



MEDIA RELEASE

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50% of kids missing out on school camps. Australian camp census confirms the outdoor experiences are vital to children’s wellbeing, education, and sustains regional economies.

The first national camp census reveals Nearly 2 million Australian school-aged children attend camp each year, according to research released today by the Australian Camps Association (ACA).

The ACA Census and Economic Contribution Report reveals that camps are not only a cornerstone of the Australian education experience but also a significant contributor to the nation’s economy, generating \$1.74 billion annually. In 2024 alone, camps hosted 3.96 million participants, with school groups accounting for approximately 70% of all attendance.

Beyond recreation, the report underscores the critical role camps play in fostering student wellbeing, social development, and a connection with nature.

ACA Chief Executive Officer, Peter McDougall highlighted the unique value camps bring to young Australians.

“Camps give young people the chance to step outside their comfort zone, work as a team, and build confidence,” Peter said.

“They step away from the screens to combine physical activity, connection with nature, and shared challenges, which are proven to enhance mental wellbeing and social development.”

The findings come as educators increasingly prioritise student wellbeing and resilience. “Teachers consistently tell us that student wellbeing is one of the biggest challenges they face,” Peter said.

“Camps provide a proven environment where young people can build independence, strengthen friendships, and reconnect with the outdoors. Every Australian child should have access to benefit from the unique camp experience.”

Camps: a pillar of Australian education

School camps have been a cornerstone of Australian childhood for more than 70 years. The report confirms they remain a mainstream and valued part of school life across the country, with new data highlighting the scale of participation and the role camps play in education and youth development.

Key findings include:

- 3.96 million camp participants in 2024
- 48% of Australian school-aged children attend camp annually
- School groups represent 70% of participation
- \$1.74 billion annual contribution to the economy
- More than 15,000 jobs supported by the sector

Camps also play a vital role in supporting regional communities, creating jobs and driving demand for local services such as food suppliers, activity providers, transport operators, and tourism businesses.

Learning beyond the classroom

Camp programs are designed to build practical life skills through activities like team-building challenges, environmental education, hiking, canoeing, and outdoor leadership programs.

“These experiences help young people develop teamwork, leadership, and resilience in ways that traditional learning environments cannot always achieve,” Peter said.

“At the same time, camps reconnect children with nature, which is essential for both physical health and mental wellbeing.”

A sector supporting millions of young Australians

The ACA Census is the most comprehensive analysis of the Australian camps sector, offering valuable insights into participation, economic impact, and the role camps play in education and community life.

“This report confirms what educators and families have long known,” Peter said. “Camps are not just a fun experience. They are an important investment in the wellbeing, development, and future of young Australians.”

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