



Hon Dan Tehan MP
Minister for Education
Member for Wannon, Victoria
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29th April 2020

Dear Minister Tehan,

The Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA) is the National Peak body representing the interests of Outdoor Recreation across the country. OCA is reaching out for your support at this crucial time. Our sector supports outdoor educators, outdoor recreation facilities, school camp providers, community outdoor recreation bodies as well as outdoor therapy for those with special needs.

The Council is made up of each state's representative peak body and individually they have reached out to their relevant education departments to encourage a swift return to enabling participation in outdoor recreation. The health and wellbeing benefits are well understood particularly for students and school communities. As our communities begin to re-engage in community sport and recreation, we are seeking your support to see a timely return to participation in school camps and outdoor recreation excursions. Today we ask you to consider backing us on this important message.

The effects of COVID-19 have been wide-reaching, and this has been a very trying time for many industries, people and family units. But what we do know is that the rebound to our health, both physical and mental, is incredibly important for the community, the health system and a resilience influencer to other challenges people may face in their day to day lives.

Key messages...

We believe an outdoor program will be more important than ever because students will need space and time to process the impact this time has had on their lives. The outdoors will be an even more extraordinary space to discover their strengths and help students reconnect through shared experiences post social distancing from their peers.



The data speaks volumes...

There is substantial research to confirm that outdoor programs positively impact young people's self-perception of their own personal strengths, feelings, limitations, and the value they bring to a team. The collaboration often involved in outdoor activities, such as cycling, hiking, canoeing and climbing within a framework of safety and support brings people together and helps them to connect in a positive way.

Connecting people with nature-based outdoor activities is important for their health and well-being as the industry has been reported to save an estimated \$480 Million per year on healthcare system costs in NSW, \$208 Million in WA and \$380 Million in VIC (Marsden and Jacobs, 2017).

In addition to the health benefits, camp-based recreation and education contributes a massive ***\$16-20 billion to the Australian economy each year, \$11 billion to Australian GDP.*** While this industry is currently trading at \$0 in the National economy, we are hoping by working with you we can start to return this economic benefit back to all of Australia in an effective timeframe for regional communities to survive this epidemic.

In Summary....

We ask that you please support our messaging to the states in returning students to the outdoor education opportunities as soon as possible as it will positively impact their re-entry and will be well received by both students and teachers alike as curriculum needs are met and life-skills are being taught.

As the Australian recognized peak body for the outdoor 'skill-building' sector, we are here to help and guide you as a key stakeholder and partner in our industry.

Sincerely

A McGuckian

Andrew McGuckian

Chair

Outdoor Council of Australia

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