



## Gregory River Canoe Marathon 1976-2025



### CONNECTION TO BOODJAMULLA

#### Emu foot print and human footprint

Acknowledging the Kalkadoon people and North West Canoe Club onto Waanyi country and water.

#### Circles within circles

Symbolising the competitors coming together from their respective land/country to compete.

#### Snake body

Symbolises the Waanyi dreaming, the story behind the waterways and land. Boodjamulla meaning female rainbow serpent

Dennis Willetts



The North West Canoe Club was formed by a handful of canoeing enthusiasts on the 14 January 1975.

In 1976, 4 members of the club decided to paddle the Gregory from "The Knobbies" to the Gregory Hotel. The trip was such a success that it was agreed to organise a canoe race.

The inaugural Gregory Down River Canoe Race took place on the 6 June 1976. 18 paddlers started off together in 2 x TK2's, 5 x TK1's, 1 x single down river racing kayak and 4 x Canadian Canoes.

Dave Ferguson was the first paddler to cross the finish line in his down river racer in a time of 4 hours 9 minutes, closely followed by Ron Snow in a time of 4 hours 11 minutes. First home in the Canadian Canoe was Gary and Vicky Pickering.

In 1977, the race was changed to the Labour Day weekend in May, with 75 paddlers starting.

In 1981, the Canadian Canoe team event was introduced, which led to a dramatic increase in numbers, as it encouraged the social paddlers to take a real interest in the race. It was also televised by ITQ Channel 8.

The race has since gone from strength to strength and has grown to be one of the largest and most isolated canoe races in Australia, regularly attracting over 150 competitors.

The largest number of competitors was in 1991 when 250 paddlers competed.

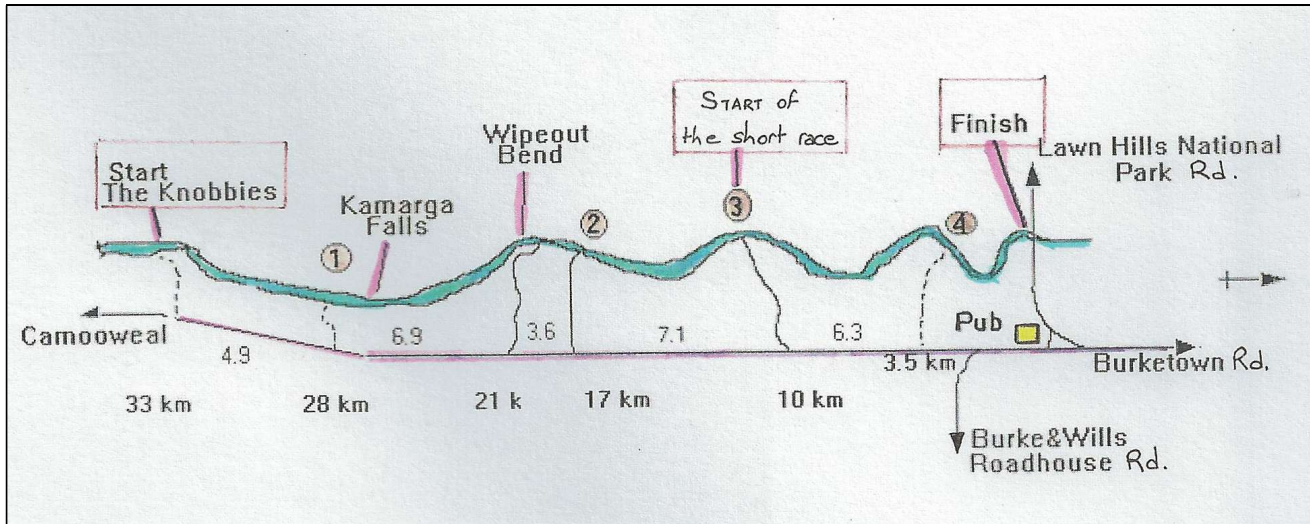
To be celebrating the 50th anniversary is no small milestone and we would like to acknowledge:

- the Mount Isa and Cloncurry locals who continue to travel to Gregory for the May Day long weekend;
- the paddlers who travel from all over Australia to compete in our race;
- the local businesses who sponsor the event; and
- the Gregory community for allowing us to share their river.

The current committee of the North West Canoe Club would like to welcome all past participants and new paddlers to the 50th Gregory River Canoe Marathon and trust you will have an amazing weekend.



## Paddler and Land Crew Info



All distances to Start Line and Checkpoints are measured from the Gregory Hotel. The Start Line and all Checkpoint entrances will be sign posted with a large white aluminium sign. Emergency Crews will be on standby for the duration of the race.

### RACE REQUIREMENTS

**Competitors must ensure that their race number is visible on both sides of the craft above the waterline. Left on the nose and right on the tail.**

Your boat must be scrutineered by race officials on Saturday, 3rd May 2025, and we require you to recheck the craft flotation at the race start line.

All competitors must be supported by a land crew. Your land crew will be responsible for you throughout the race.

**All competitors must wear the following at all times:**

- Level 50 (previously Type 2) or Level 50S (previously type 3) PFD and complies with Australian Standard 4758.
- Paddling helmet that complies with CE EN 1385:2012.

Failure to do so, or removal of these items at any stage throughout the race, will result in immediate disqualification and withdrawal of your boat from the river.

## RACE RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that you also wear:

- footwear at all times;
- gloves;
- hat and sunscreen;
- a dry bag with a **dry cloth and duct tape** in it to repair any damage that might occur to the craft during the race;
- Sufficient clean drinking water and food.

## HEAT STROKE

The use of PFD's and helmets increase the chance of heat illness, so drink regularly, and if you begin to feel overheated, use the river water to cool yourself down. If you continue to feel unwell, speak with your land crew or the next Checkpoint Official and consider your options.

## RACE START - MARATHON COURSE

The Race briefing will be held at **7:30am** on Sunday morning at the Race Start located 33kms from the Gregory Hotel up the Gregory Downs Road and the Camooweal Development Road. The entrance will be signposted. Racing will commence at **8:00am**.

## RACE START - SHORT COURSE

The **Short Course Race** briefing will start at **9:20am**, with racing to commence at **9:45am** downstream from Checkpoint 3, which is located 10 kilometres from the Gregory Hotel up the Camooweal and the Gregory Development Road. The entrance will be sign posted.

## RACE SAFETY

**Safety** is the number one concern. If you see a competitor in distress, render assistance. Failure to do so could result in disqualification. Record the time involved and a time adjustment will be made to your finishing time. If you see a craft struggling down river, notify the next Checkpoint of the craft and its number.

Challenging areas of the river such as the rapids at Kamarga 1 & 2 can be portaged on the **Left** hand river bank and Pandanus Alley on the **Right** hand river bank. **Portage any section of the river that you feel is beyond your capability.**

## WITHDRAWAL

**If for any reason a competitor or team withdraws from the race, they must notify the next down river Checkpoint Official of their decision. Failure to do so could initiate an unwarranted search by Emergency crews, which will result in a monetary charge being applied to the offending individual or team.**

Once competitors or teams have withdrawn from the race, they cannot re-enter.

## **CHECKPOINTS**

There are 4 Checkpoints along the race course; each will be signed on the water by a bright orange banner.

Checkpoint Officials will be visible by their bright coloured vest; please call out your race number as you paddle past the Checkpoint.

**Teams Change overs:** Teams change overs can only happen at designated check points! Please ensure this is done out of the main flow of water to allow other paddlers to continue through unhindered.

**Land Crew:** Familiarise yourself with the race course and the location of the start line and different checkpoints along the river prior to the race. The start line and each checkpoint entrance will be sign posted on the road with a large white aluminium sign.

Prior to the race discuss with your competitor the different locations along the river/checkpoints where you will meet them to give them the supplies needed during the race. You are fully responsible for the needs of your competitor along the river. Please ensure that they are properly fed and hydrated during the whole event.

Heat illness risk can be increased by the use of helmets and life jackets, so ensure your competitor maintains a proper hydration level and if they become overheated ask them to get into the river to cool down.

Sunburn is another serious issue. Make sure your competitor has sunscreen. Long pants, long sleeve shirt and hat are strongly recommended.

## **STARTING TIMES - MARATHON COURSE**

Check for your start sequence and class on the computer printout attached to the official's vehicle at the race start. Ensure you are in the correct class. If you feel there is an error, speak to a race official immediately.

Check your craft for flotation and race stickers (above water line, either side of craft, left on the nose and right on the tail).

**7:30am Race briefing**

**8:00am Racing commences**

## **THE START**

The start lagoon is small, so remain well behind the start line until your race start is called.

Before the start of each class, the boat race number will be called out, please respond by raising your paddle/hand, or calling out "here".

Due to the narrowness of Carnage Leap and the number of craft involved in each start, the start line will be 100m upstream from Carnage Leap in the lagoon. A 10 second count down will be given prior to the start of each race class.

Each Class Start will be 2 minutes apart, unless the first bottle neck of the race becomes congested.

**Carnage Leap**: ~ 100 metres after the race start, the river converges into a narrow section which then funnels into a small chute called Carnage Leap.

Two race volunteers will be present to help anyone who falls out, and will radio back to the start line with the all clear, so the next class start can begin.

**Checkpoint 1**: ~ 4.3 kilometre paddle down river from the race start. It will be marked on the river by an orange banner.

Please call out your boat number to the Checkpoint Official.

Teams are to swap competitors out of the main river flow, so as not to impede the other paddlers.

If for any reason a competitor or team withdraws from the race, they must notify the nearest Checkpoint of their decision.

**Kamarga Rapids 1 & 2**: ~ 8 kilometres into the race you will encounter the first two of the three rapids of the race. The Kamarga rapids are the largest of the race, with a 100 metre waterhole between them.

These rapids will be signed on the river by a large orange banner.

A safety boat with rescue tubes will be stationed here for safety purposes. They will only intervene if a paddler becomes distressed.

**If you feel these rapids are beyond your abilities, there is a portage for both the rapids on the left hand side of the river.**

**Mellish Park**: ~ 13 kilometres into the race, you will reach Mellish Park, home of Wipeout Bend. Changes to the river course over the years have rendered Wipeout Bend relatively harmless.

**Checkpoint 2**: ~ 16 kilometres into the race. It will be marked on the river by a large orange banner.

**The cut off time for Checkpoint 2 is 11:00am.** If you have not arrived by this time you will be withdrawn from the race, and your race stickers will be removed from your craft.

Please call out your boat number to the Checkpoint Official.

Teams are to swap competitors out of the main river flow, so as not to impede the other paddlers.

If for any reason your competitor or team withdraws from the race, they must notify the next down river Checkpoint of their decision.

**Checkpoint 3:** ~ 24 kilometres into the race. It will be marked on the river by a large orange banner.

**The cut off time for Checkpoint 3 is 12:00pm.** If you have not arrived by this time you will be withdrawn from the race, and your race stickers will be removed from your craft.

Please call out your boat number to the Checkpoint Official.

Teams are to swap competitors out of the main river flow, so as not to impede the other paddlers.

If for any reason your competitor or team withdraws from the race, they must notify the next down river Checkpoint of their decision.

**Checkpoint 4:** ~ 34 kilometres into the race. It will be marked on the river by a large orange banner.

The last rapid, Galloping Jacks, is in this section of the river. It is a straight rapid 30 metres in length. This rapid finishes into the last long water hole of the race, which is 3 kilometres in length and just before the finish line.

**The cut off time for Checkpoint 4 is 1:00pm.** If you have not arrived by this time you will be withdrawn from the race, and your race stickers will be removed from your craft.

Please call out your boat number to the Checkpoint Official.

Teams are to swap competitors out of the main river flow, so as not to impede the other paddlers.

If for any reason your competitor or team withdraws from the race, they must notify the next down river check point of their decision.

**Finish Line:** The finish line is the large banner across the river just before the little bridge.

**The cut off time for the finish line is 2:00pm.**

**Congratulations on completing the 50<sup>th</sup> Gregory River Canoe Marathon**

**KIDS NOVELTY EVENT 2.00PM - 2.30PM**

**PRESENTATIONS 2.30PM**

**Race presentations will be held at the finish line at 2.30pm.**

**There will be sufficient shade, so bring a chair down and watch your fellow competitors cross the finish line.**

**Food and drinks will be available for sale at the finish line. Make sure you have some cash to replenish yourself after your long day on the river and support the local people of this great community.**

**The North West Canoe Club thanks you for taking part in the 50<sup>th</sup> Gregory River Canoe Marathon and hopes to see you in 2026.**

The Gregory River Race could not be held each year without our wonderful sponsors.  
 A big thank you to all the sponsors who have supported us over numerous years and to those new who have come on board.



**DONNA MCCORMACK**