

## Frequently Asked Questions

Below are some of the more frequently asked questions regarding Edmund Rice Camp. If you have a question that is not found on the list below, please feel free to email us at [ercvic@edmundrice.org](mailto:ercvic@edmundrice.org) and we will do our best to help out!

### 1. What are Edmund Rice Camps?

Edmund Rice Camps are activity based holiday camps staffed by young adult volunteer leaders. The camps are designed to give children and families in need a “break” from their daily lives, targeting those who would not normally be able to have a holiday. For more information, have a look at the **‘about us’** page on this site.

### 2. What different types of camps are run and where are they held?

There are many different camp experiences that volunteer leaders can choose from. Camps are run each school holidays and over the long weekends of Labour Day (February) and Queens Birthday (June). Camps are run for groups of children aged 8-11 years, 12-15 year old boys and for families groups. Each year we also run a specific camp for Indigenous children, Refugee children and Refugee families.

ERC also run activity days for Refugee teenage boys and girls. These days can involve a sporting theme of basketball and Futsal, or excursions to places of interest such as the Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary, Luna Park or day trip to the beach.

For more details on camp programs that we are currently offering, see the **‘programs’** page on this site.

### 3. Why is there such a high child to leader ratio?

We believe that each child is special and each deserves the same amount of attention on camp. A one to one ratio helps both children and leaders develop friendships and assures that each child will receive a similar amount of attention, care and love from our volunteer leaders. It is also an important way for volunteer leaders to be positive role models. Further, it is necessary from a supervision point of view as the more volunteer leaders available, the safer the environment for the children.

### 4. How are the camps funded?

Edmund Rice Camps Victoria are supported financially by the Christian Brothers, Grants, donations by Edmund Rice Schools and other businesses. We also hold several fundraisers throughout the year such as a Comedy Night, Garden Party and participation in the Ampersand Walk.

### 5. Where do the kids and families come from?

Kids and families are referred to us from many different agencies throughout the whole of Victoria. The majority of referrals come from Melbourne, Geelong and Ballarat. Some of the agencies that refer to us are Department of Human Services, Mackillop Family Services, Connections, St Vincent De Paul, Berry St and Anglicare.

## **6. What do I have to do to become involved in Edmund Rice Camps?**

Becoming involved in Edmund Rice Camps Vic is easy. If you would like to become a volunteer leader on a camp, then simply download the **'Volunteer Application Form'** within the volunteers section and post it to us at:

Edmund Rice Camps  
7 Amberley Way  
Lower Plenty, Vic, 3093

To be involved in any program run by Edmund Rice Camps involving children, you will also need to fill out a 'Working With Children Check' form. You can get a form by contacting the office or visiting your local Post Office. If you are under 18 years of age then you are not required to have a Working With Children Check.

## **7. How old do I have to be to get involved in Edmund Rice Camps?**

Volunteer leaders have to be above 17 years of age or at least completing year 11 at school to attend a camp. The reason behind the restriction is because taking care of younger children for a week as a volunteer is a very important role and puts a lot of responsibility on a volunteer. We believe this responsibility is too much to ask of people younger than 17 years of age or studying in a younger year level than Year 11.

There is no restriction on the age above 17 years and we pride ourselves on being open to all people from any age, race and religion. We do not discriminate against any person and our volunteer leader base is very diverse and we welcome everyone over 17 years of age.

If you are under the age of 17, there are many opportunities to become involved in Edmund Rice Camps without actually doing a camp.

## **8. Can I get involved without doing a camp?**

Absolutely, There are many different ways you can become involved. Camps could not exist without the help of the many people who do not actually camp! You can become involved by attending a fundraising event such as our Comedy Night or getting a team together to walk in the Ampersand Walk. You can join a committee which are responsible for things like fundraising, leader formation and training, equipment, publicity and publications, Board of Management or cook on camp. Any help is always appreciated and you can feel free to contact the office to let them know if you can help out in any way.

## **9. What training do I need to become a volunteer leader?**

You don't need any formal training to become an ERC volunteer leader. Each new volunteer leader needs to attend a new leader training day prior to their camp where they learn all about the structure of camps, policies and procedures and the role of each leader. At the beginning of each camp we run a pre-camp day for all volunteer leaders attending who will be on that camp. On this day, leaders will also participate in team building activities and program procedures and the aims of camp will be covered.

Edmund Rice Camps are also a great way to build on your leadership skills. We run several internal and external training opportunities for our volunteers. These include First Aid, Community Surf Rescue and Behaviour Management courses and training days for volunteer leaders who wish to take on a position of responsibility on camp.

## **10. How are the camps structured? Is there one person in charge of the whole camp?**

On each camp, experienced volunteer leaders will take on a position of responsibility on camp. Generally, the volunteer leaders and kids on camp will be split into halves. For each half, a Coach, Camp Captain and two Group Captains will take on positions of responsibility (so that there are two Coaches, two Camp Captains and four Group Captains on each camp). Also, there will be one Pastoral Facilitator on camp who divides their time between each half.

The Coach is the person with the most responsibility on camp. He/she deals with children with extreme behavioural problems and makes important decisions about whether a child or family should be sent home or whether an activity is safe to participate in. Camp Captains are the people who are seen as running the show! They are primarily responsible for deciding what activities to run on camp and for letting all kids and leaders know about the days' activities. Each Group Captain is the 'head' of a group of kids and leaders. They are mainly responsible for the medication of each child on camp, knowing where all members of their group are and for running games and activities. The Pastoral Facilitator is on camp for the welfare of the volunteer leaders. He/she takes the time to talk to each leader about any concerns they have about the camp and will run a de-brief for the volunteer leaders at the end of each day.

Volunteer leaders also take on roles as bus drivers, first aid and beach/pool patrol and each camp will have a volunteer cooking.

## **11. What is the role of a new volunteer leader on camp?**

Each volunteer leader, new and experienced, has a valuable role on camp. Volunteer leaders on camp work as a team with duties shared between all. First time leaders bring new ideas and spirit to camp and often, experienced leaders have much to learn from them. Volunteer leaders who are not holding a position of responsibility, experienced and new, are the most important people on camp for they are the first point of contact for the

kids. The main role of a volunteer leader is to form friendships with the kids and families and to be a positive role model. Volunteer leaders will also need to supervise kids' behaviour and there is always opportunity for all leaders to run games on camps. Leaders on camp may also be expected to take their turn doing dishes, shower and night duties but the fun times always outweigh those not so pleasant duties.

### **12. How do I deal with difficult behaviour of kids?**

Volunteer leaders on camp often find that by providing kids with alternative activities and by keeping kids busy that minor behavioural difficulties sort themselves out. But when faced with the more difficult situation, it is important to remember that you are not alone! Volunteer leaders on camp work as a team so leaders facing a difficult situation will gain support from more experienced leaders and the leaders holding a position of responsibility. The Camp Captains and Coaches on camp can always be called upon to help solve those difficult issues. You will learn more about dealing with difficult behaviour of kids on training days and on the pre-camp day.

### **13. How much involvement is expected by volunteer leaders?**

When volunteer leaders sign up to a particular camp, it is very much an all or nothing philosophy. For example, if a camp is run from Monday to Friday, volunteer leaders will be expected to attend and participate in the pre-camp day on the Monday and to participate in the post camp de-brief ending with a meal for all volunteer leaders on the Friday at 8pm. During camp, since each child is expected to participate in each activity, each volunteer leader would also be expected to participate in every activity. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule and if, for example, you were allergic to horses or simply afraid of them, you would not be forced to go horse-riding!

Aside from camps, how involved you become with Edmund Rice Camps is up to the individual. You could decide to head a committee or go to the fundraising events or simply decide that your passion lies with the kids and that you will keep on camping!

Any involvement, how ever great or small, is always appreciated and you can contact the office to let them know how you would like to become involved.

### **14. How much does it cost to go on an Edmund Rice Camp?**

To attend a camp, volunteer leaders are asked to pay a fee of \$40, with leaders attending activity days paying \$10 per day. This will help cover the cost of paying for your activities, food and accommodation.