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### **Queensland Outdoor Education Providers (school camps) - return to business**

Queensland Outdoor Recreation Federation Incorporated (QORF) is the peak body representing the interests of the outdoor sector in Queensland. As a member-based, not-for-profit association, QORF represents and advocates on behalf of a coalition of outdoor groups and individuals.

QORF appreciates the work that your government and the Queensland Department of Education have done in these difficult times, particularly in ensuring that school students continue to receive the best possible education.

As the peak body organisation for Queensland's outdoor industry, QORF has been working with the State Government to develop an industry COVID SAFE Plan for Outdoor Education Providers, which was submitted for the approval of the Chief Health Officer last Thursday 11 June 2020 (a copy of the submitted plan is attached for your information). This industry plan is intended to take effect from the commencement of Stage 3 of the "Queensland Roadmap for easing of restrictions".

This industry plan is intended to allow outdoor education providers to get back up and running. Outdoor education providers operate approximately 108 camps across Queensland and provide outdoor education programs (focusing on personal development qualities such as resilience, independence, leadership, and communication) for in excess of 120,000 Queensland primary and secondary students each year.

Outdoor education providers in Queensland incorporate around 13,000 beds, with a turn-over of more than \$162 million per annum (in a normal year), while contributing to regional economies across our State (figures provided by Australian Camps Association).

While awaiting approval from the Chief Health Officer of the industry COVID SAFE Plan for Queensland's Outdoor Education Providers, we are seeking confirmation from you and Education Queensland that Education Queensland schools will be able to return to school camps with our outdoor education providers as soon as the industry plan comes into effect.

Along with many other industries, Queensland's outdoor education industry has been devastated by the COVID-19 crisis, and the reactions to this crisis. This devastation has been exacerbated by the uncertainty regarding whether our Department of Education will allow school camps to resume for State schools in Term 3.

The Victorian Government announced this week that school camps will be allowed to resume from Monday 22nd June 2020 - [https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus\\_schools\\_operations.aspx](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/Pages/coronavirus_schools_operations.aspx). If Victorian schools can return to school camps, then surely Queensland schools must be able to do the same, particularly given the amazing efforts that have been made by the entire Queensland population to ensure that we are better placed than most States of Australia regarding COVID-19.

Outdoor education programmes are not an optional extra that can be discarded or postponed so that students can focus on academic pursuits. School camps deliver education that is mapped to the curriculum. School camps have been shown through independent research to decrease anxiety, increase connection to schools, increase connection to peers, and increase students' efficacy ([www.oypra.org.au](http://www.oypra.org.au)). Given the recent effects of COVID-19 on students, now, more than ever, is a time to embrace the benefits that school camps can provide for all students. School camps will have appropriate controls in place to manage risks associated with COVID-19, as per the industry COVID SAFE Plan.

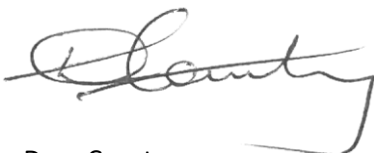
Queensland outdoor education providers risk losing the wonderful, highly trained staff who deliver the educational outcomes for students. If there is no certainty around when Queensland Department of Education schools will return to school camps, then our outdoor staff may be forced to relocate to other States, such as Victoria, where school camps are operating. The temporary loss of those workers will make it more difficult for Queensland outdoor education providers to operate, and with the current state border restrictions, some of those workers will be unable to return to Queensland.

Can you provide an assurance to Queensland outdoor education providers that once the industry COVID SAFE Plan for Outdoor Education Providers is approved by the Chief Health Officer, Queensland Department of Education schools will return to school camps and our outdoor education providers will be able to return to the business that they do so well?

Our outdoor education providers will not be operating in the same manner as they did before COVID-19, but will continue to contribute to the best possible education for Queensland's students.

If you have any queries, please contact QORF Executive Officer, Dom Courtney by telephone on 0419 976 800 or by email [eo@qorf.org.au](mailto:eo@qorf.org.au).

Yours sincerely,



Dom Courtney  
Executive Officer