



Victorian Sea Kayak Club Trip Guidelines

Victorian Sea Kayak Club Mission

To cultivate sea kayaking as an enjoyable adventure – inclusive, safe and sustainable

With thanks to the following current and former members for their contributions to this document: Ray Musgrave, Andrew Campbell, Bill Zombor, Peter Costello, Peter Treby, Terry Barry, Ron Morris, Helmut Heinze, Kate Alberico.

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1. Purpose of these guidelines

- a) The 'Victorian Sea Kayak Club Trip Guidelines' aim to ensure that trips and events are undertaken with minimum adverse risk.
- b) Trips operated by the Victorian Sea Kayak Club (VSKC), henceforth referred to as VSKC trips, are governed by these guidelines and its underpinning principles.
- c) Members and guests participating in VSKC trips are expected to abide by these guidelines.
- d) Members are expected to understand and accept these guidelines as a condition of being a member of the VSKC.
- e) VSKC trips and activities should comply with relevant legislation and regulations on land and at sea at all times.

2. VSKC trips

2.1. What are VSKC trips?

- a) VSKC trips must be published on the VSKC website in the trip calendar. The final responsibility for the published details of a VSKC trip rests with the Trip Leader.
- b) Trips discussed and arranged on the VSKC's Facebook page as private paddles are not VSKC trips.
- c) Published trips must have a date, time, launch point and planned journey, expected conditions (e.g. surf launches, tide streams, etc.) and skill level (i.e. grade) required.
- d) Published trips must include the name and preferred method of contact for the Trip Leader.
- e) The VSKC trip grading indicates the level of skill and experience required by a participating member.
- f) The grading of a VSKC trip will be confirmed or, if necessary, altered by the Trip Leader on the day of launch.
- g) All VSKC trips have a Trip Leader.

2.2. Who is a VSKC Trip Leader?

- a) A VSKC member is a Trip Leader when they have any of the following qualifications recognised by the committee:
 - i. A VSKC Level 3 qualification deemed to be current by the Committee.
 - ii. A Paddle Australia Sea Leader Award or higher (Sea Guide, Sea Instructor, Sea Assessor).
 - iii. A Sea Skills paddler leading a trip as defined under the requirements of a Peer Paddle (see Explanatory notes)
 - iv. Other comparable international accreditations in the case of visiting guest instructors – decided by the Committee on a case-by-case basis.

Explanatory notes

The 'Peer Paddle' trial commenced in July 2020 and is extended until 30 November 2023. This permits members with PA's Sea Skills award to lead trips within the following boundaries:

- Pod size is limited to a maximum of 5 paddlers, including the trip leader
- All paddlers must have PA 'Intro to Sea Skills' award or higher, or VSKC 'Grade 2' award or higher
- All paddlers must:
 - wear clothing suitable for immersion and conditions
 - carry equipment in good working order
 - have kayaks fit out to [VSKC standards](#)
 - carry a mobile phone in a waterproof container or VHF radio
- Wind forecast must be below 12 knots in the area the paddle is to occur
- The paddle must occur within 1km of the coastline in the enclosed waters of:
 - Port Phillip Bay (excluding the entrance to the Yarra River)
 - the northern section of Westernport Bay (see Appendix A for maps)
- Overnight trips are not permitted
- Paddling in surf is not permitted
- Trip leaders must undertake a risk analysis on the beach prior to launch, by checking off the points above (eg, do the actual wind conditions reflect the forecast).
- The paddle must occur between dawn and dusk.

3. Trip leader responsibilities

- a) The Trip Leader is responsible for facilitating VSKC trips in the spirit of the purpose of the club: 'To cultivate sea kayaking as an enjoyable adventure – inclusive, safe and sustainable.'
- b) The Trip Leader has the responsibility for and authority to, make decisions necessary to allow participants to enjoy the trip while mitigating risk.
- c) The Trip Leader:
 - i. makes the final decision on trip planning, trip route, under what weather or sea conditions the trip may be conducted, whether the trip commences, whether the trip is changed or called off, on the conduct of the trip and any decisions that impact the group during the trip.
 - ii. may appoint Assistant Leaders but will retain the final responsibility
 - iii. may run a VSKC Trip jointly with another Trip Leader; joint Trip Leaders agree on a 'primus inter pares' (who bears the final responsibility and will make the final decision).
 - iv. allows or refuses participation by a member on a VSKC trip
 - v. is entitled to ask paddlers to alter their conduct if it is affecting group safety or cohesion

- vi. must ensure that all participants have signed the VSKC Trip Waiver form (Appendix B).
- vii. should have appropriate weather forecasts and tide conditions for the trip – information that may affect the outcomes of the trip;
- viii. should have nautical charts and geographical maps, as applicable.

4. VSKC members

- a) A VSKC member:
 - i. is a financial member who has paid their annual fees or is a life member
 - ii. must be open and honest about their capabilities, freely disclosing any physical or skill limitations to the Trip Leader and where appropriate to fellow paddlers, before embarking on a trip, and/or when asked to do so by the Trip Leader.
 - iii. is expected to demonstrate respect for other members.
- b) The behaviour and conduct of a VSKC member during a paddle should at all times be guided by the safety of all members in the group, respecting the diversity of skill within the group.
- c) VSKC members may be required to lend support to other paddlers whilst on an activity, without placing themselves at significant risk.

4.1. VSKC member responsibilities

- a) It is the responsibility of the member to:
 - i. ensure their kayak meets the minimum of safety equipment with all equipment in good working order.
 - ii. dress appropriately for the expected and potential conditions
 - iii. know who the Trip Leader is
 - iv. satisfy themselves that a Trip Leader is present and acknowledged
 - v. abide by the Trip Leader's decision/s
 - vi. follow VSKC safety requirements
 - vii. inquire about the likely conditions and risks involved in a paddle before committing to launch
 - viii. self-assess their ability and fitness to undertake any trip
 - ix. be assessed for Sea Kayak Basics – Safety Induction (SKB) on their first VSKC paddle trip, within 3 months of joining the VSKC (refer to VSKC Grading System section)
 - x. actively consider a plan for skills improvement
 - xi. ensure they are complying with relevant marine safety legislation (e.g. use of light at night etc.)

4.2. VSKC members and Trip Leaders

- a) Paddlers may consult the Trip Leader about any trip aspects prior to and during the course of a paddle.
- b) VSKC members who don't acknowledge the authority of the Trip Leader may not participate on the paddle.
- c) If a VSKC member chooses not to follow the advice of the leader during a club trip, they do so at their own risk and will from that point have resigned as a participant of the trip and will be advised by the Trip Leader accordingly. Individuals who effectively opt out of a trip in this way do so at their own risk.

Explanatory notes

Self-assessment of skills and disclosure of capability is fundamental to building trust between paddlers and managing risk effectively. A pod of paddlers who are aware of each other's strengths and limitations is significantly more capable of managing risk than the same number of individual paddlers who have not communicated their capabilities to each other.

A VSKC member can seek guidance from the Trip Leader to help in assessing their capability to deal with a paddling situation before making a commitment to get on the water. Members should actively inquire and seek advice from within the club to assess their skills. As a standard personal practice, members should at all times analyse their paddling abilities frankly and resist subjective external pressure in making their own personal judgments.

A decision to consider personal safety is not a private matter as the decision to accept a risk can have an impact on the safety of the group. Each VSKC member is responsible for the objective disclosure of their capability to a Trip Leader, particularly where the Trip Leader is not familiar with your skills and experience. This means, profiling the conditions you have comfortably paddled in (i.e. not the conditions that you think you can handle). A logbook outlining the number of trips, length of trips and trip conditions is the most effective way that your capability can be quickly verified by a Trip Leader.

Likewise, a paddler has the right to discuss with the Trip Leader their experience and the grade they have achieved in the VSKC or Paddle Australia (PA) grading system. You have the right to verify the background of your Trip Leader. For Trip Leaders holding a Paddle Australia Award you can do this by searching <https://education.canoe.org.au/find.php>.

5. Registering for a VSKC trip

- a) VSKC members wishing to participate in a VSKC trip:
 - i. must assess their skill level to see if this trip is suitable for them.
 - ii. must register their interest with the designated Trip Leader prior to the day of the event.
 - iii. must consider the weather and sea forecasts prior to the trip and self-assess to determine if this paddle is still suitable for them in the updated conditions.
 - iv. must notify the trip leader if they intend to withdraw from the trip for any reason.
- b) The Trip Leader will advise the club member prior to the day of the trip whether they are, or are not, accepted on the trip.
- c) If a VSKC member turns up for a trip without prior acceptance, the Trip Leader has the right to deny participation on that day.
- d) For regular weekly VSKC trips at a fixed location with a fixed route and a small regular cohort of participants, the Trip Leader has discretion to exempt known regular participants from registering for these trips. Members that are new participants are required to register their interest with the Trip Leader on each occasion prior to the day of the event, until advised otherwise.

Explanatory notes

Paddlers with a grading lower than that of the advertised paddle, or actively training towards a higher grading, may be a suitable participant on that paddle, depending on factors including prior experience, the experience of the paddle pod, and the conditions expected. Such paddlers are invited to inquire and may be accepted at the sole discretion of the Trip Leader.

6. Participation of non-VSKC members

- a) In some circumstances, non-VSKC members may attend club trips subject to notification to the Trip Leader and acceptance prior to the day of the trip.
- b) Acceptance of the suitability of a guest paddler to attend a trip shall be at the sole discretion of the Trip Leader.
- c) In such an instance the guest paddler must agree to and sign their acceptance of the VSKC Trip Waiver form and participants be made aware of guest attendance.

6.1. Participation of children

- a) VSKC members that are children under 18 years of age (e.g. children covered under a VSKC Family Membership) must always be accompanied by the parent VSKC member and subject to the acceptance of the Trip Leader.
- b) Guest paddlers wishing to bring children for whom they are responsible must seek prior approval of the Trip Leader and must always accompany the child paddler.

- c) VSKC members wishing to bring children that are not covered by VSKC Family Membership (i.e. guest child paddlers) must also seek prior approval and must always accompany the child paddler.

7. Guidelines for trip planning

7.1. Risk identification and risk management

- a) VSKC trips are subject to risk identification and risk management by the Trip Leader.
- b) A risk identification and risk management plan should be compiled for significant trips such as multi-day trips and expeditions
- c) The Trip Leader will consider a member's suitability to participate, including equipment, skills, health and fitness, in line with the inherent requirements of a planned trip
- d) In planning a trip, the VSKC Trip Leader will need to establish a paddler's skill level. As all trips are graded, a paddler's skill level is required to match the trip rating. Paddlers with a grading lower than that of the advertised paddle, or actively training towards a higher grading may be accepted on a trip subject to a range of considerations. For this reason, the VSKC requires all members to contact the Trip Leader well in advance of the trip date to discuss the level of competency required. The Trip Leader will discuss the required ability and skill level, logistics, equipment needed and the possible conditions in the area where the paddle will be conducted. If the Trip Leader feels the member does not have the required ability or equipment, a right of refusal to participate can be exercised.

7.2. Trip Leader-to-paddler ratio

- a) VSKC trips should include an appropriate proportion of experienced to novice paddlers while having regard to the nature and difficulty of the trip. The Trip Leader may refuse entry if the trip has inadequate numbers of experienced paddlers.
- b) The ratio between the number of paddlers and Trip Leaders should not exceed:
 - i. 10 + 1 Trip Leader when all members of the group have demonstrated that they are comfortable in the expected conditions
 - ii. 6 + 1 Trip Leader when conditions may be somewhat challenging or paddlers are untested in the expected conditions
 - iii. 2 + 1 Trip Leader when leading or instructing untested paddlers in demanding conditions (e.g. surf).

7.3. Float plans

- a) A float plan is to be issued for VSKC trips prior to the commencement of the trip (excepting the Red Eye paddle, the Tea House Café paddle and the Thursday Daylight Savings paddle).

- b) The VSKC Trip Leader must ensure that the float plan is complete, and the details of every participant noted. You can download a [VSKC float plan template](#) from the VSKC website, which includes the following information:
 - i. Paddler details – name and contact phone number
 - ii. Boat details – make, model, hull and deck colours
 - iii. On board mobile phone number and/or VHF call sign
 - iv. On shore emergency contact details – name and phone number
 - v. Car make, model and registration.
- c) The VSKC Trip Leader must appoint a land-based contact that is available throughout the period of the trip to effectively manage emergency situations. Some circumstances may require the land-based contact to notify emergency rescue authorities if participants fail to respond to agreed scheduled notifications.
- d) A completed float plan and risk management plan (if applicable) must be provided to the land-based contact and the Trips Coordinator prior to departure.

7.4. Safety briefings

Trip leaders must conduct a safety briefing immediately before launch, including:

- a) An introduction by each member, stating skill level
- b) An outline of the trip route
- c) A summary of the forecast weather conditions
- d) A summary of the expected paddling conditions, including important hazards and risk factors (e.g. channel crossings).
- e) Appointing assistants if required (e.g. pod leaders, rear guard)
- f) Requirements for any surf launch/exit
- g) An explanation of landing sites including emergency exits
- h) Identification of emergency equipment within the group such as towlines, first aid kits, flares, phones and other equipment as required
- i) Discussion of safety protocols such as buddy system, towing, lighting or other on-water protocols that may be required during the trip
- j) Asking paddlers to inform him or her of any major or minor medical conditions such as illness, allergies or injuries (confidentially if preferred). The paddler should outline their management plan regarding their medical condition, medications and any other issues
- k) A reminder of basic trip protocols such as minimal group spread, not paddling in front of the pod leader, looking around and behind regularly to assess other members
- l) A demonstration of paddle signals using paddle, whistle, etc.
- m) A check to see if any group member has concerns or questions.

8. On the water

- a) On the water, paddlers are ultimately responsible for their personal safety.
- b) However, the VSKC expects members to follow some basic protocols and to support fellow paddlers. When sea kayaking there is safety in numbers.
- c) These VSKC protocols are to be followed while on the water:
 - i. A paddler is responsible for and will act to ensure their own personal safety
 - ii. A paddler should look out for other paddlers
 - iii. A paddler will not paddle in front of the pod leader when a pod leader has been appointed (the Trip Leader may appoint a paddler to lead the pod)
 - iv. At all times a paddler will position themselves close enough within the pod to enable the Trip Leader to communicate with them
 - v. A paddler will exercise their own skills and not assume assistance from other paddlers
 - vi. A paddler should assist another paddler, without placing themselves at undue risk
 - vii. A paddler will follow the direction of the Trip Leader
 - viii. A paddler will inform the Trip Leader if they are asked to go beyond their comfort level
 - ix. A Trip Leader can determine actions to support a paddler in difficulty. Other paddlers are expected to do everything possible (while having regard for their own safety) to assist the Trip Leader in helping fellow paddlers to safety.

9. Skills development and the grading system

- a) VSKC trip descriptions include the paddler grade required to participate. This allows a paddler to assess whether they can participate in the trip.
- b) The VSKC grading system is comprised of Sea Kayak Basics (an internal VSKC award) and Paddle Australia's (PA's) Sea Awards.
- c) it's important to note that:
 - i. the VSKC is not a Registered Training Organisation (RTO)
 - ii. VSKC training and skills development is provided by volunteers
 - iii. paddlers are graded by PA-approved assessors for all PA qualifications
 - iv. paddlers are responsible for organising and undertaking their own skills development.

9.1. The VSKC grading system

- a) **New members**

A new member joining the club will be recorded as 'ungraded' and will be advised of the requirement to complete Sea Kayak Basics – Safety induction within three months of joining the club. Where a new member does not complete this within

three months or advises the club that they do not plan to paddle, the member will be noted as a 'Non-paddler/Social Member' in the membership database.

- b) A 'Non-paddler/Social Member' is not accepted on club paddle trips or rolling practice sessions. These members wishing to commence paddling with the club are welcome at any time to contact the Training and Safety Coordinator and express interest in completing the Sea Kayak Basics – Safety induction, as noted in item 9.1d below.
- c) Ungraded paddlers are not accepted on club paddle trips or rolling practice sessions. The exception to this is for an ungraded paddler to attend a suitable trip by arrangement with the Trip Leader to complete the Sea Kayak Basics – Safety Induction, as noted in item 9.1d below.
- d) **Sea Kayak Basics – Safety Induction (SKB)**

An internal VSKC award assessed by a Trip Leader (Sea Leader, Sea Instructor, or Grade 3 member under previous grading system). SKB is the minimum required to attend any VSKC paddle except for the monthly New and Prospective Members' Welcome Paddles, which is the preferred venue for SKB assessments. Ungraded paddlers may be accepted into an alternative suitable paddle at the Trip Leader's discretion, if the paddler is ready to be assessed to SKB standard on the paddle and the Trip Leader has sufficient resources to conduct the assessment.

Members who cannot demonstrate prior learning (refer to Recognition of Prior Learning below) are expected to attain this grade within 3 months of joining the VSKC. Members will have to demonstrate basic boat control, the ability to paddle in easy conditions for one hour at a speed of 5 km/h without undue stopping, a wet exit followed by an assisted rescue and a 50-metre swim. See Appendix C for the full requirements.
- e) **Introduction to Sea Skills (ISS)**

A PA Sea Award assessed by a qualified PA Sea Assessor. See [Paddle Australia's Assessment Guideline](#) for requirements. Holders of the award must register with Paddle Australia and demonstrate currency every three years in line with PA requirements.
- f) **Sea Skills (SS)**

A PA Sea Award assessed by a qualified PA Sea Assessor. See [Paddle Australia's Assessment Guideline](#) for requirements. Holders of the award must register with Paddle Australia and demonstrate currency every three years in line with PA requirements.
- g) **Sea Leader (SL)**

A PA Sea Award assessed by a qualified PA Sea Assessor. See [Paddle Australia's Assessment Guideline](#) for requirements. Holders of the award must register with Paddle Australia and demonstrate currency every three years in line with PA requirements.

h) **Sea Instructor**

A PA Sea Award assessed by a qualified PA Sea Assessor. These awards are assessed external to the VSKC. See [Paddle Australia's Assessment Guideline](#) for requirements. Holders of the award must register with Paddle Australia and demonstrate currency every three years in line with the PA requirements.

i) **Where a member resigns and rejoins the club**

A rejoining member (previously a member) is required to complete the SKB safety induction, unless the member provides evidence of a current Paddle Australia Sea qualification, such as Introduction to Sea Skills, Sea Skills, Sea Leader or Sea Instructor. A rejoining member will not be re-assigned the legacy (internal to VSKC) grading system of level 1, 2, or 3.

j) **Maintaining your Paddle Australia Sea qualification**

Where a member allows their Paddle Australia Sea qualification to expire and does not renew their qualification with Paddle Australia, the member is to be awarded the SKB grade in recognition of prior learning for their previous achievement of a Paddle Australia Sea qualification.¹

9.2. Grading assessments

- a) The VSKC Committee appoints a Training Coordinator who is responsible for the coordination of member grading assessments and practice events.
- b) The club conducts grading assessments regularly to grade members at competencies defined at each grade. Members who wish to qualify for the Sea Leader award may apply for the scheduled assessment intakes. They will choose an Instructor as mentor. Intake numbers may be capped due to the availability of Instructors and Assessors.
- c) Members are responsible for undertaking the training and required practice to pass an assessment. This typically means that prior to and during the intake, the member is expected to undertake self-practice, seek assistance, attend club practice events such as rolling nights and surf days, and/or attend external training courses.

9.3. Recognition of prior learning

- a) Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) applies to new members or guests holding:
 - i. Paddle Australia Sea Awards (Intro to Sea Skills and above)
 - ii. Equivalent awards as determined by the VSKC Committee (eg, international awards from organisations like British Canoeing).

¹ This means that a paddler who does not renew their Paddle Australia award qualification will be noted in the VSKC membership records as having the paddler grading Sea Kayak Basics. This would only occur provided that the member has maintained continuous membership and has not resigned then rejoined the club.

9.4. First aid training

- a) The VSKC encourages all members to complete first aid training.
- b) The first aid qualification HLTAID003 is valid for 3 years and the CPR qualification is valid for 1 year.
- c) Reimbursement by the club for the cost of first aid training is limited to Trip Leaders (see sections 9.5 & 9.7).

9.5. Reimbursement of cost of Paddle Australia registration and first aid training for PA Sea Leader or higher graded paddlers

- a) On initial attainment of PA's Sea Leader, Sea Guide, Instructor and Assessor awards, the VSKC will pay for the individual's PA registration and reimburse them for the cost of first aid training (HLTAID003 or equivalent and CPR).
- b) For subsequent renewals of PA registration and first aid training, individuals should pay the cost up front, then apply to the VSKC Committee for reimbursement, providing they have demonstrated continual commitment to the club.
- c) As a guide, the following activities demonstrate continual commitment:
 - i. In the 3-year period prior to PA re-registration:
 - leading a minimum of six club trips, or
 - providing six training or assessment sessions to club members – on or off water, or
 - a combination of the above to the equivalent value.
- d) At the time of application for reimbursement of expenses, the member is to provide evidence of the activities above to the Committee. Generally, this would be satisfied by submission of Paddle Australia log book entries. Trips, training and assessment events that run over multiple days count as a single event.

9.6. Legacy VSKC grades

- a) Prior to the adoption of the VSKC's new grading system in 2019, the VSKC had three grades – 1, 2 & 3. These legacy VSKC grades do not directly align with the Paddle Australia's Sea Awards, however:
 - i. Grade 1 is similar to Introduction to Sea Skills.
 - ii. Grade 2 is similar to Sea Skills, although Sea Skills paddlers are required to roll in surf conditions.
 - iii. Grade 3 is similar to Sea Leader. In order to lead club trips, Grade 3 members are required to submit to the VSKC each year a [Level 3 grading currency statement](#). This is due at the time when VSKC annual subscriptions become due. Grade 3 members who do not submit a Level 3 grading currency statement in this period revert to grade 2 in the VSKC membership register and forfeit Trip Leader status.

9.7. Reimbursement of cost of first aid training for Grade 3 members

- a) A Grade 3 member who can demonstrate to the committee that they regularly lead trips may apply to the VSKC Committee for reimbursement of the cost of first aid training (HLTAID003 or equivalent and CPR).
- b) For guidance as to what constitutes regularly leading trips, refer to 9.5(c).

9.8. Reimbursement of camping fees for club trips

- a) Trip Leaders may apply to the VSKC Committee for reimbursement of camping fees and associated expenses for any official VSKC overnight trip, training or assessment where camp fees are payable and where they are leading that trip.

9.9. Reimbursement of cost of safety equipment

- a) Trip Leaders may apply to the VSKC Committee for reimbursement of safety equipment (see 9.9d) each VSKC financial year up to the value of \$50.00, providing they have demonstrated continual commitment to the club.
- b) As a guide, the following activities demonstrate continual commitment for safety equipment reimbursement claims:
 - i. In the 1-year period prior to the claim for reimbursement:
 - i. leading a minimum of two club trips, or
 - ii. providing two (on- or off-water) training or assessment sessions to club members, or
 - iii. a combination of the above to the equivalent value.
- c) At the time of application for reimbursement of expenses, the member is to provide evidence of the activities above to the Committee. Generally, this would be satisfied by submission of Paddle Australia logbook entries. Trips, training and assessment events that run over multiple days count as a single event. There is no requirement to produce a receipt.
- d) The following examples of safety equipment are a guide to the items suitable for this reimbursement: first aid equipment, radio equipment, tow line, GPS, map equipment.

Explanatory notes

The table below summarises, across all Paddle Australia awards and VSKC grades, whether a VSKC member:

- is required to register with Paddle Australia (PA)
- is required to submit a grade currency statement to the VSKC annually
- is required by PA to have current first aid and CPR qualifications
- can apply for reimbursement for PA registration, first aid training, camping fees and safety equipment.

Member grading/award	PA registration required	VSKC grading currency statement required	Current first aid qualification HLTAID003 (prev. Level 2 First Aid) and CPR qualification recommended or required by Paddle Australia	Members may apply for reimbursement for cost of PA registration, first aid training, safety equipment, and camping fees for club trips. Conditions apply**
<i>VSKC grading (pre-2019, except Sea Kayaks Basics)</i>				
Ungraded	No	No	NA	No
Sea Kayak Basics	No	No	NA	No
Grade 1	No	No	NA	No
Grade 2	No	No	NA	No
Grade 3*	No	Yes	NA	Yes
<i>Paddle Australia awards</i>				
Intro to Sea Skills	Yes	NA	NA	No
Sea Skills	Yes	NA	NA	No
Sea Leader*	Yes	NA	Recommended	Yes
Sea Guide*	Yes	NA	Recommended	Yes
Instructor*	Yes	NA	Recommended	Yes
Assessor*	Yes	NA	Mandatory	Yes

10. Equipment

- a) The VSKC requires that members ensure their craft is seaworthy, their equipment is suitable and is in good working order.
- b) Paddlers purchasing safety and communication equipment specified by Paddle Australia for each PA award (and summarised below) should discuss these lists and equipment choices with VSKC Instructors and Assessors prior to obtaining equipment.

10.1. The sea kayak

- a) As a minimum, each member's craft must be a sea kayak in seaworthy condition with the following features and safety equipment:
 - i. Minimum volume cockpit, watertight bulkheads and hatch covers, including positive buoyancy
 - ii. Deck lines 5mm diameter minimum
 - iii. Kayak carry toggles at both ends
 - iv. Spray skirt that fits cockpit and paddler, with release strap.
 - v. If fitted to the kayak, a rudder or fully retractable skeg in working order
 - vi. An approved lifejacket (PFD) with pealess whistle attached, to be worn.
 - vii. Hand pump
 - viii. Paddle leash
 - ix. Paddle float
 - x. Sponge and or bailer.
- b) Refer to the [VSKC Boat Set Up Guide](#) on the website for further information regarding additional equipment beyond the minimum stated above.

10.2. Additional safety and communication equipment

- a) Members working towards Paddle Australia qualifications should seek advice from VSKC Sea Assessors before purchasing any safety and communication equipment specified in the Paddle Australia Assessment Guideline relevant to that qualification.
- b) Members qualified as Introduction to Sea Skills (or Grade 1) should have, as appropriate to the trip and expected conditions, additional safety and communication equipment as specified for that award in [Paddle Australia's Assessment Guideline](#).
- c) Members qualified as Sea Skills (or Grade 2) should have, as appropriate to the trip and expected conditions, additional safety and communication equipment specified for that award in [Paddle Australia's Assessment Guideline](#).
- d) Members qualified as Sea Leader and above (or Grade 3) should have, as appropriate to the trip and expected conditions, additional safety and communication equipment specified for that award in [Paddle Australia's Assessment Guideline](#).

10.3. The paddler

- a) Paddlers should always dress for the forecast weather conditions and sea temperature and be prepared for worse than forecast conditions and the possibility of immersion in the sea. Windproof outer garments such as a cag should be carried and accessible at sea, if not already worn.²
- b) Trip leaders may refuse to allow a paddler to participate in a trip if the paddler's clothing is deemed to be insufficient for the expected trip conditions. Cotton clothing is not permitted at any time.
- c) The following examples are provided as a guide for paddlers considering how to dress and equip for a trip. If you have any questions about dressing for a trip, ask the Trip Leader or a VSKC Instructor.

Head

- a) Summer hats should be broad-rimmed and not too floppy.
- b) Winter hats should be made of a warm fabric such as thermal fibre (e.g. Polartech) or a neoprene hood.
- c) Hats should have a secure chinstrap or be attached to your PFD with a length of cord.
- d) Sunglasses with retainer strap.
- e) Sunscreen must always be worn and kept accessible for regular re-application.

Body

- a) Summer: A long sleeve thermal top, or, only if it is hot, a lycra sun/rash top. **Never** wear cotton.
- b) Winter: As a base layer, synthetic or wool thermals are best. Adopt a layering system – start with a long sleeve thermal, maybe two, then your wet suit, cag or dry suit. As you warm up, peel off a layer. Again, **never** wear cotton.

Lifejacket (PFD)

- a) An approved PFD with pealess whistle attached. Choose one that allows free movement of your arms.
- b) A pealess whistle **must** be attached to your PFD with a length of cord. Storm or Fox 40 whistles are recommended.
- c) PFD pockets are always useful for snacks, sunscreen, etc.
- d) A signalling device is recommended on day paddles, eg, a CD or similar mirror surface.
- e) After dark, a strong white light, fixed, complying with relevant regulations, to be attached to your PFD or boat deck.

² The topic of suitable kayak clothing and dressing for immersion is addressed in a number of online articles, for example, see Paddle Australia's [What to wear when paddling](#) and Kayarchy's [Kayaking safely](#).

Hands

- a) Some members choose to wear fingerless gloves. Consider the impact of wind chill, sunburn or blisters.

Legs

- a) Winter: long-leg thermal pants under a pair of bike or neoprene shorts. Consider dry pants, dry suits, or wet suits as options.
- b) Summer: quick-dry board shorts or thermal wear if cooler conditions require.

Feet

- a) Protective footwear such as neoprene booties.
- b) **Never** wear sandals as they catch on things or fall off in surf.
- c) No bare feet to prevent injury.

10.4. Essential equipment – protected waters

- a) Drinking water that's accessible at sea, preferably hands free.
- b) High energy snack that's accessible at sea.
- c) First aid kit that's accessible, and knowledge of how to use it.
- d) Personal medications if required. Make others aware of your condition and where medicine is located before the trip commences.
- e) Mobile phone in waterproof case.
- f) Survival kit including emergency bag/shelter/space blanket.
- g) Lunch and water or sports drink, accessible from cockpit.
- h) Waterproof matches and light. Test it regularly to ensure no corrosion problems.
- i) Maps and charts relevant to the area.
- j) Basic repair kit including duct tape, Swiss Army knife/multi-tool, shock cord, spectra cord, etc.

10.5. Essential equipment – unprotected waters (in addition to 10.4)

- a) The following safety equipment may be required, particularly for trips to remote areas:
 - i. Spare paddle
 - ii. Means of outside communication such as a VHF marine radio (requires a certificate of proficiency), satellite phone, 27MHz marine radio, and personal locator beacon (PLB), as appropriate to the trip.
 - iii. Mobile phone in waterproof case, in addition to (not instead of) a VHF marine radio.
 - iv. GPS unit
 - v. PLB or Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) recommended, and mandatory in offshore conditions (refer to marine regulations).
 - vi. Transistor radio – for receiving weather reports.
 - vii. Flares for use during day and night.

- viii. Strobe light
- ix. V-sheet, dye marker, and other safety gear.

10.6. Other equipment

- a) Deck-mounted or hand-held compass.

10.7. Camping equipment

- a) Lightweight camping equipment including tent or bivvy sack, sleeping bag, sleeping mat, cooking stove, food and water.
- b) Large carry bags for transporting camping equipment from the boat to the campsite (e.g. Ikea shopping bags).
- c) All gear to be packed in dry bags, and stowed in the kayak to maintain boat trim

For more information talk to experienced kayak expeditioners in the club.

11. Paddling etiquette and the environment

- a) Each VSKC member is expected to actively demonstrate respect for the places we visit.
- b) Sea kayaking has a low environmental impact; keep it that way.
- c) Respect site requirements, e.g., permits, fire safety and other applicable guidelines.
- d) Do not leave rubbish behind or pollute water supplies in any way.
- e) Members and Trip Leaders are equally responsible for their effect on the environment. Minimal impact camping should be practised, especially considering that the greatest impact sea kayaking has is on land, be it just for a rest break, or for longer periods. How we leave an area reflects on all sea kayakers.
- f) Where appropriate ensure camping permits and permission is gained from relevant authorities and liaise with landholders.
- g) Carry all your rubbish out with you ('Ship it in, ship it out'). Pack to minimise rubbish – even though a sea kayak's capacity is greater than a backpack, it is still wise to give some thought to excess wrapping, glass bottles, etc. Do not burn or bury rubbish. Rubbish is likely to be dug up and scattered by animals and may injure them. Digging disturbs the soil and encourages weeds and erosion. Do not leave **anything** behind. If possible, clean up the waste left by others.
- h) Respect flora, fauna, the sea and what it has to offer. Share your experience with the wildlife, observe and enjoy.
- i) Leave campsites and beach entry and exit points the same, or in better condition than when you arrived – give the VSKC a great name.
- j) Don't wash in streams or lakes. Detergents, toothpaste and soap (even biodegradable types) harm fish and other aquatic life. Wash at least 50 metres away from streams and lakes and scatter the wash water so it filters through soil before returning to the waterway. Use gritty sand as a scourer instead of soap to clean dishes. Don't throw food scraps into streams or lakes.

- k) A group size of up to six is ideal to minimise the environmental impact of camping. If the group is large, set up a couple of campsites to lessen the impact. Look for low impact sites. Sandy or hard surfaces are better than boggy or grassed areas. Camp on existing sites rather than new ones and keep at least 30 metres away from watercourses and tracks. Spend only one or two nights at each campsite, unless unavoidable due to prevailing conditions.
- l) Use modern camping equipment, waterproof tents (with floors and tent poles) and foam or cellular mats to minimise damage to camping areas. Digging trenches around tents is damaging and unnecessary if the tents are erected on a well-drained, raised site.
- m) Always carry warm clothing and a fuel stove when camping – this will negate the need for a fire (many areas don't permit exposed fires). Compared with campfires, fuel stoves are faster, cleaner, easier to use in wet weather and don't scar the landscape or risk bushfire.
- n) Always carry sufficient food to cater for unscheduled delays that does not require cooking, especially during summer months in case of a day of total fire ban.
- o) Overall, respect the enjoyment of others, be considerate to those in your party and leave the area pristine for future groups.

12. Sea kayaking and risk

- a) VSKC members accept risk and consequences.
- b) The VSKC provides a forum for learning to manage sea kayaking risk.
- c) In signing a VSKC membership renewal form, or joining as a new member, or signing a VSKC Trip Waiver form, every member acknowledges the club's membership conditions include agreeing to undertake sea kayaking at their own risk when participating in VSKC organised paddles.
- d) A VSKC Trip Leader will remind members and guest participants of the waiver of liability on club trips by seeking your signature on a 'Release and Waiver of Liability' form (Trip Waiver) on each trip (Appendix B). Signing of this Trip Waiver is standard VSKC practice. This Trip Waiver is enforced to protect volunteers and VSKC officials from the myriad of circumstances that they cannot control which include, but are not limited to, matters such as weather, equipment, skills, behaviour and decisions taken by other members.
- e) The assumption that VSKC members paddle at their own risk does not mean the club abrogates its responsibility to provide a forum for members to seek advice and guidance on the management of sea kayaking risk. Advice and guidance 'to provide opportunities for individuals to enjoy recreational sea kayaking responsibly in safety' is a key element of the value that the VSKC provides to members.
- f) Sea kayaking inherently has risk involved. The VSKC aims to minimise these risks to an acceptable level for its members. Although not all risk can be removed, we need to strive to have the level of risk at an acceptable level.

- g) Each VSKC event will have its own unique risks, which should be considered by the trip leader when planning and running trips. [Paddle Australia's Risk Management template](#) is a useful tool to assess and manage risk. The trip leader should undertake reasonable steps to ensure that the risk is reduced to an acceptable level, such as implementing extra safety measures, or changing planned trips to mitigate foreseen risks.

13. Incident response and reporting

- a) The VSKC is an organisation with a responsibility to its members as well as the greater community. In order to reduce the likelihood of negative occurrences, an incident response and reporting system exists. The system aims to standardise actions taken when an incident occurs and aims to manage information and investigations as a result of any incident occurring. While the immediate focus of any incident is to ensure all personnel and equipment are safe, thought should also be given to the further actions following any investigation. This is to allow the club to review its practices and procedures to help prevent future incidents of a similar nature.
- b) The following are defined as a VSKC reportable incident:
 - i. death of any person involving a VSKC event
 - ii. serious injury of any person involving a VSKC event
 - iii. injuries which may result in a claim on VSKC insurance
 - iv. significant property damage to VSKC or personal property
 - v. any property damage to external parties as a result of VSKC action
 - vi. significant environmental impacts involving VSKC, e.g., wildfire
 - vii. any incident which involves external rescue or emergency services response
 - viii. any incident which could serve to impact the reputation of the VSKC.

13.1. Initial response actions

- a) As a minimum, the following initial response actions must be adhered to for any reportable incident:
 - i. Ensure all personnel and property are safe
 - ii. Ensure all medical aid is provided
 - iii. Notify all relevant contacts/services
 - iv. Record contact details of all persons involved

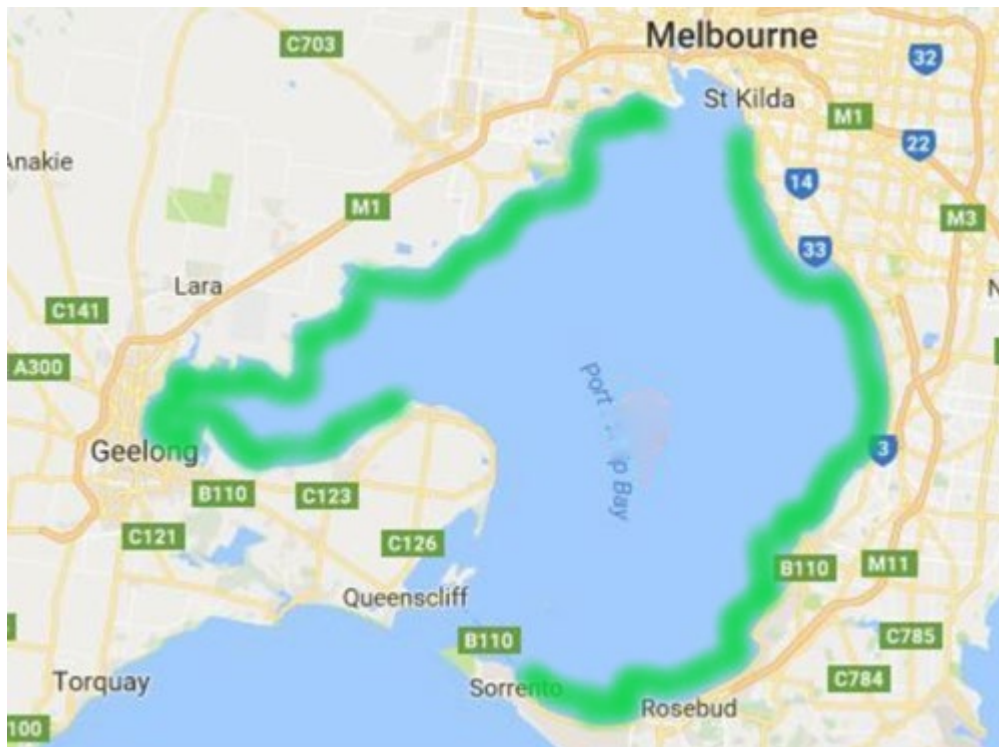
13.2. Post-incident follow up

- a) All members are to independently record their observations/recollection as soon as practicable.
- b) Trip leader or nominated person must compile an Incident Report within 72 hours (see Appendix D or download [here](#)) and email to [Training and Safety Coordinator](#).

- c) Within 48 hours, the Trips Coordinator or nominated committee member is to contact all persons involved and arrange for a suitable time to conduct a debriefing of the incident.
- d) The outcomes of the incident response and reporting can be used to support the committee's review of practices and procedures, to help prevent future incidents of a similar nature.
- e) The committee will notify the insurer as required by the insurance policy.

Appendix A: Peer paddle maps

Map A: Port Philip Bay. Trips to be conducted only in the green highlighted areas. This excludes the entrance to the Yarra River.



Map B: Westernport Bay. Trips to be conducted only in green highlighted areas. This is confined to the northern waters of Westernport Bay and includes the northern and western waters of French Island.



VSKC Trip Waiver Form



THE VICTORIAN SEA KAYAK CLUB

Incorporated association A17985B

("The Club") is a group of sea kayakers who enjoy paddling in open waters. There is no such thing as a completely safe trip, as even the most sheltered and protected waters can become dangerous in adverse conditions. Weather is not fully predictable, adverse changes can and do occur suddenly. Even with the best information available time conditions can be misjudged.

The Club, its members, office holders, volunteers, employees and agents cannot ensure a risk free activity.

Please read this carefully before signing

Each participant must be aware that participation in VSKC activities is dangerous and physically demanding, involving risk of injury, death, personal property loss and/or damage. The risks include (but are not limited to) injury or death due to wind, waves, immersion underwater, impact with floating, submerged or exposed objects, slipping and falling, injuries in remote places without medical facilities, sprains, strains, dislocations, lacerations, fractures, concussion, snakebite, seasickness, hypothermia, hyperthermia, exposure to temperature extremes, inclement weather, road accidents while travelling to and from activity sites and diverse other risks that may not be related to any of these, or known or predictable. Each participant acknowledges that he or she is aware that weather and sea conditions are unpredictable and dangerous.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK, REPRESENTATIONS, WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND INDEMNITY

The Club agrees to allow the participant (a current financial member of the Club or invited guest) to be involved in the activity described below on the following terms, and **EACH PARTICIPANT HEREBY AGREES:**

1. That he or she participates at his or her own risk.
2. That he or she can swim and is physically fit to participate.
3. That he or she is solely responsible for the seaworthiness of any equipment used by him or her.
4. That he or she waives, releases and discharges the Club, and any of its office holders, volunteers, employees and agents from and against any and all claims or actions which the participant (or any person claiming through or under him or her) may have against the club, its office holders, volunteers, employees and agents with respect to death, injury or loss of any kind whatsoever suffered or incurred by the participant howsoever caused even if such death, injury or loss was caused by or contributed to by the act, default or omission (amounting to negligence, breach of duty or otherwise) of the Club, and any of its office holders, volunteers, employees or agents.
5. That he or she indemnifies the Club, its office holders, volunteers, employees and agents against all liability sustained by all or any of them in relation to the participant's involvement in the activity.

To be signed by members and guests participating in this activity

Activity:

Location:

Date:

Appendix C: VSKC Sea Kayak Basics assessment

OFFICIAL VERSION 1.0 OCTOBER 2018

- **Sea Kayak Basics**
- Intro to Sea Skills
- Sea Skills
- Sea Leader
- Sea Instructor



Sea Kayak Basics

Sea Kayak Basics represents the minimum skills and knowledge required to safely participate in a VSKC paddle. Demonstration of these basic skills allows a paddler to progress from novice to beginner and join VSKC paddles on enclosed waters in conditions deemed safe by the Trip Leader.

Assessment: Can be assessed by Sea Leaders, VSKC Grade 3 Trip Leaders and Sea Instructors who meet respective currency requirements. The competencies outlined below must be demonstrated confidently on or prior to participating in a member's first club paddle. Assessment is available on selected, regular VSKC paddles by prior agreement with the relevant Trip Leader. Where a paddler is unfamiliar with any required knowledge or skills (refer below), a Trip Leader will teach and demonstrate the knowledge and/or skill on land and/or water as appropriate prior to any assessment.

Recognition of prior learning: In order to recognise any prior learning, relevant official documentation must be provided to the Trip Leader prior to the paddle. Otherwise the paddler is required to demonstrate the knowledge and skills outlined below to the satisfaction of the Trip Leader.

Conditions: Enclosed waters, wind <10 knots and seas <1 metre.

Knowledge:

- Present sea kayak and on board equipment to VSKC standards for inspection (i.e. hatches and other equipment set or stowed ready for launch, safety equipment, on-board water supplies and communication device waterproofed and packed).
- Present themselves for the paddle suitably dressed for the conditions on the day and know how to modify paddle clothing to suit changing conditions
- Understand use of whistle, hand and paddle signals to communicate.
- Show an understanding of correct posture for paddling and basic injury prevention

Skills:

- Competently fit the spraydeck, launch the kayak and paddle away in a controlled manner
- Paddle forward and turn the kayak in an efficient manner
- Perform a basic low brace support stroke
- Come alongside and raft up as a group or with at least one other kayak
- When signalled, perform a competent wet exit from the kayak
- Get back into the kayak with assistance from other paddlers
- Swim 50 metres in sea kayaking gear (shirt, shorts, and footwear as a minimum, wearing a spraydeck and personal flotation device)
- Demonstrate an ability to maintain an effective group paddling pace (as a guide, 5 km/hr for a period of one hour, without undue stopping).

The candidate has demonstrated all of the required competencies for Sea Kayak Basics.

Candidates Name:

Date:

Assessors Name:

Assessors Signature:

Appendix D: VSKC Incident Report form (download [here](#))

VSKC Incident Report

Trip leader or nominated person to please fill out the form within 72 hours and email to the VSKC's [Training and Safety Coordinator](#).

Date of form completion	
Date of incident	
Time of incident	
INCIDENT DEBRIEF	
NATURE of INCIDENT	
LOCATION	
PARTICIPANTS	
EXTERNAL AGENCIES	
INJURIES RECEIVED	
INCIDENT OUTLINE	
CONTRIBUTING ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
WEATHER	
WIND	
SEA STATE	
TIDE STATE	
AMBIENT TEMPERATURE	
SEA TEMPERATURE	
VISIBILITY	
OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS	
CONTRIBUTING EQUIPMENT FACTORS	
NUMBER OF BOATS	
COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT USED	
PFD	

CLOTHING	
NAVIGATION EQUIPMENT	
OTHER RESCUE EQUIPMENT	
DETAIL ANY OTHER EQUIPMENT FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE INCIDENT, OR ASSISTED WITH THE INCIDENT	
TRAINING FACTORS	
QUALIFICATIONS/GRADES OF PADDLERS	
FIRST AID/CPR CURRENCY	
KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL WATERWAY	
TIME SINCE TRIP LEADER LAST LED A TRIP?	
WHAT TRAINING/KNOWLEDGE GAPS WERE EXPERIENCED?	
IN YOUR ASSESSMENT, WHAT WERE THE MAIN CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO THE INCIDENT?	
WHAT 3 THINGS WORKED WELL DURING THE INCIDENT?	
WHAT 3 THINGS COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED DURING THE INCIDENT?	
DO YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS THAT COULD ASSIST IN THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THIS INCIDENT?	