



KOKODA YOUTH LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

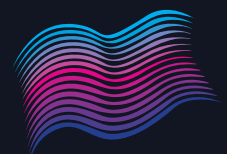
RSL & SERVICES CLUBS ASSOCIATION

2025 TREKKERS GUIDE



The Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge should be something every young Australian should aspire to do!

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Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge (KYLC)

KYLC is a peer group leadership program promoted by the RSL & Services Clubs Association and overseen by the KYLC Benevolent Fund.

The Challenge is aimed at young people at school or disadvantaged or unemployed young people in the community who are having difficulty in finding their way in society. It is also used to encourage young achievers with natural leadership skills.

With more than 600 young men and women now having made the trek since the project commenced in 2005, that represents an investment of more than \$3 million by clubs in our country's youth.

For Clubs, the program has the potential to build stronger ties with the community and local business while increasing their relevance with young people who will be their future members and become the 'custodians' of the ANZAC and Kokoda traditions. Any club can join the program regardless of whether you are a member of the RSL & SCA.

The leadership program aims to create a greater awareness of the sacrifices of the Diggers on the Kokoda campaign among our young people to ensure the traditions live on. At the same time, it instills in participants a commitment to community service and enhances their personal development by providing an opportunity for them to experience the same conditions under which our diggers fought. It is a transformational experience encouraging future leadership roles back in the community.

Adventure Kokoda

Adventure Kokoda is the specialist Kokoda Trek Operator engaged by the RSL & Services Clubs Association to operate the Treks under the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge (KYLC) Program. The Directors and Team Leaders have over 24 years' experience on the Kokoda Trail. The company was established by Charlie Lynn, a former army major and leading advocate for the Kokoda Trail to be proclaimed as a National Memorial Park. Charlie has trekked Kokoda over 90 times and has mapped the original wartime trail over this period. He also re-discovered many of the battle sites that had been reclaimed by the jungle over the years since the war. These include Brigade Hill, the Isurava battle site, the 'golden staircase' on Imita Ridge and the wartime route taken by the 39th Militia Battalion as they marched towards Kokoda to meet the invading Japanese army.

Charlie Lynn served in the Australian Army for 21 years. This included tours of duty in Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia and the United States. He is a graduate of the Army Command and Staff College.

During his time as an exchange instructor with the United States Army he completed their Special Forces Military Freefall program involving tactical High Level Low Opening HALO parachute jumps on oxygen from 20,000 feet with full combat equipment - at night. He was appointed Captain of the Parachute Display Team at Fort Lee in Virginia and completed 200 jumps during his tour of duty.

After leaving the army he worked with Adventure West and the Australian Rural Leadership Program running outback survival programs for mining companies in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and outback New South Wales.

He was elected to the NSW Parliament in 1995 and has held the position of Parliamentary Secretary for Veterans Affairs for the past four years. He retired from Parliament in March 2015.

The Program

The Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge (KYLC) Program is designed for young community leaders, young people with strong family military connections and management staff with leadership potential in the NSW club industry or suppliers to that industry with the view to strengthen their skills and attitudes to the challenges of management.

The program involves an arduous 10 day trek across the original Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea, presentations at significant battle sites and discussions on sacrifice, courage, mateship, endurance and leadership. It provides participants with a practical leadership experience based on the achievements and sacrifice of our diggers during the Kokoda campaign.

During the program participants will receive a strategic overview of the Kokoda campaign on arrival in Port Moresby. During the trek they commence each day with 'Orders' which covers a particular day of the Kokoda campaign. Orders are given in a military format (Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and Logistics and Communications) and the situation will be illustrated on a mud model. Battle site briefings are given at each significant location along the track during the day. Each day a participant will be appointed as the team leader and a 'Leadership Reflection' is conducted at the end of each day. This involves a presentation and discussion on the qualities of brigade, battalion, company, platoon and section leaders.

The final session of the program involves a goal-setting program which requires participants to make a commitment to achieving a personal goal and a community service goal after they return to Australia. These will be shared with each sponsoring RSL Service Club.

The learning outcomes from the program include:

- A practical understanding of the theory of leadership within a team environment.
- An appreciation of the aspirations and fears of other members of the group.
- A practical understanding of the effectiveness of interdependency within a team environment.
- A detailed strategic and tactical understanding of the Kokoda campaign.
- The limitations of leadership at the political/strategic level. The relationship between Prime Minister Curtin, General Douglas MacArthur and General Thomas Blamey, and the effects of this relationship on the leadership of the battlefield commanders on the Kokoda Trail.
- Case studies of leadership and sacrifice at the battles of Brigade Hill, Eora Creek and Isurava.
- The culture of the Koiari and Orokaiva people who live along the trail.
- An increase in personal fitness, a loss of fat from the body, a hardening of the muscles, a toughening of the attitudes and an improvement in grit and determination!

Adventure Kokoda have a simple approach to personal leadership development. It's based on the reality of a jungle trail over the Owen Stanley Ranges in Papua New Guinea - not a contrived experiential scenario in a controlled environment. Our leaders have been led by great men and have led great men and women. Veterans are their mentors. PNG guides are their guardian angels. Kokoda is their leadership laboratory.

Why Be Involved?

The Kokoda Youth Leadership Program aims to create a greater awareness of the sacrifices of the diggers on the Kokoda campaign among our young people to ensure the traditions live on.

At the same time it instills in participants a commitment to community service, enhance their personal development by providing an opportunity for them to experience the same conditions under which our diggers fought and hopefully transform them for future leadership roles back in the community.

Being selected for the trek is a privileged opportunity to develop personal leadership skills based on the values our Kokoda veterans held dearly. These include personal discipline, mutual respect, trust, mateship, courage and self-sacrifice. Successful candidates should be prepared to act as a community volunteer in some way after they return.

Participants in the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge will gain:

- A positive feeling of self-worth and self-confidence
- An appreciation of our military history
- A respect for the sacrifice made by young Australians of a previous generation
- An appreciation of a culture whose values are not based on materialism
- A sense of responsibility for the outcomes of the choices they make
- An appreciation of the qualities necessary for effective teamwork i.e. loyalty, trust, honesty, courage, leadership, respect, discipline and sacrifice
- An understanding of the characteristics of Australian leadership
- An appreciation of the 7 essential understandings of effective leadership (self, others, culture, environment, history, present and future)
- An understanding of the purpose and value of community service
- Traversing the Kokoda Track is still an awesome challenge. Successful completion of the trek will restore self-confidence and provide participants with a strong sense of accomplishment.
- They will learn basic navigation skills and bushcraft.

Your Commitment

The opportunity to participate in a trek across the Kokoda Trail is a privilege akin to a \$7,050+ scholarship. Participants should therefore understand that it is not a prize, a gift or a right - it is a privileged opportunity to develop personal leadership skills based on the values our Kokoda veterans held dearly - these include personal discipline, mutual respect, trust, mateship, courage and self-sacrifice.

The trek itself is a physically demanding challenge. You will be required to be in adequate physical and medical shape and free of any medical conditions that may prevent them from completing such an arduous personal challenge. You will need to alert us of any potential health problems prior to the trek.

The most important qualities for a successful pilgrimage are a sense of adventure, a positive attitude, a healthy body, an inquiring mind, an abundance of common sense and a good sense of humour. Keep in mind that from the time you arrive at the airport in Port Moresby, until the time you depart at the end of your pilgrimage, you will be led and accompanied by trek leaders and PNG guides.

If you prepare yourself adequately for the adventure it will be a pilgrimage you will never forget.

The following suggestions will help you in this regard:

- Allow yourself a minimum of three months to prepare yourself physically for the trek – longer if your fitness needs to improve. This includes training with a 12 - 15kg backpack.
- Give yourself time to purchase and use your trekking gear before your trek. Clothing should be light and comfortable; boots should be worn a few times to ensure there are no 'hot-spots'; you should acquire a good quality backpack and/or day-pack and consider using two trekking poles. Time spent selecting; organising and testing your gear will pay dividends during your trek. A detailed list of recommendations will be given to you at a later date.
- You need to ensure you have a valid passport.

Remember that every step you take as part of your physical training regime is akin to a deposit in your personal fitness account. If you make enough deposits you will have more than enough to draw on when you are doing the hard yards on Kokoda. If you haven't made enough deposits you might have to go into debt – and that is always painful!

Before you depart, you will be required to attend a compulsory workshop and provide and/or complete the following paperwork:

- Personal Particulars
- Medical Clearance
- Deed of Release
- Visa Application
- Additional Health Form (as required by the PNG Consulate)
- Travel Insurance Application
- Copy of your passport
- Other forms as required

Your Commitment

Before your trek and when you return from Kokoda, your sponsor may request you share your experiences, both verbally and written, to a variety of people, which may include, Club Members, Club Board, Management Team(s), media and other persons as requested. Your sponsor may also request that you represent them at various functions including, but not limited to, ANZAC and Remembrance Day activities.

It is important that you understand what you are about to undertake and raise any concerns with your sponsor as soon as possible.

The Experiences

I can't thank you enough for what you have given me. You have given me more strength and courage than I have ever had in my life. Thank you for having the belief in me to be a valuable individual who could accomplish this challenge. Your generosity and kind act has brought me an ever-lasting confidence in who I am and what I can achieve in life. Never did I expect to ever be confronted with so much emotion, but it is exactly what my spirit needed to learn and grow.

It saddens me to know that only 1% of Australians take on this empowering journey and most individuals my age will always be naive to the events that occurred on the Kokoda Track during WWII. I feel that if every Australian fully comprehended the sacrifice that our young soldiers made in protecting our country from invasion and delved into the history and culture of Papua New Guinea, Australian society would change for the better. Learning about the bravery and fortitude of the Australian soldiers, along with the enduring commitment of the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels to assist our Diggers, has been a valuable lesson for me. Now, through knowledge of their sacrifice and my experiences whilst walking the Track, I have learnt that life is a beautiful and magical gift; full of surprises and challenges. I hope that more and more Australians undertake this endeavor to discover this and better themselves in light of the stories of battle.

I can't express my gratitude enough towards the RSL and Services Clubs in providing me with this opportunity. Your generosity and humble act has allowed me to experience a life-changing journey. I will carry those 12 days in my heart forever as I learnt of the bravery and strength the Diggers portrayed to ensure the life we have today. Their actions have allowed me to truly understand the importance of life, the morals and the values we should all cherish as human beings. It would be an honor and a privilege to repay your generosity by providing my services to the Association in any way, to help gain the awareness of Kokoda and the Organization. I would cherish nothing more than to contribute at club commemorative activities and speak on behalf of the Organization about my experience.

I hope one day to be in the position to give back to others what you have given to me. I have learnt to live in the moment and that sometimes the things we are searching for are right there in front of us. I will never forget the image of Bomana Cemetery, where 3,280 brave young men lay in sacrifice of our country. Those rows of white marble are a true reflection of what it is to give your all. Whenever I feel the pain of personal suffering, I will think of them and remember their strength. The gratitude I hold for them should be inside every Australian's heart.

This trek has given me the understanding of what it feels to accomplish something great, given my best effort. I now believe I hold the determination and power to achieve my life's ambitions. No more will I indulge on the words 'tomorrow' or 'later', but only take my all into every endeavor I embark on.

Staring into the eyes of Havula Luala, a dear Fuzzy Wuzzy, and witnessing his wholesome spirit radiating in his eyes was one of the most empowering and enlightening moments I could ever experience. Then and there I learnt the respect and appreciation our Diggers and Fuzzy Wuzzies deserve. I now aspire to become a custodian of the legend and carry on the stories of leadership and courage. With the four words courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice, a leader is born. It is inside every one of us, and for those who seek it, will find it, through the wonder of the Kokoda legend. So in the eyes of Bruce Kingsbury, are we as humans, living our lives to the fullest? Are we reaching our hands out to those who need it? Are we striving to create meaningful and passionate lives? To just have this hope and determination in my heart is the most precious gift one can receive.

Please contact me in the future if there is anything I can do to be of service in light of this marvelous program.

Kind Regards,
Ashley - 2013 Trekker

The Experiences

“The leadership aspect was a major highlight for me. I learnt that I don’t necessarily need to be in a management position to invoke change and improve efficiencies. I learnt that acts of leadership don’t have to be huge, nor do they necessarily need to be recognised, but if they instill the right kind of change, the one that makes a difference or results in improvement then that’s what truly matters. I really learnt the value of support and asking for help (even when I really didn’t want to) and the successes that I achieved by leaving my ego behind.”

Sarah - 2014 Trekker

“They say trying to describe the Kokoda trek is like trying to describe a rose. No matter what and how many words I use they never seem to suffice. The only way you can fully appreciate the stories and lessons of life that the Kokoda trek has to offer is to undertake the trek yourself. “If you want a physical challenge, run a marathon. The Kokoda trek is so much more than just a 10 day walk through the jungle”.

Rachel - 2015 Trekker

There were so many memorable sites and moments along the trail that I will never forget. It has reinvigorated the respect I have for the diggers that have and are currently serving for Australia. The four words Mateship, Courage, Endurance and Sacrifice could not have been chosen better for their meaning, and you appreciate them more after completing the trek.

I still can’t believe I have completed the Kokoda Trail but I am so grateful I did. I certainly have got more out of it than I ever thought I would! Those close to me have noticed that I have changed slightly and I think they’re right. I am embracing life more than ever, I rise to a challenge to wake up every morning knowing that today is going to be a good day. We have so much in our lives that we forget we have so much to offer, so I hope that I can make that change in my community and show others to appreciate what you have. I am truly grateful for the opportunity and can’t thank enough to everyone involved.

Laura - 2015 Trekker

The feeling of exhilaration when I stepped through that Kokoda arch at the end more than made up for any hiccups I encountered along the way. It was humbling to realise that what I experienced was only a taste of what the ANZACs had to go through to protect our country and its future. To be counted among those who have been able to recapture a small slice of history and emulate what the ANZACs did is an honour and a privilege.

Mariel - 2014 Trekker

“I don’t think anybody could claim that it’s not an exercise in personal leadership. But what this week has certainly been about is personal development and challenging people personally.”

Lachlan - 2015 Trekker

“The track has been a source of inspiration, motivation, adventure and reassurance. I feel like a change of energy has occurred within me. I have a clearer vision of what I’d like to accomplish and of the path to achieve my goals. I have full faith in myself. I can and I will!”

Daisy - 2014 Trekker

Selection Criteria

The Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge should be something young Australians aspire to do. The program will only benefit those who appreciate the privilege of being chosen and who are willing to learn about the Kokoda campaign prior to their departure. They should also be willing to commit to a rigorous physical training program to ensure they are physically capable of completing the program.

Applicants should therefore demonstrate a strong desire to participate in the program – an added preference is for young people who have had a relative serve in the Kokoda campaign, or other conflicts. This desire can be measured by a willingness to conduct personal research in order to gain an understanding of the Kokoda campaign prior to the final selection of the participants.

Applicants should be able to fulfill the following:

- Aged between 16 - 25 years of age for the Young People's Trek or up to 35 years of age for the Club Industry Trek;
- Appreciate the privilege of being chosen and who are willing to learn about the Kokoda campaign prior to their departure;
- Willing to commit to a rigorous physical training program to ensure they are physically capable of completing the program;
- Applicants should therefore demonstrate a strong desire to participate in the program. This desire can be measured by a willingness to conduct personal research in order to gain an understanding of the Kokoda campaign prior to the final selection of the participants;
- Participate in local media interviews and community events to encourage other young people to nominate for the KYLC program;
- Provide a personal report back to the Director and Members of the sponsor Club or Association about their experiences and personal development whilst on the Trek
- Ability to attend a KYLC workshop on 17th May 2025, at Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club, 20-26 Canterbury Rd, Hurlstone Park NSW 2193;
- Be able to travel:
 - Club Industry Trek - during August 2025 (4th to 15th August 2025)
 - Young People's Trek - during the September 2025 NSW School Holidays (30th September to 11th October 2025)
- Currently have or be able to obtain a passport;
- Obtain relevant vaccinations;
- Cover out of pocket expenses, estimated at approximately \$1,500 - \$2,500 AUD.

As part of the selection process, applicants may be requested to:

- Submit an essay that gives their personal background and story, including any information about the military service of their family members in past years;
- Attend a personal interview with the sponsor

The success of the Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge depends on the selection process.

The opportunity to participate in a trek across the Kokoda Trail is a privilege akin to a \$7,050+ scholarship. Participants should therefore understand that it is not a prize, a gift or a right - it is a privileged opportunity to develop personal leadership skills based on the values our Kokoda veterans held dearly - these include personal discipline, mutual respect, trust, mateship, courage and self-sacrifice.

Time Line

Tuesday 28th January 2025

Information on Entry Requirements and Application will be available on the RSL & SCA website

Monday 3rd February 2025

Applications open

Wednesday 30th April 2025

Applications close

Thursday 1st May 2025

Administration Kits containing all documents for trekkers to complete will be emailed to sponsors.

Saturday 17th May 2025

KYLC Workshop, Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club, 20-26 Canterbury Rd, Hurlstone Park NSW 2193.

All trekkers and a representative of the sponsor or parent must attend

Monday 30th June 2025

All completed paperwork and payments for Trek 1 and Trek 2 must be received via email to bradsmith@rslservicesclubs.com.au

Monday 4th - Friday 15th August 2025

Club Industry Trek - Trek 1

Tuesday 30th September to Saturday 11th October 2025

Youth Trek - Trek 2

Q Why do I have to attend a workshop?

A Workshop attendance is compulsory for all trekkers and a parent/guardian or a representative from the sponsoring club. This will ensure that all procedures are understood and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions regarding preparation or about the trek.

Q Will my sponsor cover the whole cost of the trek?

A You will need to discuss the level of sponsorship with your sponsor. Some sponsor's will cover at percentage of an applicant's trek and expenses and ask that the applicant fund raise the remaining cost themselves. This reaffirms the participant's commitment to the program. Please discuss this with your sponsor.

Q Are the trek leaders trained in first aid?

A Adventure Kokoda Trek Leaders are experienced and qualified in First Aid. They carry a comprehensive first-aid kit with each group however there are items which you should bring to treat minor ailments or irritations. You will receive a detailed list of recommended 1st Aid items to bring. They also carry a satellite phone, a VHF radio with moon-raker antennae and an emergency location beacon.

Q I don't have a passport?

A You will be required to obtain a passport to travel to Papua New Guinea.

Q Do I need to get travel insurance?

A Travel insurance is required and you will need to complete and application, but this is included in the cost of the trek.

Q Are there any out-of-pocket expenses?

A All of your trek expenses i.e. PNG accommodation, meals, transport, trek fees, Sydney to PNG and return flights are included in the cost of the trek. Out-of-pocket expenses may include obtaining a passport, hiking boots and other equipment, doctor's visit and medicine prior to trek and cash to purchase souvenirs on the trek. In 2018, these expenses totalled approximately \$2,000 AUD.

Q Why do I have to train?

A KYLC is an arduous 10 day trek across the original Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea. The trek itself is a physically and mentally demanding challenge. Remember that every step you take as part of your physical training regime is akin to a deposit in your personal fitness account. If you make enough deposits you will have more than enough to draw on when you are doing the hard yards on Kokoda. If you haven't made enough deposits you might have to go into debt – and that is always painful!

Q Do I have to carry my own pack?

A Yes.

Q Does the trek leader have a "Working with Children" clearance?

A Yes.

Q I have a question that is not listed here?

A Contact your sponsor in the first instance or KYLC Manager Brad Smith on 0413 104 084 for more information.

Your Sponsor

If you have any questions, please ask your sponsor, they are a wealth of information.

Kokoda App

Download the FREE Kokoda App from the App Store or from Google Play, which is a resource for Australians of all ages to learn more of the Kokoda story.

Social Media

www.facebook.com/RSLServicesClubsKYLC

www.instagram.com/rslscakylc RSLServicesClubsKYLC

Websites

RSL & Services Clubs Association

www.rslservicesclubs.com.au

Adventure Kokoda

www.kokodatreks.com

1942: War in the Pacific

www.kokodatreks.com/history/thepacificwar1942/index.cfm

The Kokoda Campaign

www.kokodatreks.com/history/thekokodacampaign/index.cfm

Major battles of the Kokoda Campaign

<http://www.kokodatreks.com/history/majorbattlesofthekokodacampaign/index.cfm>

Television Documentaries

ABC Documentary: RSL Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge

www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLCz7qUI9FFmqihaijuadJPoA8sJIU0D8q&feature=player_embedded&v=Q48HEYWTZVU

Life Challenge Kokoda

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3EP8nkSKOai3z9JDEvGJHQ>

Angry Anderson Kokoda Challenge

www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLCz7qUI9FFmplk_GltGEAJ33D0bNZunFh&feature=player_embedded&v=vLtFd8XnvYA

Sydney Swans on Kokoda

www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&list=PLCz7qUI9FFmrNAQ8E39leWYEZyZDW5sKf&v=BAiajXkG_m0

KOKODA: The bloody track

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oScT3WhCk8w&feature=player_embedded&list=PLCz7qUI9FFmou6X54JsVJ2g8qNk7q6Zl8

Trek 1 Details

MONDAY 4TH - FRIDAY 15TH AUGUST 2025

Trek 2 Details

TUESDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER TO SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2025

Personal Details

First Name:
Surname:
Address: Suburb:
State: Postcode:
Home Phone: Mobile:
Email Address:
Date of Birth: Age as at Date of Trek:
Occupation:
Passport Number:
Passport Expiry Date: Passport Place of Issue:
Height (in cm): Weight (in Kg):
Sex (please circle one): Male Female
Shirt Size (please circle one): S M L XL XXL XXXL

Emergency Contact Details

(1) First Name: Surname:
Address: Suburb:
State: Postcode:
Home Phone: Mobile:
Email Address:
Relationship:
(2) First Name: Surname:
Address: Suburb:
State: Postcode:
Home Phone: Mobile:
Email Address:
Relationship:

Occupation

Name of Employer:

Position:

Number of Years:

Education

School:

Current Year or Level of Education:

Cadet Service (Army / Navy / Air Force)

Unit:

Rank:

Years of Service:

Community Service

Name of Organisation:

Years of Service:

Name of Organisation:

Years of Service:

Name of Organisation:

Years of Service:

Referees

First Name: Surname:

Title/Position:

Company:

Phone: Email Address:

First Name: Surname:

Title/Position:

Company:

Phone: Email Address:

