

Dear Parent/Guardian,

WORK EXPERIENCE / DUKE OF EDINBURGH / COMMUNITY SERVICE PLACEMENTS AT TEEN RANCH AUSTRALIA

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION LETTER

The purpose of this letter is to give you some information regarding Duke of Edinburgh / Work Experience placements at Teen Ranch Australia. Most applicants 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.

APPLICATION FOR PLACEMENTS

Young people interested in a placement at Teen Ranch are required to complete Teen Ranch information sheet, provide health information and contact details, and sign a Prohibited Person Employment declaration. The Voluntary Staff Coordinator oversees all placements, orients them on arrival and supports them during their placement.

All full-time staff and most of the voluntary staff are Christians, whose involvement is an expression of their commitment to following Jesus. We do not require those seeking a Duke of Edinburgh or work experience placement at Teen Ranch to be Christians. However, we do expect a willingness to respect the Christian ethos amongst the staff and respect the purpose statement of introducing young people to Jesus Christ. We find that being involved at Teen Ranch and living amongst committed Christians is one of the best ways for young people to consider the reality of the Christian life. Many of those who have done placements here become interested in further involvement as voluntary staff and some become interested in attending a local church.

ROLES

Placements are commonly arranged during school holiday camps (Round Ups) or weekend camps. Some also occur midweek during school camps. There are many roles that volunteers may undertake at Teen Ranch – however, during the first involvement in the organization, this is usually as kitchen staff and cleaning staff. The Voluntary Staff Coordinator (and other supervisors) allocate roles appropriate to each volunteer'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. Young voluntary staff in the kitchen and cleaning roles are accompanied by fulltime or senior voluntary staff. 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.

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.

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, you may contact myself or the Staff Coordinator.

Yours Sincerely

Graham Poole
Assistant Director

TEEN RANCH AUSTRALIA

WORK EXPERIENCE, DUKE OF EDINBURGH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE PLACEMENTS

PARENT/GUARDIAN DECLARATION AND ACCEPTANCE OF CONDITIONS

STAFF MEMBER'S NAME: _____

DOB: ___/___/___

APPLICATION PROCESS

I have read the accompanying documents contained in the application package.

- Introductory Letter (Work Experience, Duke of Edinburgh and Community Service)
- Application Form (Work Experience, Duke of Edinburgh and Community Service)
- Prohibited Employment Declaration
- (If less than 18 years old) Parent/Guardian Information Letter (Work Experience, Duke of Edinburgh and Community Service)

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 during her Duke of Edinburgh / Work Experience placement, in a voluntary capacity, under the conditions outlined in these documents.

Parent/Guardian's signature

Parent/guardian's name (printed)

___/___/___
Date