

risks that we have learned new things, explored new arenas, found love and discovered ourselves. If we had not been willing to live this adventurous life, then we may never have lived the lives we have, or will do.

This book is not about avoiding risks, but it is focused on managing the desirable benefits of taking risks while minimising the potential damages if things go wrong. This will involve understanding why you are operating, what you hope to achieve, who you are working with, where you are working, the types of technologies that can support your endeavours, and assessing whether you have achieved what you hoped to achieve. Risk management is not a 'one size fits all' process, it has to be adapted, refined and varied according to the differences in people, places, programs, communities, societies and environments. Risk management is an iterative process within which all stakeholders, internal and external, should be able to play a part.

Risk, adventure and the outdoors

There are many articles that define risk as the potential to lose something (e.g. Beedie 1994; Dickson & Tugwell 2000; Priest & Gass 1997), but if we reflect on any area of our lives, the main reason we take a risk is that we might gain. Rarely will someone take a risk with the expectation that it will fail (Bernstein 1996). In fact, if we did take a risk in the expectation that it would fail, many may question our very sanity! Some examples of where risks are taken in the hope of gaining is in finance, investments, relationships or gambling.

This book builds on over seventeen years of Australian industry interest in the management of risks in outdoor activities which has been documented in earlier editions of the risk management document published by the Outdoor Recreation Industry Council of New South Wales (Dickson & Tugwell 2000; Jack 1994). As with this book, the earlier publications drew upon a wide array of insights and experiences from industry experts.

Here we adopt a whole-of-organisation approach to risk management, drawing upon the definitions of risk and risk management that are used in the international standard AS/NZS ISO 31000: 2009 Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines (ISO 31000) (SASNZ, 2009) which supersedes earlier risk management standards (Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand 1999, 2004). This latest standard defines risk as 'the effect of uncertainty on objectives' (SASNZ 2009, p. 4).

As noted in ISO 31000, every aspect of an organisation may have objectives, such as economic objectives, social objectives and environmental objectives, and these may occur across all levels of an organisation, from the strategic to services, projects and processes. In each of the areas and across all levels there is 'uncertainty, whether, when and the extent to which they will achieve or exceed their objectives' (SASNZ 2009, p. iv).

While there is uncertainty, it is not a reason for risk to be avoided, rather, the term risk is applied in this book in the sense that activities are taken in order that a person, a group, or an organisation may achieve their objectives, so that they may gain, grow, learn or benefit. In doing so, there will always be some degree of uncertainty about those activities: that is normal, that is the risk. Given this understanding of risk, risk management is about maximising the potential positive effects upon the objectives, while minimising the potential negative effects. Risk management is therefore defined within ISO 31000 as 'coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to risk' (SASNZ 2009, p. 2).

Why adventure and the outdoors?

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. (Thoreau, 1854/1986, p. 135)

Adventure

Increasingly adventure is being 'commodified', packaged as a saleable product for any consumer with the available funds to buy (Cater 2006; Dickson 2004; Varley 2006). Even the summit of Mt Everest appears to be accessible if you have sufficient funds (Krakauer 1997). Yet this process of selling 'adventure' is at the risk of losing the essential nature and role of adventure in life and society.

Colin Mortlock, British adventurer, author and academic suggests that adventure and the outdoors are an essential part of a person's growth:

To adventure in the natural environment is consciously to take up a challenge that will demand the best of our capabilities – physically, mentally and emotionally. It is a state of mind that will initially accept unpleasant feelings of fear, uncertainty and discomfort, and the need for luck, because we instinctively know that if we are successful, these will be counterbalanced by opposite feelings of exhilaration and joy. (Mortlock 1984, p. 19)

Further, Mortlock wrote of the feelings and pleasure one may have in facing challenges in the outdoors, whether achieving one's goal or not:

In all cases you, the person in the situation, are being challenged to the best of your abilities. If you have given of your genuine best, and either overcome the challenge or retreated with dignity through skill and experience rather than luck alone, then you have had one of the greatest experiences of your life. You have had a 'peak experience' with feelings almost indescribable and beyond those common to normal or routine living. Ultimately life is about feelings, those that are concerned with the joy of living, rather than the anxieties of modern existence. (Mortlock 1984, p. 19)

Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound quoted his friend when he suggested that there is an important role for the future of societies in the having of adventures: 'Without the instinct of adventure in young men (sic), any civilization, however enlightened, any State, however well ordered, must wilt and wither' (Trevelyan quoted in Hahn 1947, p. 2).

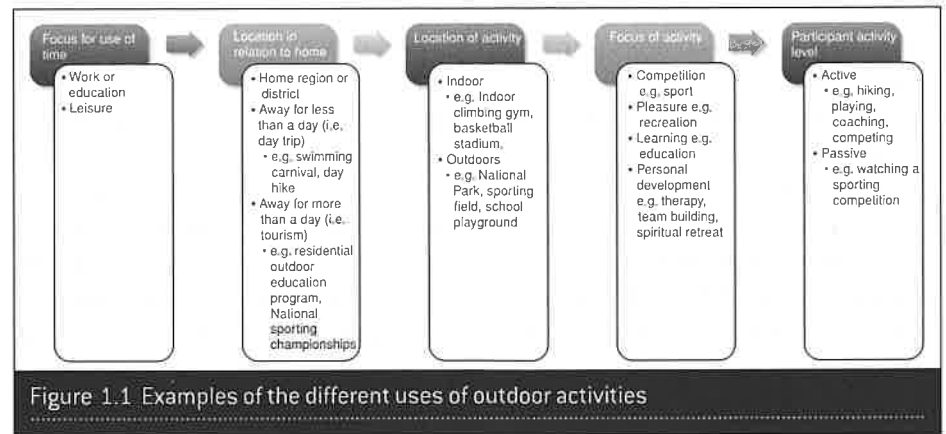
Varley (2006) in a review of available literature on adventure, suggested that there are some core qualities of adventure, including risk, uncertainty, participant responsibility, participants' use of skills, emotional engagement and authenticity. These may be reduced to three key conditions: responsibility (self determination), risk-uncertainty, and transcendence as a result of an ecstatic or marginal experience. If uncertainty is an essential component of adventure, then to offer to sell an activity, an event or a program that has a guaranteed outcome may be in contradiction to what an adventure really is (Dickson 2004). While *real* adventures with their attendant uncertainty and potential for danger may be desirable for individuals and societies, they may not actually be a commercially saleable product, but they may be important for an individual's lifelong education and development.

The outdoors

At a time when we are more disconnected from nature and nature's rhythms than at any other time, adventure and reconnection with the outdoors in a way that encourages freedom, relaxation and engagement is an ever-increasing challenge. Nature and the outdoors have been drawcards for personal development, growth and reflection for millennia. Across cultures, religions, eras and countries, outdoor environments, including deserts and wilderness areas, have been central to our beings as humans.

Louv (2006) coined the term 'nature deficit disorder' which is used to describe the costs associated with our alienation from nature. This 'disorder' is the result of a lack of contact with the natural world, with dirt and trees and insects and animals and birds and may be manifested in 'diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses' (Louv 2006, p. 34). For Louv, connection with nature is essential for healthy development of children and adults, a view reflected in a wide range of recent research highlighting the health and community benefits of physical activity in the outdoors (e.g. Aldous 2006; Biddle, Gorely, Marshall & Cameron 2005; Dickson, Gray & Mann 2008; Mallar, Townsend, Brown & St Leger 2002; Pretty, Peacock, Hine, Sellens, South & Griffin 2007; Surridge 2004).

The outdoors may be used in a variety of ways depending upon the person's use of their time, the location with respect to where they reside, the activity focus or purpose, and the level of activity of the participant (Figure 1.1). Yet even these distinctions are not so simple, for example climbing at an indoor gym will have some similar concerns relating to personal protective



equipment as in climbing outdoors in a natural environment, while a local canoe club will have similar issues related to weather and personal safety as would competitors in a national canoe championships. Thus, from a risk management perspective, many of the issues discussed in this book will have application across sport, recreation and education where they use activities that are conducted primarily in the outdoors.

Perceived and real risk and safety

Another discussion that exists in the literature is the use of the terms perceived and real risk. Haddock defined real risk as 'the amount of risk which actually exists at a given moment in time (absolute risk adjusted by safety controls)' and perceived risk as 'an individual's subjective assessment of the real risk present at any time' (1993, p. 20). Regardless of whether the risk is 'real' or 'perceived', the reality is that the participant will respond to how serious they perceive the risk to be and how they evaluate the benefits or costs associated with taking the risks. Regardless of any objective measure by 'experts', people will perceive things differently and will feel and behave accordingly.

What may be deemed unsafe by one person, may be more to do with their lack of familiarity with the activity, while what is deemed too safe, may be due to too much familiarity. For example, for a new participant, abseiling may be considered as a 'high risk' activity, yet statistically may have less injuries than other activities in the outdoors (Dickson, Chapman & Hurrell 2000). In contrast, for an instructor, coach or guide, being too familiar with an activity may render them complacent and make them susceptible to not being conscious of relevant safety issues (Lange 2007).

Commensurate with these definitions of risk and risk management is the reiteration that an adventure is where the outcomes are uncertain. Risk is desirable. As noted by Walle, 'the absence of risk may decrease the satisfaction