



## **Re: Professional development opportunities for teaching outdoors**

We're lucky in Victoria. Through the determined efforts of visionary teachers, scholars and outdoor leaders, our state is widely seen as a global centre of excellence for outdoor education. Our students have access to some of the most thoughtful, and challenging, camps and outdoor programs in the world.

But I also know how hard it can be to maintain the passion and excellence if you are feeling isolated. Let's face it: outdoor educators are sometimes a lone voice in a broader school community, which makes it all the more important that we support each other as a genuine community of practice.

Since 2013, there has been no state funding available to support the community of dedicated outdoor teachers. So unlike other subject associations, Outdoors Victoria depends entirely on the efforts of people like you, who contribute time and effort voluntarily. I'm very excited to share with you the following current initiatives to improve outdoors education in Victoria, and to invite you to be a part of each of them.

**Outdoors Education 2016.** This year, Outdoors Victoria is hosting what we hope will be the best outdoor education conference in Victoria yet. We are very excited to announce that Outdoors Education 2016 will take place on May 6-7 at Federation University, Ballarat. Don't miss early bird registration, which closes on 16 March!

**Professional Development.** We are committed to fully supporting outdoors education, not just at an annual conference but also through an ongoing program of professional development events and teacher resource development. OV intends to recruit a qualified education officer to implement a year-round program of support, but we need your help to make this a reality. In February we will be releasing further details about this program to those who indicate an interest, and how you can help.

**Advocacy for outdoors education.** As Victoria's voice for the outdoors community, we engage government leaders on the policy and funding decisions that matter for us. Late in 2015, we prepared a list of investment priorities entitled "Invest Outdoors" to focus attention on the need for greater funding for outdoors education, national parks management, tracks and trails, and outdoor community groups. We also provided a contribution to the "Education State" process highlighting the benefits of outdoor education for our students. Now more than ever, we have an opportunity to work with our state government to truly embed outdoor education in our curriculum and educational practice.

We're committed to strengthening and supporting the outdoor education community with inspiring and informative events, professional development opportunities & effective advocacy. Please return the enclosed card so we can keep you well informed of future opportunities. Alternatively, send us an email ([info@outdoorsvictoria.org.au](mailto:info@outdoorsvictoria.org.au)) with the subject line "Outdoors Education" and your contact information. We won't pass your details on to third parties, ever.

All responses received by 28 February will go into a draw for a free registration for this year's conference, plus a \$100 Kathmandu gift certificate. So don't delay! We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Chuck Berger, CEO