

"IS COOINDA THE RIGHT CAMP FOR YOU?"

THINKING ABOUT SENDING SOMEONE TO CAMP COOINDA

A guide for families, youth workers and social workers

Kids and camps differ greatly. Getting the right match is sometimes difficult. We hope these notes will help you make the best choice for the young people in your care.

Camp Cooinda Inc. is an independent non profit youth organisation. It has been operating camps on the Gippsland Lakes since 1960. The camps are for 12 - 18 year olds and emphasise boating, other outdoor activities and personal development in small groups.

The aims for the kids are: enjoyment of outdoor activities,
 learning how to canoe, kayak and sail,
 making friends,
 and encouraging self esteem.

Visit the camp website at www.campcooinda.asn.au for more information about Camp Cooinda activities, the dates and costs of camps, the location of the camp site 20 km from Bairnsdale and photos from previous camps.

GROUPS

All activities are in small groups. Campers sleep in tent groups of 4 or 5 with a group leader. Activity groups usually combine a girls tent group with a boys tent group to make an activity group of 8 - 10 campers and two adult leaders.

These groups are decided days before kids arrive at camp, using the information provided on the "Campers Information Form" which we ask to be sent to us a couple of weeks before the camp. We aim to put campers of approximately the same age together, so that older groups of 16-18 can tackle more challenging canoe expeditions than younger campers of say 12 - 14. If a camper comes with a friend of about the same age we put them in the same group. We also try to match the different social maturity of boys and girls..

These groups have a large say in planning their program. It is a group process. **There is no individual choice of program**, so how kids function in groups can affect how they feel about the program.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

The main activities are canoeing, kayaking, and sailing. Other activities include archery, fishing, initiative games, group games, hiking, outdoor cooking, and camping out overnight. The program does not include surfing or water skiing.

Most groups do 2 or 3 overnight expeditions in canoes or kayaks away from the base site. The weather (particularly the wind strength) greatly influences where and how far they can go. Short canoe expeditions are 6 - 8 km each way. Long canoe or kayak expeditions for 16 - 18 year olds can be 20 or more km each way. Even short expeditions involve a lot of effort and energy! So how kids feel about energetic activity can affect how they feel about the program.

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

This sort of camping involves risks that can be managed only by thorough safety planning. Over the years Camp Cooinda Inc. has developed procedures which it considers are essential for safety. The main ones that might affect your decision about whether this is the right camp for one of your young people are:

- A parent or guardian of every camper must provide a written statement that the camper can swim at least 100 metres. Ability to swim across a pool is not enough. The safety of other people and the camper's safety are affected by this. There are also implications for the level of responsibility carried by volunteer leaders. There will be no exceptions.
- A camper must be willing to observe safety requirements such as always wearing a "life jacket" in a boat and staying close to other members of the group on the water. We don't encourage smoking and those who do smoke need to be responsible with butts because of the dry bush in the summer. We don't swim on the ocean beach where there are no lifeguards. For some kids resentful of authority, these could be felt to be too restrictive. For safety in this program they are essential. There are no exemptions from safety requirements.
- Campers must not consume alcohol or marijuana during the camp. Any substance which distorts awareness and reduces physical co-ordination and control, and therefore increases safety problems in a boating program, may not be taken to camp.

DECIDING IF CAMP WILL BE APPROPRIATE FOR A YOUNG PERSON

As detailed above, campers must be able to participate in an energetic outdoor program, work constructively in small groups and follow the directions of leaders on safety issues. There is one volunteer leader for each group of 4-5 campers.

For most of the young people who come to the camp it is a great time for making friends, being part of a group, and enjoying energetic outdoor activities. The chance to be in the outdoors, under the stars, and cooking out is something they look forward to. Many come back for 3 to 5 years. Some become leaders in the program.

For some young people the Camp Cooinda program will not be attractive or appropriate. Health issues that limit physical activity, interfere with effective group participation or require increased leader supervision may mean that Cooinda is not the right camp program.

If you need further assistance considering whether Cooinda is appropriate please contact the Camp office on telephone (03) 9013 9465.

In some circumstance, Cooinda may need to contact the young person's school to help with this decision.

CAMP COOINDA INC

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