



Dear Parent/Guardian,

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 organisation situated at Cobbitty, NSW. It has been in continuous operation since it was established in 1961. 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 70 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 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, and obtain two closed written references. This process is partly to fulfil our duty of care to the campers by ensuring that all staff members 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 members commonly assist during school holiday camps (Roundups) 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) allocates 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 members are placed in a leader support role during the entire camp to provide on-the-job support, advice and encouragement. Young voluntary staff members are often placed in an “apprentice leader” role on several camps before assuming full responsibility for a cabin group.

### **Supervision - outside work hours and accommodation**

Overnight, single staff members stay on the property at Cobbitty, in the voluntary staff quarters in 8 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 himself/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 members under 18 years old are not permitted to leave Teen Ranch property unless authorised 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 organisation also needs to be protected. At the introductory staff meeting, guidelines regarding ‘appropriate interaction with campers’ are outlined and emphasised. All staff members are expected to read, sign and abide by our code of conduct.

### **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.

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

Yours Sincerely,

Voluntary Staff Coordinator

## Voluntary Staff Under 18 Years Old

### Parent/Guardian Declaration and Acceptance of Conditions

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and/or completed the following:

1. Introductory Letter (Australian Volunteers)
2. Application form (Voluntary Staff)
3. Staff conduct policy
4. Statement of faith
5. Reference Form – Christian Leader
6. Reference Form – Employer/Teacher
7. Parent/Guardian Information Letter

#### Risk Warning

1. I understand that recreational activities organised by Teen Ranch may include, but are not limited to, horse riding, canoeing, abseiling, low and high ropes courses, rock climbing, abseiling, archery, crate climb, giant swing, challenge course, pool games, bush skills, orienteering, bush walks, campfires, wide games, indoor games, initiatives, free time, swimming, sports, craft activities and other similar activities arranged from time to time (**Activities**).
2. I acknowledge that the Activities are of their nature inherently dangerous.
3. I agree (on behalf of my child) to comply with all rules and warnings made available by Teen Ranch with respect to the Activities and follow any instructions or directions given by any employees, representatives or agents of Teen Ranch.
4. I certify that my child is physically fit and has no medical condition that would make participation in the Activities more hazardous. If my child is pregnant, disabled in any way or have recently suffered an illness, injury or impairment, I should have or did consult a physician before participating in the Activities.
5. I agree (on behalf of my child) not to consume alcohol prior to the Activities or use any medicines or substances that will inhibit my mental or physical ability to safely and effectively participate in the Activities.
6. I agree that Teen Ranch is not responsible for any personal items or property that is lost, damaged or stolen during the Activities and/or from the campsite generally.
7. I understand that Teen Ranch is committed to conducting the Activities in a safe manner and holds the safety of participants in the highest regard and that Teen Ranch attempts to reduce such risks and insists that all participants follow safety rules and instructions that are designed to protect the participants' safety.
8. I am solely responsible for determining if my child is physically fit and/or sufficiently skilled for the Activities.
9. I recognise and acknowledge that there are risks of physical injury to participants in the Activities, and I freely and voluntarily agree to assume the full risk of any and all injuries that my child may sustain as a result of participation in the Activities.
10. Except where such a claim arises as a result of the negligent acts or omissions of Teen Ranch, I assume all risks and hazards incidental to such participation in the Activities, and I waive and indemnify Teen Ranch, its officers, employees, agents and representatives, for any claim arising out of an injury to my child and from any and all claims arising out of or connected with my child's participation in the Activities.
11. Except where such a claim arises as a result of the negligent acts or omissions of Teen Ranch, I agree to release, and not make any claim against Teen Ranch arising as a result of, or in connection with, my child's participation in the Activities. I agree to indemnify Teen Ranch, its past and present employees, volunteers and agents from any and all third party claims caused in whole or in part by my child's negligent or intentional acts or omissions.
12. I consent to medical care and transportation in order to obtain treatment in the event of injury to my child during the Activities, as Teen Ranch staff members and group leaders may deem appropriate. (I understand that I will be notified as soon as possible if this happens to my child).
13. I understand that this document extends to any liability arising out of or in any way connected with the medical treatment and transportation provided in the event of an emergency and/or injury to my child.
14. I agree to not amend any part of this document.
15. I acknowledge that I have read and fully understood the important information above and agree to the terms of this document.
16. 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 child to be given, by staff qualified in first aid, the following non-scheduled medication (that is, medication available in the supermarket), if required. (Please circle)
  - Paracetamol
  - Antihistamine
  - Other (please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

#### Acceptance

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

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_