

A NOTE TO PARENTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE VOLUNTEERING FOR AN EDMUND RICE CAMP

WHAT ARE EDMUND RICE CAMPS?

Edmund Rice Camps aim to give kids a fun holiday, with a bunch of other kids. The leaders are young adults who volunteer their time to look after the kids and make them feel special. Each child has a young adult as a 'big buddy' during the camp, to try and give them the best possible time. The 'big buddies' and 'little buddies' are grouped in teams of about eight. Other activities involve the whole camp, often forty people or more. The volunteers have a training day on the Monday, with the kids arriving Tuesday morning and the camp going through till Friday afternoon.

WHAT ACTIVITIES DO THEY DO?

There are outdoor activities like swimming, bush-walking, canoeing and games. There are also indoor activities like crafts, concerts, games and singing - lots of singing! The kids learn a lot of special, fun songs which get everyone involved. Of an evening there may be a movie, a concert and more indoor games. The 'big buddies' accompany their 'little buddy' in each activity, which are always conducted with others in a team or larger group setting.

WHAT SHOULD THEY BRING ON CAMP?

They will need personal items such as soap, toothbrush and toothpaste, towel, sheets & blankets (or sleeping bag), sunscreen, insect repellent, a hat, shoes suitable for bushwalking, swimming togs. They should not bring valuable items or significant sums of money. Mobile phones are not permitted once the camp begins. If you need to know the phone number of the campsite, ask the camp organisers beforehand.

WHO RUNS EDMUND RICE CAMPS (ERC)?

In Townsville, ERC is an agency of the Catholic Diocese of Townsville, and the paid coordinators are employees of the Diocese. ERC exists throughout Australia, and a number of other countries around the world. The organisation is named after the man who founded the Christian Brothers.

WHO WAS EDMUND RICE?

Edmund Rice was a wealthy businessman born in Ireland in 1762. Following the death of his pregnant wife from a horse-riding accident and the subsequent birth of his disabled daughter, Edmund felt a call to reassess his life. After many years of searching, Edmund left his home and devoted his fortune to providing opportunities for the growth and education of the downtrodden and needy children in his community. He opened a school in a stable, living in the loft. Other people, inspired by his example, joined him in offering their lives in the service of those in need.

WHAT ABOUT CAMP SAFETY?

All camp volunteers receive training in child protection, and are required to abide by a strict code of behaviour. No volunteer is allowed to be alone with a child. Activities are carefully planned to minimise risks, and camp leaders follow a detailed care and safety policy. The camp is organised with 'layers' of leadership. New volunteers will be 'big buddies' for the kids on camp. Other volunteers will be Team Leaders, and others overall Camp Leaders. The volunteers 'outnumber' the kids, so we are well placed to manage behaviour and conduct all activities safely.

POLICY FOR CARE AND SAFETY

Edmund Rice Camps Townsville has a comprehensive policy covering matters of care and safety of children and volunteers on its camps. Volunteers are all called to a role of leadership, both with the children and within the team of volunteers. Below is an outline of the principles which shape and guide the policy.

LEADERSHIP FOR COMMUNITY

An ERCT camp achieves its purpose through building a temporary community among all participants. This community building does not happen only as an indirect effect of time spent in common activities, but includes intentional action by the leaders. This is demanded by the fact that the children who attend the camp have often experienced hurts or deprivation which have led them to be less capable or willing to trust and to experience healthy friendships, especially with adults. The basic structure of camp leadership reflects this intentional caring by pairing each child with a leader, who accompanies and befriends the child throughout the whole camp. Other leaders with specific roles have particular responsibilities in the various areas of policy. The responsibility to build community lies with the whole leadership team.

For these reasons, Edmund Rice Camps Townsville has a commitment to the following principles:

- Leaders undertake to commit themselves to the solidarity of the leadership team.
- Leaders accept that some personal sacrifices are involved, and are prepared to put aside their own comfort for the sake of the children and the other leaders.
- Leaders do their best to create an atmosphere of support and fun, not standing on their own dignity but entering activities with a childlike spirit.
- Leaders are prepared to trust others and allow friendships to form through sharing of themselves.
- Leaders are committed to creating a safe and caring environment.
- Leaders do their best to create an atmosphere in which others who wish to may feel free to confide in them, even on difficult matters.
- Leaders are respectful of the fact that Edmund Rice Camps do not just attempt to be places of care but are Christian in spirit.

CAMP SONGS

ERC has a strong tradition of camp songs. As a volunteer expect to learn a heap of new, fun songs. The kids respond very well to these songs and it builds up a great camp spirit! Expect kids to come home with some very catchy tunes stuck in their heads!

CHILD PROTECTION

Edmund Rice Camps put in a lot of effort to ensure the care and safety of all children and volunteers. Before every camp volunteers are trained in the theory and practice of child protection. We have a comprehensive policy which lays down guidelines and regulations to inculcate attitudes and behaviour which best promote care and safety. Every volunteer is required to get a 'Blue Card' as mandated by Queensland legislation, in an attempt to ensure that unsuitable people do not have access to children. (Those under 18 are not required to have a Blue Card.) Underpinning all this is a deep commitment to respect for the dignity of each person. Edmund Rice Camps is a Christian organisation which confidently promotes Christian values and draws on the inspiration of Blessed Edmund Rice.

FORMATION

Edmund Rice Camps originated in the Christian Brothers, and takes its name from their founder Edmund Rice. So spirituality is integral to the ERC experience, since it is founded on a Christian spirit of service. ERC seeks to encourage young adults to grow in their spiritual life, to become more through serving others. This process of 'integral formation' aims to help young adults see the many ways that their experience on camps can throw light on a whole range of personal and social issues. Although ERC is a Catholic organisation, volunteers are welcome from any churches, those who are searching, and anyone of goodwill, provided they commit themselves to the policies and the spirit of Edmund Rice Camps.

OUR MAJOR FUNDING PARTNERS

Catholic Diocese of Townsville: Edmund Rice Camps Townsville is an official agency of the diocese, and is supported with funding from the diocese. The ERCT Coordinator is an employee of the diocese, and the ERCT office is located in the Diocesan Centre in Stanley Street, Townsville.

The Christian Brothers: The Christian Brothers are the originators of Edmund Rice Camps and have a special relationship with ERCT, providing funding, support, training and a close relationship which ensures that Edmund Rice Camps Townsville continues to embody the spirit of the movement.

St Vincent de Paul Society: The SVDP has a special relationship with ERCT and funds children to come on camps. We work with SVDP to ensure that families in need can benefit from the opportunity of our camps for kids.

Sisters of Mercy: The Sisters of Mercy are supportive of the diocese's efforts to assist young people to discover and live their vocation, and see Edmund Rice Camps as a valuable way of doing this.