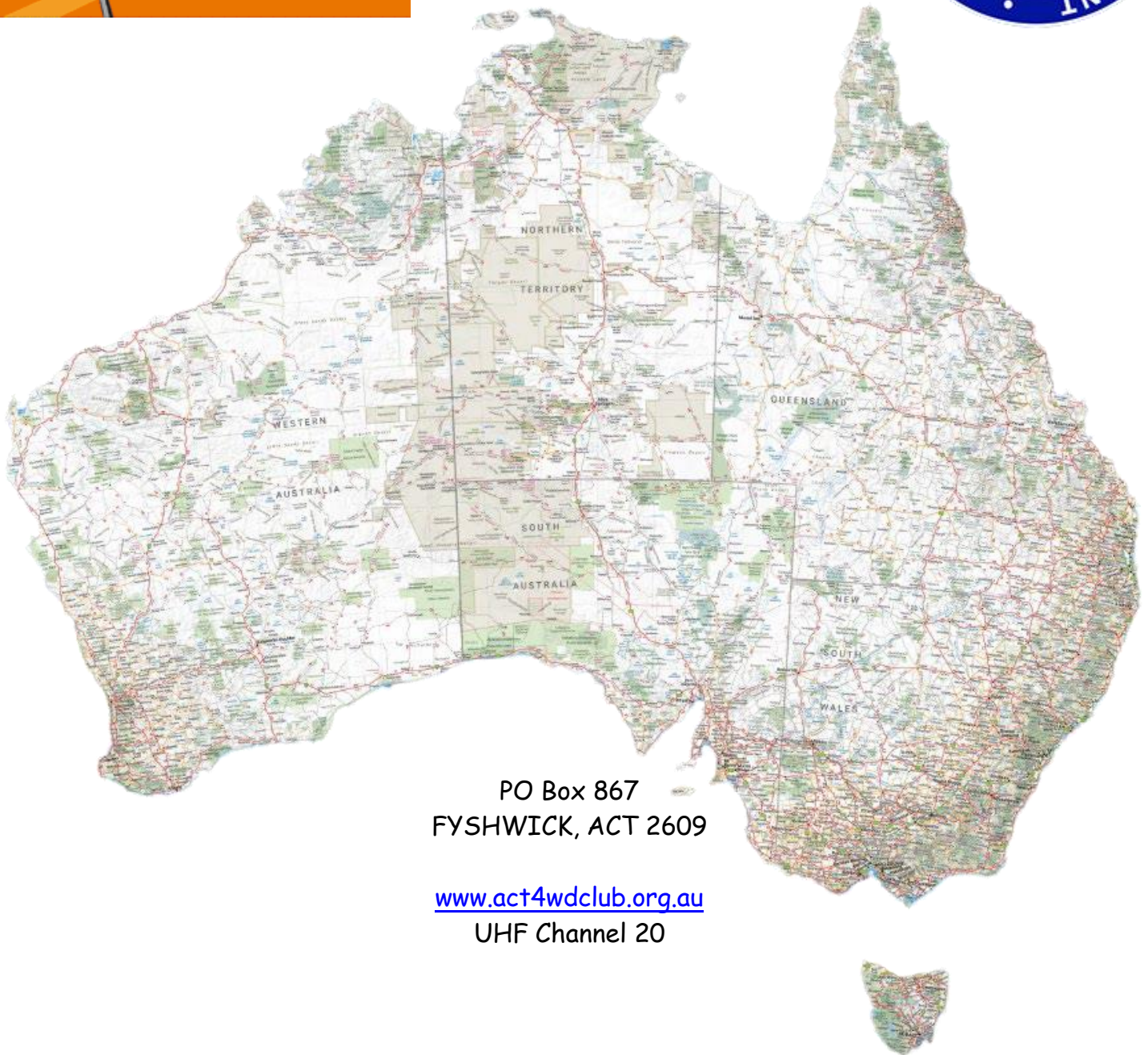


ACT4WD Club - Trip Leader's Guidelines (2026)



PO Box 867
FYSHWICK, ACT 2609

www.act4wdclub.org.au
UHF Channel 20



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1. Introduction & Trip Leader's responsibility

These guidelines have been prepared as a generic document with reference to club specific bylaws and club specific guidelines. There may be special circumstances during a trip where additional actions may be required to ensure safe travelling. At all times, Trip Leaders need to be aware of potential risks and will need to mitigate these risks with common sense logic and appropriate actions.

The Trip Leader has responsibility for the safe running of the trip. It is the Trip Leader's responsibility to counsel prospective participants regarding their competency and the trip standard, both before and during the trip.

The Trip Leader **always has** the absolute discretion to make the final judgement to determine the suitability of vehicles or equipment proposed to be used. Furthermore, the Trip Leader has the discretion to accept or reject any person's participation. This specifically includes drivers and passengers, whether before or after the commencement of the trip. This should be done in accordance with the relevant club by-laws, regulations & policy.



1.1 Skills & Attributes of a Trip Leader

The club should run training sessions, where experienced Trip Leaders can advise new potential Trip Leaders how to run trips. It would also be advisable that a potential Trip Leader has attended a couple of club trips already. If Trip Leader training assistance is required, contact either the Training Co-ordinator or the Committee.

All members are encouraged to participate in trips and to organise a trip for the trip calendar. Any member, regardless of the level of 4WD expertise and experience, is able to lead a trip however new trip leaders should have the support of an experienced trip leader.

The club committee manages the trip calendar through the Trip Coordinator, who is available for trip suggestions and for help in preparing trips. Experienced trip leaders are also willing to mentor and help people wanting to lead a trip.



The suggested Trip Leader pre-requisites include:

- Ability to organise and a sense of responsibility
- Effective communication skills and ability to demonstrate authority
- Knowledge of radio communications as per club policy
- Map reading skills - refer [Map Reading Guide \(Auslig\)](#)
- GPS skills to be used in conjunction with the relevant maps
- Knowledge of convoy procedures (Appendix C) and ability to organise the placement of vehicles in convoy
- Responsibility for recovery situations or delegation to a suitable person(s)
- Appropriate 4wd driving experience for the selected tracks
- An understanding of the track classification system (2.2 Track Classification)
- The ability to assign an appropriate Trip Rating using the Track Classification
- Ability to select and nominate an appropriate Tail End Charlie (TEC) and a Repeat Charlie for larger groups/mountainous areas as needed.

1.2 Trip Participants Guidelines

All participants on a trip are responsible for their own vehicles and the actions that they take.

Trip participants do not need 4WD experience that matches the expected difficulty level of the trip as the policy of the club is to use trips as a training ground to build on everybody's skill in as safe as possible an environment. However, the vehicle and safety/recovery equipment must meet the minimum standard required for the trip, see 'Minimum Trip Equipment Standards' at the end of this document or on the website. If your skill level does not match the expected difficulty level of the trip or you have any concerns, please talk to the trip leader well before the trip to make them aware. If this is your first time offroad, it is recommended that you have done at least one basic 4WD training course with the club or take a more experienced buddy with you from the club.

Adequate pre-trip preparation should be undertaken and as a minimum, participants should:

- Register for the trip with the Trip Leader. Some trips may have strict limits on convoy numbers
- Put a completed and signed ICE Personal Details Form(s) in your glove box for each person in your car
- Maintain their vehicle in a roadworthy condition and have tyres that have a suitable tread for the conditions anticipated. For longer range trips it is advisable to have a pre-trip vehicle inspection carried out by a reputable 4WD specialist
- Ensure that their vehicle has rated front and rear recovery points fitted. If not fitted as standard, they need to be installed by a competent fitter and must be safe for use in a recovery situation. Factory transport tie down points and Tow Points off a bull bar are not sufficient unless designed by the bulbar manufacturer. Tow balls and receiver hitch pins should never be used for recovery, however there are 50mm square towbar hitch recovery devices available quite cheaply that can be used instead.
- Provide adequate personal supplies of fuel, food, water and clothing for the trip, relevant vehicle and equipment spares or as otherwise advised by the Trip Leader. Note all fuel must be mounted outside the vehicle
- Obey the instructions of the Trip Leader at all times
- Do not leave the trip without the Trip Leader's knowledge and agreement.

2. Trip Leader's Guidelines

2.1 Planning the Trip

Before setting out on a trip, it is important that some basic planning is completed to ensure that the event is conducted in such a way to ensure that it is both enjoyable and safe for everyone. The amount of planning required for a trip is variable and depends on the trip leader's familiarity with the intended track and the duration of the trip. Previous trip reports are a valuable source of information for trip ideas and for track conditions. A number of track guides are also available from various publishers. Selection of the route is most important, and consideration should be given to the following:

The trip leader determines the destination and general route, establishes the trip timings and coordinates any administrative requirements, such as campsite bookings, as appropriate. The following is a summary of the activities undertaken by the trip leader:

- **Plan the trip**
- **Trip Rating** - rate the trip to the highest expected standard using the Track Classification Scale (see Section 2.2 or the next page) and be prepared enroute to make changes to suit weather or track conditions
- The trip leader is to ensure that all drivers are aware of the general program for each day, including the route to be taken and the rendezvous point on the first day.
- **Type** - determine the trip type, e.g. Day trip, weekend, outback trip etc
- **Destination** - determine the destination and / or areas to be travelled
- **Daily Trip Length**: Estimate the distance to be travelled each day. Remember that low range 4WDing is likely to average no more than 20km/hour and in rough conditions could be considerably less with a lot of extra fuel used
- **Weather**: Check likely weather - this will affect the trip rating
- **Fuel**: Plan for access to fuel for petrol and diesel vehicles or longer trips
- **Camping**: Select suitable camping grounds and arrange for bookings if necessary
- **Permits**: Check if permits are required and coordinate provision, if necessary
- **Costs**: Advise other participants of expected costs for camping, permits and access fees as necessary
- **Group Size**: Determine maximum number of vehicles, based on expected track or weather conditions and trip leader experience
- **Breaks**: Generally, allow for breaks at least every 2 hours
- **End of Driving**: Plan on being at the overnight destination about 4pm to allow time for camp set up before dark and to allow families with young children to prepare the evening meal at a regular time
- Allow extra travel time for **larger convoys**
- **Contact**: appropriate National Park's offices and State Forest staff or check websites as necessary to obtain an update on track conditions and any track closures.
- **Route** - plan route (tracks) to include alternate routes in case of adverse conditions
- **Special Equipment** - Assess if any special equipment will be required. i.e. snow chains, appropriate first aid kit, UHF Radio (handheld & vehicle mounted) and a fire extinguisher should be installed in

every vehicle in a visible and easily accessible location

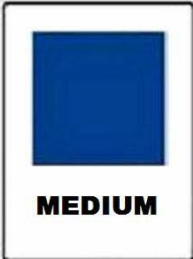
- **Vehicle Requirements** - Depending on trip duration and location(s), you may need to remind vehicle owners of their responsibility to ensure their vehicle is roadworthy and appropriately set up for the trip
- **Maps** - Obtain relevant and current maps of the areas
- **Newtracs** is a great new free Australian GPS app that shows track ratings in colour that you can check before you leave and also use on your trip. If you enter your vehicle profile it will automatically log the difficulty of each track while you drive for future users.
- **Season** - Decide on the time of year to run the trip
- **Activities** - Consider other activities which may be included in the trip
- **Research** - Gather information about the area to be visited, maps, books, contact other club members and relevant authorities
- **Supplies** - Consider, fuel, food, water, clothing, camping requirements, accommodation
- **Convoy Communications** - Determine minimum radio requirements for the trip and carry spare UHF radios to lend members without one and for guiding vehicles in rough sections
- **Emergency Communications** - Determine the communications necessary in an emergency situation. It is important to be aware of areas where normal communication equipment (mobile phones) will not operate, so the need for specialist equipment (sat phone, HF radio, EPIRB etc.) should be considered
- **Emergencies** - Plan what you are going to do if there is an emergency. In an emergency take charge and direct members to ensure that the appropriate response to potential incidents such as bush fires, personal injury, mechanical or vehicle damage, alternative routes, total fire bans, etc. Note NSW generally has a Total Fire Ban from October to March where the ACT does it as needed. Include emergency requirements for food, water and clothing as appropriate for the type of trip.
- **000 & The Emergency Plus App**: If you need to contact 000 while out of phone service, an iPhone 14 or later will let you text 000. If you have an iPhone 14 Pro This app will show your GPS location and a map and allow you to direct dial 000. When you look at the map in the app, you will see 3 words down the bottom. The 'what 3 words' company have divided the world into 3m squares and converted the longitude and latitude of the location into 3 unique words to make it easy for anyone to tell emergency services where they are.
- **Hazards Near Me App** - NSW Rural Fire Service with regular updates on fires etc.
- **Participants** - decide on the number of 4WD vehicles, and the number of participants appropriate for the nature of the trip. Generally trips should have a maximum of 10 vehicles, definitely not more than 15 vehicles. This is primarily an environmental issue and for groups larger than 15, extra

consideration should be given to minimise the environmental impact of the group at rest areas, camping grounds and during vehicle recoveries. Otherwise split into 2 groups.

- It should be noted that **4WDDriving is unpredictable** by its very nature and variation from the expected degree of difficulty and breakdowns are very possible.
- **Track Classification changes** during a trip but the classification must be chosen for the most difficult section that may be traversed. [Newtracs](#) will help you determine track difficulty from live data.

2.2 Track Classification

The following classifications will assist in determining an overall Trip Rating:

	Grade 1 - Easy	Grade 2 - Medium	Grade 3 - Difficult	Grade 4 - Very Difficult
Overview Description	All Wheel Drive and High Range 4WD. Novice 4WD Drivers	Mainly High range 4WD but Low range required. Some 4WD experience recommended.	Significant Low range 4WD with standard 4WD ground clearance. Should have 4WD driver training or lots of 4WD experience	Low range 4WD with High ground clearance. Experienced 4WD Drivers
Advisory				
Expected terrain and track conditions	Mostly unsealed roads with no obstacles and minor gradients.	Tracks with some steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. May have shallow water crossings.	Tracks with frequent steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. Possible deeper /more difficult (i.e. rocky) water crossings.	Tracks with frequent very steep and/or rocky/slippery/sandy sections. May have difficult river crossings.
Vehicle suitability	All wheel Drive and High Range 4WD. Can be low clearance with single range and road tyres.	Suitable for medium clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain or road tyres.	Suitable for medium to high clearance vehicles with dual range and all terrain tyres.	Suitable for high clearance vehicles with dual range and tyres suitable for the terrain. (Mud Terrain tyres).
Recovery Equipment	Recovery equipment should be carried by one car just in case.	Recovery equipment should be carried.	Recovery equipment required to be carried.	Winch/Recovery equipment required and will probably be used.
Driver Training / Experience	Suitable for novice 4WD drivers.	Recommended that drivers have experience or 4WD training. Recommended to be done in groups of vehicles. Novice 4WD drivers accompanied by experienced 4WD drivers.	Recommended for drivers with reasonable experience or 4WD training. To be done in groups of vehicles.	Drivers with extensive experience should only attempt as there are several technical challenges. Recommended to be done in groups of four or more vehicles.
Weather	May be difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.	Will be more difficult in wet conditions.

The track grading classification scale above has been developed to assist in advising Trip Leaders and

participants on 4WD trips of the type of tracks that they can expect to encounter. It is intended, over time, for all 4WD tracks to be rated according to this scale and sign-posted accordingly.

On most 4WD trips participants can expect that a variety of tracks will be traversed each with an appropriate rating. Trip Leaders should advise participants of the range of track ratings expected to be encountered on the planned route.

2.3 Advertising the Trip

Once the trip planning has been completed, the trip will need to be placed into the trip calendar, which is emailed to members, published in the monthly newsletter and is available on the private club Facebook site. Club trips must be promoted within the club and are available to all members. As a guide, when a trip is advertised it should have a minimum of two vacancies. For one or two day trips, notification should be through the monthly newsletter, by the club email address and on the private Facebook page at least one month in advance. For longer trips, particularly those planned to extend over several weeks; several months' notice should be given through the newsletter, the club email address and on the private Facebook page

Updating the trip calendar can be done by contacting the club Trip Coordinator and providing him/her the following details (this is available as a [Trip Template Document on the club website](#)):

- **Trip Name & Destination:** Indicate the trip name and planned destination (provide a Google maps reference or Google trip plan link)
- **Trip Leader:** State who is leading the trip, mb and email
- **Dates / Duration:** Nominate dates, departure time and duration of trip, stating the meeting point and approximate distance to be travelled from start to finish
- **Trip grading:** Indicate trip grading in accordance with descriptions at Section 2.2 (further details are available in the newsletter and on the website)
- **Vehicle numbers:** State minimum number of vehicles (suggested maximum 10 vehicles per convoy). Each club / Trip Leader to determine the limits. Public Liability insurance and environmental impact requirements need to be considered
- **Vehicle and Recovery Gear requirements:** Ensure that these requirements notified in the trip advertisement.
- **Fuel:** Indicate if additional fuel is to be taken due to lack of fuel in a remote area and/or indicate where fuel stops are planned
- **Camper Trailers/Caravans:** Provide notes about the suitability or not for camper trailers and caravans if it's an overnight trip and could turn muddy or snow or become a narrow track
- **Maps:** List any maps that would be useful for participants to bring (paper or electronic)

- **Special Equipment needed:** (note some gear can be shared) - eg: 'UHF Radio, portable is ok if that's all you have. I will have 2 spare portables if you don't have one. We will be on Channel 20 unless that's busy.'
- **Food/meal stops:** state the minimum required food for the trip and meal stops planned
- **Comments:** State any special requirements and give a brief description of the planned trip and activities, fuel and airing down points, etc.

Refer Sample Trip Advertisement (Appendix A) and on the [club website](#).

2.4 Running the Trip

The following activities and tasks should be carried out:

- **All drivers fill in and sign the 'trip attendance' form.** The club has developed a Risk assessment document that is on the website and has been sent to all members. In the pre-trip briefing, all drivers fill in and sign the 'trip attendance' form, acknowledging they have read and accept the Club's 'Trip Risk Assessment' document.
- **Start meeting point:** At the start meeting point carry out all the introductions and tell everybody that we usually stop at the start of the dirt to air down to 25 psi or lower
- **Confirm Air Down:** Communicate that we will stop together at the end of the trip to do a debrief and to air up before heading home, also to help anyone who is unable to air up
- **Briefing(s):** Provide trip briefing(s) and state the planned daily activities
- **Head count:** Confirm head count before, during and immediately following the trip
- **Attendee record:** Record a list of all attendees and email to the Trip Coordinator after the trip so records can be kept of who was on the trip for insurance purposes. This includes visitors and children who are not club members. This is necessary for Public Liability insurance coverage
- **ICE Card:** all participants should have one for each person in the glove box, Trip leader to have spares, these are in Appendix E
- **Who has a First Aid Kit, Snake Bite Kit and a Fire Extinguisher?**
- **Trip report:** Nominate person(s) to complete trip report(s). Usually the last person to arrive but can be shared for longer trips. They are then responsible to send the trip report to the Trip Coordinator and Newsletter Editor within a week of the trip finishing
- **Photos:** ask participants to take photos on the trip and send them to the newsletter editor and/or trip coordinator
- **Weather:** Check weather reports prior to trip and if possible, every day on a multi-day trip
- **Night Travel:** it is more difficult to 4WD at night as the lights cause blind spots and depth perception is difficult so judging how deep ruts and gullies are is harder. Some participants may have difficulty seeing as well in the dark. Allow adequate time on trips for incidents and try not to get caught out 4WDing at night unless night driving is in the trip plan
- **Tail End Charlie:** The TEC has the responsibility for keeping the Trip Leader informed of the

progress or delays of the group, confirming they have passed vehicles and turns and for ensuring that gates are left open or closed as found by the Trip Leader. With larger groups or mountainous areas you may have to have a Repeater Charlie to pass on communications

- **Inexperienced drivers:** If necessary, designate positions within the convoy to accommodate special requirements, such as inexperienced drivers
- **Spotter for hard sections:** it is a good idea that the trip leader or a passenger gets out with a handheld uhf and directs following cars through a difficult section
- **Communicating 4wd settings:** it is important that the trip leader communicates when they are approaching rough, steep sections to tell the convoy to switch into low range and when to go back to high range. Also check that everyone is in 4wd once they are on the dirt as it will improve cornering and help in difficult areas
- **Convoy procedures:** Explain convoy procedures as per Club Rules/By-laws. Refer Appendix C
- **Recovery gear/winch:** Find out who has recovery gear and a winch and try to spread them out in the convoy. Confirm if any vehicles do not have rated recovery points talk and about only using a dedicated towbar towing hitch receiver, not a hitch pin or towball for recovery if a vehicle does not have a dedicated rear recovery point
- **Greater distance between vehicles on ascent & descent:** depending on steepness, weather and surface grip
- **Communication:** Decide on radio channel and do a radio check before departing by having each vehicle call their position number in order. The ACT4WD Club generally uses Channel 20 on trips but if this channel has interference/other vehicles the group will move up 2 channels at a time (at the direction of the Trip Leader). Channel 10 should be used as the Club Channel to contact other groups in the vicinity and to avoid head-on collisions. Be aware that some vehicles may have an older UHF with only 40 channels



- **Breaks:** make sure you provide adequate toilet breaks, coffee & food breaks etc
- **Setting camp:** Make sure you stop and set up camp well before sun set. Happy hour is a good idea and gets the group to mix and socialise and also helps with discussing how the day went and planning the next day
- **Vehicle Checks:** It is important to check the vehicles' mechanical state at the end of each day before socialising so repairs can be made then. It is poor etiquette to do vehicle repairs at the start

of a day and hold the rest of the convoy up

- **End Point:** It is important to have a definite end point, ensure that a location is selected during the planning stages and also confirm the participant(s) that will provide/write the trip report(s)
- **Questions?**

2.5 Member's Responsibilities

When participating in club trips:

- **Safety:** Each driver is individually responsible for the safety of his/her own vehicle, passengers and preparation level of their vehicle
- **Behaviour:** No driver is to drive in a manner that may endanger themselves or others
- **UHF radio:** Each vehicle is to be equipped with a UHF radio which may be substituted by a handheld UHF radio. Usually the trip leader carries spares
- **Leaving trip early:** If a participant wishes to depart from the trip prior to completion, they must notify the Trip Leader. The Trip Leader may assist with the departing if the participant requires it. For further information, see Section 11
- **Tread lightly:** Look after the environment and leave nothing but footprints. Follow the ARMA Code of Conduct for Four Wheel Drives (Appendix D)

2.6 Visitors on Club Trips

Club events are primarily intended for club members. The club's public liability insurance provides cover for club members and visitors on club trips. Prospective new members are encouraged to attend a club meeting and one trip before deciding on membership.

Visitors are to be advised:

- that the invitation applies for only one trip
- that the visitor is individually responsible for the safety of his/her own vehicle and passengers
- while the trip leader and other club members will provide assistance as required, participation in any portion of the trip remains at the discretion of the visitor.

In all cases, an existing member must sponsor visitors on club trips and that member is responsible for hosting the visitor for the duration of the trip.

Club members wishing to have a visitor attend a club trip should seek the agreement of the trip leader.

2.7 At the end of the Trip

Return any borrowed equipment and ensure the trip report is submitted for club magazine by required date. Remember to clean your vehicle and equipment after each trip and between eco-sensitive areas and check the mechanical state of your vehicle for necessary repairs including tightening all nuts and bolts. If the winch was used it should be wound out, rope cleaned and rewound and tensioned once dry.