



Originally established in the 1940s to provide summer holiday accommodation for orphans - Don Bosco Camp has evolved. From its roots as a bush camp by the sea - it has developed a unique tradition of holiday programs involving teams of dedicated volunteers trained in the Salesian Preventive System. The huge popularity of the camps is no surprise to Salesians. They emphasize the cornerstones of the Salesian Method: friendship, joy, freedom, presence, and positive mentoring - especially with peer to peer youth leadership. At Don Bosco Camp we are now meeting third generation campers here to experience some of the memories of their parents.

How does the Community Benefit from Camping?

Camping programs do not set out to solve all the problems faced by young people. However they are an important and valued part of an overall strategy that supports them in very concrete ways.

Camps are Fun

Ask any young person. Camps are a valid and worthwhile recreation for young people. Camps for children and young people are hugely popular. They always have been and they always will be. They offer young people a chance to gather and create that 'temporary community' which is not home and not school. It is a chance for an experience of group fun, freedom and challenge. They are often highlights in young people's lives - giving them memories they take with them always. During 2005, more than 6000 young people have participated in camps at Don Bosco Safety Beach. Importantly the camps are open to all young people regardless of gender; religion, disability or nationality and our camps always reflect the multi-cultural nature of Australian society. We have gone to particular lengths to encourage young people with special needs or disabilities to participate on camps.

Special Things Happen on Camp

Camping has evolved a great deal from the simple sing-a-long around the campfire (though that remains) and now more sophisticated aims based on modern outdoor education objectives form the basis of the camp program. Goals include team building, personal development, leadership, self-esteem, challenge and co-operation. School camp organisers know that great learning happens on camp. There is something about that special experience that stays with a young person well beyond the few days on camp. Good programming makes the most of the vibrant camp atmosphere to offer young people fresh insights on themselves and their world. Salesian holiday camps build these into a program that never feels like a classroom - these are learnt on the beach, around the campfire, out horse riding, while doing the washing up or during the huge water fight at the end of a long summer day.

From Camper to Leader

The development of youth leadership is an important component of the Don Bosco Camp program. This provides a vibrant, exciting and youthful style to our camp and offers great young role models to campers. For young leaders (16-22 years) and the wider community, however this experience of leadership has substantial and long-term benefits.

Camp is an ideal opportunity for young people to test growing competencies, take on new experiences and to live the consequences. It is a real life setting with meaningful challenges and yet it is a safe and supportive environment. Young people can be encouraged to take personal responsibility by looking after themselves and their belongings. They take on social responsibility by sharing in the cleaning up and the

running of their camp. Eventually they take on leadership challenges: running an activity, supervising a small group, planning a game, organising the washing-up roster, dealing with minor disputes between young campers etc. It is real leadership, not role-playing. Young leaders have the chance to feel real responsibility, push their boundaries, think about consequences and outcomes, experience those outcomes, get feedback and reflect on the experience. And the young campers think they are legends.

Over the years, as the new leaders progress to more experienced leadership roles, their confidence soars. They find they can lead a boisterous group of 60 young people, plan and prepare for a week's activities, delegate responsibly, handle people-problems and express care and concern for the young campers. Their sense of community responsibility, social justice and a positive personal contribution is enhanced in immeasurable ways. We see this time and again - parents are amazed at their teenager's growth and maturity. The young person takes on new challenges at school and in the wider community. Many find themselves using their new skills in highly committed community-based activities: we have 12 month volunteers in the Pacific Islands, others working with street kids, running youth groups, taking active leadership roles in their school or sporting organisations. The large numbers requesting references for their time as leaders with Don Bosco also testifies to its value to the workforce. While the skills and attributes they acquire on camp lend themselves to many professions, there is a steady flow of enthusiastic camp leaders heading for work in the huge summer camp programs. A number of our leaders are currently working with our Cagliari project, where we place volunteers in Salesian missionary works throughout Asia and the Pacific working in schools, orphanages and community projects. www.cagliari.org.au for more info.

A Safe Haven

For at risk and disadvantaged young people camps at Don Bosco offer far more than fun - they offer a brief respite from the real world; a place where they are safe, welcomed and valued. They are treated with respect by adults and young leaders who model generosity, optimism, care, support, clear boundaries and positive fun. Disadvantaged young people have a special place in all Salesian works - they are an integral part and purpose of the camp and this impacts policy and goals.

Affordable for All

One very fundamental and practical way this preference for the disadvantaged is expressed is through our pricing policy. No child is denied a place on camp because of financial reasons. The camp sponsors many young people - a significant proportion every camp. Some families contribute whatever they are able, and the camp covers the balance. A number of families pay for their own child and then donate the cost for an additional child. There is also a wide network of school and charitable organisations that refer and sponsor young people to come on camp. Our price can be kept low because the holiday camps are conducted with a team of volunteers and because income from camp bookings throughout the year is used to maintain the site and fund the holiday programs.

Family Respite

Camps support the whole family - not just the camper. This is especially so for disadvantaged families where respite is often critical. The single parent under stress and struggling with three teenage sons, the couple negotiating separation, the children placed in foster care, families who have been forced out of their home, young people in institutional care - have all benefited from a week of respite for their kids. On camp the young people can forget about home and enjoy themselves, and their parents can concentrate on adult concerns.

It is not just disadvantaged families who benefit. In most families both parents are working and school holiday supervision is not easy. We cannot meet the demand.

While the programs at Don Bosco primarily benefit youth, the nature of work with young people means the benefits have long-term impacts on the community. We all benefit when we support young people and provide them with opportunities to grow and mature in a supportive, caring environment. Their personal experiences of responsible and proactive leadership, social justice, co-operation and teamwork are taken into adulthood and become an investment in the quality of our community.

Who Are We?

The Salesians of Don Bosco are a Catholic religious congregation dedicated to young people - especially the poor and disadvantaged. Don Bosco Camp on the Mornington Peninsula is recognized by the Australian Taxation Office as a registered charitable organisation and has been conducting holiday camps at Safety Beach for 60 years.

These days the camp is managed by Lay Salesians who live on-site. The camp is used all year round for school camping and leadership programs and weekend youth and community groups. There are also facilities offered to families needing respite and emergency accommodation. Seven five-day holiday camps are conducted each year during school holidays for boys and girls ranging in age from nine to 15 years. These are offered to hundreds of young people throughout the state, with a preference for the poor and disadvantaged. The programs include a young leadership component. Campers who have 'graduated' can be invited to undertake leadership training and then participate in the camps as young volunteer leaders - learning valuable skills that they take with them all their life.

There is a special emphasis on outreach to the local community - supporting young people and families on the Mornington Peninsula especially in the provision of emergency and respite accommodation to people of the area. We have a vision to take this further with the development of a Youth Centre adjoining the campsite.

OUR VISION:

Don Bosco Camp is a place especially for kids - where they can experience joy, freedom, friendship and challenge in a safe and positive environment.

- The central work of the camp is the Holiday Program: camps for children and young people held during the school holidays. We are committed to conducting and expanding our high quality, affordable camps which offer the traditional Salesian camp ministry to young people - especially the disadvantaged.
- The value of Salesian youth leadership is fundamental to Don Bosco Camp. This is reflected in the formation, training and support of young volunteers in peer-to-peer youth ministry that underpins the holiday programs. It is also reflected in the annual leadership training opportunities offered to young leaders from a wide variety of community settings.
- We aim to provide a high quality, affordable camping venue that complies with all statutory and industry standards offering holiday and school camping opportunities to a wide range of groups. We will promote use of the camp to generate income to finance camp improvements and support the holiday programs.

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