. It is the process of arranging consultation with DSE and the ASAA that has delayed the resort AAS.

Inherently, it was agreed that much of the content for the non-resort AAS would reflect the content of the finalised Bushwalking AAS. As the consultation for that AAS took longer than expected, the non-resort AAS was also delayed. It is currently with our Lawyers (Moray & Agnew Solicitors) and will be released as soon as possible.

AAS Review Committee

If you have expressed an interest in being on the first AAS Technical Review Committee; Please note that the closing date for nomination forms is/was **Friday 28th April**. If you have not returned your nomination form, please do so ASAP.

VWA High ropes harness and procedures

As you are most likely aware, all adventure activity providers using ropes and harnesses (commercial and non commercial) have been on tender hooks since news was circulated that the Victorian Workcover Authority (VWA) had successfully convicted a high ropes constructor, supplier and trainer for providing a rock climbing harness in a situation where the participants could invert (intentionally or otherwise).

As there is always some risk of inversion when hanging from a rope in a climbing harness, implications seemed frightening for all rope based activities. The VWA have been very accommodating in their response to our concerns. A meeting was held on April 5th and several outcomes were agreed that reflect a great deal of understanding and commitment from the VWA.

The ORC and the VWA are currently working on a communication to better explain the current situation. That will be circulated via this email list as soon as it is finalised.

Until then, please do not over react. The VWA are inspecting these high ropes activities due to a series of incidents. These incidents were primarily due to failed connection (between the participants harness and the structure) and/or inadequate procedures and supervision.

Only these activities are being looked into at the moment, the VWA have NO plans to look into the safety of climbing harnesses for other activities and they will work with the ORC and the outdoor industry to resolve any grey areas.

We look forward to circulating more comprehensive information.

Torquay Kayaking incident

The operator involved in the recent kayaking near miss off of Torquay beach is being asked to provide evidence to the land managers (in the form of a please explain) of adherence to the AAS for Canoeing and kayaking.

The AAS have been the licence criteria for commercial organisations operating from the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee land for around a year and this is the first incident in which they will be used to investigate a near miss.

As this near miss was potentially the largest kayaking disaster in the world, it serves as a very interesting case study. We will provide information on the outcome as soon as we are made aware. This scenario may also assist in providing clarity relating to who is responsible for a school group in such a situation (operator or teacher) the VOEA are currently discussing this and other aspects of the incident with the Dept of Education and Training.

Additional Information

Directions Paper – Public Land Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licence Reform Project (Objections from non-commercial organisations)

On Wednesday 1st February 2006 the Department of Sustainability and Environment released their directions paper on the ***Public Land Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licence Reform Project***. The aim of this project is to improve the current licensing system for tour operators and activity providers and in doing so encourage a number of associated benefits such as assisting DSE and other land managers to better manage their resources.

The ORC has developed and submitted a response based upon broad consultation. Our response, as well as the directions paper can be downloaded for free from the AAS updates section of the ORC website **http://www.orc.org.au/aas/aas_updates.htm**.

If you have any additional comments or suggestions that are not covered in the ORC's response, we have arranged with the DSE team for you to send your comments directly to **licence.reforms@dse.vic.gov.au** and mention the page of the ORC's response (or the directions paper) that you are referring to.

Conferences for 2006

Victorian Tourism Conference 2006 - Planning for the Experience
Date - May 2nd & 3rd
Venue - Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG)

This year's conference will be focusing on the Visitor Experience. How do we create exceptional visitor experiences? How does a product or destination develop those memorable qualities? Is it possible in the era of instant gratification and limited leisure time?

New additions to the conference line up of speakers are Gary Donnison, CEO of the National Tourism Alliance who will be providing an insight into the economic analysis of Australia's Tourism Industry and Lynne Hocking, Manager, Partnership Marketing, Tourism Australia who will be joining the Tourism Experience and Innovation Workshop.

For a Program, Registration form, Speaker information and Discounted Accommodation Offers Click Here or contact Reneé Ashcroft on 03 9650 8399 or renee@tourismalliance.com.au

IMPACT: Camping in Australia - Australian Camps Association Conference 2006

Date: 13th – 16th October 2006
Venue: Vision Valley, Arcadia NSW

Theme: "Empowering Camps and Outdoor Activity Providers to IMPACT communities"

To register your interest in attending, to receive regular updates or if there are other ways in which your organisation would like to be involved, please let us know by sending us your request. (Go to www.auscamps.asn.au then click 'Conference 2006' on the menu list and click on 'Would you like to receive regular conference updates?' under the contents section and then submit your details).

Email: conference@auscamps.asn.au
Ph: 1800 061 702
Website: www.auscamps.asn.au

Further information about the conference visit www.auscamps.asn.au and click on 'Conference 2006' on the menu list.

2006 VOEA State Conference - Adventures with Uncertainty

Date: 26-27 May 2006
Venue: Bayview Conference Centre, Clayton, Melbourne

Visit http://www.voea.vic.edu.au for more information.

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