



# THE BUSH CLUB INC.

## Personal Locator Beacon FAQ's

### **Q. What is a PLB?**

A. A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) is a radio beacon which alerts the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) via satellite that a person is in distress.

### **Q. What should I do immediately after buying a PLB?**

A. Register it with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) at <https://beacons.amsa.gov.au/>

### **Q. Why should I do that?**

A. So that if it is activated it can be matched to who you are.

### **Q. But I'll be using it only on land, so why should I register it with a maritime authority?**

A. AMSA coordinates land rescue as well as sea rescue.

### **Q. When should a Bush Club leader carry a PLB?**

A. The question is misguided. A leader isn't the only person responsible for the safety of a group of adults. Each adult person is responsible for their own safety. Same for first aid kits.

### **Q. When should a group carry a PLB?**

A. When the planned walk contains a section where no mobile phone signal can be accessed without a long walk.

### **Q. What should a group do before setting off on a trip where they will be carrying a PLB?**

A. Log into the AMSA account for that PLB and register the trip details. Also test that the PLB battery isn't flat by the test method specified for that PLB model (DO NOT ACTIVATE THE PLB TO TEST IT).

### **Q. Someone has been injured and can't walk out. Should the group set off a PLB?**

A. Only if no mobile phone signal or fixed phone can be accessed by walking a reasonable distance.

### **Q. Why is it much better to make a phone call rather than set off a PLB?**

A. Setting off a PLB gives information only about the location and identity of the PLB. It doesn't say anything about the nature of the emergency, the number of people in the group, the exact location, access etc.



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## **Q. How can I improve my chances of getting a mobile phone signal?**

A. Go to high ground, and ideally in line of sight of a mobile phone tower. A mobile phone signal carries a surprisingly long way if there are no obstructions.

## **Q. What if my phone displays a message saying "emergency calls only"?**

A. Perfect. You can make an emergency call. It will be on the network of a carrier other than your own carrier.

## **Q. What phone number should I call?**

A. If in Australia, either Triple Zero (000) or 112. If overseas, either 112 (more chance of getting an English speaker) or whatever the local emergency number is (probably local language only).

## **Q. Does a PLB need to be set off exactly where the injured person is?**

A. Not necessarily. If the PLB is in a canyon or if there isn't a clear view of the sky, the PLB should be moved a short way to where there are less obstructions.

## **Q. Are there penalties for activating a PLB unnecessarily?**

A. Yes.

## **Q. I don't want to buy a PLB, where can I borrow one?**

A. The Bush Club owns two PLBs See the Equipment section on <https://www.thebushclub.org.au/information/>

Also, in NSW, some police stations and National Park offices lend PLBs. See <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/questions/where-to-hire-emergency-beacon>

## **Q. Can an Australian PLB be used overseas?**

A. Yes, the radio frequency is the same worldwide. Register the overseas trip details on the Australian AMSA site as usual. Similarly as in Australia, the PLB should be activated overseas only if no mobile phone signal or fixed phone can be accessed without a long walk.

## **Q. What's the difference between an EPIRB and a PLB?**

A. EPIRBs are designed for boats and vehicles. They're much heavier than PLBs, far too heavy to be carried by bushwalkers. An EPIRB floats upright with the deployed antenna out of the water, and it has a longer signal life than a PLB.

## **Q. Are PLBs used at sea?**

A. Yes, on lifejackets.