

Parent Information Statement

The Impact of Outdoor Youth Programs on Positive Adolescent Development

HREC Project Number:1443180.1

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Other Researchers: Nick Allen, Ian Williams, Lauren Rose, Craig Olsson, George Patton, Benjamin Farinazzo, David Strickland, David Petherick, Philip Wheatley, Andrew McGuckian, Brendan Smith, and Ben Lovell

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We would like to invite your son or daughter to take part in a new research project being run by the University of Melbourne. The project is being offered through Rosebud Secondary College to all Year 9 students (in 2016). This information sheet tells you all about the project and what is involved. At the back of this sheet you will find Medical and Consent Forms (printed on YELLOW paper). Please complete the forms on behalf of your son or daughter and return them to the school.

For people who speak languages other than English: If you would also like information about this research and a copy of the Consent Form in your language, please call Lauren Rose on 90357700.

What is an Information Statement?

These pages tell you about the research project. They explain all the steps and what's involved in the project. This information is to help you to decide whether or not you would like your son or daughter to take part. Taking part in this research is voluntary. If you don't want your son or daughter to take part, they don't have to. Your son or daughter can be withdrawn from the project at any time. Once you have understood what the project is about, if you would like your son or daughter to take part, please complete and sign the consent form and send it back to your son/ daughter's school. If you have any questions about this Information Statement please contact the Study Coordinator, Lauren Rose, on 9035 7700.

What is the research project about?

This study is about ways of building good emotional health and wellbeing. We know that these qualities are important to leading a full and successful life. Research shows that developing these strengths early in life can pave the way for future achievement in school, employment and relationships. Our research aims to look at ways of enhancing wellbeing and strengthening valuable life skills by providing young people with a range of key experiences in the outdoors within a small group setting. We want to find out whether these sorts of experiences can help develop qualities such as confidence, resilience, responsibility, and leadership. To describe this another way, we all know that eating well and exercising regularly helps develop good *physical* health; in this project we want to find out whether our outdoor programs help promote good *emotional* health and wellbeing.

In this project we will be offering young people the opportunity to take part in a 7-day outdoor program (camp). Unlike other outdoor programs that your son/daughter may have been on, this camp has been designed to maximize wellbeing benefits to young people. We will be working with young people in a series of small groups, with up to 12 students participating in each group (more detail on this below).

In addition to taking part in the outdoor program we will also ask young people to complete a number of questionnaires. The information we gather in the surveys will help us to find out whether young people can develop skills and qualities that build wellbeing and resilience. This information will help guide schools and health professionals in developing further programs and approaches to support young people in the future.

Who are the researchers?

This project is being run by the University of Melbourne, through the Outdoor Youth Programs Research Alliance (OYPRA). OYPRA is an Australian research group set up to better understand the possible benefits to young people of taking part in outdoor programs and camps. Dr Paul Dudgeon is the main researcher, along with a number of other key staff. He is based at the University of Melbourne. Whether you choose to take part in the study or not will have no effect on your relationship with the University of Melbourne or with any members of the Outdoor Youth Programs Research Alliance. This project is funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant.

What will my son or daughter be asked to do?

If your son or daughter chooses to participate, they will get to attend a 7-day, outdoor camping program for free. The camp will be based out of an accredited campsite in or near one of Victoria's national parks. We will be running two camps in 2016, both in term 1 (February). Half of participating students will attend the first camp, and half will attend the second camp. It will be up to the school which camp your son or daughter attends.

Camp dates

Camp #1: Saturday 13th February to Friday 19th February 2016 (week 4, Term 1)

Camp#2: Sunday 21st February to Saturday 27th February 2016 (week 5, Term 1)

As both outdoor programs run during term time, this means your son or daughter will miss 5 days of school. Teaching staff at the school will take account of this when planning regular classroom lessons.

During the camp program, your son or daughter will be involved in a range of activities, including initiative games, group discussions and outdoor activities. The outdoor activities may include bushwalking, mountain bike riding, canoeing, ropes course and overnight camping. Students do not need to have any special experience to take part in the program, and for most activities they are free to choose how much they wish to be involved. All activities will be run by qualified outdoor instructors. Teachers from your son or daughter's school will also be on the camp and accompanying students in activities.

Additional information about the camp can be found on the project website at:

<http://outdoorsvictoria.org.au/2016camp/>

Login using the password "Rosebud2016" You can find links to further information about the following:

- Venue
- Accommodation
- Catering& Food
- Student Equipment& Gear
- Adventure Activities
- Risk Management (e.g. emergency contacts; communications; program supports)
- Medical Forms

As well as attending camp, your son or daughter will also be asked to complete an online survey on five occasions (twice before camp, and three times after returning). The surveys take about 30 minutes to complete and will be spread over several weeks before camp, and up to 6 months after camp. The information we gather in the surveys will help us to find out whether young people's experiences on camp can help build wellbeing and resilience.

The online survey has questions about the following areas:

- demographics (e.g. age, gender, family structure, parent education)
- health behaviour (e.g. nutrition, physical activity, and screen-time)
- mental strengths and difficulties (e.g. resilience, wellbeing; depressed mood, and aggression)
- relationships with schools, friends and teachers
- relationships with nature
- reflections on camp experiences

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The surveys are confidential, which means only members of the research team will see students' answers. Surveys will be completed at school, and members of the research team will be at school during these times. We may also invite your son or daughter to participate in reflective discussions (approx. 1 hr) about their camp experiences at six-month follow-up; information from these discussions will be recorded.

As well as asking students to tell us about their camp experience, we will also ask the school to provide additional information about students, such as school attendance, teacher observations and academic performance records as part of this project. This additional information will help us build a more complete picture of student experiences and the effects of camp.

What are the possible risks and benefits?

By participating in this program your son or daughter will be involved in some outdoor activities. These activities might include bushwalking, mountain bike riding, canoeing, ropes course and overnight camping. As with any physical activity there is always a possibility of being hurt or injured. We aim to minimise the chance of this by: having strict rules and guidelines about safety; having qualified people running the activities; only using good quality equipment; having staff with first aid training on all trips. The safety and welfare of participants is treated as a priority on all our programs. When run safely, these outdoor activities actually have a lower risk of leading to injury than many regular sports such as football, basketball, hockey and soccer. With the activities we do, your son or daughter will always have the choice about how much they want to get involved. We call this 'challenge by choice'.

As well as doing outdoor activities, your son or daughter will be involved in group discussions and filling out some surveys. We understand that it can sometimes be difficult or uncomfortable for people to answer questions about personal aspects of their life. There is a possibility that some students may become unhappy or distressed by some of the questions that are asked in the survey. We have done our best to make sure that the questions will not cause them to feel upset. All the questions we ask have been approved by an independent ethics committee. However, if your son or daughter does feel unhappy at any stage (either during surveying or on camp), they can talk to any attending school teacher. We will also provide contact details of Kids Helpline at the end of the survey. Your son or daughter does not have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with, and they can stop the questionnaire at any point.

There are many potential benefits for your son or daughter by taking part in this project. By taking part they may: enjoy new activities; find out about new places to visit in Victoria; have fun; make new friends; get opportunities for leadership and responsibility; develop new skills; improve mental and emotional health; gain greater self-awareness, confidence and independence. We hope that they will enjoy being part of our program.

There are also a number of broader benefits of the project. We hope to use the information we get from this project to learn more about ways of building good mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people. We would like to understand more about the types of experiences that can help young people develop skills to meet the challenges of being a teenager. This information will help guide schools and health professionals in developing further programs and approaches to support young people in the future.

How will confidentiality be protected?

The information we collect for this study will be kept confidential (subject to legal limitations). All information collected from on-line surveys will be stored in a password-protected database. Only members of the research team have direct access to the database. All other information collected about students will be stored in locked filing cabinets or on password-protected computers. Study participants have the right to access information we collect from them. Data is kept until your son or daughter is 25 years old, and then it is destroyed. Results of the study will be summarised in various forms. For example, a summary will be available from the project website (www.oypra.org.au). Your son or daughter will not be identified in any study reports, nor will their school be named in any public reports. If we write or talk about the results of the project, or produce educational manuals or videos,

we will not use any names to protect your child's privacy. Grouped data from the study may also be published in academic journals. No individual information will be identified.

What if I want to withdraw from the Research?

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Your son or daughter is free to withdraw at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously provided. Your son or daughter will be able to attend school as normal during the week of the camp if they choose not to participate in this research project.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information, please contact the Study Coordinator, Dr. Lauren Rose on (03) 90357700, or lauren.rose@unimelb.edu.au. Alternatively, you can contact the Chief Investigator, Dr Paul Dudgeon on dudgeon@unimelb.edu.au

This research has been approved by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Number: 1443180.1) and by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (Project ID: 2014 002549). If you have any concerns about this project please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne (Tel: 8344 2073; Fax: 9347 6739).

What do I do next?

If you wish for your son or daughter to take part in the program, please complete and sign the YELLOW Medical and Consent forms provided at the back of this document:

- All students: complete the Student Medical Form (YELLOW, 1 page)
- All students: complete the Consent Form to Participate in Research (YELLOW, 1 page)
- Students with Asthma: also complete the Asthma Management Form (WHITE, 2 pages).
- Students with Allergies: also complete the Allergic Reaction Management Form (WHITE, 1 page).
- Students with Diabetes: also complete Fitness to Participate Form (WHITE, 1 page)
- Students with Epilepsy: also complete Fitness to Participate Form (WHITE, 1 page)

Only students with completed forms will be able to attend. Please return your completed forms to the school at your earliest convenience.