

How to organise a clean up paddle: 10-step guide

1. Where?

A lot of clean up paddles include cleaning up around the reserve or boat ramp that you launch from. It's a good idea - or a necessary requirement in many cases - to contact the local council and let them know your plans; often you'll need to book the reserve/park, provide a copy of our PaddleNSW public liability insurance, risk assessment, etc. You can also ask the council if a council truck can pick up the bags of rubbish collected by participants or otherwise to provide free tip vouchers.

Depending on where your clean up paddle is, you may also need to consider permission from maritime authorities, National Parks, landholders, Local Aboriginal Lands Council, etc.

2. Who?

Club and community? Is it just your club you would like to involve, or members of the public as well? The former is much easier, the latter will require more work – to include members of the public or other community organisations you'll need enough experienced paddlers supervising, need to get participants to register, possibly have boat hire available, etc. It is doable though and is an excellent way to get new members for the clubs and form partnerships with other community groups. And of course, the more people involved, the more rubbish collected and the more people inspired to stop so much rubbish entering our waterways.

3. Consider going on a date:

Our slogan is 'pick up while you paddle', so why not go on a date to make your paddle more enticing: some key dates to hold your event on are Clean Up Australia Day (first Sunday in March), SUPtember (Single-Use Plastics campaign in September), World Environment Day (June 5), World Rivers Day, World Oceans Day, etc.

4. Risk Management:

- a. Risk assessment and risk control: see the PaddleNSW Risk Assessment for Clean Up Paddles. Modify it to suit the particular conditions and needs of your event and carry out the controls – this isn't just something you have on paper, you need to enact the controls to make your event as safe as reasonably possible.
- b. Safety personnel: you'll need some experienced kayakers (preferably qualified guides) to help supervise paddlers on the day. You can ask other clubs to help with this – PaddleNSW can put you in touch with relevant people.
- c. Registrations: Have a registration system and mark participants off on arrival at your event so you know how many people are coming, who is on the water, their contact details, medical conditions, paddle ability, etc.
- d. Safety briefing: Provide safety information to people before the event (eg. as part of the registration process, or an email to participants) and at the event - give a safety briefing before people launch.

5. Registrations:

The Event Coordinator at PaddleNSW can help set up the rego for your event. Consider what info you need to know about participants – paddle ability/experience, do they have their own boat or need to hire/borrow one, relevant medical conditions, emergency contact details (who they would like you to contact if they end up in hospital etc), covid questions, etc. For non PaddleNSW members, include PaddleNSW Single Event Membership in the registration – this provides them with personal accident insurance (note: this insurance is limited in scope and participants may want to have their own private health insurance as well).

6. Promoting your event:

Promote your event before AND after (promoting the achievements of the event afterward helps inspire future attendance, and builds a sense of community for those who were there when they can see the collective effort and achievement). Obviously promote your event to your own club members, community Facebook pages etc plus PaddleNSW can help promote it. If you register your event with Clean Up Australia Day, let PaddleNSW know and we will get it added to our Clean Up Australia Day hub page – an interactive map on the CUA Day webpage where anyone can look up all the clean up paddles and their details in Australia (see www.cleanupaustaliaday.org.au/paddle).

Its best to seek **permission to use photos of people** – just depends how formal you want to go with this. At small events, usually a mention of it in the briefing on the day of the event is enough (“eg. let us know if you don’t want to be in any photos for media”), but for larger events you may want to include a tick-box in your registration process. It doesn’t hurt to be cautious. Do not take photos of kids without the permission of their parent/s, explain to the parent where you may use the photo and ask if this is ok. If in doubt, don’t do it. Regardless of permission, don’t take photos of kids in swimwear, or with tops off etc – kids need to be fully clothed in photos, have an appropriate posture etc.

7. Sustainable, respectful events:

- a. First Nations: Include an Acknowledgement of Country (or Welcome to Country if you can arrange this with an Indigenous person of the local Country).
- b. Environment: Avoid as many single-use plastics at your event as you can, have recycling bins / bags. Only use caterers who have compostable takeaway containers / coffee cups etc.
- c. Participants: Be respectful to participants by providing communication in the lead up to the event and on the day around what to expect, what to bring, etc. Have someone designated to answer enquiries pre event (online enquiries) and at the event.
- d. Volunteers: work out before the event how you are going to thank your volunteers on the day or afterwards.

8. Clean up kits:

Clean Up Australia Day send out clean up kits (free, or you can make a donation), with gloves, rubbish collection bags (made from corn-starch), syringe disposal container, mini first aid kit, high vis vest etc if you register your event with them. (As mentioned in point 6, if you register your event on the Clean Up Australia Day website we can have it added to our Clean Up Australia Day hub page as well).

PaddleNSW also gives a set of digital scales (for weighing rubbish) to clubs who want to record their rubbish – see point 9.

You may want to add ‘pick up reachers’ to your kit (grabbing claws on the end of a stick) – handy for reaching out into the water or under bushes. Pick up reachers are available from Bunnings and cleaning suppliers.

9. Collect rubbish.... AND data:

We use the Litter Stopper app to record amount and weight of rubbish collected, type of rubbish etc. This is important for us to see our contribution as paddlers to the health of our rivers and to the community, and apply for funding for future projects. PaddleNSW can provide clubs/groups with baggage scales to weigh your rubbish.

The Litter Stopper app can be downloaded at litterstopper.com To enter data, select Start Clean – Registered Organisation – PaddleNSW – PaddleNSW, and choose to time your data entry or not. When entering details, please put your club/group name under “location”, as well as the actual location (this is the only place we can add club/group name). An email copy of your entry is automatically sent to PaddleNSW.

10. Clean up forever, or reduce the source?

It's good if your clean up paddle event can raise awareness and possibly start taking action around reducing the source of rubbish – i.e. how can we stop so much rubbish entering our rivers? What can we as clubs and individuals do to lessen the amount of plastic we use? How can we keep up the pressure on the NSW and federal governments to ban more single-use plastics? The PaddleNSW Environment Committee is working on these questions, and we are always looking for more people to help out if you are keen to volunteer! Also if you'd like more ideas in this space, we can connect you with members with experience at this.

If you're not from a club, not a member of PaddleNSW or are in a different state – contact PaddleNSW, we are still happy to help.

Enjoy making our waterways a better place!