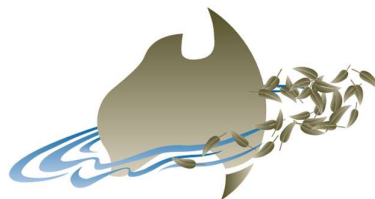


# Australian Adventure Activity Standard

Key requirements for preparing and delivering adventure activities.



**Outdoor Council  
of Australia**

Representing the  
Outdoor Sector Nationally

## Traditional Owner Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.

## Copyright

Copyright 2026 Outdoor Council of Australia.

## Disclaimer

The information published in the Australian Adventure Activity Standard (AAAS) and accompanying Good Practice Guides (GPGs), including this document, is for information purposes only and is not a substitute for, or intended to replace, independent, professional or legal advice. The information contained in the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and the Good Practice Guides are a guide only. Activity providers and any other person accessing the documentation should consider the need to obtain any appropriate professional advice relevant to their own circumstances, including the specific adventure activities and needs of the dependent participants.

The information published in the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides are subject to change from time to time. Outdoor Council of Australia gives no warranty that the information is current, correct or complete and is not a definitive statement of procedures. Outdoor Council of Australia reserves the right to vary the content of the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and/or Good Practice Guides as and when required. Activity providers should make independent inquiries as to the correctness and currency of the content and use their own skill and care with respect to their use of the information.

The Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides do not replace any statutory requirements under any relevant State and Territory legislation and are made available on the express condition that Outdoor Council of Australia together with the authors, consultants, advisers and the Australian Adventure Activity Standard Steering Committee members who assisted in compiling, drafting and ratifying the documents:

- are not providing professional or legal advice to any person or organisation; and
- are not liable for any loss resulting from an action taken or reliance made on any information or material contained within the Australian Adventure Activity Standard, Good Practice Guides and associated documents.

## Contents Overview

### Preface

### 1 Introduction

### 2 Management of risk

### 3 Planning

### 4 Diversity, equity and inclusion

### 5 Participants

### 6 Environment

### 7 Equipment and logistics

### 8 Responsibilities and roles

42

## Version details

| Version | Date         | Details    |
|---------|--------------|------------|
| 1.0     | 23 Sept 2019 | Version 1. |
| 2.0     | 2026         | Version2   |

44

## Foreword

“When I experience dadirri, I am made whole again. I can sit on the riverbank or walk through the trees; even if someone close to me has passed away, I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need of words. A big part of dadirri is listening.”

**Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM**

<https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/>

51

The Australian Adventure Activity Standard and Good Practice Guides are designed to ensure effective, responsible, sustainable and safe delivery of adventure activities to dependent participants. They can help people across the outdoor sector to develop appropriately managed adventure activities which enhance individuals and our communities, while protecting the environment and culturally significant places. In doing this, these documents can help ensure that people will continue to enjoy the benefits of adventure activities well into the future.

Best wishes for all your adventures,

59

**The Australian Adventure Activity Standard Steering Committee.**

**Outdoor Council of Australia**

62

## Creation

The Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAAS) and accompanying Good Practice Guides (GPGs) were developed through a national project and launched in 2019. They drew together, and built upon, the various state and territory-specific adventure activity standards that had previously operated across Australia, replacing a fragmented set of arrangements with a single, nationally consistent voluntary framework. The original development drew on the input of a wide range of outdoor and adventure activity experts with extensive sector experience, supported by expert advisory groups and informed by open consultation across activity providers, education authorities and other stakeholders. The creation of this first national adventure activity standard and suite of good practice guides was funded by the State and Territory Governments.

The Steering Committee gratefully acknowledges the members of the various focus groups, industry consultation, working groups and expert advisors for their work and contributions, and thanks the State and Territory Governments for funding the original development.

The AAAS and GPGs are now maintained by the Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA). They are subject to comprehensive review at least every five years, with targeted reviews undertaken in response to serious incidents, fatalities, relevant court decisions, or material changes in regulation or practice. Reviews are overseen by the Steering Committee and conducted in accordance with the AAAS Review and Update Methodology — a pragmatic, mixed-methods process combining legislative and regulatory analysis, currency checking of cited standards and instruments, stakeholder consultation, data-informed risk assessment, and structured expert input through the Expert Advisory Group, followed by open public consultation before endorsement.

The first comprehensive review under this methodology was undertaken in 2025–26. The review was facilitated, and the Standard and Good Practice Guides drafted, by Dr David Marsden of The OREAS Group for and on behalf of the Outdoor Council of Australia. The Outdoor Council of Australia gratefully acknowledges the contributions of all who took part in the review:

- Dr David Marsden (PhD), Lead Consultant (The OREAS GROUP)
- Lori Modde, Project Sponsor (OCA Chair)
- the members of the AAAS Steering Committee, who provided governance, direction and endorsement of the reviewed documents;
  - Lori Modde, OCA Chair, Outdoors NSW, ACT
  - David Marsden, Lead Consultant, The OREAS Group
  - Andrew Atfield, Tasmania Government
  - Andrew Knight, Outdoors Victoria
  - Dom Courtney, Outdoors Queensland
  - Jodie Freund, South Australian Government
  - Katie Brown, Outdoors WA
  - Mitchell Hardy, NT Government
  - Neil Le Febvre, Outdoors WA
- the members of the Expert Advisory Groups, who contributed specialist knowledge and reviewed drafts across the Core and activity Good Practice Guides; and
- the activity providers, education authorities, peak bodies and individuals who contributed through public consultation, focus groups, and submissions.

Further details of the creation and review of the AAAS and GPGs can be found at [www.australianaas.org.au](http://www.australianaas.org.au), where updates are also published.

## Funders

The Steering Committee gratefully acknowledges and thanks the State and Territory Governments for funding the original development and 2026 review.

# Preface

---

## Interpretation of the Standard and Good Practice Guides

The following words and phrases are used in all documents and have specific meanings:

- **Must:** used where a provision is mandatory, if the provider is to operate fully in accordance with AAAS or GPGs. (This is equivalent to the keyword “shall” used in other voluntary standards e.g. Standards Australia, other International Standards Organisations (ISOs) etc.)
- **Should:** used where a provision is recommended, not mandatory. It indicates that the provider needs to consider their specific situation and decide for themselves whether it applies or is relevant. A “should” statement describes good practice. Departure from a “should” statement does not of itself establish a breach of duty — a provider may meet its obligations by other means appropriate to its context — but providers should be able to explain the basis for a different approach.
- **Can/cannot:** indicates a possibility and capability.
- **May/need not:** indicates a permission or existence of an option.
- **But are/is not limited to:** used to indicate that a list is not definitive and additional items may need to be considered depending on the context.

The following formatting is used throughout:

- Defined words are in italics. They are defined in the Glossary.
- Examples are in smaller italic 9-point font.
- In document references are underlined. References are to section heading titles.
- External web or Australian AAS & GPG document links are dotted underline italic.

# 1 Introduction

---

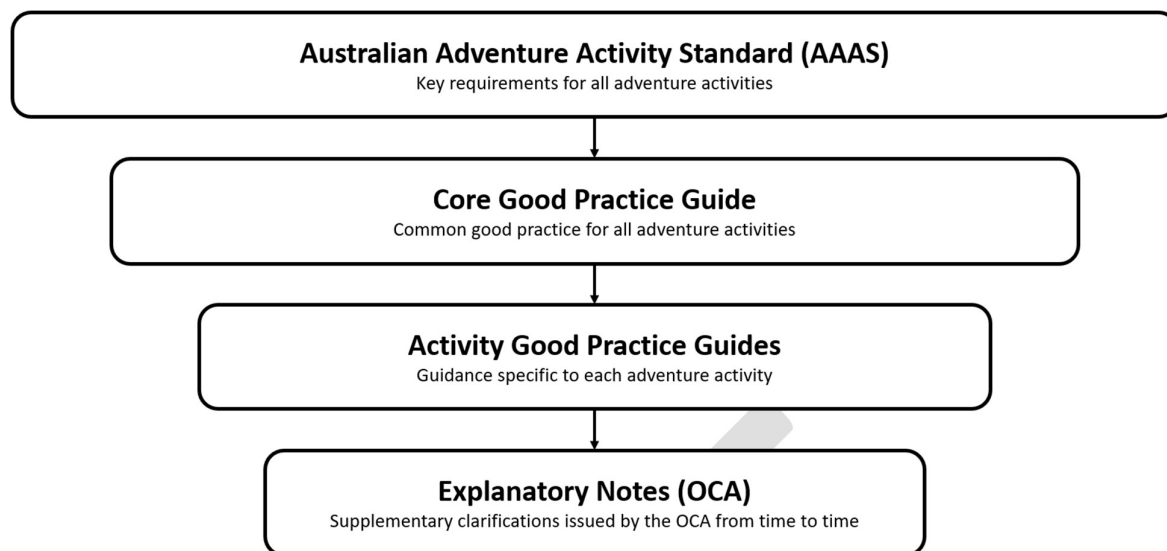
## 1.1 Introduction

The Australian Adventure Activity Standard (AAAS) and associated Good Practice Guides (GPGs) provide essential information for the safe and responsible planning and delivery of adventure activities with dependent participants. They are an industry good-practice framework covering safety, environmental and cultural responsibilities and service delivery. They are not a full legal compliance framework.

A provider is any organisation, business, community group, government agency, school or individual that holds the ultimate legal duty of care and that organises and leads adventure activities with dependent participants. The Standard and GPGs apply to a provider as a whole organisation rather than to specific roles within it.

Dependent participants are those who rely, wholly or partly, on the provider’s systems, processes and operational practices for the support, supervision, guidance or instruction needed to take part in an activity. The degree of dependence may vary. Each provider must determine whether they are working with dependent participants and the level of that dependence.

The guidance for adventure activities comprises several related documents. For any activity, the AAAS (the Standard), the Core GPG, the relevant activity GPG, and any applicable Explanatory Notes issued by the Outdoor Council of Australia, from time to time, should be consulted.



*Figure 1: Structure of the Standard and Good Practice Guides*

The documents present cumulatively more specific information. Providers should determine how they use the AAAS and GPGs based on their context and need, and are encouraged to draw on them when developing and reviewing their standard operating procedures. Activity providers are encouraged to obtain independent professional and legal advice on their obligations and to reference the laws relevant to the area in which they operate.

## 1.2 Guidance for using the Australian Adventure Activity Standard

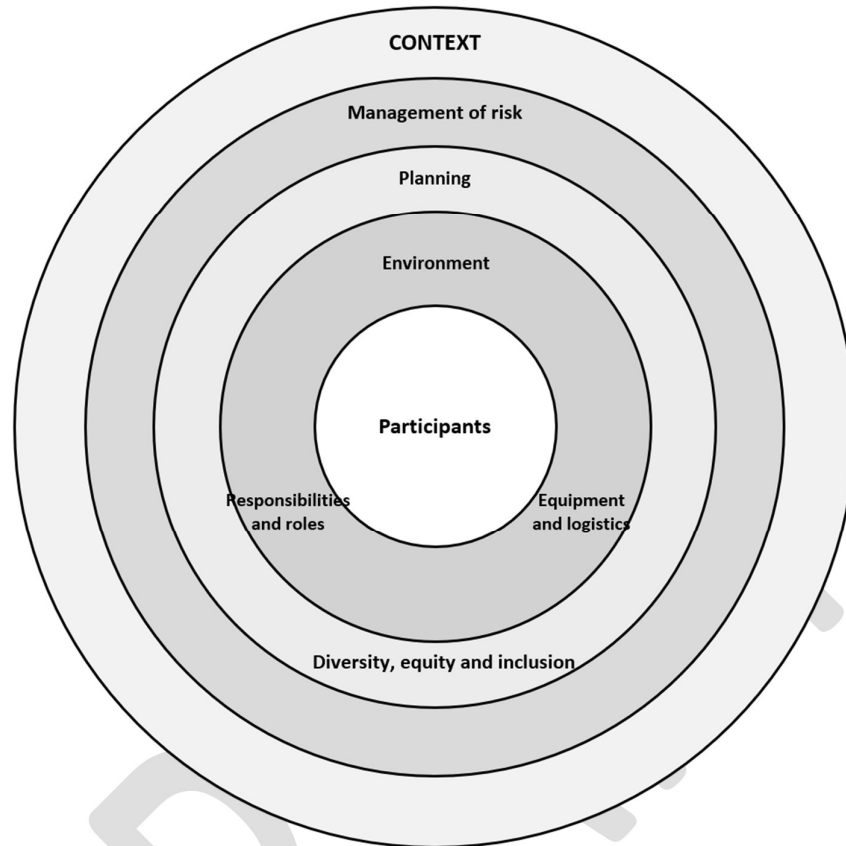
This Standard and the Good Practice Guides identify essential considerations that help providers apply a systematic approach to the management, planning and delivery of adventure activities. They do this through a structured framework that outlines the importance of:

- managing risk
- planning for activities
- diversity, equity and inclusion
- understanding and supporting participants
- appropriate environments, equipment and logistics, and
- clear responsibilities and roles for those leading activities.

The AAAS and GPGs are not, of themselves, legally binding. However, they refer to laws and/or regulations that may be binding, and some land managers or organisations may require compliance as a condition of a licence, permit or contract. Providers have a legal duty of care to dependent participants.

## Safe, responsible and inclusive adventure activities

*an ecological model — the AAAS components nested within the context of the activity*



*Figure 2: Components of the AAAS framework*

While the components of the AAAS framework are discussed separately, they are inter-related. Providers are encouraged to consider how they address each component and how these work together within their own adventure activity management systems. Further description and detail are provided in the Core and activity-specific Good Practice Guides.

## 2 Management of risk

---

### 2.1 Risk management

Risk is defined as the 'effect of uncertainty on objectives' and can result in positive and negative outcomes.

The management of risk involves systematically:

- identifying the range of factors and influences that might impact on achieving objectives, and
- putting in place coordinated activities to direct and/or control these factors (adapted from AS ISO 31000:2018 Risk management — Guidelines).
- The management of risk and the development of safety systems must focus on all stages of the design, planning, preparation and delivery of adventure activities.

Risk management systems must be flexible, adaptive and responsive.

Providers may choose to apply a benefit–risk assessment approach, which weighs the benefits of an activity alongside its risks (adapted from AS ISO 4980:2023). Benefit–risk assessment complements, but does not replace, the risk management framework based on AS ISO 31000:2018.

While the AAAS identify a range of potential risks, these may not be fully comprehensive. The management of risk may include addressing aspects not identified in the Standard. These could include, but not be limited to, such things as additional site-specific hazards.

### 2.2 Risk management requirements

Risk management is a commitment and process that must be integrated into all aspects of the providers' governance, management and operations. This ensures risk management is embedded into the policies and practices of the provider and covers all the factors that contribute to risk, not just those occurring during the delivery of the adventure activity itself.

A risk management plan identifies hazards and assesses risks for an activity and specifies how these will be managed. Risk management plans must be documented for each activity.

The development and implementation of risk management involves several steps. These include:

- specifying the context of the adventure activity/s
- identifying people, equipment and environmental hazards
- assessing who or what might be harmed, how and to what extent
- determining the level of risk considered acceptable to the participants or client organisation and the activity provider
- analysing the risks and selecting appropriate risk controls. This informs decisions on what risk management controls are required for the context and objectives
- implementing the controls
- having a communication structure to inform people of their relevant responsibilities
- actively monitoring risks and the effectiveness of controls
- modifying risk controls as and when necessary.

Effective risk management also includes ensuring compliance with all relevant laws and/or regulations that apply to the activity and the context. It should be noted these may change over time.

### 2.3 Incident reporting

There must be a process for reporting incidents and near misses. Some incidents will also need to be reported to relevant government authorities (e.g. Police, local Work Health and Safety, Insurers, Land/Water managers).



215 Information on incidents and near misses should be collected and assessed.

216 Providers should also periodically review other incidents related to adventure activities they conduct.

217 Incident and near miss information should be used to develop risk management strategies and to inform risk

218 treatment, program design and delivery.

## 219 3 Planning

---

### 220 3.1 Planning

221 Whether preparing for one, or a series of activities, the management, design and delivery of adventure

222 activities requires good planning. Planning allows providers to:

- 223 • meet their own objectives (e.g. to comply with laws, provide enjoyable/educative experiences,
- 224 sustain financial viability); and
- 225 • contribute to the objectives of their members, clients or partners (e.g. achieve personal goals, social
- 226 interaction, leadership/skill development).

227 There must be a process in place for the development and approval of activity plans that suit the context and

228 purpose.

### 229 3.2 Activity plans

230 Activity plans help bring to life the purpose and objectives of the activity. They also inform decisions made

231 before, during and after the activity.

232 Inclusions in the activity plan will vary but should include:

- 233 • purpose: What is the purpose of the activity?
- 234 • participants: Who are the participants and why is this activity relevant?
- 235 • location/s: Are the location and conditions suitable for the activity?
- 236 • risk: What are the risks involved and how will these be managed?
- 237 • emergency management: How to respond in case of an emergency?
- 238 • logistics: What needs to be organised (e.g. permission, transport, equipment)?
- 239 • leaders: Who will lead the activity and what competencies and currency do they need?
- 240 • contingency: How to respond if things change?

### 241 3.3 Cultural, historical and environmental values

242 Consideration and respect for the **cultural, spiritual and historical** significance of sites, places and people

243 should be factored into adventure providers' planning and delivery of services. Considerations may include:

- 244 • recognising and giving due regard to the feelings, wishes or rights of others
- 245 • seeking information and/or permission from native title holders, Traditional Owners and/or other
- 246 land managers
- 247 • respecting and applying appropriate cultural values
- 248 • implementing environmental sustainability practices.

### 249 3.4 Emergency management planning

250 Actionable plans must be developed to support timely and effective response in case of an emergency.

251 Emergency management plans must be:

- 252 • specific and include documented emergency processes and procedures

- 253 • familiar to those who need to implement them
- 254 • shared with other appropriate people or agencies (e.g. land managers, a responsible non-participating
- 255 person and/or participants)
- 256 • periodically reviewed, practised and updated.

### 257 3.5 Activity leader documentation

258 Activity leaders must have timely access to relevant documentation to assist them to prepare for, and deliver,  
259 the activity.

## 260 4 Diversity, equity and inclusion

---

### 261 4.1 Diversity, equity and inclusion

262 Adventure activities are delivered by, and for, people of diverse identities, abilities, cultures and  
263 circumstances. Providing equitable opportunities for safe and meaningful participation is fundamental to good  
264 practice.

265 Providers must recognise the diversity of participants and activity leaders, which may include:

- 266 • ability and disability
- 267 • age
- 268 • cultural and linguistic background
- 269 • First Peoples identity and connection to Country
- 270 • gender, sex and sexual orientation
- 271 • neurodivergence
- 272 • religion or belief
- 273 • socio-economic and family circumstances
- 274 • prior experience of trauma, marginalisation or discrimination.

275 Risk management and activity planning must address the foreseeable implications of this diversity for the  
276 safety, wellbeing and participation of all involved.

277 To support safe and equitable participation, providers should:

- 278 • identify and reduce foreseeable barriers to participation
- 279 • apply reasonable and proportionate adjustments suited to the activity
- 280 • provide information and briefings in accessible formats
- 281 • respect the cultural, religious and dietary requirements of participants and leaders
- 282 • assess the suitability and safety of any adaptive or participant-supplied equipment.

283 Providers must plan for and manage psychological safety, identifying and addressing foreseeable psychosocial  
284 hazards such as bullying, harassment, exclusion and discrimination.

285 Providers must have an accessible process for raising and responding to concerns and complaints — including  
286 about discrimination, exclusion, harassment or cultural safety — that can be used by participants, parents and  
287 guardians, staff and volunteers, and that is accessible to children.

288 Relevant laws and/or regulations — including work health and safety, discrimination and cultural heritage  
289 protection — must be complied with.

## 290 5 Participants

---

## 5.1 Participants

The needs and abilities of participants must be considered at every stage of adventure activity design, management, planning and delivery.

Considerations relating to participants should include:

- taking reasonable steps to understand the abilities and needs of individual participants, group and/or client organisation
- using understanding of participants to design, plan and deliver an appropriate program
- effectively communicating timely information about the activity or program and its requirements
- implementing a process to obtain relevant details on pre-existing health or personal conditions, informed consent and acceptance of risk to participate before the activity begins
- meeting any legislative or legal compliance expectations relating to participant health and safety. Some examples: vulnerable person and child safety protection laws and regulations, privacy laws, anti-smoking/drug laws, sex discrimination laws and regulations, allergy and anaphylaxis safety for minors' laws etc.

Records relating to activities involving minors must be retained. The minimum retention period is determined by the law(s) and/or regulation(s) of the relevant jurisdiction(s) and must be complied with. Because a person who took part as a minor may be able to bring a claim many years after the activity — in some cases decades later, once they have reached adulthood — providers should retain these records for a period of 25 to 45 years, based on the limitation periods that apply in their jurisdiction and the nature of the activity.

## 5.2 Supervision

Participants must be provided with appropriate and ongoing supervision throughout the activity.

The level of supervision — direct, indirect or remote — must be:

- appropriate to the activity, environment and participant group
- based on the risk assessment, and
- adjusted as conditions or circumstances change.

## 5.3 Activity leader to participant ratios

Activity leader to participant ratios must be appropriate to the activity, environment and participant group.

Ratios must comply with:

- any activity-specific recommendations, and
- any land owner, land manager or other authority requirements.

## 5.4 Activity briefing

Participants must receive a briefing appropriate to the activity.

The briefing should cover:

- the nature of the activity
- safety requirements
- emergency procedures
- communications, and
- activity expectations.

330 Activity briefings must occur before an activity commences, and should reoccur at appropriate points as the  
331 activity progresses including, before a new stage or task, when conditions, plans or the environment change,  
332 or when new information affects participant safety.

333

DRAFT

## 6 Environment

---

### 6.1 Environment

Providers have a responsibility to understand the environments in which they are operating. Further, they have a responsibility to implement practices that address principles of environmental sustainability.

To maximise safety, relevant environmental conditions and impacts must be considered in risk management and activity plans.

These conditions include:

- weather and emerging weather variations
- geography
- seasons
- sun safety
- local flora and/or fauna hazards or impacts
- severe weather and fire weather warnings
- bushfire and fire danger rating.

Providers should identify and monitor weather and environmental conditions that might trigger modification, evacuation or other relevant response.

## 7 Equipment and logistics

---

### 7.1 Equipment requirements

The equipment selected must be suitable for the purpose for which it will be used.

This includes ensuring all equipment:

- meets any legislative or regulatory requirements
- is appropriately serviced, stored and maintained
- is appropriate in style, size, quality and quantity for the activity and client.

Communications, first aid and emergency response / rescue equipment must be:

- suitable for the context and the activity
- accessible, adequate and appropriate for the potential hazards and risks involved.

### 7.2 Logistics

At times it may be necessary to transport dependent participants for the activity.

Vehicles and drivers must comply with any transport laws and/or regulations.

## 8 Responsibilities and roles

---

### 8.1 Responsibilities and roles

The activity provider has primary responsibility for participants and for the overall conduct of an activity. The provider plans, authorises and resources the activity and is accountable for the systems that make delivery possible.

Adventure activities must be led by competent people who act under the direction of the provider and have appropriate knowledge, skill and experience.

The standard leadership roles are Leader, Assistant Leader and Support Person. Where a provider uses different titles, each must be mapped to these roles and the mapping documented.

### 8.2 Requirements for leaders

Providers must ensure that people in leadership roles:

- conform with the provider's risk management systems
- have current, verified and documented knowledge, skill and experience
- only assume roles within their knowledge, skill and experience
- provide an appropriate level of supervision (direct, indirect or remote) for the context
- are fit to fulfil their duties (e.g. managed for health, psychosocial fitness, fatigue and medications)
- comply with activity-specific leader-to-participant ratios.

### 8.3 Preparing and supporting leaders

Providers must prepare and support every person in a leadership role, whether employee, contractor or volunteer.

This includes:

- induction
- familiarisation with sites and hazards
- provision of the activity, risk management and emergency management plans
- suitable and serviceable equipment, and
- the authority to modify, pause or cancel an activity.

### 8.4 Knowledge, skill and experience

The knowledge, skill and experience required of leaders is expressed through the AAAS Outdoor Leader Knowledge, Skill and Experience (KSE) Framework. Determining that a person is capable of their role is a non-delegable responsibility of the provider.

Providers must verify each leader's knowledge, skill, experience and currency, ensure leaders hold a current, nationally recognised first aid qualification appropriate to the context, and keep records of verification.

Records relating to activities involving minors must be retained for at least 25 years.