



Hawkesbury Canoe Classic 2009 Briefing Notes

24th – 25th October, 2009
Version 1.0

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Associated Documents

1. Hawkesbury Canoe Classic Participants Allocations
2. Hawkesbury Canoe Classic Checkpoint Information

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Ambulance	000
WICEN Net Control (SYDWEST)	(02) 9674 7135
Mark Cheeseman VK2XGK	0409 786 033
Neil Fallshaw VK2XNF	0428 210 849

1 Introduction

WICEN is once again providing the primary safety communications network for the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic. This event involves up to 400 canoes paddling 111km, from Windsor Bridge to Brooklyn, overnight on the Hawkesbury River. This is a challenging event for all involved, and WICEN is no exception.

1.1 Overview

The operation from WICEN's perspective involves communicating key pieces of information on the status of canoes in the event between event controllers and checkpoints, and between one checkpoint and another. At the beginning of the event, a message originates from START to all checkpoints. This involves canoes which have withdrawn from the event. See Entry Updates, below.

The first canoe down the river will be tracked and each checkpoint will report the passing of the first canoe.

Other messages ("due soon") indicate the times that canoes have left a checkpoint, en route to the next checkpoint. These are important safety messages as they indicate to the next checkpoint controller that they should expect the canoe and to initiate a search if it doesn't arrive within a reasonable time. It is therefore critical that these messages are delivered promptly – a maximum of 5 minutes after the canoe has left – otherwise unnecessary searches may be required.

The other common type of message is a Withdrawal – this means that the canoe has withdrawn from the event and all subsequent checkpoints can mark it as such on their master sheet. A withdrawal is only issued when the canoe's number is physically in the hands of a checkpoint official or an official on the close down vessel.

1.2 Changes this year

- Net control station will be called SYDWEST, to be consistent with other networks operating on the event. CONTROL is the callsign of the Race Controller.
- Checkpoint E has a new location, and is now a minor checkpoint. All major checkpoint functions formerly based at E have been transferred to D.
- Checkpoint G has been a land-based checkpoint for a number of years. Checkpoint notes have been updated accordingly.

1.3 Time Zone

All times in this document and for the entire duration of the event are in **Australian Eastern Daylight Time**.

1.4 Commander / Organizers

The event organizers this year are Neil, VK2XNF and Mark, VK2XGK. On the day of the event Neil will be the event commander and Mark will be the deputy commander.

Neil Fallshaw VK2XNF	Home/Work:	(02) 4473 5312
	email:	neil@beachcomberpark.com.au
	Mobile:	0428 210 849
Mark Cheeseman VK2XGK	Home:	(02) 4739 4956
	email	mark@cheeseman.org
	Mobile	0409 786 033

1.5 Callsigns

The event callsign will be **VK2WIX** for the voice Network.

Periodic network announcements will be made by SYDWEST on the voice repeaters using the event callsign to advise other operators of the event, and requesting that other operators keep their traffic to a minimum. An example of this announcement is in the section Net Control Functions.

Operational Callsigns

The following special callsigns will be used on the voice network during the event.

Callsign	Function	Location
SYDWEST	Net control at SES Western HQ, Phone (02) 9674 7135	Seven Hills
COMMANDER	Event commander. VK2XGK/VK2XNF	Mobile
RACECON	Race Controller	Mobile
START	Starting line	Windsor
FINISH	Finish line	Brooklyn
CLOSEDOWN	Closedown boat	M/Mobile
A,B,C etc	Race checkpoints	Checkpoints
SPENCER	Land checkpoint near OSCAR	Spencer

Packet callsigns, if used, are the operator's own callsign.

1.6 Network Overview

The voice repeater network for the event consists of the linked repeaters:

Callsign	Frequency	Offset	CTCSS	Location
VK2RWK	439.825MHz	-5MHz	-	Kurrajong Heights
VK2RAF	439.925MHz	-5MHz	-	Wiseman's Ferry
VK2RWS	438.275MHz	-5.4MHz	-	Berowra
	147.175MHz	+600kHz	-	Berowra

Recommendations for which repeater to use at each checkpoint are contained in the checkpoint notes document.

In addition, a low power 70cm repeater has been established on 439.900MHz (-5MHz oddest), to facilitate direct traffic between F and G. This repeater is not linked to the main repeater network, and is recommended as an alternative to voice simplex between those checkpoints.

The packet network this year consists of three digipeaters co-sited with the main voice repeaters. All digis are on the WICEN packet frequency of 145.200MHz, and run UIDigi software as a self-contained APRS network. Any non-APRS packet activity should take place on other packet frequencies, to avoid interference with the APRS traffic.

2 Preparation

All checkpoints must have the equipment to operate voice on both a simplex frequency and one of the main net frequencies. Note that 2m voice coverage for the main net is only available on the lower part of the river (from about K down). Obviously, if only one operator is available, then transmission on only one channel at a time will be possible, however monitoring of both channels must be maintained when not transmitting, so a dual band radio would suffice.

When operating packet, the packet system must operate independently of both of these voice systems. In other words, simultaneous operation of primary voice, simplex voice and packet must be possible (aside from limitations due to close operation of multiple radios on the same band).

Check the checkpoint notes document to determine which repeaters and frequencies service your checkpoint and for specific gear requirements

Ensure you have sufficient battery power for the duration of the event. Some checkpoints have 240V power but may not always be available.

Paperwork, including standard WICEN message forms and HCC-specific forms

Each checkpoint should organise among its members who will provide what. Don't be afraid of doubling up – it's far better to have too much gear than not enough. If any checkpoint is unable to cover any of the above requirements, please contact Neil or Mark as soon as possible, so we can work out an alternative plan.

Even if you have packet capabilities at your checkpoint, you must have the facilities for voice simplex to adjacent checkpoints in case of a packet failure. Timely transmission of canoe messages is critical to overall event safety and this cannot be performed on the main repeater network.

3 Before the Event

Before the event, make sure you contact the other WICEN personnel on your checkpoint, and that somebody from your checkpoint makes contact with the checkpoint official. Make sure that you know who is bringing what gear, that you have adequate backup systems available, and you all know who will be arriving at your checkpoint and when to expect them.

If you discover any problems that could affect the event, contact Mark or Neil as soon as possible, so that we can make alternative arrangements. Don't wait until the Saturday to find out that nobody has a working packet system, or that you don't have the correct 70cm repeater channels programmed into your radio.

The checkpoint briefing will be held at Lindfield Public School, 218 Pacific Highway on Thursday, October 15, starting at 1900 (dinner will be served from 1830). Please try to attend if you can (or at least, have a WICEN representative from your checkpoint there). As there is limited parking on-site, those who are not picking up checkpoint equipment should park in Grosvenor Road (behind the school).

This is a good opportunity to meet face-to-face with the checkpoint officials that you will be working with on the night, and to pick up any late updates to the briefing material.

4 Arriving and Setting Up

Please try to arrive at your checkpoint in time to set up at least your voice station prior to the radio check at 1500. While this does make it a long haul for those on later checkpoints, it is important for WICEN to establish its voice network at that time in order to provide communications for the final stages of race preparation. This provides the race controller with the status of equipment and personnel at each checkpoint in time to take any remedial action that may be necessary.

The Race Controller will not start the race until he is satisfied that all checkpoints along the course are fully operational, and that information can only be obtained through the WICEN network in many cases. Once the radio check is over, those on latter checkpoints may choose to take a little nap before things get really busy.

Make sure you identify the Checkpoint Controller at your checkpoint, and make sure they know who you are. They will be expecting you! All incoming messages are to be delivered to this person in the first instance, but they may (and probably will) instruct you to deliver certain types of messages to another checkpoint official. ***Any incoming messages without a specified recipient are to be delivered to the Checkpoint Controller.***

It is important to have your voice station set up well in advance of the start of the race, to allow time to diagnose any problems and to participate in the **radio check starting at 1500**. If necessary (ie, you haven't finished setting up your voice station) you may participate in the voice network using another radio or antenna (such as your mobile rig). However in that case, it is important that you do call SYDWEST and get a signal report once your final station is on-air. Bear in mind that your checkpoint official will probably want the latest updates from START well in advance of competitors arriving. SYDWEST will provide this information.

You may set up your packet station later than that, provided that you are operational well in advance of the first canoes arriving at your checkpoint so that you can receive Due Soons from the upstream checkpoint.

Also make contact with the RVCP personnel at your checkpoint, particularly those handling communications. Compare notes with them so that if any unexpected communications failures occur with WICEN's or RVCP's network, alternative plans can be put into place by the other. WICEN and RVCP have considerable overlap in their respective networks and this provides a good deal of redundancy to deal with unforeseen circumstances.

As stated above, a full voice network check will take place at 1500. Please make sure you call into this net, even if you are not fully set-up. This is to ensure that all checkpoints have basic communications working, and to enable the event commanders to work on any problems that arise.

During the radio check, please indicate to SYDWEST whether or not you have made contact with the checkpoint controller at your checkpoint, and the Red Cross official, if applicable.

5 Emergency Procedures

Any Emergency communications takes absolute priority over all other communications.

If you require an ambulance at your checkpoint at any time, it is preferable if you can call 000 directly (if you have a reliable **landline** phone working at your location). Make sure you notify SYDWEST as soon as possible of the nature of the emergency, in case the Ambulance Service has difficulty in contacting you while in transit.

If you don't have a **reliable** phone, contact SYDWEST (interrupt any other traffic on the net) and SYDWEST will establish contact with the ambulance.

When speaking to the 000 operator, ask specifically for "**Ambulance Sydney Operations**". This will ensure that you are transferred to the Sydney operations centre. If it is more appropriate that the Ambulance approach from the northern side of the river, (this would only apply to the lower part of the course, where access is easier from the North), ask for "**Ambulance Northern Operations**".

When you are transferred to the Ambulance operator, state clearly that you are involved in the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic, state your checkpoint letter, and give them the SYDWEST phone number as a backup contact number. That way, if they can't get through to you, they can call SYDWEST and they can relay messages. Make sure SYDWEST is aware of the situation as soon as practicable, and is kept updated on progress.

When the checkpoint coordinator determines that there is an emergency, the following procedures are to be carried out.

1. Obtain complete details from checkpoint coordinator or other official. **WRITE THEM DOWN.**
2. Call SYDWEST and send details of emergency. Indicate the need to call ambulance and/or Police to the checkpoint if this is the case.
3. SYDWEST will inform Race Director of emergency.
4. SYDWEST will call Red Cross to checkpoint if possible.
5. SYDWEST to request land crew, if emergency is about a paddler, at nearest downstream major checkpoint to proceed to checkpoint. **Do not say why at this stage.**

WICEN is not to make any comment to media or other enquirers. All enquires to be referred to the Race Director.

If you (or officials at your location) need to make direct contact with SYDWEST, phone SYDWEST on the number provided.

The event commanders can be reached directly on the mobile numbers above (provided that they are in a mobile coverage area).

6 General Procedures

6.1 Message Handling

The main messages to be passed are the entry update, first canoe, left here / due soon and withdrawal messages along with ad hoc undefined messages.

As a result of problems with handling of Canoe Left Here / Due Soon message in recent events, some message handling procedures have changed. Left Here / Due Soon messages will be passed directly between checkpoints, either by voice or packet. Entry update messages from START, first canoe and individual withdrawals from checkpoints will be sent by voice only to SYDWEST where they will be made available on the main voice net.

All voice messages must be written down on WICEN message forms at the sending and receiving end, to ensure accurate delivery. In particular, make sure that the message has a sender and recipient – either the person's name or their title or tactical name, as well as the checkpoint letter. Messages that arrive at a checkpoint without a recipient are to be handed to the Checkpoint Controller to be actioned.

If you cannot locate a recipient for a message at the checkpoint control, then the message should be handed to the Checkpoint Controller. Similarly, messages for land crews should be given to checkpoint staff for delivery – it is not WICEN's role to locate land crews at checkpoints, as this can compromise our ability to provide communications coverage for the checkpoint.

6.2 Timeliness of message delivery

Remember, Left Here / Due Soon messages are SAFETY messages; if a canoe does not turn up at the next checkpoint within a reasonable time of leaving the previous checkpoint, then that canoe is considered to be overdue and needs to be located. If Left Here / Due Soon messages are not transmitted to the next checkpoint in a timely manner, then the safety of those canoes is at risk until the message arrives at the next checkpoint.

This is why the "5 minute rule" was introduced several years ago: the Left Here / Due Soon message for any canoe must arrive at the next checkpoint no later than 5 minutes after its departure. Operators must make every possible effort to ensure that this goal is met and if it becomes obvious that it is not possible for any reason, then the checkpoint concerned must notify SYDWEST so that alternative arrangements can be made.

There are many messages to be passed during the event and while they may seem routine and not urgent, their timeliness is important to the smooth running of the race. Therefore, treat every message that you are asked to deliver as important and take all necessary steps to deliver that message to its destination as soon as humanly possible.

6.3 Official Tracking

Key race officials will travel along the course from Start to Finish, and their whereabouts needs to be tracked. A sign in sheet has been provided to all checkpoints. The officials will sign in and out on this sheet when arriving at and leaving the checkpoint. When an official makes an entry on this sheet, this information needs to be transmitted to SYDWEST as soon as possible, so that they can update their master sheet as to the whereabouts of critical officials. When an official signs out of a checkpoint, record their travel intentions, so we know their next intended location.

6.4 Voice Procedure

The voice network for the event will run as a Directed Net, unless advised otherwise. This means that all communications must be directed through SYDWEST; do not call another station direct when a Directed Net is in operation. Should traffic levels fall to a level where it is deemed unnecessary to maintain a Directed Net, then the Commander may decide to make Net operations Undirected. This will be announced by SYDWEST.

In the event of a race emergency, the net will immediately revert to a directed net until advised otherwise.

The standard WICEN message forms must be used for all undefined message types. If sending a message, make sure the message sender writes the message and hands it to you on paper. At the receiving end, write down the message on a message form and hand the original to the recipient. Make sure you use message numbers (if you are sent a message without a number, ask the sender for a message number). Log all relevant details of the message in the log.

The voice network will be used for broadcast messages including Entry Update, First Canoe, Withdrawal messages.

6.4.1 Left Here / Due Soon Messages

- When sending canoe numbers by voice, call the receiving checkpoint and make sure that the operator is ready to receive numbers, before sending the message.
- Each Canoe is assigned a sequence number (starting at 001 for the first canoe that leaves the checkpoint) – at the start of the message, state the sequence number for the first canoe in the message and the total number of canoes in the current message. This allows the receiving station to quickly identify if any canoe numbers have been missed either in this message or a previous message.
- Do not send an individual time for each canoe in the message, a single time for the whole message will suffice, since no canoes will differ from that time by more than 5 minutes.
- Do not use WORDS TWICE or READ BACK unless specifically requested to by the receiving station.
- Receiving stations are not to read back numbers, unless a particular number was difficult to hear, in which case request a re-transmission of that number or numbers.
- If a receiving checkpoint has not received any canoe messages for a period of 10 minutes, they are to call the upstream checkpoint and check that there have in fact been no canoes since the last message. This should be applied in a flexible manner, since there are times when the flow of canoes thins out (particularly late in the event) and there will be longer periods with no canoe traffic.
- If sending messages by packet, you must ensure that the message has been received and passed on at the receiving checkpoint.

6.5 Other Defined Messages

These are messages with a known format and for which a special message form exists. Make sure you have copies of these message forms with you and that you use that form to take down the message. This will help the checkpoint officials to transcribe the information onto their own paperwork.

6.5.1 Entry Updates

There is one (1) entry update message which provides each checkpoint with the latest details of who has or has not started the event the event. This is Non Starters.

It originates from START early in the race, and is required by all stations. An announcement will be made on the voice network when these are available from SYDWEST either via packet or voice. It is requested that later checkpoints defer requesting these messages for a short while to allow earlier checkpoints (who have a more immediate need for the information) to obtain the messages first.

If for a particular entry update message there is no information then the message is still to be sent with the contents of “**No canoes**”

6.5.2 First Canoe

The arrival details of the first canoe at each checkpoint are to be sent to SYDWEST. The details are checkpoint, canoe number and time.

6.5.3 Withdrawals

Canoes along with time and checkpoint of withdrawal are sent to SYDWEST by voice only as soon as possible after the competitor has withdrawn. SYDWEST will periodically (say every hour) collate the withdrawals and make them available for distribution by packet or voice. This is different to previous years, and will let the CLOSEDOWN vessel focus on closing down checkpoints. Withdrawal information will be transferred to the closedown vessel at times convenient to them.

6.5.4 Left-Here / Due-Soon

These are used to track the paddlers as they progress down the river. WICEN will be provided left here lists from checkpoint officials as paddlers leave a checkpoint. The canoe numbers will be sent to the next checkpoint.

All Left Here messages MUST be sent within 5 minutes of the oldest canoe time.

When a checkpoint receives a due soon message from the previous checkpoint pass it to the checkpoint officials. Ensure that the time of receipt is on the message, as this will be used as the time the canoe left the previous checkpoint.

So please consider your backup communications strategy (and discuss it with your upstream/downstream checkpoint as appropriate). If you foresee any difficulty please contact one of the event commanders as soon as possible so that they can ensure that we are able to manage any contingency that may arise. After all, WICEN is supposed to be the communications experts.

Left Here/Due Soon messages will be sent by WICEN between the following checkpoints:

Left Here	Due Soon
Charlie	Delta
Delta	Echo
Echo	Foxtrot
Foxtrot	Golf
Golf	India
Juliet	Kilo
Kilo	Lima

For information, RVCP will handle Left Here/Due Soon between the following checkpoints:

Left Here	Due Soon
India	Juliet
Lima	Finish

6.6 Net Control Functions

The following functions are carried out by net control;

- Record time checkpoint is open and closed (Net Control Checkpoint Log)
- Record time each participant expects to arrive home on Net Ctrl Pers List in the participants spreadsheet
- Keeping a log as detailed in Logging section,
- Respond to emergency situations,
- Broadcast a network identification message every hour,
- Keep track of the location of the HCC race controller,
- Provide any information required by checkpoints
- Provide Entry Update messages to all checkpoints
- Provide consolidated withdrawals to checkpoints ever hour
- Ensure no message bottlenecks are occurring at any checkpoints

6.6.1 Example identification message

This is V K 2 Whiskey India Xray, the net control station for the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic operating along the Hawkesbury River from Windsor to Mooney Mooney.

WICEN is conducting an exercise providing communications for the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic and will be using this frequency to pass messages relating to the safety of paddlers in the event. We are using abbreviated callsigns and abbreviated voice procedure. All network stations are licensed Amateur stations.

We would appreciate that stations using this frequency for other traffic keep their messages brief to ensure that this safety is not compromised. This is V K 2 Whiskey India Xray, out.

Note: We don't have a monopoly on the frequencies, so if other people insist on using the repeater, talk to them (using VK2WIX) and try to encourage them to go somewhere else.

7 Close Down of Checkpoints

The close down procedure for checkpoints has been the source of some confusion in years gone by. Partly as a result of people's enthusiasm to get away as quickly as possible, and partly due to conflicting briefing notes distributed by various organisations.

Close down authorisation for a particular checkpoint comes from CLOSEDOWN. Each Checkpoint will retain a presence at their designated Checkpoint until such time as the officials on CLOSEDOWN are satisfied that all competitors have been accounted for at the *next* Checkpoint downstream from their Checkpoint. The only exception relates to boat checkpoints, which are permitted to follow the CLOSEDOWN boat downstream prior to being stood down.

The Checkpoint awaiting permission to closedown will maintain a light of any sort to guide in returning paddlers.

The Checkpoint will maintain contact with either SYDWEST, or failing that, CLOSEDOWN or the next Checkpoint downstream.

It is important to ensure that you maintain a listening watch on one of the repeaters until such time as you have been closed down. The closedown boat may need to communicate directly with you using repeater reverse (ie, transmitting on the output) of one of the repeaters, if it is in a location where repeater access is

difficult. This is particularly important on the lower part of the course, where Closedown does not have the same options to use high-gain antennas that fixed checkpoints have.

8 Logging and Reporting

It is critical that all important communications to or from your location are logged on standard WICEN log sheets. If you are unsure whether or not something is important enough to be logged, log it anyway. Better to have too much detail in the logs than not enough. SYDWEST will log all communications, as we will be running a directed net. Also log relevant events at your checkpoint (eg, start/end of operations).

- Record short messages on logging sheets. Most WICEN members should have a WICEN Log Book from their Regional Coordinator.
- Record formal messages, eg emergency traffic, on WICEN message forms. Again these are available as pads from Regional Coordinators

9 Forms

The forms are used mostly for voice transmission and recording of details. There are 3 forms and each checkpoint is to give this information to the checkpoint coordinator. If you do not have a printer when messages are received by packet, then it may be necessary to transcribe the information onto a form for the checkpoint coordinator. These forms are used for the special message types described in 6.6.

START to provide a copy of the non-starters form to the race officials for them to fill out and return.

Non Starters Provides a list of previously entered competitors who are not starting the race.

First Canoe Provides details of the passage of the first canoe.

Withdrawals Provides a list of competitors who have withdrawn. The list is maintained by SYDWEST.

All other messages are to be written on standard WICEN message forms.