

Dear Parent/Guardian,

VOLUNTARY STAFF AT TEEN RANCH AUSTRALIA

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION LETTER

The purpose of this letter is to give you some information regarding voluntary staff at Teen Ranch Australia. A number of our staff are aged 15-17 years – we consider it prudent to involve their parents/guardians in the application process and to obtain their written consent to their child's involvement whilst under 18 years of age.

Teen Ranch Limited is a non-denominational, not-for-profit, Christian organization situated at Cobbitty, NSW. It was established in 1961 and since then has served almost 230 000 campers. It is the first camping organisation in NSW to receive accreditation under the new scheme of the Australian Camping Association. Its mission statement is as follows: to introduce young people to Jesus Christ through an affordable, enjoyable, educational and safe camp experience provided by a community of caring, growing Christians.

Teen Ranch employs 20-25 fulltime staff, is aided by approximately 150 voluntary staff (aged 15-65 years) and serves 5000 campers each year. It provides midweek, weekend and school holiday camps. A wide variety of government, Catholic and private schools; Christian and non-Christian youth groups; as well as adult groups are served by the organisation. It also assists young people by providing work experience opportunities and experience contributing to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. It has associations with several similar organizations overseas, namely Teen Ranch Scotland, Teen Ranch France, Teen Ranch Romania, Teen Ranch Poland and Teen Ranch Canada.

Voluntary Staff Selection

Young people interested in contributing as voluntary staff are asked to complete an application form, read the Teen Ranch Statement of Faith and Staff Conduct Policy, sign a Prohibited Person Employment declaration, and obtain two closed written references. This process is partly to fulfill our duty of care to the campers by ensuring that all staff have been appropriately screened regarding child protection issues. In addition, Teen Ranch has a particular interest in the ongoing development of each staff member (both paid and volunteer) – the application process also reflects this pastoral focus.

Most people interested in voluntary staff will be Christians, whose involvement will be an expression of their commitment to following Jesus. Often young people apply who aren't Christians or who are just beginning to consider the truths of Christianity. We believe that being involved at Teen Ranch and living amongst committed Christians is one of the best ways to consider the reality of the Christian life and are open to non-Christian young people applying to be volunteer staff. In these circumstances, the two references should be completed by two employers, teachers or mature adults who know the young person well. Some questions in the application form can only be answered by Christians – in these instances, the particular question may be left blank.

Roles

Voluntary staff commonly assist during school holiday camps (Round Ups) and weekend camps. There are many roles that volunteers may undertake. These include kitchen staff, maintenance, cleaning, snack bar, activity instruction (horses, ropes, canoeing, archery, pool games, sports, initiatives) and cabin leading. The Voluntary Staff Coordinator (and other supervisors) allocate roles appropriate to each staff member's maturity, experience, abilities, interest and personality, with a particular focus on the ongoing development of the staff member.

Supervision – during work hours

During work hours, varying degrees of supervision are given depending on the specific role. No young voluntary staff member is given responsibility beyond what they are considered capable of handling.

1. Kitchen, maintenance, cleaning – young voluntary staff are accompanied by full time or senior voluntary staff when placed in these roles. No staff member is permitted to use kitchen or maintenance equipment or machinery or cleaning fluids unless trained by the appropriate full time staff member.

2. Activity staff – those voluntary staff involved in activity instruction are in an assistant role, supervised by staff members with qualifications and experience appropriate to the particular activity.
3. Cabin leaders – this role requires significant responsibility and hence great care is taken in selecting staff with the suitable skills, experience and attitude. Two senior staff are placed in a leader support role during the entire camp to provide on-the-job support, advice and encouragement. Young voluntary staff are often placed in an “apprentice leader” role on several camps before assuming full responsibility for a cabin group.

Supervision outside work hours and accomodation

Overnight, single staff stay on the property at Cobbitty, in the voluntary staff quarters in 10 bed single-gender bunkrooms. Most staff in these rooms will be aged between 15 and 25 years. Appropriate supervision is given but your child will be expected to take responsibility for him/herself and positively respond to leadership that is given regarding appropriate behaviour and curfews.

Fulltime and voluntary staff in the cabin leader role stay overnight in the camper accommodation, supervising the 8-10 campers in their cabin.

Activities

Whilst volunteering as staff, there is often the opportunity to participate in some of the activities. All participation is under the supervision of qualified and experienced instructors. The accompanying risk warning will need to be signed if your child wishes to be involved.

Leaving Teen Ranch property

Staff under 18 years are not permitted to leave Teen Ranch property unless authorized by the Staff Coordinator. As the one exception to this rule, they may visit the General Store across the road from the Teen Ranch property. Any other offsite trips will be supervised by an adult.

Appropriate interaction with campers

Teen Ranch has a duty of care (both legal and moral) to ensure that all campers are protected from any form of physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse whilst at the Ranch. The integrity of individual staff and of the organization also needs to be protected. At the introductory staff meeting, guidelines regarding ‘appropriate interaction with campers’ are outlined and emphasized. All staff are expected to abide by these guidelines.

Volunteer ethic

Teen Ranch has benefited over many years from a healthy volunteer ethic. Teen Ranch has a commitment to ensure that the generosity of young people is not taken advantage of and demonstrates this by maintaining reasonable and safe working hours and conditions and by intentionally contributing to each staff member’s development. Accommodation and food are provided for voluntary staff during periods of service. The satisfaction of contributing as a volunteer in a mission such as Teen Ranch is a unique and precious experience.

Consent

The accompanying consent form should be signed and returned with the other application forms. We will seek to renew your written consent annually until your child turns 18 years old.

If you have any specific questions concerning voluntary staff, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Sincerely

Gary Stanley
Voluntary Staff Coordinator

TEEN RANCH AUSTRALIA

VOLUNTARY STAFF <18 YEARS OLD

PARENT/GUARDIAN DECLARATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF CONDITIONS

Staff Member's Name: _____

DOB: ___ / ___ / _____

Application process

I have read and completed the following documents.

- Introductory Letter (Australian Volunteers)
- Application form (Voluntary Staff)
- Staff conduct policy
- Statement of faith
- Reference Form – Christian Leader
- Reference Form – Employer/Teacher
- Prohibited Employment Declaration
- (If less than 18 years old) Parent/Guardian Information Letter (Voluntary Staff), with Declaration and Acceptance of Conditions

Risk Warning

I/we understand that recreational activities organized by Teen Ranch Limited may include horse riding, canoeing, abseiling, and low and high ropes courses. These and other recreational activities arranged from time to time are of their nature inherently dangerous. I also understand that Teen Ranch is accredited by the Australian Camping Association, which means its camps comply with Australian industry best practice contained in the standards set by that organization.

In signing this declaration I/we acknowledge on behalf of my/our child attending Teen Ranch that the paragraph above constitutes a risk warning under the terms of the *Civil Liability Act 2002 (New South Wales)*, and I/we hereby release Teen Ranch, its officers, employees and volunteers from liability to the extent permitted under the terms of that Act.

Medical Assistance

In the event of injury or illness of my/our child, I/we acknowledge that Teen Ranch will endeavour to contact me/us on the telephone number/s provided on this form, but in the event of emergency, authorize Teen Ranch to obtain all necessary medical assistance, including ambulance transport and hospital accommodation, and I/we agree to pay for all related fees and expenses.

If my/our child needs any medication while on camp, I will contact Teen Ranch prior to the camp to make the necessary arrangements. Generally when I have indicated specifically below, I give permission for my/our child to be given, by staff qualified in first aid, the following non-scheduled medication (that is, medication available in the supermarket), if required.

- Paracetamol
- Antihistamine
- Other (please specify) _____

Acceptance

I permit my child to serve at Teen Ranch Australia for the next 12 months, in a voluntary staff capacity, under the conditions outlined in these documents.

Parent/Guardian's signature

Parent/guardian's name (printed)

___ / ___ / ___
Date