

Bushwalk

By Leah Reid and Robert White

For years, bushwalking enthusiasts from the Bar and the judiciary have enquired about whether the Bar Association had a bushwalking group.

The call to action was answered in 2021.

A much needed addition to the Bar's social calendar

The Wellbeing Committee announced the formation of the Bar Bushwalking Group as part of its collegiality program, as well as to support members to live a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

Bushwalking (also known as hiking, rambling, trekking or even 'forest bathing' as the Japanese colourfully describe it) is the perfect antidote to the demanding work of the Bar. Renowned for having positive effects on physical and mental health, research shows walking in nature can improve fitness levels, reduce stress hormones, and increase creativity. Moreover, bushwalking with colleagues permits conversations to flow and happen outside the usual hustle and bustle of everyday worklife.

Bushwalking keeps your mind sharp in a way other exercise does not, because it involves navigating unpredictable terrain. Negotiating overhanging branches, slippery dirt, trail markers, or animals crossing your path requires you to adjust along the way, which is good for your brain.

Eighteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the middle of the latest NSW lockdown, it is unsurprising that there are fewer organic opportunities to connect with other barristers. For those members who have shifted their practice to predominantly work from home, and for junior members of the Bar, the Bar Bushwalking Group provides a unique opportunity to meet and mingle and explore some of the large network of bushwalking tracks in New South Wales.

Another advantage of bushwalking is that, unlike other organised activities requiring agility or proficiency in a particular skill, it only requires taking that first step and following it with another. The appeal of bushwalking transcends age, gender, and even practice area, and permits us to invite partners, friends and family as well.



A walk to remember

The inaugural walk took place on Sunday 2 May 2021 at the heritage-listed Manly Dam Reserve.

Manly Dam Reserve is a hidden gem in Sydney's Northern Beaches. The walking track overall is well managed and offers spectacular scenic views over Manly Reservoir, which sparkled in the beautiful autumn weather.

Undeterred by the runners completing the Sydney Trail Series (which was taking place at the same time), approximately 20 barristers and their families set off at 10am around the seven-kilometre circuit trail.

The diverse trail includes sandy flat terrain, elevated boardwalks through the wetlands and across the Dam, and short climbs and descents on rock steps leading to a picturesque waterfall.

Pausing to enjoy the scenery and snacks, our resident native flora expert, David Pritchard SC, proved Latin does have a use outside of the courtroom, educating the group on various spectacular native flowers.

Finally, the leisurely three-hour walk was topped off with a sausage sizzle, cooked by experienced grillers Tim Castle SC and Robert White. The Bar Bushwalking Group is grateful to the Bar Association for its support in hiring the barbeque area.

Put on your walking boots

Organised by seasoned bushwalkers David Pritchard SC, Tim Castle SC, Robert White, and Leah Reid (and ably supported by the Bar Association's Chris Winslow) the group aims to hold at least three walks each year of easy to moderate difficulty. The next walks are scheduled to take place on:

- Sunday, 1 August 2021 in the Royal National Park; and
- Sunday, 7 November 2021 at the Sassafras Gully Loop, Springwood (Blue Mountains).

The Bar Bushwalking Group looks forward to welcoming new members and their family and friends. Registration for the remaining two walks is essential – look on the Bar Association website and InBrief for more details.

Depending upon the level of enthusiasm, there may be the opportunity for the Group to organise smaller, more demanding walks (which could, for example, involve overnight or even longer interstate trips).

On a final note, the organisers are looking for a name to call ourselves – the Bar Bushwalking Club (BBC) is probably not appropriate. All suggestions welcome! **BN**

