



INFORMATION FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE VOLUNTEERS

The Pandani Search & Rescue Volunteer Coordinator (the Coordinator) maintains a register of about fifteen members who have agreed to assist the Police in ground search and rescue operations and to support other Police investigations, such as searching for evidence.

What does being a Pandani Bushwalking Club Search and Rescue Volunteer involve?

The Police first emails the Coordinator with details of the search and the time and location of the Police briefing. The Coordinator promptly forwards this email to all members on the club's volunteer list and asks that volunteers respond to the email address given on the Police's original email.

Requests for assistance can be at very short notice, such as the night before. Searches can be in difficult and remote terrain and in all weather conditions. Volunteers must be aware that searches for missing people might lead to finding an injured or deceased person. This is extremely unlikely, but it could occur, and it might cause distress.

What would be the commitment?

Police requests for assistance are very infrequent and might only occur every few years. There is no roster, and you will not be on standby. If you are not available when a request is made, you simply decline – you are a volunteer – and no explanation is needed. There is no minimum requirement for participation in searches. You are encouraged to attend the annual Police and SES training day, and if you miss two consecutive days the Coordinator might contact you to discuss your ongoing interest and suitability. If you are unable to participate for an extended period or no longer wish to be a volunteer advise the Coordinator.

Do I need training?

Annual Search & Rescue training days are run by Police and the State Emergency Service (SES). The training will help you understand the processes and procedures of a real search or investigation, to help develop your skills, and to provide an opportunity to build relationships with the Police and SES. Training days are usually a fun day. Pandani also conducts its own familiarisation and training half-day, and these are most usefully held several months before the annual Emergency Services training. The Pandani training half-days provide both the club and prospective volunteers an opportunity to consider their suitability. Pandani training half-days will be advertised on the club's website 'Club Events' page and on Facebook. Police search procedures may be reviewed, and the Coordinator will update volunteers on any changes.

What if a search is being conducted and I can go?

If you volunteer to attend a search, the Coordinator will tell you who else is attending so that volunteers can arrange carpooling amongst themselves to the briefing location, which will be near the search area. Usually the briefing is early (7am-ish), and Police will give a detailed briefing of what is required. You will be allocated to search teams of 10-15 people that are usually led by a Police Officer or an Emergency Services person. Volunteers are likely to be assigned to secondary search areas, which frees-up professional resources for primary search areas. If there is any conflict of interest - both real and perceived - you must not attend. You must not be affected in any way by alcohol or recreational drugs. At the end of a search, you will be wet, dirty, tired, and likely to be covered in scratches and leeches, and probably found very little!

What type of person makes a good S&R Volunteer?

You will need to be a strong walker and walk fit, and reasonably well-known to the club. You need a professional attitude, stamina, and patience. You must work precisely as instructed by the Police and to accept their advice quietly and willingly. You are likely to be assigned to a small team led by a Police Officer or Emergency Services person. Volunteers will be distributed across other teams, so you must be comfortable working with people not known to you. Volunteers must fully comply with any Police instructions regarding confidentiality such as taking photographs or discussing what has occurred afterwards, because this information could cause profound distress to family and friends of the person, or compromise a criminal investigation, or reveal information about Police operations. The Pandani 'Culture of Courtesy' applies. Assisting the Police is a public duty, and you must be mindful that your conduct reflects upon the club.

What equipment is needed?

You must be self-contained for the day and be equipped as for a club remote area day walk in difficult off-track conditions in the weather conditions prevailing in that location and at that time.

What happens if a problem occurs during a search?

At the scene speak with your search team leader or a Senior Police Officer or the Coordinator if the latter is attending and if that is appropriate. If it cannot be resolved at the time contact the club president or a committee member promptly on your return.

What happens if I am injured during a Search or need support afterwards?

Police have confirmed that volunteers involved in search operations and the training day will be provided insurance cover through the Police's own system. Counselling services will also be available if they are needed, and the Coordinator will be able to advise and help you.

I am interested and think I would be suitable. How do I become a volunteer?

Prospective volunteers can self-nominate and can indicate their interest by registering to attend the Pandani training half-day when it is listed in the Event Program. If you have any additional questions, contact the Coordinator using 'Send an Email' located under the Members menu on the Pandani website: <https://www.pandani.org.au>