Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines

Compiled for the Victorian Climbing Community

Revision: V03

Published: 30 April 2020

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Foreword - Consultation Process for The Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines

The need for a process for the Victorian climbing community to discuss widely about best rock-climbing practices and how these can maximise safety and minimise impacts of crag environments has long been recognised. Discussions on these themes have been on-going in the local Victorian and wider Australian climbing communities for many decades.

These discussions highlighted a need to broaden the ways for climbers to build collaborative relationships with Traditional Owners and land managers. Over the years, a number of endeavours to build and strengthen such relationships have been undertaken; Victorian climbers have been involved, for example, in a variety of collaborative environmental stewardship projects with Land Managers and Traditional Owners over the last two decades in particular, albeit in an ad hoc manner, as need for such projects have become apparent.

The recent widespread climbing bans in the Grampians / Gariwerd have re-energised such discussions and provided a catalyst for reflection on what climbers are doing well, what practices are appropriate and what they can do better. The need to have such climbing best practices and climbing management best practices documented in a readily accessible document that is embraced by the wider climbing community, and embraced by Traditional Owners and Land Managers has been given added urgency.

Matthew Brooks, an Outdoor Educator and long-time climber, had already begun to formulate and pen ideas about the scope and content of such a document. When the Victorian Climbing Club (VCC) and the Australian Climbing Association Victoria (ACAV), agreed on the need to develop such a document, Matthew volunteered to coordinate its further development and elicit ideas and feedback from the wider climbing community. He co-opted appropriately experienced climbers with the requisite knowledge and skills to act as a ‘steering committee’ and provide a ‘road map’ to developing **The Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines.**

The initial focus was to formulate and agree on the broad aims and scope for such guidelines for recreational climbing in Victoria. Once this was done, the focus shifted to formulating an ongoing consultative process and then moving to ‘flesh out’ and develop the content.

The first drafts were developed largely by these individuals, mostly drawn from the ranks of VCC and ACAV but also including climbing guidebook writers and licenced tour operators. They also cast a wide net to garner input and feedback from other key groups and individuals with expertise, knowledge and insights pertaining to particular issues covered in the document.

What you see in this document are the fruits of these labours. This is not a finished product. Further Community consultation continues and constructive feedback is welcome to facilitate ongoing revision and improvement of this document.

REVISION

Revision	Date	Comment	Approved - ACAV	Approved - VCC
V01	3/10/2019	Table of contents issued for review	MCT	KML
V02	16/02/2020	Draft issued to Parks Victoria	n/a	n/a
V03	30/04/2020	**Published** further community feedback to be incorporated in future revision	MCT	KML

1. Introduction

Rock Climbers have always held a respectful appreciation of our wild places, including the flora, fauna and cultural heritage they contain. This appreciation is a large part of the reason climbers travel to such places. As our population expands and areas once distant become more accessible it is natural that there will be a growth of both the recreational and professional commercial popularity of our chosen recreation and the consequent potential environmental impacts. This will make it imperative that we shoulder responsibility as a community to ensure the areas in which we recreate are preserved and managed correctly for future generations.

Rock climbing activities are recognised as a legitimate use of public lands and Parks Victoria managed areas and the natural settings offered by parks are integral to the climbing experience. While climbing activities have some inherent risks, the challenge associated with undertaking these in the natural environment form an important part of the recreational opportunities provided in Public Lands and Parks Victoria managed areas.

The use of public lands and wilderness locations brings with it a responsibility to ensure that our activities are not depriving future others from enjoying what we are able to enjoy.

The natural areas in which we climb are also the Traditional Lands of a people who hold a deep connection to Country that is of great cultural and spiritual importance. The adoption of appropriate climbing practices that are concordant with protection of the environment and cultural heritage is thus of critical importance.

The challenges we face in the management and protection of these lands, without undue exclusion of recreational user groups, are not new. There are many examples around the world where these challenges are being successfully met. These Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines outline a future for responsible climbing that can coexist with robust measures for the protection of cultural heritage and the environment and can be facilitated by climbers working hand in hand with the Traditional Owners and Land Managers.

2. Executive Summary Recommendations

These are the key recommendations made by the climbing community that will grant better protection for our climbing areas, the vitally important environments and the cultural heritage values of these places.

These recommendations include;

- Adoption by the climbing community of a Climber Code of Conduct
- Consideration of measures including seasonal or periodic closures of areas for rehabilitation and flora and fauna recovery
- Adoption of a volunteer local area Climbing Steward Program supported by the Victorian climbing community
- Area Climbing Stewards to facilitate maintenance and monitoring of local areas in consultation with, and under the direction of, Traditional Owners and Land Managers
- Surveys conducted by area stewards to form a data-base identifying impacts (and potential impacts and issues) and identifying areas that require significant repairs, closure or monitoring
- Respectful and direct consultation with the appropriate Traditional Owner Groups to:
    - identify potential conflicts at different sites and
    - suggest solutions that will help safeguard the environment and cultural heritage and might help ensure ongoing access for climbers.
- Creation of a Fixed Safety Anchor data-base, by the climbing community, to facilitate the checking, testing, and subsequent repairs or replacements that might be required.
- Regular meetings, communication and information sharing with Traditional Owners and Land Managers to foster relationships and effective cultural and environmental protection.
- New cliff activity areas (i.e. those identified by either Parks Victoria, climbing organisations or individuals) are approved by Parks Victoria where:
    1. the site(s) diversify, and/or provide additional, climbing opportunities to those not already provided for elsewhere on managed estate;
    2. proposed use of the site(s) will not adversely impact on the use of an area by other visitors;
    3. natural and cultural values of the site(s) are protected.
- Parks Victoria to allow rock climbing in appropriate areas, consistent with the protection of park values.

- Parks Victoria will accommodate a diversity and range of settings and opportunities for rock climbing activities at appropriate sites across the State.
- A commitment by Parks Victoria (the land manager for many of the climbing sites in Victoria) to include in any new Landscape Management Plan, details of the process it will follow to consult with any recreational user group likely to be significantly impacted by any management change. Such consultations should include exploration of a range of options and should occur before the land manager makes any new set-aside determinations or changes to how it implements National Parks Regulations.

3. Climbing Management Principles

3.1 History of Rock Climbing in Victoria

Rock climbing in Victoria has a long and rich history with early photos dating back to the early 1900s suggesting that the contemporary sport started relatively early in the settlement.

Rock climbing as an activity comes as naturally to humans as walking. Throughout history numerous cultures have engaged in rock climbing. Examples include the North American Anasazi, (who from 1500BC climbed and lived on the sides of massive sandstone escarpments in southern Utah, USA) and the Chinese bird-nest collectors who in the 1300s scaled overhanging limestone cliffs, an activity which is still practised across south-east Asia today.

For thousands of years people have ascended mountains and rocky summits, usually in the pursuit of holy affirmation. By the late 1700s the European Alps started drawing genuine adventurers. These men and women began a systematic ‘conquest’ of the highest alpine mountains. The prestigious Alpine Club was formed in London in 1857 and many other alpine clubs followed in Europe and elsewhere. After the most obvious summits had been 'conquered' (via their easiest routes) these same climbers then turned their attention to ever more difficult lines. However, these ascents usually required more specialised rock climbing techniques, which were usually practised and developed on smaller cliffs. Then in the summer of 1886 Walter Parry Haskett Smith raised eyebrows with his solo ascent of Napes Needle in the English Lake District. Rock climbing had been born. By 1897 climbers had established climbs with impressive standards of difficulty (such as the bold ascent by O.G. Jones, of Kern Knotts Crack, also in the Lake District). Regions such as the Elbe Sandstone Mountains in Germany, the Dolomites in Italy and the Peak and Lake Districts of north of England became famous for their rock climbing venues.

Despite Australia's perception as a flat continent, early climbing adventurers were attracted to the spectacular volcanic spires of south east Queensland, the sandstone escarpments of the Blue Mountains in New South Wales and to the saw-tooth ranges of the Grampians in Victoria.

The earliest Victorian climbing records indicate that a group of adventurers and climbers were active in the Grampians as early as 1908. This makes the Grampians one of the earliest rock climbing destinations in the world. The famous Australian photographer George Rose captured images of climbers in 1909 making the first ascent of Gorilla Head, an intimidating multi-pitch roped climb on Mackays Peak. During the same period he also photographed climbers in action on Mt Rosea (then called Goat Rock), the Wonderland Range and on Mt Difficult. George Rose's images captured Australia's earliest serious climbers in action. In 1912, Herbert Percival Bennett was also photographing climbers in the Grampians. It is quite possible that both Australian photographers were influenced by England's famous George & Ashley Abraham's *Rock-Climbing in Wales* book which had been released in 1906.

Pic 1. A nerve-trying feat, scaling Gorilla Head, an immense overhanging cliff, Mackay's Peak, Grampians, Vic., Australia, *Monash Collections Online*, http://repository.monash.edu/items/show/14249 George Rose, 1909.

The First World War would have halted much of the early climbing exploits in Victoria. There is anecdotal evidence that rock climbing in the Grampians, Mt Buffalo and in the Cathedral Ranges (nearer to Melbourne) was practised between the wars. The Cathedral Ranges was used by the 1st Commando Regiment as a training location during the second world war but there is no photographic or written evidence of this.

Shortly after World War Two adventurers once again started investigating the rock climbing potential of various cliffs around Melbourne.

In 1947 Victoria's first official climbing club was formed. The Melbourne University Mountaineering Club (MUMC) spent much of its time at the nearby Sugarloaf (in the Cathedral Ranges) and at Hanging Rock. Eric Webb of the MUMC even produced an early guide to the Sugarloaf. In 1952 the Victorian Climbing Club (VCC) was formed. Such was the popularity of the Cathedral Range, the VCC built a substantial 12 bunk climbers hut on the Sugarloaf Saddle. This hut was in use for many years and even had a rescue stretcher situated inside Wells Cave. The hut was eventually dismantled and fire later destroyed all traces of it.

Throughout the 1950s, small groups of dedicated climbers continued to explore some of Victoria's most remote and spectacular cliffs. It was during this period that climbers were again paying regular visits to the Grampians (routes were climbed on the Fortress in 1956, Mackays Peak in 1958 and the Chimney Pots [then called the Temple] in 1959). The first climbs were also established at Mount Buffalo. Unfortunately many of the climbing records relating to the 1950s have been lost.

In the 1960s new technology in the form of nylon ropes, smooth-soled climbing shoes and better protection saw more and more people taking up rock climbing. For the first time climbers were

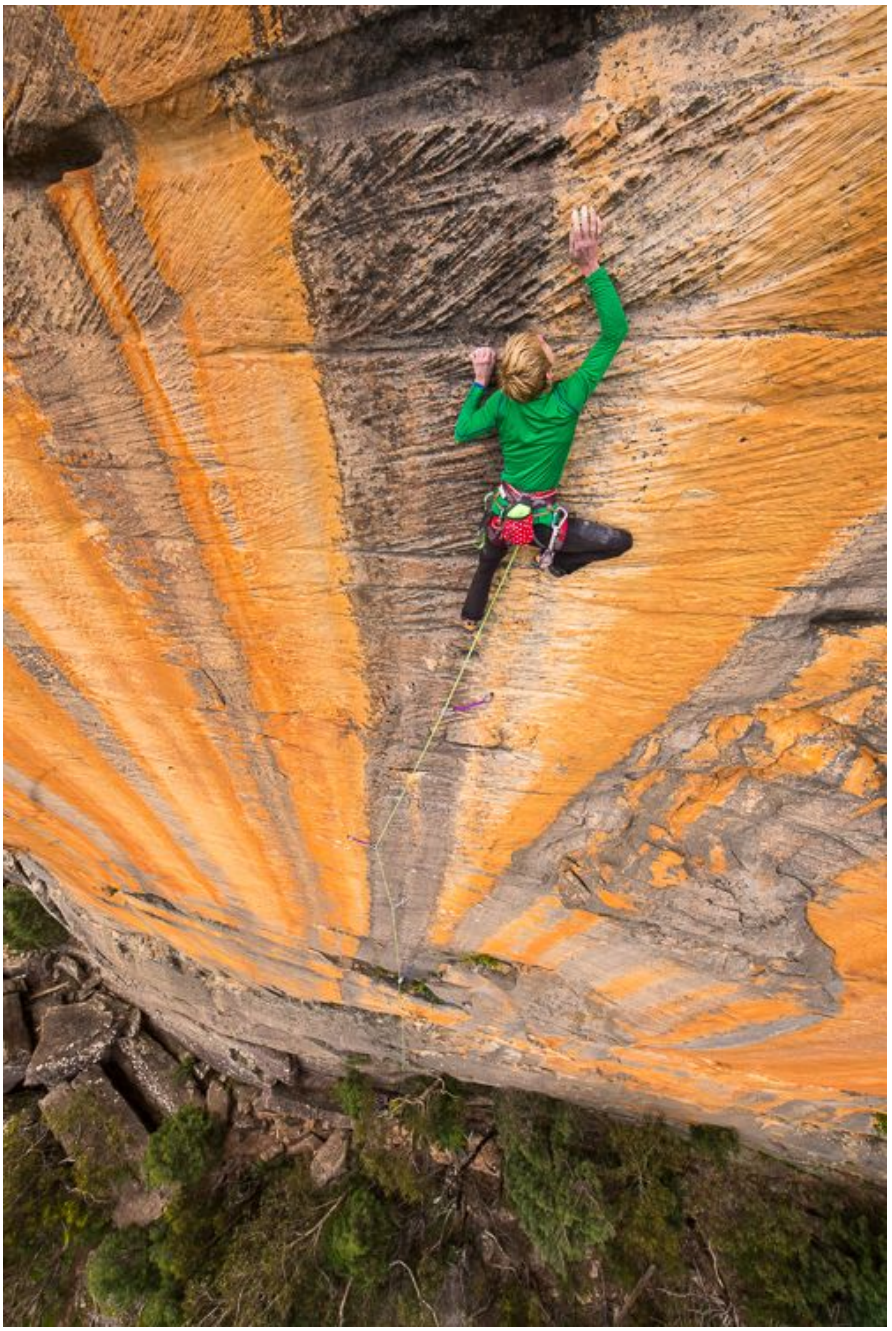
coming not only from academic backgrounds (usually through the MUMC or the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology [RMIT] Mountaineering Club) but also from working class backgrounds, something that had been happening in Britain over the previous decades. The VCC was instrumental in attracting climbers from less academic backgrounds. The increase in climber numbers also saw numerous new climbing destinations opened up. Major climbing discoveries during this period included Bugiga (Mount Rosea), Bundaleer, Gunigalg (Mount Stapylton) and Gar (Mount Difficult). It also saw the first route to be climbed on Taipan Wall (The Seventh Pillar, climbed in 1966, was a major step forward in Victorian climbing).

In 1963 Dyurrite (Mount Arapiles) was visited by climbers for the first time. Bob and Steve Craddock saw a photo of Mitre Rock on a RACV brochure and decided to brave the then five hour drive from Melbourne to check it out. The main cliff across the road from Mitre Rock was entirely unexpected. There is no doubt that the 1960s was a golden era in Victorian rock climbing exploration. Most of the important cliffs were discovered and many of the big classic lines were established. The VCC released their first official climbing guide to Mount Arapiles in 1965.

The 1970s saw more big advancements in rock climbing technology. The clean climbing revolution that had begun on the granite cliffs of California and in the eastern United States soon became the accepted norm here in Australia. The use of pitons and hammers were exchanged for wired nuts and hexentrics. In 1973 the US climber Henry Barber visited the Grampians and Arapiles and in the process opened up the eyes of the locals as to what was possible. The new clean climbing technology combined with new attitudes saw the standards of Victorian climbing explode. The invention of a radical new camming device called Friends by California climber Ray Jardine was also instrumental in pushing up the levels of difficulty. Another important addition was the introduction of RPs, a tiny wired brass nut that was originally developed for the sandstone and quartzite walls of the Grampians and Arapiles and for the thin granite seams of Mount Buffalo. Using these RPs allowed the 'new wave' of Australian climbers to tackle blank walls between the major lines, an unthinkable proposition of the 1960s.

The 1980s continued to see new innovations and with them even more difficult ascents completed. Sticky rubber soled shoes was a major step forward. Micro cams (first developed in Natimuk at Mount Arapiles by local climber Malcolm Matheson) were quickly copied by manufacturers in the UK and in the United States. New improved harness designs appeared on the market. The early 1980s saw dozens of climbers living at Arapiles establishing hundreds of new climbs with levels of difficulty comparable and in a few cases even exceeding those in the rest of the world. As the late 1980s progressed so did the influence of sport climbing, a style of climbing first developed by European climbers and which became one of the most popular climbing styles we see today.

Rock climbing in Victoria now has tens of thousands of devotees, spanning a variety of disciplines ranging from bouldering, sport-climbing, traditional climbing and even big-wall climbing. Victoria is seen as having some of the best climbing in the world.



Pic 2. Monique Forestier climbing the walls in between the cracks climbed in the 1960s New technology, fitness levels, shoes and techniques made these lines possible. Taipan Wall, Grampians, Vic., Australia is often described as "the best cliff in the world". *Photo Credit Simon Carter Onsight Photography.*

3.2 Modern Rock Climbing Custom and Practices

3.2.1 Modern Rock Climbing

Modern Rock climbing is an outdoor recreational activity in which participants climb up, down or across natural rock formations or artificial rock walls. The goal is to reach the top, summit of a formation or the endpoint of a usually pre-defined route without falling. Professional rock climbing

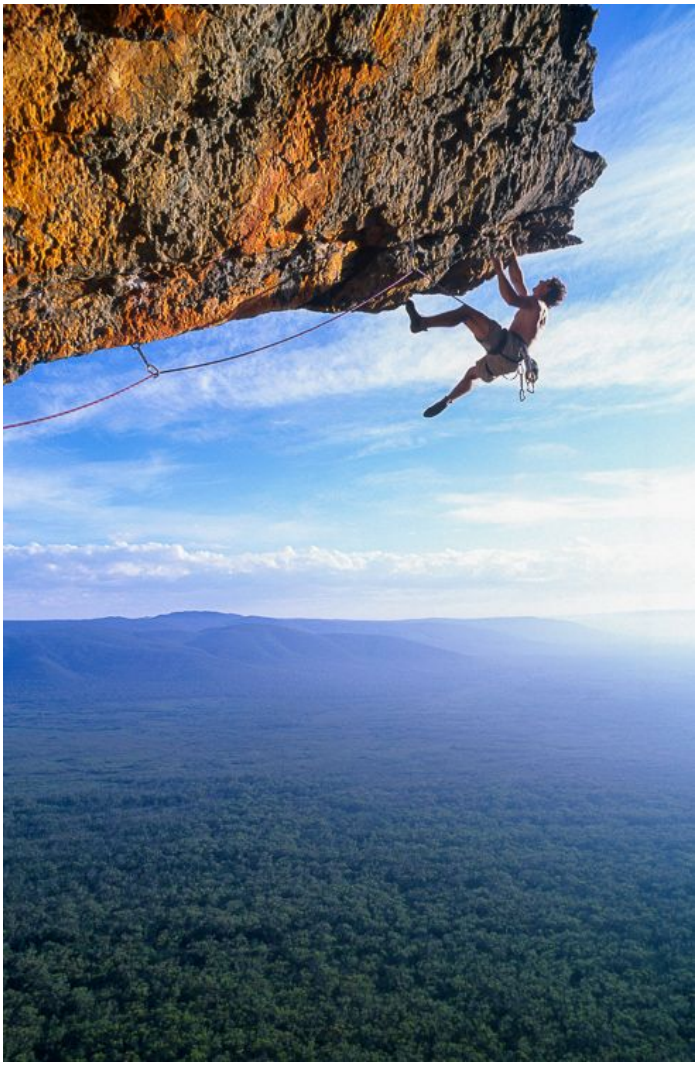
competitions have the objectives of either completing the route in the quickest possible time or attaining the farthest point on an increasingly difficult route.

Rock climbing is a physically and mentally demanding sport, one that often tests a climber's strength, endurance, agility and balance along with mental control. Critical knowledge of proper climbing techniques and use of specialized climbing equipment is crucial for the safe completion of routes.

Throughout the world there are a wide range and variety of rock types and formations and, consequently, there has evolved a universally recognised separation of rock-climbing into several different styles and sub-disciplines, such as scrambling, bouldering, traditional climbing, sport climbing, aid climbing, top rope climbing and abseiling that are relevant to climbing in Victoria.

3.2.2 Sport Climbing

Sport climbing is distinguished from traditional rock climbing by the use of permanently fixed safety bolt anchors. Sport climbing eliminates the need to place nuts or SLCDs. This style of climbing was developed in the early 1990s in Europe and allows the climber to concentrate largely on the technical moves at hand rather than the placing of natural protection. Sport climbing is an important arm of climbing and is very popular.



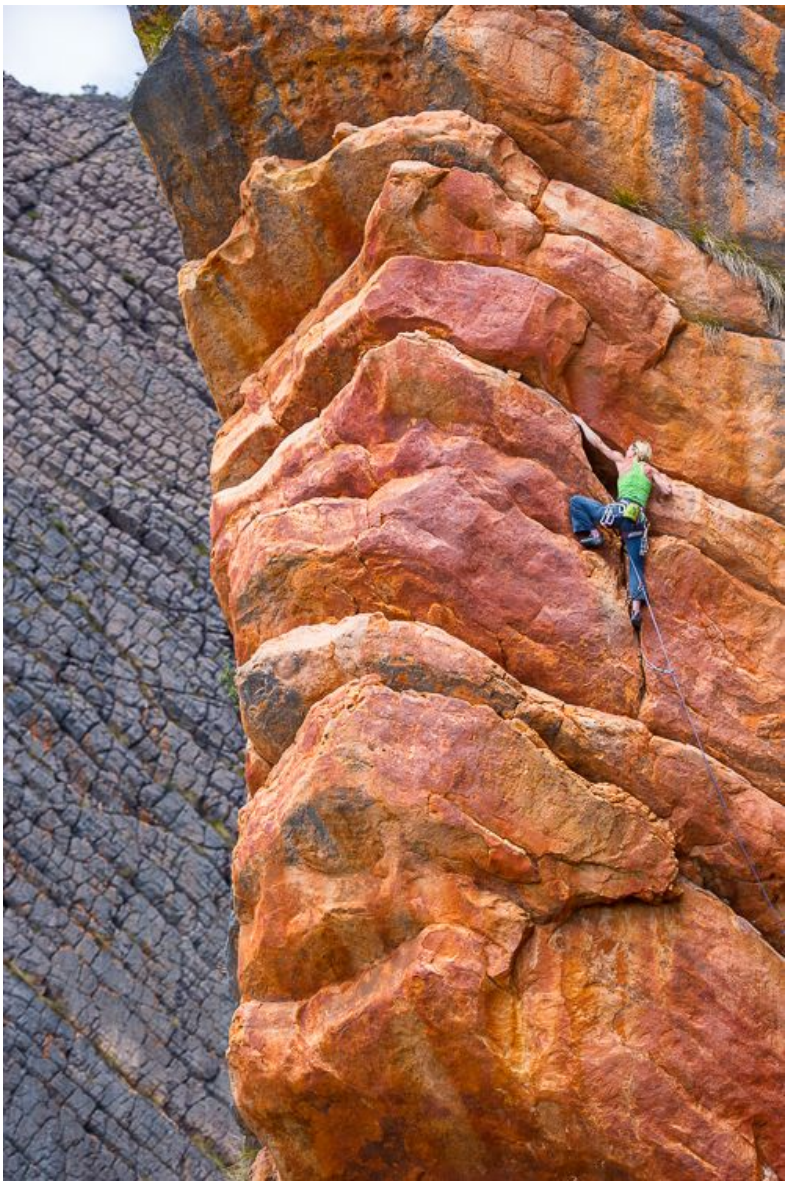
Pic 3. Sport Climbing is popular world wide, enabling climbers to climb otherwise impossible walls in safety using fixed anchors in between the cracks where removable

anchors cannot be used. The Lost World, Grampians, Vic., Australia. Aan area with unique steep climbing found nowhere else in the world. *Photo Credit Simon Carter Onsight Photography.*

In Victoria sport climbs are almost always established on rock that would otherwise not accept the use of natural protection. The safety bolt anchors are placed by the first ascent climber and remain in place for many years for the enjoyment of future ascentionists. Sport climbing also partially reduces the risk associated with traditional leading. In most cases safety bolt anchors are placed about two or three metres apart, although this will depend on how difficult the climbing is and the nature of the terrain. Most climbers will place the first safety bolt anchor on a sport climb at least four metres off the ground. Using a stick clip to clip the rope into the first safety bolt anchor further reduces possible accidents and reduces the climbs visibility to other park users. It is also now standard practise to colour all the hangers to better blend in with the surrounding rock. The safety bolt anchors are placed using world's best practice using a battery power drill by rappel. All sport climbs use lower-off safety anchors at the top of the climb. The use of lower-offs is both convenient and safe as well as eliminating any erosion issues that may be associated with a more traditional walk off along the top of the cliff.

3.2.3 Traditional Climbing

Traditional climbing involves rock climbing routes in which anchors used for fall protection are placed by the climber while ascending. Safety anchor bolts are rarely used. More commonly removable gear called cams, hexes, and nuts are placed in constrictions or cracks in the rock to protect against falls (in place of safety bolts) but these anchors are not used to aid the ascent directly. These anchors are retrieved by a second person or by abseil. Climbs which are protected by a mixture of preplaced bolts and traditional climbing protection (cams/nuts/hexes) are commonly referred to as "mixed" routes, as in a mix of traditional and sport climbing. Historically, pitons (a kind of deformable nail) were placed in constrictions in the rock instead of hexes, nuts and cams. These are difficult to remove and often destructive, resulting in a number of un-removable "fixed" pitons on many older traditionally protected routes, and are not commonly used in modern climbing due to the availability of modern removable anchors. Modern Traditional climbing is exceptionally low impact, leaves little trace and is considered as acceptable in wilderness areas around the world.



Pic 4. Traditional Climbing utilizing removable safety anchors is a low impact form of climbing practice enabling people to climb cracks and features on the faces. Grampians, Vic, Australia. An area with some of the best quality sandstone climbing in the world. *Photo Credit Simon Carter Onsight Photography.*

3.2.4 Scrambling

Scrambling is "a walk up steep terrain involving the use of one's hands". It is an ambiguous term that lies somewhere between bushwalking, mountaineering, and rock climbing. Scrambling often requires the use of ropes on exposed sections where there is the potential of a large and consequential fall.

Scrambling is an important aspect of climbing and all rock climbers will at some stage require scrambling techniques to gain the base of their chosen climb(s). There are many rock climbing locations in Victoria that require some form of scrambling to gain the base of the cliff. Examples of scramble approaches include all of the climbs on the Bluffs (and accessed via Alis) at Mt Arapiles, or Upper Tribute Wall at Mt Stapylton in the Grampians.

The difference between climbing and scrambling is that scrambling usually covers easy juggy ground that doesn't require the use of a rope but still requires the use of your hands. That said, what is one person's scramble may be someone else's (roped) climb and it is important to be able to make a judgement call as to when a scramble requires the use of a rope. For example, Alis at Mt Arapiles is occasionally climbed using ropes but many climbers are comfortable 'scrambling' up it. Other examples of this difficulty in defining the difference between climbing and scrambling include ascents of The Fortress in the Grampians. Most parties scramble to the summit (grade 1 or 2 in the Ewbank grading system) while others prefer a rope to give them confidence. Another famous example of this is Federation Peak in Tasmania. Most parties scramble to the top while others prefer to use a rope over a short section of the route where it is especially exposed.

It is impossible to draw a universal demarcation line between climbing and scrambling. In general terms, climbing uses rope for protection but scrambling does not. That said, there are many scrambles that some would feel safer and more comfortable using a rope. Ropes are sensible on more difficult or dangerous scrambles but when a scramble uses ropes and belays, this then should be regarded as climbing.

There are many climbing approaches and excellent 'walks' in Australia that require various degrees of scrambling to be able to complete them. All scramblers must know their limits and to turn back before they get into difficulties.

In the United States scrambling is regarded as Class 3 in the Yosemite Decimal System of climbing difficulty. In Britain scrambles are usually rated using Ashton's system of either Grade 1, 2, 3 or 3S (S for serious), with the grade being based around technical difficulty and exposure. In Europe easy scrambling is regarded as UIAA Class 1 (off trail hiking, minimal or no exposure and using a hand hold or two) and moderate to difficult scrambling is UIAA class II (handholds frequently needed, possible exposure, route-finding skills helpful).

Here in Australia we regard easy scrambling as having frequent use of large positive footholds and handholds with minimal exposure (up to grade 1 in the Ewbank grading system). More difficult scrambling is usually steeper but with generally good footholds and handholds but may be more exposed (up to grade 3 or 4 in the Ewbank grading system). While many experienced climbers are comfortable 'scrambling' over even more difficult terrain (say grades 5 to 7 in the Ewbank grading system) most climbers will feel more comfortable using a rope.

3.2.5 Bouldering

Bouldering is a form of rock climbing that is performed on small rock formations or artificial rock walls, known as boulders, without the use of ropes or harnesses. While it can be done without any equipment, most climbers use climbing shoes to ensure sufficient grip on footholds, chalk to keep their hands dry and provide a firmer grip, and bouldering mats or pads to prevent injuries from falls. Unlike free solo climbing, which is also performed without ropes, bouldering problems (the sequence of moves that a climber performs to complete the climb) are usually less than 6 meters (20 ft.) tall. Traverses, which are a form of boulder problem, require the climber to climb horizontally from one end to the other. Artificial climbing walls allow boulderers to train indoors in areas without natural boulders. In addition, Bouldering competitions take place in both indoor and outdoor settings.

Pic 5. Bouldering utilises little equipment or infrastructure and is an accessible way for climbers to challenge physically demanding problems that can be from a single move/1-2m or up to 10 metres. The Grampians, in Victoria holds world renowned areas with some of the worlds hardest boulder problems found here, with some of the best quality sandstone climbing in the world. *Photo Credit Simon Carter Onsight Photography.*

The sport originally was a method of training for roped climbs and mountaineering, so climbers could practice specific moves at a safe distance from the ground. Additionally, the sport served to build stamina and increase finger strength. Bouldering evolved in the 1900s into a separate discipline. Individual problems are assigned ratings based on difficulty. Although there have been various rating systems used throughout the history of bouldering, modern problems usually use either the V-scale or the Fontainebleau scale.

In Australia and around the world, bouldering has become very popular and, for many people, a worthy pursuit in its own right rather than an adjunct to, or merely a means of training for, roped climbing.

3.3 Climbing Stewardship and Crag Access in Victoria

Over the last few decades there have been numerous instances of climbing organisations such as the VCC or its environmental trust, Cliffcare, working with Parks Victoria and/or traditional owners to ensure protection of natural environments and cultural heritage, particularly at Dyurrite/Mount Arapiles and in Gariwerd/Grampians.

Further information on this can be found at this link;

https://www.cliffcare.org.au/our-record

A number of pertinent examples of such collaboration that have occurred from 1990 to 2020 are listed in Appendix A.

Pic 6 and 7. In 2008 after Aboriginal Surface Scatters were discovered under a climb named "Manic Depressive" at Bundaleer, CliffCare and Parks Victoria's Cultural Heritage team worked together to create a boardwalk and wooden tripod to protect both this area and the climb above. *Photo Credit Cliffcare Collection*

In addition to working collaboratively with Parks Victoria on a range of projects designed to protect and maintain crag environments and to maintain access to Gariwerd/Grampians on behalf of climbers over many years, Cliffcare has also been involved in discussions with Parks Victoria when specific access issues arose. A number of examples of 'wear and tear' at popular crags and harm to cultural heritage in crag environments have emerged over the last half a dozen years - these examples were of particular concern to climbers, land managers and Traditional Owners alike.

These examples pointed to a need for better management of visitors to these sites, including walkers, climbers, campers and casual visitors. In the short term these concerns led to bans being declared that prohibited climbing from huge areas of the Grampians National Park. Climbers felt unfairly targeted and blamed for damage often caused by non-climbing visitors who co-frequented

many of these same sites. In the medium term, these concerns re-energised efforts to re- assess just what environmental assets and cultural heritage existed at these sites as a basis for informing the best, appropriately tailored management options for the future.

A chronology of these concerns and discussions is summarised in appendix B.

Pic 8 and 9. In 2011 after identifying the track up the Pharos Gully at Djurrite - Mt Arapiles State Park Using native-species seedlings, a planting day is held in the Pines Campground with CliffCare, Friends of Arapiles and local volunteers, plus the Natimuk Primary School lending a hand! Fun fact: the school planted the original pines in 1936 , *Photo Credit Cliffcare Collection*

Pic 10. CliffCare volunteer Bec Hopkins joins volunteers from Absolute Outdoors and Tammy from PV Halls Gap for the annual Clean Up Australia Day event - abseiling from the extremely popular Pinnacles tourist area to fill six large bags of rubbish. Climbing volunteers also participate in the event at Arapiles around the campground and Summit Road. , *Photo Credit Cliffcare Collection*

3.4 Rock Climbing Management Around The World

3.4.1 Introduction

Rock climbing in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia, using ropes and rudimentary safety and belaying techniques, is over a hundred years old. Yet, as a popular and increasingly 'mainstream' recreation, rock climbing in Australia is in its relative infancy compared to other places in the world (notably Europe and North America). There are certainly lessons that can and should be learnt, by Australian climbers and land managers alike, from the common threads that are apparent in the evolution of approaches to the formal management of crag and mountain environments around the world, including management of the impacts of the different forms of climbing. In this regard, a considered examination of the long history of management and engagement by the leading climbing federations, clubs and access funds around the world is illuminating.

The United States started to see climbing access problems increasing considerably in number and scope in the 1980s. Many land managers suddenly felt overwhelmed by the increase in the popularity of climbing. Since most land managers had little knowledge about climbing or how to regulate it, the end result was that climbing areas were being closed down.

The American Alpine Club formed an Access Committee in 1985 to deal with the ever expanding closures—many of which could only be resolved by challenging the federal government or through outright purchase of land. In 1991, the Access Fund was formed to represent climbers and lobby to keep climbing areas open. The Access Fund realised that these closures needed climbing lobbyists to work with the government officials who were making the rules and decisions in Washington, DC.

In Europe the history goes much longer and deeper. Federations and Clubs, formed in the 1800s, have a legacy of successful lobbying for the freedom of access to the hills and of dealing with impacts in a society where Mountaineering and Climbing are much more part of the social fabric and are considered a mainstream recreational activity - not unlike surfing in Australia but with many tens of millions of regular participants.

In Australia, climbing was once considered an obscure extreme activity with few participants. Now that it has become a mainstream outdoor recreation, climbers are faced with the need to become more organised, to self-manage and to be proactive stewards looking after outdoor climbing environments. Now that indoor lead climbing, bouldering and speed climbing are recognised Olympic events, the expected media exposure will no doubt lead to burgeoning participation in outdoor climbing and an accompanying increase in pressures on environmental assets.

Another factor leading to the increase in impacts requiring proactive management is that rock climbing often occurs in unique and sometimes remote environmental settings. Areas such as cliff sides, canyons, and alpine areas of our parks, often harbor valuable natural ecosystems and cultural heritage sites which require careful management. Such settings present land managers with particular challenges; climbing activities take place primarily off-track, away from developed facilities, and these are areas that historically have had little oversight by land managers or owners.

With the rise in popularity of outdoor recreation activities, including rock climbing, it is inevitable that the environmental impacts of these recreational activities are becoming more noticeable. Actual and potential impacts of climbing and climbers on natural and cultural environments must be carefully considered and a range of management options tailored to preempt or mitigate these impacts.

3.4.2 USA and Canada

USA

In the mid 1980s, climbers began to see access problems emerging all across the United States. During this time the sport climbing movement was relatively new, and many land managers suddenly saw and were overwhelmed by the large number of people climbing. With most land managers having little or no knowledge about rock-climbing, and no experience managing it, a common response by land managers to the large growth in the number of climbers flocking to some climbing areas was to ban climbing in some of these areas.

The increasing panic in the climbing community around closures was exacerbated by the intra-community debates about changing climbing ethics - as embodied by the ethics of the relatively new 'sport' climbing approaches compared to the low-impact 'traditional' climbing practices. Fierce debates ranged about rap bolting, hang dogging, and climbers were divided on these issues. Some people were lobbying government agencies to try and prohibit things like rap bolting.

In 1985, the American Alpine Club formed an Access Committee to challenge the increasing closures—many of which would only be resolved by fighting the federal government or through the outright purchase of property. The access problems were so widespread, that it became clear that the climbing community needed a dedicated organisation to work on these issues and consult with land managers. So in 1991, the Access Fund was formed as its own organization to represent climbers and lobby to keep climbing areas open.

One of the Access Fund's biggest issues of the time was changing the mindset of the fighting anti-recreation policies at National Parks and Forests across the nation. It quickly became clear that the Access Fund needed to start dealing with the source—the government officials who made the rules back in Washington, DC.

The Access Fund promotes the responsible use and sound management of climbing resources by working in cooperation with climbers, other recreational users, public land managers and private landowners. It encourages an ethic of personal responsibility, self-regulation, strong conservation values, and minimum impact practices among climbers.

Working toward a future in which climbing and access to climbing resources are viewed as legitimate, valued, and positive uses of the land, the Access Fund advocates to federal, state, and local legislators concerning public lands legislation; works closely with federal and state land managers and other interest groups in planning and implementing public lands management and policy; provides funding for conservation and resource management projects; develops, produces, and distributes climber education materials and programs; and assists in the acquisition and management of climbing resources.

Right across the USA, there are scores of local crag or local area groups where climbers work hand-in-glove with land managers. Yosemite Valley (Ca), Index (Wa), Joshua Tree (Ca), Hueco Tanks (Tx), are just some of many well known examples. Most of these groups work to ensure crag areas and access tracks are well maintained and any adverse impacts of human traffic are minimised. Some of these groups are involved in discussing access options and possible restrictions and making recommendations on these matters to the land managers. Some of these groups make

recommendations about what proposed future new routes might or might not be allowed and/or how these might be protected.

The example of the Action Committee for Eldorado (ACE), in Colorado is illustrative of the approach taken in many parks across the United States to regulate the installation, removal or replacement of fixed climbing protection.

The Action Committee for Eldorado (ACE) was incorporated in 1992 by the Access Fund. Its first task was the creation of a fixed hardware review process and a Fixed Hardware Review Committee (FHRC) to supervise the process. In 2011, the FHRC was dissolved and its functions absorbed by the ACE Board. Currently the number of Board members is nine. ACE Board member's term length is three years and are staggered so that complete turnover of ACE Board members does not occur in any year.

Anyone desiring to (a) establish a new route requiring fixed hardware, i.e., bolts or pitons; (b) add or remove bolts or pitons from an existing route; (c) replace any fixed piton with a bolt; or (d) add, remove, or relocate fixed belay or rappel anchors on any route, must submit an application to ACE.

The fixed hardware review process is designed to provide the climbing community with the opportunity to comment on and discuss, approve or disapprove of any such applications. After considering the community's opinion on the applications, each member of ACE votes whether he or she believes that the climbing community supports the application. ACE then notifies the Park, and recommends that the Park either approve or deny the application based on the community's position.

ACE's recommendation to the Park is advisory only. The Park reviews the application to determine whether there are any environmental or other conflicts with the application and makes the final decision on whether to approve the application. It is of note and instructive that the Park has traditionally approved proposals recommended by ACE.

Presumably, if a similar approach was taken to the overseeing of fixed climbing gear in relation to National or State Parks in Victoria, such a committee or board would include experienced climbers, and representatives of Parks Victoria and Traditional Owners. Thus, Parks Victoria and Traditional Owners could be confident that any recommendations from the committee would have been based on prime considerations of protection of cultural heritage and environment as well as climber safety.

CANADA

In Canada, crag access and stewardship are primarily driven by provincial-based climbing organisations such as the Climbers Access Society of British Columbia (CASBC) and the Ontario Access Coalition. These organisations work with land managers to build and maintain trails to crags, to supply and retro-fit rappel anchors and to generally ensure that climbing sites are well looked after and that environments and sensitive habitats are protected. They also foster appropriate crag etiquette and partner with industry sponsors to help achieve these ends. One of many such industry sponsors is the Mountain Equipment Co-op (MEC) which is notable for its commitment to environmental causes and which has over 5 million members in Canada and internationally.

Such partnerships between climber-organisations and the recreation industry are similar to those in the U.S.A where, for example, the REI Co-op, with over 18 million members, works with non-profit organisations, particularly the climbing-focussed Access Fund to steward and maintain trails and public lands across the country.

3.4.3 Europe

In 1987 the European Program for Cooperation in the Mountains was established. The European Programme seeks to identify and analyse the economic and social forces impacting on biodiversity conservation, and apply the power of the constituency to address them.

The programme is active in a variety of theatres such as species and ecosystem conservation within agriculture, forestry, recreation and agriculture sectors and supports regional and global policy analysis and recommendations. The inclusion by climbers in the programme was based on the realisation that climbing in Europe is a continent-wide phenomenon. Any ban in one country or part of a country would lead to increased pressures on sites in other neighbouring countries. Thus regional and continental approaches were necessary to identify sites where restrictions and management approaches were necessary.

An approach was delivered working from the premise that it is possible to practise climbing in an environmentally harmless way, provided certain criteria are fulfilled. A study looked at sites across the EU, the impact, the solutions and what had worked how these could be implemented elsewhere to produce a sustainable outcome. This study also looked at the economic factors, legal access aspects and the large social influences in European society where the sport and associated branches are large.

Codes of conduct, buttressed by educational initiatives, were created. These, combined with practical management plans that outlined solutions for areas that were experiencing problems, paved the way for sustainable alpine and mountain activities. Climbing association used stewards to successfully manage the growth and development of sustainable climbing areas without restricting the “freedom of the mountains”. The International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation, commonly known by its French name, Union Internationale Associations d’Alpinisme (UIAA), was used as a base for integration of multiple associations at European level.

3.4.4 South Africa

The Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) was established in 1891. It was the first UIAA member in Africa. It comprises 14 autonomous Sections. Each Section mostly deals with the issues of mountain access in its local area, works building and maintaining relationships with landowners. This ensures mountain access for its members and guests.

Although the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa protects many human rights, these do not include the right to access the mountains for recreational purposes. This access requires the permission of the landowner – either the State or a private landowner.

Most mountain land owned by the State or statutory entities has been proclaimed as a protected area, such as a national park, a nature reserve or a mountain catchment area. Many of these are also proclaimed UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Most areas have a management plan for environmental conservation and regulations governing access and activities within them. The public may have access to these areas subject to the conditions applicable in each case.

The 19 national parks in South Africa are managed by the S A National Parks Board Table Mountain National Park is a gem in the heart of the City of Cape Town, with easy access for all. Table Mountain, recently proclaimed one of the Seven New Natural Wonders of the World, heads an 80-kilometre string of peaks that offer a great many classic rock climbing routes, bouldering spots,

footpaths for hikers and several bolted crags for sport climbing. By agreement with SANParks, the MCSA manages all the bolting in the Park. MCSA volunteers also form the backbone of the mountain search & rescue service. State nature reserves are usually managed by the local municipality or by provincial entities such as the Western Cape Nature Conservation Board. The MCSA maintains good relationships with State entities. They have assisted them with bolting, rock climbing guidebooks, search and rescue, surveying their hiking trail systems, and have granted us some special privileges such as access to some pristine mountain areas that are closed to the general public.

Many mountain areas in South Africa are in private ownership, usually forming part of a farm which depends on mountain water for irrigation. Some farmers offer accommodation on their farms to the public on a commercial basis, and allow their paying guests access to their mountains. Most farmers have understandable concerns about allowing strangers access to their farms. These concerns include the safety and security of their farmworkers, crime such as stock theft, the risk of liability arising from veld fires or personal injury, littering, pollution of water sources, and even the nuisance of traffic raising dust which may spoil export fruit. Yet many farmers have proved willing to share their mountains with dependable people who appreciate mountain splendour. The MCSA has been able to build relationships and develop arrangements for access to many privately-owned mountain areas. Some of these arrangements lead to written agreements and protocols for visitors but ultimately they depend upon trust, which arises when visitors show due respect for the farmers, their neighbours and the land itself. Farmers also appreciate that we are able to be their eyes and ears, to report back to them on issues such as outbreaks of invasive alien vegetation in remote parts of their land.

By donation or purchase, the MCSA has acquired ownership of, or registered servitude rights of access to, many extensive tracts of mountain land. Some properties now have built huts or shelters. Most of these properties are wilderness. The MCSA's twofold objective is to conserve this land for posterity and for our members and their guests to have unhindered access, to explore, camp and climb. To reach some of the remote properties, MCSA must cross the land of other landowners, and in each case we have had to negotiate arrangements for access. Most of these arrangements have been recorded in written agreements, and some even registered as formal access servitudes against our neighbours' title deeds.

The MCSA believes that stewardship arrangements, that help conserve mountain and cliff environments, and thereby help to secure access to the mountains and crags in South Africa, are in good shape.

3.4.5 Australia

Australia has a number of organisations that have been involved in the management of climbing related access issues and consulted extensively with land managers to reduce climber visitor impact at our crags. Many of these organisations formed from social groups organising trips to the cliffs and mountains on weekends and have evolved into incorporated clubs or associations with Access focused staff and committee members. These include Australian Climbing Association Queensland, Sydney Rockclimbing Club, Canberra Climbers Association, Victorian Climbing Club, Australian Climbing Association Victoria, Climbers Association of South Australians, and Climbers Association of Western Australia.

VICTORIA

For the last few decades Cliffcare has been involved in extensive stewardship works organised through consultation with Parks Victoria. Examples include track work and fencing at sections at Mt Arapiles, track and erosion improvements at Camels Hump and the You Yangs, anchor replacement and tree protection at Werribee Gorge and Staughton Vale in the Brisbane Ranges. In the

Grampians National Park, the Victorian Climbing Club worked with Parks Victoria and the Traditional Owners to protect an important cultural heritage site at the well known climbing location of Bundaleer. In Summerday Valley, Parks Victoria and Cliffcare worked together to improve trails and protect the area from further erosion after the extensive damage from the 2009 and 2011 bushfires.

Further detail of this extensive work and consultation can be seen at Appendix A.

NSW

The Sydney Rock Climbing Club and Crag-Care have been involved in a wide range of environmental support and clean up activities in the Sydney and Blue Mountains Region with the climber run Crag-Care working alongside Blue Mountains City Council and NSW National Parks in the restoration of many tourist and climber accessed paths in the Blue Mountains near Blackheath and Katoomba.

Bouldering is extremely popular in the Sydney region and is a popular activity in the Bidjigal Reserve is regarded as an important and popular climbing area in Sydney. This area is regarded as world class in quality. It also contains several climbs of extreme difficulty which are of national significance. The area attracts climbers from other parts of the country as well as overseas visitors. (Dr Peter Balint pers. comm. 25/2/2010) Sydney Bouldering (Balint 2001) contains detailed information about the climbing opportunities in Bidjigal Reserve and outlines the ethic of environmental care in a section of the guide called ‘Very Important Stuff’. The general name given for climbing areas in the reserve is The Balkans. The two main areas are:

The Trenches – the rocks behind the playing fields on the western side of Darling Mills Creek

Frontline – the cliff line behind the houses on the opposite side of the creek, accessed from Lara Crescent

A misinterpretation of climber activity meant that climbers were thought to etch hand-holds (that is not the case and highly unacceptable) into some of the rock faces and to cause minor damage to vegetation around the rocks. However, if done in accordance with the ethic of environmental care outlined in Balint (2001), bouldering has limited impact and is compatible with the character of the bushland reserve. There was no evidence of rubbish or vandalism during the field inspection for this Plan of Management, however these have occurred in the past (by local non - climber youth). Clean up days have been organised by the Sydney Rock Climbing Club and other informal groups within the Sydney climbing community. These groups have often removed large amounts of household waste left by illegal dumping.

3.5 Lessons Learned From Other Areas

From all studies and areas it has been found that proper consultation between Land Managers and Climbing Associations and the use of motivated local area climbing stewards has been essential in the formation of sustainable management plans and programs that allow the continuation of climbing in an environmentally and culturally harmless and respectful way. Climbers know where they do and don't go, and the solutions to best avoid 'no go' areas or to minimise impacts. Many outdoor people are environmentally management trained for sustainable tourism.

Local climbing groups often appoint area stewards who ensure regular direct liaison with local Land Manager/Parks staff. They assist in organising and promoting clean ups, track repair, track realignment, weed removal, tree planting, climber education, safety anchor replacement and low level 'policing' of correct climber behaviour and etiquette.

Track rationalisation, realignment and hardening of social/game trails and staging areas has proved successful in many areas across the world when combined with discreet signage and fencing. This work can often be carried out by local steward groups who are more than keen to see their area successfully preserved for the future and hold knowledge of the area and of which tracks are not needed. Camels Hump and the You Yangs near Melbourne have seen such successful projects and protection by local climbing stewards.

At Mount Arapiles, the rationalisation of lower-offs or fixed abseil points has minimised climbers' tracks down loose and steep descent gullies and allowed for reduction of once significant tracks and erosion problems. Educational programs and notice boards provide a base for communication of correct behaviour, closures and of impacts that need to be minimised.

In the US at Hueco Tanks cultural education sessions have been run for local climbers and cultural heritage inductions and programs for guides that operate in the area. Local climbers are utilised on a volunteer basis to ensure that appropriate information is passed on out at the cliffs. Thus, stewards act to engage with and educate climbers about the ethics and standards of the local climbing community.

3.6 Climbing Area Visitor Capacity

3.6.1 Rock Climbing Visitation Historically

Rock climbing and its associated activities such as bouldering have traditionally been considered 'extreme' sports with relatively small numbers of fanatical participants. Statistically, even on a per capita basis, the safety of the activity compares favorably with most mainstream sports. This has been true historically when climbing numbers were relatively low, and today when there are many more participants.

Historical figures on the number of climbers using particular areas is near impossible to come by because the recreational side of climbing is generally not undertaken in the organised way many activities are. It is very similar to bushwalking (despite the extra specialist knowledge required) in that there are many people that participate recreationally even outside of the usual official clubs (ie The Victorian Climbing Club) and they do not log their participation in any location.

3.6.2 Rock Climbing Capacity Precedents

In the US in the 1990s climbing saw and significant growth in numbers. This was in fact due to a number of factors that are somewhat similar to the growth in numbers we are now seeing in Australia 10 - 15 years later.

Theses factors include;

- the expansions and convenience of sport climbing,
- the continual growth of indoor climbing and opening of climbing gyms
- popularisation of climbing by mainstream media coverage of outdoor climbing
- growth, development and accessibility of bouldering
- lower costs and accessibility of climbing equipment
- the inclusion of indoor climbing into the Olympics for Tokyo 2020

Recent years have seen a significant increase in the popularity of indoor/artificial climbing. Despite some 'flow on', there does not seem to have been a correspondingly large increase in participation in outdoor climbing. There are a number of factors at play that have led to increases in visitation to certain cliffs and bouldering areas and yet no increase or even declines in visitation to other sites. Climbing venues characterised by convenient access, a wide range of good quality routes, and safe, easy to protect sport routes, or a combination of these factors, are usually very popular. Understandably then, crags such as Taipan Wall, Bundaleer, Summerday Valley and Mt Arapiles have experienced a lot of traffic. The consequent increasing impact has become very apparent at some cliffs.

Other more remote areas or traditional climbing areas that require significant effort to access or climb have not had similar increases in visitation and remain largely untouched. Many climbing sites in the Grampians and elsewhere have experienced no visits apart from the visits of the first climbers that climbed there and recorded their climbs. A significant number of Grampians climbs were first completed in the 1970s and 80s; many of these have not been visited or climbed since, simply due to their remoteness. This would be similar for many areas throughout Victoria. Not all areas are equal in terms of route quality, rock features, aesthetics, climbing style, difficulty of access or level of challenge that they provide.

3.6.3 Gariwerd / Grampians Rock Climbing Case Study

In early 2019 in line with the sweeping climbing bans put in place, Parks Victoria made several media releases detailing their estimated numbers of climbers visiting Gariwerd / Grampians to climb. These numbers were poorly researched using average Grampians visitation numbers and figures taken from the climbing website thecrag.com. This website is a database used to record in electronic form climb worldwide, climber data and ascents. The following will explain why these figures were far from accurate and more realistic figures are possibly attined.

The number of rock climbers who visited Gariwerd/Grampians National Park in 2018 is estimated between 1,500 and 5,000 climbers. While this is a large range, it is significantly smaller than the estimate of 80,000 people that has been released by Parks Victoria.

We believe that Parks Victoria have grossly overestimated the number of climbers visiting the Grampians and the purpose of this report is two-fold:

1. to shed light on the potential misinterpretations by Parks Victoria that led them to estimate such extreme numbers.

2. to correct the estimates that have been blindly distributed by the media and politicians as arguments to support the climbing bans in the Grampians.

Statement by Parks Victoria

“Recently, Parks Victoria has become aware of potential impacts from climbing activity on the park’s environmental and cultural values. The number of climbing sites has risen from approximately 2,000 sites in 2003 to an estimated 8,000 sites in 2018. Visitation has also increased from approximately 8,000 people in 2003 to 80,000 people in 2018.”

~ Parks Victoria, Ministerial Response in early 2019 to a letter written about the Grampians climbing bans

Corrected Estimates by Australian Climbing Association Victoria (ACAV) and Climbing community observations and recordings.

It is estimated that in 2018, there were between 1,500 and 5,000 climbers who visited the Grampians. Those climbers made between 5,300 and 17,800 total visits that year. Whether comparing 5,000 climbers or 17,800 visits, it is still only a fraction of the Parks Victoria estimate of 80,000 people.

In 2018, there were 1.07 million tourists who visited the Grampians overnight.[1] Having made 17,800 visits, climbers visiting the Grampians made up just under 2% of visitation to the Grampians and it would be prudent for Parks Victoria to investigate the cultural and environmental impact of the remaining population of visitors to the Grampians who have not been banned from activities in the Park.

It is estimated that there are 200 climbing areas in the Grampians (not 8,000), of which approximately 60% have currently been banned [2].

No estimates were made for climbers or visitation in 2003 as there are currently no reliable sources available for this information.

[1] Grampians tourism report 2018:
https://grampianstourism.com.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2019/04/Grampians-Tourism-travel-snapshot-YE-Dec-18.pdf

[2] Infographic demonstrating Grampians closures:
https://savegrampiansclimbinghome.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/closed_extent_map_large.jpg

Definitions

Terminology and Assumptions

theCrag is a website that describes itself as a project to collect and distribute climbing information to the climbing community. Climbers use this website to find new climbing areas, read about climbs, and use as a logbook to record what they have climbed and when.

A route is an individual climb or bouldering problem. A rock wall or boulder may have many routes on it.

An ascent is when an individual climber climbs a route.

A site or area is a region that may contain one or many routes on one or many walls and boulders.

A visit is a trip to the Grampians that may be one or more days. In tourism, typically visitors are counted rather than the number of days that someone may visit a tourist destination.

Example

An individual climber could visit the Grampians for one weekend and climb in the area Ravine. On both days of the weekend, they could climb the route Pains Ford twice to warm up and then attempt to climb a harder route called Portland Criminals three times. The counts for this visit to the Grampians would be:

• 2 routes (Pains Ford, Portland Criminals)

• 10 ascents (4 x Pains Ford, 6 x Portland Criminals)

• 1 area (Ravine)

• 1 climber

• 1 visit

Inadvertent Misinterpretation by Parks Victoria

It is believed that Parks Victoria made two errors while interpreting data from theCrag. They may have misinterpreted ascents to mean visits and routes to mean areas. Both misinterpretations would lead to large over-estimates about the number of climbers visiting and climbing areas in the Grampians. These misrepresentations are due a lack of understanding of climbing terminology, consultation with industry/subject matter experts and research.

Limitations of theCrag data

Growth based on theCrag data is challenging because theCrag has increased in popularity significantly since 2015 and it is not possible to determine what proportion of growth is due to popularity of the website versus popularity of rock climbing in the Grampians. As such, estimates for 2003 have not been made in this report.

It is unknown what proportion of climbers publicly record their climbing. The number of climbers must be multiplied by some unknown factor to account for this. The range of this factor was estimated as follows:

Lower factor (3): In 2018, the second Grampians Bouldering Festival was run and there were approximately 200 attendees who purchased tickets. On that weekend, there were 103 climbers who recorded their visit on theCrag. If approximately 100 climbers also visited the festival without purchasing a ticket, then it is possible that there were 300 climbers who visited the Grampians that weekend. It is estimated that there were 300 climbers who visited the Grampians while only 103 recorded their visit on theCrag, resulting in a factor of 3x.

Upper factor (10): This is the largest unknown in this analysis however it has been included as a potential factor since it may have been used by Parks Victoria and has been referenced as a very uncertain ‘finger in the air’ by other interested parties. It seems plausible that 10% of visits are logged on theCrag by climbers considering that many climbers never use theCrag, some climbers only log certain visits, international climbers may not use theCrag, and private accounts are not included in the data.

Tables and Figures Table 1. Estimates of climbing areas and climbers visiting the Grampians

This table provides estimates of climbing areas and climbers visiting the Grampians by both Parks Victoria and ACAV. Calculations are provided on the following page with references provided

Figure 1. Climbing history logged on theCrag

This figure shows the climbing history that has been logged on theCrag dating back to 2000. There was a decrease in climbing from 2005 to 2010, likely due to bushfires affecting the Grampians. The year 2015 marks the start of a period of steady growth of climbers logging ascents on theCrag, however it is unknown what proportion of this growth is due to increased popularity of the Grampians versus increased popularity of the website due to marketing efforts and general interest in technology.

3.7 Benefits of Cooperative Climbing Management

It has been recognised world wide by land managers that a properly engaged and consulted user group community produces many benefits culturally, environmentally and economically for the areas and regions they visit. Many of these benefits have been seen already within the Victorian Climbing Community in past and recent times

3.7.1 Cultural Benefits

It has been shown that in the United States area where climbers are engaged by local Land Managers, and First Peoples representative groups the land is afforded a much higher level of protection by those user groups acting as effective stewards - assuming a protective and educated ownership role.

Volunteer area stewards are able to monitor, educate, correct and somewhat police behaviour of land users, enforce existing buffer zones and alert Land managers to potential problems before they arise or at a point where any problems require minor solutions. Local stewards often know the areas very well and with basic cultural induction are able to pass on detailed knowledge of the area ensuring user have greater respect for sensitive areas.

Local stewards are often in particular sections of the Park that are not able to be regularly visited by Land Manger staff. With a properly connected stewardship program comes ownership and protection of important cultural areas.

Local stewards, guides and Licenced Tour Operator groups also form an important part in educating the remainder of the climbing community and user groups about the stories and the importance of that land to the aboriginal people of that land. This may be through inductions (such as at

Summerday Valley in 2019) or through educational programs and engagement with local traditional owner groups.

Pic 11. Following some flood damage to the lower section of the climbers track to the Gallery, and concerns about traffic past the Billimina shelter, climbers began using an alternate (previously closed) trail to the right of an art shelter. CliffCare notified Parks Victoria upon becoming aware of this and directed climbers away from this area with plans for trail repair to protect the cultural heritage site and the environment. *Photo Credit Cliffcare Collection*

In the Grampians climbing was taking place at the Millenium Caves on the Goat Track in the Victoria Range. It was noted in the 1990 and early 2000s climbing guides that there was Aboriginal Art Work in one of the caves. The nearby climbing routes were re - routed to avoid this area and the Art remains undamaged to this day.

At Bundaleer, stone artefacts were found at the base of one of the climbs and with collaboration from the local indigenous community and Parks Victoria a timber walkway and signage was constructed to help people bypass the area and to prevent any harm occurring to the artefacts.

3.7.2 Environmental Benefits

Co-operative climbing management awards great benefit to the Land Manager as has been demonstrated throughout the world.

Local volunteer groups are able to organise or help with clean ups, minor track repair tasks, erosion mitigation, weed removal, re-vegetation, education, etiquette awareness, signage, and are able to recognise potential environmental concerns before they become larger issues.

Pic 12. Clean Up Australia Day working bee at Mt. Arapiles and in preparation for a major revegetation project in the Pines Campground at Mount Arapiles, Jim Newlands propagates native callitris pines from around the Mount. *Photo Credit Cliffcare Collection*

3.7.3 Economic Benefits

Local climbing groups have been employed successfully to assist in the management of climbing and potential use issues throughout the world and there are numerous economic benefits and reasons for this to be cooperatively engaged in by land managers and traditional owners. Volunteer projects attract both volunteer land and potential environmental funding and grants from external sectors that are not within the Land Managers budget. The successful application for and use of 'Pick my Project' funding for the laying of hundreds of stone steps to stabilise walking paths and mitigate erosion at Mt Arapiles is one such example.

A solid and properly engaged climbing community such as that at Horsham and Natimuk brings many resources and skills to the community. Climbers also happen to be doctors, nurses or other medical personnel, educators, lawyers, small business owners, trades-people, firefighters, police, defence personnel, artists, chefs, engineers, IT specialists, scientists and researchers, managers and administrators. Many of these people have moved to climbing areas to live, bringing their skills to local areas where such skills can be in short supply. In the regions surrounding climbing areas such as Mt Arapiles, the Blue Mountains and Nowra, for example, it has become extremely common for climbers seeking a lifestyle change to move into the local area, buy property, start businesses and or bring their skills and trades with them from the metropolitan areas.

Others visit for extended periods - groups involved with Defence Force, police or fire brigade roping courses have spent large amounts of money within the community over month-long periods. Many recreational climbers will tend to visit the Grampians, Mt Arapiles and other such destinations for multi-day periods, multiple times in the same year. These people are return visitors spending money

on accommodation, camping fees, food, fuel, vehicles, vehicle hire, equipment hire, tourist services, all within the community.

A 2015 study completed in the Red River Gorge climbing area in Kentucky in the USA produced the following findings:

Finding One: Climbers are a substantial economic force in the RRG.
Rock climbers are spending $3.6 million dollars annually in an area that includes some of the poorest counties in the United States. Their expenditures create $1.3 million dollars in added value to this economy and $2.7 million in total revenues in sales for local business owners.
Finding Two: Demographic data contradicts prevailing climber stereotypes.
Prevailing myths about rock climbers often suggest they are uneducated, unemployed, and contribute little to the local economy. However, over half of respondents in our study have college degrees and one fifth of our respondents have terminal degrees such as doctorates. Most of those who do not have college degrees are, in fact, college students.
Finding Three: Climbers create job opportunities in the RRG.
Finding Four: Climbers are strongly interested in selective economic development in the RRG utilizing locally owned businesses.

This study found that rock climbing generates approximately 39 full-time jobs in the RRG. This does not include any cases of part-time jobs, seasonal workers, or business owners and entrepreneurs. The strong recommendation from the study was that local policy increase access to climbing areas to further increase climbers' economic impact.

4. Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines

4.1 Introduction

The majority of outdoor climbing and abseiling occurring in Victoria takes place within National Parks, State Parks and other public land managed by Parks Victoria or Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Many of these parks contain unique flora and fauna, represent or encompass prime examples of particular types of landscapes or ecosystems, or contain priceless cultural heritage.

The Grampians, for example, has the richest concentration of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites in Victoria, provides refuge for a variety of fauna including peregrine falcons and rare species of rock wallabies, and is home to flora endemic only to those ranges. It encompasses wilderness areas and conservation reference zones as well as popular tourist sites.

Understandably then, some such sites have more stringent conditions applied to climbing than apply at other places in Victoria. It is important that climbers find out about any access restrictions that might apply and be well versed about the appropriate climbing etiquette in the places they intend to climb.

In line with the Parks Victoria Climbing Code of Conduct, climbing and abseiling will continue to be allowed and accepted as a valid recreation in most of Victoria's parks if climbers are responsible, observe basic principles of conservation and respect local climbing, values and traditions.

4.2 Crag Stewards Victoria

Proper collaborative management of climbing areas has the ability to ensure that areas are appropriately protected for the future.

Part of the success of overseas programs has been due to having active local climbing area stewards who are able to log the wear and tear at their local crags, foresee and act on potential problems that may arise and monitor and manage existing infrastructure on the ground and the cliffs.

Stewards are voluntary members of the climbing community who work in collaboration with a lead coordinator, local Parks Victoria staff and Traditional Owners to complete minor works and educate as required to ensure environmental protection, cultural protection and the effective management of local cliffs.

These volunteer stewards are required to undergo training in Parks Victoria's volunteer programs and in accordance with the requirements of the Crag Stewards Victoria.

Levels of Crag Stewards

Stewardship Coordinator

- lead coordinator of stewardship program

- Liaises with ACAV, VCC, Cliffcare and Parks Victoria
- Assist and overseas grant coordinator

Region Stewards

- coordinate larger regions
- 7 Regions in Victoria; Melbourne Surrounds, North East Victoria, Mount Buffalo, North West Victoria, Gariwerd / Grampians, Djurrite / Arapiles and South East Victoria
- Help coordinate larger tasks with local Parks Staff, stewards and volunteers in their region
- Report to state coordinator
- Region stewards do not need to be a crag steward - their responsibility is in collating risk assessments and organising working bees

Area Stewards

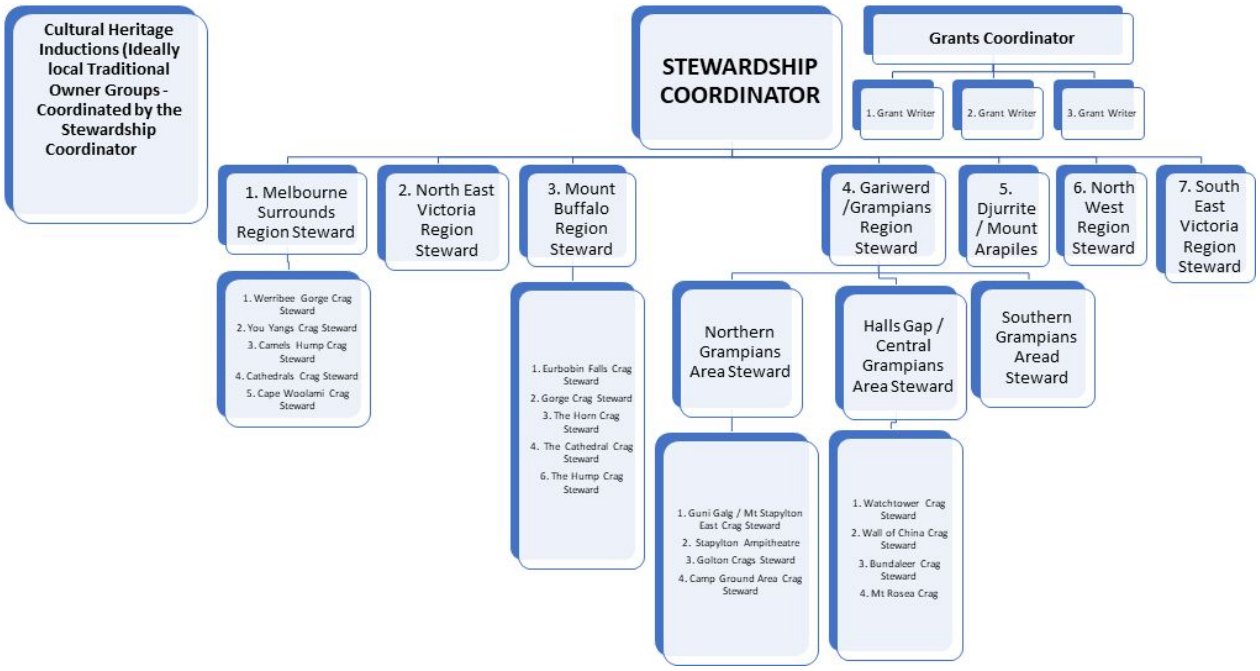
- Primarily for the larger regions that require more people and attention
- can also be a crag steward
- has responsibility of checking risk assessments carried out by the crag stewards for the region
- Report to region stewards

<u>Steward roles;</u>

- Attend their local cliffs at least 3 times a year
- Report conditions /concerns back to a steward coordinator
- Liaise with local Park staff
- Carry out a templated cliff risk assessment incorporating impacts and potential area conflict with environmental and cultural heritage values to highlight any possible conflicts with climbing traffic
- Help coordinate local repair work or working bees
- Liaise with Traditional Owners to ensure respectful climbing behaviour and co-ordinate local cultural heritage inductions.

Grant Applications and Grant Writers

- Responsible for looking for grants that are able to be used for environmental projects
- Possible small team of writers to assist



Pic 13. Crag Stewards Victoria - Organisation Chart, Courtesy Steven Wilson 2020.

4.3 Education and Climber Behaviour

4.3.1 Climber Behaviour and Etiquette

It is essential for any management plan that clubs and associations engage and educate all members of the climbing community about climber etiquette and that climber behaviour correlates with the land users values. It is generally the case that climbers are very aware of the environment they choose to climb in and climber ethics vary only small amounts from area to area worldwide with a respected code of practice largely mirroring National Parks accepted practice. The following is the Victorian Climbing Code of Conduct as accepted by Parks Victoria;

4.3.3 Victorian Climbing Code of Conduct

The following is the Victorian Climbing Code of Conduct as accepted by Parks Victoria and completed by the Victorian Climbing Club.

CLIMBERS CODE

- Find out about and observe access restrictions and agreements. Ensure access by not disturbing livestock or damaging crops.
- Use existing access tracks to minimise erosion and the need to mark new routes.
- Do not disturb nesting birds or other wildlife. Help protect all native plants; respect sites of geological, cultural, or other scientific interest.
- Do not leave any rubbish. Keep campsites clean. Avoid all risk of fire.
- Dispose of human waste in a sanitary manner. Do not pollute water supplies.
- Respect established climbing traditions in ethical matters such as the use of chalk,

pitons, bolts etc.
- Avoid indiscriminate or excessive use of fixed equipment.
- In essence, climb clean

GENERAL

- Before establishing a new climbing area, the approval of the land manager must be obtained. In existing (ie. Documented) climbing areas, be conscious of minimising the visual and environmental impact of new climbs:
- Do not mark the start of climbs. Good descriptions in guide books should suffice.
- Minimise the use of bolts (only for safety purposes) and avoid using galvanised bolts.
- Make yourself aware of and respect access arrangements and restrictions. On private property, do not disturb livestock or damage crops.
- Access to cliffs is only permitted on existing tracks. Contact Parks Victoria or Natural
- Resources and Environment if you believe a new track is required, or if a route to a cliff needs marking.
- Do not disturb vegetation, nesting birds or other wildlife. All native plants and animals are protected.
- Respect sites of geological, cultural or other scientific interest.
- Respect established climbing traditions in ethical matters such as the use of chalk,
- bolts etc. Avoid indiscriminate or excessive use of fixed equipment.
- Your life is precious. Think ahead and use a helmet! Helmets are required for all participants on commercial instruction programs.
- Large groups can create problems of crowding and excessive damage around cliffs.
- If you plan to take a group of ten or more people climbing, you are required to register to ensure there is space.
- Vehicles must stay on roads open to the public; off-road driving is illegal. Mountain bikes may be used on management roads except in the Grampians National Park and Wilsons Promontory National Park.
- Avoid disturbing soil at the top and base of cliff areas and hence prevent erosion.
- Abseil and climb over rock ledges where possible.
- Do not use popular lookout sites as belay points or abseiling venues as it causes danger to passive onlookers as well as unwarranted tampering with climber's equipment.
- Observe cliff and track closures where applicable.
- Climbers should adhere to NRE Park and Fire and other regulations.
- Abide by the 'clean climbing' ethic.

CLIMBING

- Chipping of rock is both illegal and unethical.
- Avoid indiscriminate or excessive use of chalk. Using coloured chalk to match the rock is less intrusive.
- Do not change the nature of an established climb, for example, by retro-bolting or by adding or removing other fixed equipment, without approval of the first ascent team or Parks Victoria and NRE.
- Do not leave litter such as old slings, lolly wrappers etc. Take all your rubbish home.

- Vegetation, even on cliff faces, is protected. Wire brushing to remove mosses and 'gardening' in cracks and gullies is not permitted. Use slings to protect trees while belaying or abseiling if belay anchors are not provided.

Responsible climbing will protect cliffs and ensure continued rock climbing access. For more information refer to the Cliffcare Education packs and Parks Victoria information available here.

Pic 13. Educational and responsible climbing literature produced by Cliffcare for the climbing community and displayed in all climbing gyms, stores and ideally should be on notice boards at major climbing area access points, *Photo Cliffcare Collection.*

https://www.cliffcare.org.au/education

Parks Victoria Code of Conduct for Climbing 2009

https://www.cliffcare.org.au/resource-centre

4.3.4 Cultural Heritage Protection and Considerations

Aboriginal people have lived across the country that climbers choose to recreate and work in for thousands of generations. The National Parks as we know them today were part of the land that was home to many different communities, and this same land still contains sites that have social, spiritual and ceremonial significance. It is crucial to understand this connection to Country and the relevance of these sites so we are able to recreate respectfully and preserve these sites and their important national heritage for future generations. Aboriginal cultural heritage sites include both the tangible physical, material evidence of occupation and the Intangible spiritual connections to Country and land.

Tangible cultural heritage and sites may include small stone artefacts, stone structures, burial sites, earth features, middens, stone grinding grooves, evidence of quarrying, modified trees and rock art. All these have important and unique heritage values, and contemporary traditional owners see them as important links to their Ancestors and Country. The rock art that is found in the regions and parks where we climb is fragile and extremely precious. It was created through the use of charcoal and white, yellow or red ochres, often mixed with water or egg yolk and applied to the walls and roofs of caves and cliff as a wet paint or blown by mouth to create the stencils we see today.

Intangible cultural heritage is the spiritual connection to Country. It includes places celebrated as part of the songlines or the cultural stories that are of great significance to past and present people. It also includes sites where activities of social and spiritual significance to the Traditional Owners took place. These Aboriginal places may provide a ceremonial, spiritual or cultural connection to that place or Country for local or regional nations and groups.

All such heritage is protected under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic.). Should you find any such heritage it is required under Section 24 of the Act to report the finding of that Aboriginal Heritage. It is an offence to harm Aboriginal Heritage under Section 27 of the Act and also an offence to commit an act that harms or is likely to harm Aboriginal Heritage under the Act. If you are unsure if your activity may harm something it is best to contact Parks Victoria staff versed in such heritage and local knowledge.

Country for the Aboriginal people is a source of connection, pride and kinship that allows a bond between generations. It is an essential part of their people's identity, strength and history. It is important that climbers recreate respectfully on Country and acknowledge the meaning and significance of these lands to the Traditional Owners.

The land known as the Grampians is locally known as Gariwerd. Gariwerd is an exceptionally spiritual country, rich in dreaming stories, sacred sites, bush-tucker, water and shelter for people. It is a place that is central to the dreaming of the Djab Wurrung and the Jardwadjali peoples and home to an estimated 80%-90% of the Rock Art sites in Victoria, some dating back tens of thousands of years. Their descendents are still involved in Gariwerd and maintain the culture and the stories of the land. These were largely independent groups that had similar languages and an overlapping tribal boundary that runs the length of the ranges. Gariwerd derives its name from Gar meaning Nose and Werd meaning shoulder. Together these words mean mountain range. Hollow Mountain in the north was known as the 'spear in the middle' and its neighbour Guni Galg- Mt Stapylton as ''the excrement stick'. This refers to the local clan's strict rules on burying human waste due to the belief that if any of your body fell into the hands of your enemy you could be subject to attacks by evil spirits at their request.

The stories, songs and traditions of the local Aboriginal people are based around the stories of the Dreamtime, a period before time began when the journeys of great heroes and animals spirits shaped the once barren landscape to what we are blessed with today. These journeys resulted in the creation of the formations in the landscape we see today, the mountains, valleys, rivers and lakes as well as the flora and fauna.

These stories are passed down over generations orally as a record of history and ancestry. They are used to guide the morals and traditions that influence each mob's culture, traditions and law and their ties to the area they live in and are part of.

It is thought that Aboriginal occupation of the range predates European settlement of the area by more than 40 thousand years.

Many of the more significant sites in the Grampians and other Parks are protected by cages and signage to prevent damage and access. Although the Grampians contains approximately 80% of the known Rock Art sites in Victoria, many of these sites are not signed, may not be easily recognisable, are relatively remote and many remain on a register not accessible to the public. This is important for climbers to note, as the areas we visit are often the same remote relatively untracked locations. This is particularly prevalent in the Grampians where many of the rock overhangs that are so ideal for bouldering and climbing often show signs of habitation and heritage.

Climbing conducted with appropriate techniques and respectfully is low to near zero impact. With proper awareness and appropriate behaviour, such climbing can occur relatively closely to heritage sites. Climber presence has been shown in other parts of the world to assist in protection by deterring random disgusting acts of tourist vandalism and graffiti and local sites at Djurrite/Mt Arapiles provide an example of this.

All climbers must keep Rock Art and cultural heritage in mind when exploring the areas we climb in. If climbers suspect that there is Traditional Art, however indistinct, on a section of rock then it is imperative that they avoid climbing near it to avoid any activity that may harm it in any way.

There are plenty of locations to climb. No climb or boulder is worth climbing if doing so will cause damage to cultural heritage.

Possible Management Solutions

Management responses for protection of Cultural heritage and Rock Art may include;

1. voluntary buffer zones,
2. information and discrete interpretive signage,
3. Re-direction of tracks to avoid sensitive areas,
4. fencing off of sensitive areas (Not ideal) or,
5. discrete stone barriers,
6. education of cultural values and restricted areas.
7. Have an open communication method for reporting of new cultural finds and path for action and management for protection,
8. Construction of artificial surfaces to protect or redirect foot traffic
9. Induction sessions on types of Cultural Heritage, preservation and Values.

Example - At Red Rocks Canyon National Conservation Area, Nevada,in the US, rock climbing is restricted within 50 feet of rock art and in Australia, the Aboriginal Heritage Act dictates a 50m area of cultural sensitivity around registered Cultural Heritage sites. At other locations the restriction zone may be greater or smaller depending on site-specific conditions. Occasionally climbers may discover previously unknown cultural resources and this has occurred, where climbers have reported previously unknown art in the Grampians in Victoria. It is vitally important to establish if the land managing agency is aware of any cultural resources or potential impacts that might be occurring (reporting is compulsory under the 2006 Aboriginal Heritage Act), and

climbers must inform and work with managers to establish practices that will prevent cumulative damage. Responses that address cultural resource protection have previously included construction or placement of artificial surfaces, site excavation (data recovery), or exclusion/buffer zones.

As climbers and outdoor enthusiasts it is crucial for the preservation of our cultural heritage that we;

- respect all registered, signed and known Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sites,
- educate ourselves about those sites and what this heritage looks like,
- do not climb in closed and culturally sensitive areas,
- seek information and education before climbing in a new area,
- have an awareness of others in these areas, speak up if people are causing harm,
- respect closures in the immediate vicinity of these sites and areas,
- report any suspected findings to Parks staff.

Pic 14. Cultural Heritage and important site to the Djurid Baluk Clan of the Wotjobaluk people near the Plaque cliff at Djurite / Mt Arapiles - Tooan State Park. The site is protected with simple border stones and this location has been respected by climbers and groups since its inception in the 1980's *Photo Constantine Dritsas.*

Pic 15. Discrete signage at the Cultural Heritage and important site to the Djurid Baluk Clan of the Wotjobaluk people near the Plaque cliff at Djurite / Mt Arapiles - Tooan State Park.Interpretation signage critical to the protection of well known sites in high traffic areas. *Photo Constantine Dritsas.*

4.3.5 Environmental Protection

The Gariwerd National Park spans more than 165,000 hectares and its natural beauty has captivated visitors for decades and it is a crucially important centre of biodiversity for Western Victoria. Its extraordinary diverse landscape is steeped in a rich Indigenous and Colonial history and as such is a place of environmental, historical and cultural significance.

The Gariwerd-Grampians National Park is the fourth largest park in Victoria and the single most important botanical reserve in Victoria, home to one third of Victoria's flora – some 800 native plant species. The Park also supports a wide range of wildlife with more than 40 mammals and an abundance of bird species. The accessible nature of the park enables visitors to enjoy and appreciate Victoria's natural and cultural values, and makes an important contribution to tourism. This accessible wilderness experience is also why climbers have flocked to the Park for the last 110 years. The sandstone and dry sclerophyll nature of the bushland and forests of the Park make many areas susceptible to a variety of environmental impacts, such as erosion, fire and pest species. The 2009 - 2011 Fire and Flood complex led to significant environmental damage throughout the Park. Closures were critical across vast areas of the Park to allow repairs and regrowth. With many of our state ecosystems in decline, it is critical that we have well-resourced management and cooperation from the whole land user community.

It is critical that climbers adhere to the Code of Conduct and the area stewards are able to educate those on the importance of this.

Management solution for Environmental Protection at climbing venues;

Vegetation

- Effectively marked trails
- Discrete signage for revegetation area/no go zones
- Education signage at trackheads
- Discrete wire fencing to eliminate damaging vegetation
- Education through climbing groups and stewards to minimise walking off track and keep tracks to hard wearing rock areas
- Only drive on existing tracks and roads
- Formalisation (minimalisation) of tracks in high use areas
- Stabilisation and maintenance of existing tracks in conjunction with volunteer groups and land managers

Rubbish

- Discrete signage at trackhead for education
- Education through area stewards
- Pack out all rubbish, waste and toilet paper

Toileting

- Toilets at convenient trackheads in main areas (alreading place in most parks)
- Education by area stewards to us Camp or car park toilets
- If you must toilet in the bush, dig a 15cm deep hole (min 50m from streams) and bury waste, carry out toilet paper

Closed areas

- Open lines of communication with existing climber groups and Cliffcare groups to advised on changing conditions or mitigation methods required
- Respect all closed areas and mitigation methods
- Brush off any chalk used on holds.

Stewards

- Open communication between Parks staff and volunteer stewards on
- Speak up if others are doing the wrong thing and damaging the Park and report to stewards.
- Education and training days for stewards and other volunteers.

4.3.6 Cultural and Environmental Risk Assessment ISO 31000:2018

The climbing community has developed a risk assessment template in compliance with international standard ISO 31000:2018 for the specific purpose of identifying and mitigating rock climbing risks to cultural heritage and environmental values. See Appendix F for details

Environmental Risk Assessment

Risk Assessments to a formal standard will be completed on all areas as part of the volunteer climbing stewards program and in consultation with local Land Managers to determine potential future or ongoing issues that can be mitigated or eliminated.

Cultural Heritage Assessment

Initial Cultural Heritage Assessments and environmental surveys currently being undertaken at climbing venues throughout the Grampians by Parks Victoria in conjunction with Traditional Owners, more information to be completed here once these are complete. These assessments and surveys will look at if there is any cultural heritage at these sites and any existing environmental impacts that require action.

4.3.7 Voluntary Closures

Voluntary Closures and or mitigation measures, established through liaison and collaboration between Land Managers, Traditional Owners and supported holistically and understood by the climbing community, are crucial to the protection of our country and its places. These can be at different levels, permanent or for set periods. These could be as follows;

4.3.8 Cultural Heritage Closures

Category A – High sensitivity areas, no access

These are areas that contain the following;

- Registered Cultural Heritage Sites,
- Significant Archeological finds,
- Location where mitigation or protection strategies are unable to be put in place to eliminate the significant risk of damage to that site.

Listed areas currently in this status include;

1. Gondwanaland - Victoria Range
2. The Gallery - Victoria Range, Grampians National Park
3. Millenium Caves - Victoria Range, Grampians National Park
4. Billimina Area - Victoria Range, Grampians National Park
5. Cave of Man Hands - Victoria Range, Grampians National Park
6. Little Hands Cave - Victoria Range, Grampians National Park
7. Manja Area - Victoria Range, Grampians National Park

Category B – Medium sensitivity areas, climbing activity and development acceptable under defined low impact conditions

These are areas that contain the following;

- Registered Cultural Heritage Sites,
- Significant Archeological finds,
- Location where mitigation or protection strategies are able to be put in place to eliminate the significant risk of damage to that site.

Climbing may continue under low impact conditions;

- exclusion zones for sensitive sites
- no further or limited fixed protection in selected areas
- traditional climbing only
- no brushing or damage to vegetation
- no removal or movement of rock

Listed climbing areas currently in this status include;

1. Mt Arapiles - Western Victoria
2. Bundaleer - Central Grampians
3. Summerday Valley (LTOs only), Grampians National Park
4. Taipan Wall, Northern Grampians National Park
5. Mt Kooyora State Park - Central Victoria
6. Lil Lil - Black Ians Rocks - Black Range, Western Victoria
7. Burrunj North - Black Range, Western Victoria

Category C – Low sensitivity areas, climbing activity and development acceptable under defined normal impact conditions

These are areas do not contain the following;

- Registered Cultural Heritage Sites,
- Significant Archeological finds,
- Location where mitigation or protection strategies are not required.

Climbing may continue under normal impact conditions.

Listed climbing areas currently in this status include;

Under review - to be advised.

4.3.9 Environmental Closures

Category A – High sensitivity areas, no access

These are areas containing the following;

- Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna
- Significant risk of spread of biohazard spread/contamination
- Location where mitigation or protection strategies are unable to be put in place to eliminate the significant risk of damage to that site.

Listed climbing areas currently in this status include;

1. Voluntary seasonal closures of cliffs with Nesting Bird species such as Peregrine Falcon.

Category B – Medium sensitivity areas, climbing activity and development acceptable under defined low impact conditions

These are areas containing the following;

- Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna
- Location where mitigation or protection strategies are able to be put in place to eliminate the significant risk of damage to that site.

Listed climbing areas currently in this status include;

Under review - to be advised

Category C – Low sensitivity areas, climbing activity and development acceptable under defined normal impact conditions

These are areas containing the following ;

- Few or no Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna
- Low risk of spread of biohazard spread/contamination
- Location where mitigation or protection strategies are able to be put in place to eliminate the significant risk of damage to that site.

Listed climbing areas currently in this status include;

Under review - to be advised

4.4 Climbing Infrastructure Management

4.4.1 Climbing Area Configuration

This section provides an overview of the unique management issues related to climbing. A climbing site can be essentially split into six zones. Understanding the individual zones can help clarify how, where, and during what stage of a visit climbing activity may affect rare plants, animals, cultural or archaeological sites. This scheme can also assist in distinguishing the effects of climbers from the effects of other less conspicuous recreation visitors, such as bushwalkers, who may also frequent the various zones. The zone scheme of assessment and other information-gathering tools can help ensure that management responses accurately target the correct sites of impact and practices responsible for impact.

During a typical climbing visit climbers may pass through six zones:

1. The approach to the climb (see glossary for technical definitions of climbing terminology). The “approach” is the route used to travel from the parking area to the base of the rock or mountain. It may or may not include discernible climber trails.

2. The staging area. The approach ends at the “staging area,” typically the base of the cliff where climbers prepare to climb and sometimes leave backpacks which will be retrieved after the descent. In some cases, the staging area will be at the top of the cliff. Of all the zones used by climbing visitors, the staging area is typically the most heavily impacted.

3. The climb. The “climb,” often called the “route,” is the line of travel up the cliff or mountain. This zone is typically 2 to 4 metres in width, follows a line that may be straight or very irregular, depending upon the climbing terrain, and will extend from the base to the summit, or sometimes to a fixed safety anchor below the summit.

4. The summit. The “summit” is either the top of a mountain or the rim of a cliff, where one or more climbs terminate.

5. The descent. The “descent” is the route by which climbers return to either the staging area or to the parking area where their visit originated. In some cases, the descent will involve a climber trail, while in other cases it may entail a rappel down the rock face.

6. The camping or bivouac area. This zone is the area used by climbers for overnight stays during the climbing visit. This may be separate or in isolation from the actual climbing area.

4.4.2 Climbing Approach Tracks and Staging areas

Climbing approach tracks and staging area theory

The majority of climber approach tracks in our parks and natural areas were originally designed to serve non-recreational uses, these include fire and logging roads, livestock and game trails, and trade and travel routes. For example, tracks used by climbers to reach many of the Grampians cliffs are mostly along current four wheel drive, management trails or existing bushwalking trails with usually only a small section of formed track to gain the remaining short distance. Some of the tracks in the Grampians to popular climbing areas such as Bundaleer were formed by groups such as the Melbourne Bushwalking club in the 1930s long before they were discovered for climbing. The track to The Gallery and Millenium Cave was formed by Outward Bound groups using it for camping in the 1900s

Climbers use such formed tracks to access climbing areas although the often short off track trails to cover the final cliff approach are often not purpose made. Unlike some bushwalking tracks that are designed, constructed, and maintained by professionals, some tracks to climbing sites are formed by climbers when new climbing areas are discovered simply by walking repeatedly through the area, similar to how a game trail develops. Little formal effort is often put into track construction. These tracks usually “follow the path of least resistance,” avoiding obstacles and minimizing the effort to reach a climbing destination (DeBenedetti 1990). In some cases trails may be ill-defined causing climbers to unknowingly take several trails to the same destination.

These tracks are known as “social trails,” these tracks develop as climbers make repeated visits to climbing-specific destinations that are not serviced by existing track networks, or as people move around in predictable ways within a climbing area.

The climber tracks generally develop in three locations:

1) the quickest route from the parking area or nearest formed trail to the climbing area;
2) the simplest descent from the top of a cliff or climbing site; and
3) in areas between cliffs and boulders within the climbing site (DeBenedetti 1990).

The most critical problems associated with tracks are soil compaction, track widening, trackl incision, and soil loss. Track degradation is usually a function of site durability, type of use, and use behavior rather than simply the amount of use (Leung and Marion 1996). The majority of environmental changes to trails occur during initial informal track development. Once a track becomes established, factors such as soil characteristics, topography, ecosystem characteristics, climate, and local vegetation’s resistance and resilience will dictate its prominence in the landscape (Hammitt and Cole 1998). Climber tracks tend to be primitive with minimal improvements, are often sited on steep slopes, with loose soils and “scree” common elements.

Climbers, like other outdoor enthusiasts, have the potential to disturb soil, particularly in heavily used areas or where environmental and other factors cause these areas to be more susceptible to damage. Damage to soil can limit aeration, affect soil temperature, moisture content, nutrition, and soil micro - organisms.

The most damaging impact to soil, Erosion occurs primarily through the development and use of track. Problems may be more serious where the soil is poor. Climber tracks that are mostly located on soils that have a high gravel or mineral content have been found to be less prone to soil erosion. These materials are not as easily eroded by water or wind and act as filters, binding and holding on to finer soil particles.

Climbing approach track solutions

These impacts are not without management solutions and have been successfully managed all over the world.

1. In popular climbing areas some formalization and stabilization of climber trails will eventually become desirable.
2. Along with this formalization some climber tracks may become redundant or closed as they adversely affect resource or aesthetic values.
3. Redundant tracks can be reformed, reduced or in some cases eliminated. Local climbing representatives can provide input on the minimum track requirements to access climbing locations and those not required.
4. Management Authority response may initially include conducting a climber track inventory.
5. Local climbing guidebooks describe climber access routes, descent routes, and locations of other climbing-related track and access. Consultation with a local climbing representative or arranging a joint site visit may also help with climber-track inventory.
6. Once tracks are documented (typically GPS techniques are used), a map is created. A track plan can be developed to eliminate redundant tracks. Main tracks should be targeted for stabilization or upgrading to withstand heavier traffic, while others may be closed to protect sensitive resources, and or re-routed.

Example - This approach has been taken by managers at Mt Arapiles - Tooan State Park to restore the areas eroded from previous farmland and increase visitor traffic. In the Grampians/Gariwerd National Park an earlier social climbers track was diverted by Parks Victoria staff with Cliffcare at the Buandik shelter to ensure climbers avoided further impact on a culturally sensitive site.

Local climbers, access groups and climbing club representatives may prove helpful in dispersing information concerning desired changes in climber-track and changed area access. Other management options include signing of management-preferred tracks, and brochure, sign board, and poster information concerning site advisories or area closures. There have been many examples of successful climber track management already in Victoria, at Camels Hump, Werribee Gorge, Mt Arapiles. At Joshua Tree National Park, in California, climber-trail networks have been formalized using a special climber-specific symbol. This is produced in the form of a weather- resistant sticker that can be applied to standard trail- marking carsonite posts. The symbol (an image of a carabiner—a piece of climbing equipment) is recognizable to climbers, but not the general public (Joshua Tree National Park).

4.4.3 Cliff Base Environment - The Staging Area

Typically, staging areas or the cliff base receive the most concentrated effects from climbing visitors. Staging areas (gear preparation and seating areas) at the base of cliffs and cliff tops are

also impacted by other recreationsists such as hikers, backpackers, and sightseers. For example, at The Sandinista Cliff near Hollow Mountain in the Grampians, is a part of a popular visitor bushwalking destination, especially for tourists seeking to gain Hollow Mountain caves. Conditions on this track are becoming increasingly degraded, due in part to a lack of designated trails and extensive use of social trails. Soil compaction and erosion in this area has been identified as a potential problem.

Different styles of climbing that occur in areas also have an affect on the amount and type of impact a climbing area receives. For example recent research conducted in Kentucky's Red River Gorge found impacts to staging areas are different for sport and traditional ("trad") climbing. Track quality, the number of similarly rated climbs in the area, and the presence of overhanging rock were found to contribute to staging area impacts for sport climbs. Factors contributing to impacts associated with traditional climbs, on the other hand, include the rating of the climb, climb quality, approach trail length, and the presence of overhanging rock (Carr 2006).

Management responses to mitigate impacts have included;

1. site hardening,
2. barriers,
3. exclusion zones, and
4. visitor dispersion to more robust sites through selective publicity,
5. discrete signage, and trail management.
6. Often, heavy traffic on specific climbs will lead to isolated occurrences of trampling and subsequent erosion at certain staging areas. Local climbers can provide useful information, such as locations of particularly popular climbs, or multiple climbs that share a common staging area.

4.4.4 Climbing Route Management and Safety Bolt Management

When considering the management of climbing routes there are a number of factors that come into play.

1. Appropriate place to climb - what impact will the opening of a route potentially have on the particular cliff environment or cultural heritage - this may be significant or it may have little impact.
2. Will the route offer significant value to the climbing area or is it not worth it.
3. What are the Traditional Land Owner or Managers Values - does it fit with these.
4. Any fixed protection required - does this fit within the Land Owner or Managers Values and rules.
5. Can the climb be completed fighting in with the accepted climbing ethics or style of that area.

Climbers may move over or traverse important flora or fauna habitat on the cliff face itself. Effects may include dislodging of organic matter from cracks, or direct contact with plants by climbing shoes, hands, or ropes. Damage to ferns, mosses, and lichens may be of particular concern (Nuzzo 1996; Farris 1998). In some areas this may be an issue in others it may not due to rock types being solid and more resistant to damage.

Management responses to concerns of route management and impact on the cliff face include;

1. Climbing stewards (Crag steward network and local senior representatives) who can consult with local Traditional Land Owners and Land Managers as to the appropriateness of opening any potential new climbing or potential impacts or conflicts of use at particular areas. These stewards can liaise and discuss with local climbers to reduce conflicts and eliminate potential damage. In some larger areas this may need to form part of an advisory board, meeting with Traditional Owners and Land Mangers regularly .
2. Signage indicating locally accepted climbing tradition and ethic.
3. Placement of fixed anchors to protect tree specimens. They can also be used to protect vegetation communities on belay ledges from trampling by diverting use away from their occurrence.
4. Targeted education on flora and fauna species recognition and avoidance practices, and temporary or permanent individual climbing route restrictions. Ie - Many temporary route restrictions are self imposed by climbers on routes at Mt Arapiles for nesting bird species such as the Peregrine Falcon or Kestrels.
5. Strategic bolt placement has been increasingly used to protect sensitive resources such as cliff-edge vegetation, soils, and specimen cliff trees that might otherwise be directly used as rope anchors. For example, locations such as Falcons Lookout at Werribee Gorge and at Nowra in NSW, managers and the local climbing organization have been able to protect cliff trees at the cliff tops that were previously used as rappel stations by placing adjacent bolt anchors. The use of fixed anchors and a “no top out policy” at the NPS - managed Obed Wild and Scenic River, TN, in the US has been successful in limiting the impact of climbing on cliff-edge habitat where researchers reported that “disturbed areas were relatively infrequent” (Walker, et al., 2003). Research at Shenandoah National Park, VA, supports this management strategy by recommending that installing fixed anchors on the cliff-edge could minimize damage to cliff top trees and cliff-edge vegetation caused by rope abrasion (Wood, Lawson & Marion, 2006).

4.4.5 Victorian Rock Climbing Safety Bolt and Fixed Protection Policy

Introduction

Bolting has an historical place in Australian climbing. It has both its supporters and its detractors. It is possibly one of the most divisive aspects of our sport due to the permanency of fixtures. Well placed fixed protection can be beneficial to both the environment and climbers, Conversely, poorly placed bolts and over-bolted climbs may diminish or destroy the climbing experience. It is important that these guidelines reflect the local traditions and attitudes to both climbing and the environmental management of the cliff and environs. Placing fixed protection can be seen as permanently defacing the rock and as such it should be a last resort.

A bolting policy must address safety issues such as minimising the risk of death or injury, alleviate land manager fears of litigation, avoid possible heritage impacts, address environmental impacts, both positive and negative, resulting from the placement of fixed protection and anchors.

Large climbing organisations such as ACAV and VCC aim to promote safe bolting and environmentally sound practices. But such organisations cannot actively place or replace bolts

or instruct on bolt placement due to terms of their insurance. Organisations may direct interested individuals to suppliers or manufacturers of bolting related products but it is up to the individual to properly research the products and follow the manufacturer's instructions when placing fixed protection.

Purpose

The purpose of the following joint VCC and ACAV Fixed Anchor Policy is to provide the climbing community, partner organizations, community stakeholders, agency officials, and land managers (public and private) with a clear and consistent policy position regarding the placement, maintenance and management of fixed anchors for technical climbing. The VCC and ACAV represent members throughout Victoria who access – for climbing – public and private lands. Therefore, the policy is intended to have broad application on both private and public lands.

Fixed Anchors Defined

Fixed anchors are defined as climbing equipment (e.g., bolts, pitons or slings) left in place to facilitate ascent or descent vertical terrain. These anchors are a critical component of a climber's safety system. Fixed anchors are typically placed by the first ascensionist on ascents and descents (abseils) where removable anchor placements are not viable.

Fixed Anchor Policy

Below is the joint Fixed Anchor Policy for the ACAV and VCC. ACAV and VCC have consulted directly with individuals and organizations to achieve broad support for a fixed anchor policy that allows, but appropriately limits, the use of fixed anchors.

The vast majority of climbers have not and never will place fixed anchors, opting instead to climb established climbing routes and avoid the burden of the very careful deliberation, cost and labor associated with placing a fixed anchor.

Most climbers favor some form of fixed anchor regulation in wilderness to preserve wilderness character. Most concerns about fixed anchors are almost never related to measurable resource impacts that may be associated with the physical placement of these traditional climbing tools, but rather to philosophical convictions.

Fixed Anchor Policy for Climbing Resources

1. Climbing is an appropriate activity and fixed anchors are necessary tools for climbing.

2. Some level of fixed anchor use shall be allowed wherever climbing is allowed, and that the appropriate level of use should be established on an area-by-area basis.

3. Fixed anchor maintenance and replacement shall be allowable for existing fixed anchors.

4. Climbers should bear the responsibility, in accordance with land management regulations, for determining when and where to place and replace fixed anchors, and how to use these tools.

5. Fixed anchors are a significant tool for resource management. Fixed anchors can be strategically placed to minimize climbing related biophysical impacts that can occur to fragile soils, vegetation, and wildlife. This value is sacrificed if any use of fixed anchors is prohibited.

6. Fixed Anchors are a significant tool for managing the climbing experience. Fixed anchors can be placed in such a way to improve social conditions, enhance safety, reduce the need for land management restrictions and provide outstanding recreational opportunities.

7. Public input is critically important for the management of fixed anchors. Climbers need to have a voice in managing key elements of the climbing safety system.vii

8. Administrative actions regarding fixed anchors should be well substantiated and noticed to the public. Decisions regarding fixed anchors should be grounded in a firm understanding of resource capacity, associated impacts, and acceptable rates of change to the natural and social environment. Fixed anchor management alternatives should be evaluated before any decisions are made to restrict the use of fixed anchors. All administrative changes to the condition of fixed anchors (e.g., removal) should be well-publicized to help mitigate potential negative impacts to climber safety.

Placement of Fixed Protection/Anchors

1. It is the generally accepted practice that the first ascensionist chooses whether to place fixed protection, and where and what type of protection is used. It is important that the first ascensionist carefully considers where each point of fixed protection is placed, taking into account all safety, environmental and ethical considerations.
2. It is also vitally important that the first ascensionist uses a suitable product, has practiced placements before drilling a cliff (e.g. in concrete) and installs it according to the manufacturer's instructions.
3. Fixed protection is inappropriate on climbs that can be adequately protected by natural means. Fixed protection should be used as a last resort and only to enable a climb to be lead with minimum risk of serious injury (i.e. fixed protection should not be placed just to reduce the size of a fall where the fall can be considered 'safe').
4. Fixed protection should not be added or moved on a climb (i.e. retro-bolting) that has previously been done by naturally protected means without the express permission of the first ascensionist. If the bolt placement needs to be changed and the first ascensionist cannot be contacted, 'local best practice' should be used (see section – Replacing Bolts, Bolt Removal and Retro-bolting). Routes exist where the first ascensionist wanted to create a climb in the purest possible style. Adding or moving bolts may alter the nature of the climb and devalue the efforts of the first ascent.
5. Fixed protection/anchors should not interfere with nearby existing routes. Where a new climb is in close proximity to an existing route, where practicable, it is preferable to utilize the protection on the existing route.
6. Climbers should not place fixed protection on climbs that could reasonably be deemed short enough to be described as bouldering problems.
7. Fixed protection should be placed to prevent the risk of ground fall, hitting dangerous obstacles or factor two falls. However consistent with point the risk of a dangerous fall on an existing climb may not necessarily justify retro-bolting the climb.
8. Fixed protection within a climbing area preferably should be consistent with local practice and consistent with the nature of the climb (e.g. granite slab, steep sports climb etc.) unless safety considerations deem it necessary to use alternative protection (e.g. fixed hangers/ring bolts should be placed where putting a bracket on a bolt would be extremely difficult or

where the climb is overhanging). Every effort should be made to find out what the local best practice is.

9. Bolts should not be added to an area that is declared either ‘bolt free’ or ‘no more bolts’. This status should be defined by Park Management Plans, climbing guidebooks or local best practice.

10. Fixed protection should be placed with consideration for other climbers. It is preferable to top-rope the route first to assess natural protection placements and to mark best bolt locations. Placements should be consistent for the grade and where practicable should not disadvantage climbers with shorter reach.

11. When a climb is predominantly bolted then any need for natural protection should be stated in the route description. Also the method of descent should be clearly stated where lower-offs are not provided.

Type of Fixed Protection

1. Bolts must be stainless steel or titanium. Grade 304 stainless steel is recommended for inland areas and Grade 316 stainless steel or titanium is recommended for coastal areas or other highly corrosive environments.

2. Where two metal components of an anchor are in contact both components should be the same grade of stainless steel, for example a fixed hanger and an expansion bolt.

3. All forms of fixed protection placed should be manufactured to meet or exceed the European standard EN 959 of 15kN in the axial direction and 25kN in the radial direction. Note: this standard is for the ultimate load for the product. Most products state the normal ‘working load’ so check with the manufacturer how to convert ‘working load’ to ‘ultimate load’.

4. Consistent with point all forms of fixed protection should be installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Incorrect installation may lead to failure of fixed protection regardless of the strength rating of the product.

5. The use of hammer-in ‘carrots’ is not recommended, as their reliability will vary depending on the skill of the installer and the hardness of the rock. They may also be subject to corrosion and bolt ‘creep’.

6. Glues used should be industrial masonry glues suitable for dynamic loading and prepared and applied in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.

7. Glue in fixed protection/anchors must be checked and moderately load tested sometime after the recommended curing time.

8. Glue in U-staples should not be used unless they are specifically made for rock climbing and tested to the minimum European standard when installed according to instruction.

9. Self-tapping/self-drilling bolts should not be used unless they are specifically recommended for rock climbing and meet the minimum European standard when installed according to instruction.

10. Pitons should not be placed as fixed protection. (see point for replacing Pitons.)

Belay Anchors and Rappel/Abseil Stations

1. Installing of rappel/abseil anchors should be kept to a minimum. Where possible one rappel station should service the tops of all climbs in the immediate area that can safely access the rappel/abseil point.

2. Natural protection should be used for belay anchors where at least 2, preferably 3, independent bombproof anchors can be used.

3. Additional belay anchors may be installed/replaced where no natural means of protection is available and where the existing belay anchor is inadequate.
4. Rappel/abseil stations should be installed where a tree is used for the anchor or where other features used may be unsafe (e.g. old fixed sling or unsafe natural “bollard”).
5. Each rappel/abseil station should have two separate anchors installed at least 200mm apart. The rappel/abseil rope should feed through each of the two anchors independently unless the anchor has been specifically manufactured as a rappel/abseil anchor and designed with one point of contact (i.e. it is not acceptable to feed the rope through a single non-rated D-shackle or similar product).
6. Rappel/abseil station components through which the rope is threaded should be replaceable.
7. Products used for rappel/abseil stations should be tested and rated to at least meet UIAA standard 25kN.
8. Home - made brackets, and non-rated components such as D-shackles, maillons rapide, chain links etc. should not be used.

Environmental and Heritage Considerations

1. Fixed protection/anchors should not be visually intrusive particularly where the climb is located next to popular walking tracks. For climbs less than vertical hangerless machine bolts are recommended to reduce visual impact. Rock coloured stainless steel should be used.
2. While all effort should be made to minimise the visual impact of fixed protection this should not compromise the ability of a climber to see the protection. Fixed protection should be placed on clear rock within the line of climbing.
3. Rappel/abseil stations should be installed where descending by foot is likely to cause erosion problems.
4. Rappel/abseil stations should be installed where climbers lower off trees.
5. The placement of any fixed protection/anchors is prohibited within many Government defined wilderness areas or reference areas and these restrictions must be adhered to.
6. When drilling holes every effort should be made to minimise the impact on other visitors to the area. Dust is to be brushed away from the rock and drilling should be done at a time that is not likely to disturb other people.
7. Fixed protection/anchors should not be placed within any area of importance to Aboriginal communities. If in doubt, the VCC Access Officer should be able to find out if there are any potential conflicts or concerns.

Replacement of safety bolts, safety bolt removal and Retro-bolting

1. Dangerous and unsafe fixed protection should be reported to a representative of the local climbing group.
2. Dangerous and unsafe fixed protection should, where practicable, be replaced by the local climbing community, the first ascensionist or other experienced and interested climbers.
3. Carrot bolts requiring the placing of a bolt-plate should only be replaced with a glue in hangerless machine bolt, except in situations where a hangerless bolt may be unsafe such as on an overhang or at a tenuous clip with a dangerous fall.
4. Fixed hangers or ring bolts should only be replaced by fixed hangers or ring bolts.

5. When a piton is intentionally removed it should be replaced with a fixed hanger or ringbolt.
6. A piton that is unintentionally removed should not be replaced if good natural protection is available. Where good natural protection is not available a fixed hanger or ringbolt should replace the piton. Old pitons should not be reused once they fall out.
7. Piton scars should not be filled. Often natural protection can be placed in the scars so that the rock isn't damaged any further.
8. Where possible old fixed protection should be extracted from the rock. If appropriate, old 10mm holes should be redrilled to 12mm and the new bolt placed in the same position. Note: in soft rocks extracting fixed protection may leave unsightly damage in the form of a crater, which may require filling.
9. Where old fixed protection cannot be removed the old protection should be cut off flush with the rock or (preferably) sheared off below the rock surface and the hole then plugged. Old bolts must not be left protruding from the rock surface.
10. When a fixed wire/sling/rope/cord is an essential point of protection then it should be removed and replaced with fixed hanger/ringbolt/rappel/abseil anchors.
11. Old bolt holes not re-used should be filled in with glue/resin/putty of a similar colour to the rock. Note: small or crushed stones of the same rock type mixed with the glue can improve the colour match and make excellent plugs.
12. Where there has been a change in bolt type, number or placement then the route description should be re-written by the person placing the bolts and published as a modified route (same as for new route descriptions).

Conclusion

No fixed protection can be considered 100% safe. It is the ACAV and VCC's aim to promote improvement in the quality of fixed protection, minimise the risk of fixed protection failure and minimise environmental impacts. It is the individual climber's responsibility to assess each and every piece of fixed protection and make a calculated and informed decision on whether or not the protection is adequate and whether or not to proceed with the climb.

Send all new route descriptions and Beta to the VCC newsletter:
ARGUS
GPO Box 1725, Melbourne Vic 3001
Email: argus@vicclimb.org.au

You can report unsafe fixed protection on Victorian crags to Safer Cliffs Victoria:
www.chockstone.org/Forum/Forum.asp?Action=Forum&ForumID=11
They also have practical articles about bolting:
www.chockstone.org/rebolting/introduction.html

4.4.6 Descent Routes

A descent route is the easiest way down from the top of a cliff, mountain or feature and any track or route on this will generally follow the easiest option and way down avoiding obstacles as discussed earlier. Descent from cliffs or summits may involve any combination of walking, down-climbing, and or abseiling. Although abseiling may be considered more dangerous than walking off, it causes the least disturbance to vegetation. This practice is common at Mt Arapiles

where sensitive vegetation and soils in the descent gullies are prone to erosion. Descent by walk-off may destabilize loose-soiled slopes and gullies and accelerate natural erosion processes. Use and impact of descent routes will vary depending on the style of climbing in an area.

Management solutions for descent routes may include;

1. Where climbing activity has been determined to affect sensitive resource values, consider placing signs to divert use from sensitive or impacted areas,
2. Stabilization of existing descent trails,
3. Trail diversion, or construction of new trails.
4. Fixed anchors to almost eliminate traffic,
5. Discrete signage,
6. Wire fences
7. Defined tracks

Example all these methods have been used to protect vegetation at locations like Mt Arapiles, Camels Hump, Werribee Gorge and many overseas locations. It has been common in recent years to use 2 solutions for descent areas; hardening of formal descent gullies with formed timber and stone paths or the addition of fixed safety descent anchors to allow climbers and abseilers a quicker more convenient descent and significantly reduce to numbers of people descending via the original route. This has been shown to be extremely efficient in a number of areas such as at Mt Arapiles in common popular sections of cliff such as the Watchtower.

4.4.7 Bouldering Area Management

Like climbing, successful management of bouldering areas is reliant on open communication between land managers, traditional owners and climbers, and proactive management responses. They rely principally on education and outreach to achieve constructive objectives. Management planning for bouldering sites should include consideration of the views and priorities of climbers. Like climbers when boulderers feel that they have been included in the decision making process, they are more likely to comply with restrictions, and to help enforce those restrictions among the rest of the community.

Some of the impacts that cause concerns with bouldering include, trampling of vegetation (Portable crash pads are placed below boulders to reduce injury from falling), human waste disposal, vehicle parking, pets, and camping.

In virtually all areas where bouldering is practiced, the activity has been found to be compatible with other land uses and values. Many bouldering areas have enjoyed largely unrestricted access for decades, yet have experienced minimal environmental impacts and few management problems. Determining just what measures can accomplish management goals without needlessly reducing, or affecting the quality of, recreational opportunities requires a solid knowledge of the way bouldering is practiced in a specific management area.

Both this knowledge, and good relations with the bouldering user group, are informed greatly by the assignment of a specific liaison to handle bouldering-related issues. What is important is that boulderers perceive the liaison as willing to listen and learn about their activity, and more

importantly, that he/she considers bouldering to be a valid and worthwhile activity. Boulderers, especially young boulderers, have an extensive network of Internet sites devoted to their activity, and this fact can be put to great use by land managers. The VCC made use of this to produce education documents and pamphlets and outreach in the popular climbing and bouldering around Melbourne. Sites like thecrag.com, bouldering websites and Facebook groups are receptive to postings from land managers and access groups, and these sites can be a very efficient and cost-effective method for reaching this user group.

Management responses at bouldering areas may include;

1. Planning for efficient and effective of trail networks,
2. stabilization or,
3. ground hardening at points of concentrated use,
4. selective restrictions on boulders to protect sites with significant natural or cultural resource values.
5. Education and outreach should promote low-impact use of crash pads (e.g., avoiding placing pads on top of delicate vegetation) and distinguish areas with special resource sensitivities where use of pads may cause adverse impacts.
6. Management responses for protection of rock art may include voluntary buffer zones, signing, and fencing off of sensitive areas.

Example - At Red Rocks Canyon National Conservation Area, Nevada, US, rock climbing is restricted within 50 feet of rock art and in Australia, the Aboriginal Heritage Act dictates a 50m area of cultural sensitivity around registered Cultural Heritage sites. At other locations the restriction zone may be greater or smaller depending on site-specific conditions. Occasionally climbers may discover previously unknown cultural resources. If it is not clear that the land managing agency is aware of the cultural resources or impacts that might be occurring, climbers should inform and work with managers to establish practices that will prevent cumulative damage. Other responses have included addressing cultural resource protection may include construction or placement of artificial surfaces, site excavation (data recovery), or exclusion zones

Management responses developed with local climbing representatives have included trail definition, cultural resource inventories, raptor and vegetation monitoring, definition of parking areas, education materials promoting special use considerations and minimum - impact practices, selective publicity policy for areas with significant cultural resource values, designation of camping areas, provision of trailhead toilets, and monitoring visitor numbers through trail counters and vehicle parking surveys.

Some areas that have received both high climber and general visitor levels due to its proximity to an urban area, management efforts have focused on erosion control. This may have included trail rationalisation and definition with wooden barriers, ground hardening by importing material under heavily used boulders, and vegetation restoration using raised beds, mulch, and native planting. Similar practices have been initiated by climbers at Camel Hump near Melbourne. Local and national climbing groups have stewards and can provide assistance with information on visitor use patterns, education strategies and resources, and raising funds towards mitigation efforts.

For example the Access Fund developed the The boulderProject

http://www.accessfund.org/boulderproject to promote and responsible bouldering.

Bouldering is a series of short sequential moves usually no more than 15 feet off the ground. The person on the ground is “spotting” the climber to help prevent an awkward landing if the person falls.

These Climbing Management Guidelines advocate Leave No Trace bouldering principles. These are clearly encapsulated in the Access Fund’s BoulderProject (the Access Fund was established in the USA in 1991 and is well-respected by climbers and land managers alike and and embraced by climbing communities across America):

THE ACCESS FUND’S BOULDERPROJECT

Local Low Down – Check websites, guidebooks, and talk to locals. Not only do locals know the best lines, they know the beta (information) to keep areas open.

Boulder Green – keeping nature pristine helps to keep it...well... natural. Some tips to keep it clean:

- •Speak up when the actions of others threaten access. Remember it’s your climbing future at stake.
- •Pick up & pack out tape, spilled chalk, and wrappers.
- •Brush off with a nylon brush or shirt slap tick marks & holds after you send the problem.
- •Never chip, alter, sculpt, glue-on holds, or landscape. Your project is someone else’s warm-up.
- •Limit group size & sprawl. Pad Lightly – Crash Pads can save your ankles; however they have the potential kill, abrade, or crush small trees, cactus and other vegetation. Some tips to
coexist:
- •Clever pad placements and attentive spotters turn dangerous landings into safe, enviro-friendly landing zones.
- •Place your crash pads on rocks or areas free of vegetation. The Road More Traveled – Stay on existing trails.
- •Off-trail travel between boulders can create a network of trails and is a major problem in many areas. Hard Choices – If no trail exists keep you and your gear on hard, durable surfaces.
Way Old-School – One of the quickest ways to shut down an area is to climb on or around rock art and cultural sites.
- •If someone way older and wiser than you was there first, find a new problem on a different boulder. A Climber’s Best Friend – It’s up to all of us to make sure our pets comply with local regulations or it’s to the dog house for both them and us. What's up? – Someone owns the land that you’re bouldering on and chances are it’s not you.
- •Know who owns or manages the land and abide by their regulations, including closures. The New Frontier – New areas warrant special care.

boulderProject (Access Fund 2006)

4.5 Licensed Tour Operator Agreements

Parks Victoria say there are approximately 30 Licenced Tour Operators that provide climbing services as part of their programs. These tour operators range from organisations that provide climbing exclusively, through to those that conduct extensive tours, journey programs or day trips. They are largely bound to the same conditions as the majority of Parks users although require a Licence to conduct business in Parks Victoria managed land. This Licence requires that the businesses have industry qualified and trained operators, current liability insurances and abide by the Australian Adventure Activity Standards for their activities and programs. Any activities within Parks Victoria managed lands by these businesses require the completion of a Group Activity statement now compiled online through ParksConnect system to ensure no double booking is made and a monthly follow up report through the same system. An administration fee is paid per person on the ground during each activity, staff included.

In June 2019, Parks Victoria announced that existing Licenced Tour Operators (LTOs) offering rock climbing and abseiling at Summerday Valley (which is within a Special Protection Area) in the Grampians National Park had been issued a variation to their existing licences. The variation provides strictly conditional authorisation for LTOs to continue undertaking rock climbing and abseiling activities in three designated areas within Summerday Valley (Barc Cliff, Back Wall, and a section of Wall of Fools). The licences have since been extended and are currently valid until 31st March 2020.

Heritage listed for its biodiversity and significant cultural heritage, the Grampians National Park was established in 1984 to protect environmental and cultural values of national importance. The park has more than 800 indigenous plant species and is home to one third of Victoria's flora, a range of wildlife, and the majority of surviving Aboriginal rock art places in south-east Australia.

Key legislation that drives Parks Victoria's management of the Grampians National Park and its management of these values includes but is not limited to the Parks Victoria Act 1998, National Parks Act 1975, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) and Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic).

Traditional Owners

The inductions were delivered by a member of the Barengi Gadjin Land Council AboriginalCorporation (BGLC) with support from Parks Victoria.

Inductions

BGLC delivered 4 Cultural Induction sessions for existing LTOs in November 2019 at Summerday Valley. These sessions were facilitated by the Traditional Owners, and took approximately 1 hour to deliver. The sessions included:

- Welcome to Country by Traditional Owners;
- Safety briefing;
    - Introduction by all and answer the question what Cultural Heritage means to you?;

- Parks Victoria “Aboriginal Heritage induction guide” 2017 handed out, talk to all values within the booklet;
- Walk to Wall of Falls and show Quarry site and birds eye view of Artefact Scatter;

- Traditional Owners spoke about the area and conduct their induction (at Wall of Falls);

- Discussion on impacts from climbing and visitors (at Wall of Falls);

- A walk was taken around to all the Summerday Valley climbing sites and guides were shown the go and no-go zones; and

- time was taken for general or open questions.

Cultural Induction sessions will be conducted at no expense to the Licenced Tour Operators.

Appendix A - Climbing Community Collaborations with Parks Victoria, 1990 -2020

The following is a chronology providing a brief summary of key collaborations between the Victorian Climbing Club or it's environmental arm Cliffcare and Parks Victoria from 1990 to 2020;

1993 - Parks Victoria and Victorian Climbing Club - Werribee Gorge fixed anchor replacement and cliff top stabilisation. This was a combined work between the Victorian Climbing Club and Parks Victoria where the loose and eroded areas at the clifftop of Falcons Lookout where stabilised, and fixed safety anchors on the cliff face were replaced by members of the Victorian Climbing Club.

1998 - Lil Lil (Black Ian's Rocks). Cliffcare worked in consultation with Barenji Gadjin Land Council Traditional Owners to manage and reduce possible climber impacts at the known cultural heritage site. Signage was erected, tracks formed away from known sensitive areas and a number of climbs closed in known sensitive spots.

1998 - Climbing moratorium - VCC enabled a climbing moratorium in the Northern Victoria Range (Grampians/Gariwerd) among the broader climbing community to allow for increased protection for the rare Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby protection. This area was later opened.

2000 - Parks Victoria - approved belay anchors installed with Parks Victoria funding at Werribee Gorge to protect existing trees from ringbarking and vegetation damage. Further stabilisation work of loose rock was conducted at the base and the clifftop.

2000 - Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - track maintenance and climbing area hardening at Summerday Valley (Mt Stapylton area, Grampians) to prevent erosion by commercial groups, school groups and recreational climbers.

2007 - Cliffcare - Mt Rosea/Bugiga post-fire track clearance and repairs. During this working bee large trees were cleared from the climbers track (original tourist track to the cliff base - initially formed by the Melbourne Bushwalking Club in the 1960s) to the cliff and sections of track repaired or bypassed around the landslides.

2007- Mt Arapiles/Djurite Pharos Gully Tourist Track erosion control and repairs.

2008 - Cliffcare and Parks Victoria - Bushrangers Bluff (Mt Arapiles) base stabilisation and track repair. Considerable stone work and stabilisation works were conducted in consultation with Parks Victoria to the base of this popular beginner cliff.

2008 - Cliffcare and Parks Victoria - Taipan Wall/Spurt Wall (Mt Stapylton/Gunigalg, Grampians) base stabilisation and access track rehab. Stabilisation and stone work was conducted on the track to the base, a board walk constructed to reduce gully erosion and stabilisation at the cliff base.

2008 - Flat Rock Pohlner Road track repair project with HPHP grant.

2008 - Parks Victoria and Cliffcare project (with traditional owner involvement) at Bundaleer in the Central Grampians. Included Rehabilitation of track after fire and formation of track and boardwalk to protect a Cultural Heritage site.

2009 - VCC and Cliffcare - Access negotiations for continued access to The Ravine.

2010 - Cliffcare and Parks Victoria - You Yangs climbing site repair project after fires and floods.

2011 - Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Black Hill (central Victoria) erosion control.

2011/12 - Mt Rosea/Bugiga. Closed access. Flood impact and work project.

2011/12 - Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Bundaleer Flood impact work project.

2012 - Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Realignment of The Gallery track; The climbing track (initially formed to the Gallery by Outward Bound in the 1950s) was realigned to bypass Bilimina Shelter and cultural site. This was essential to bypass the important cultural site and repair the walking track following floods.

2012 - Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - You Yangs HPHP grant. Realignment of walking access track to avoid cultural heritage site.

2013 - Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Victoria Range post-fires walking access track work. This work was conducted post fires to realign tracks and rationalisation for numerous tracks for reopening post fires.

2013 Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Red Rocks realignment of Muline and Red Rocks foot access track. Once again this work was conducted post fires to realign tracks and rationalisation for numerous tracks for reopening post fires.

2013 Cliffcare collaboration with Parks Victoria Reopened The Lookout climbing area, You Yangs.

2013 Arapiles 50th Anniversary Access Forum.

2014 Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Summerday Valley (Mt Stapylton area, Grampians) post-fire track realignment collaboration.

2014 Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Working bees post-fire. Parks Victoria and Cliffcare Volunteers.

2014 Parks Victoria and Cliffcare - Post-fires, track rationalisation in the Andersons bouldering area, Mt Stapylton, Grampians. This involved the reduction of unnecessary trails in the Anderson bouldering area near Hollow Mountain so as to minimise erosion and impact in the area.

2008–15 Parks Victoria and Cliffcare. Pharos Gully Walking Track Repair Project (Mt Arapiles). This trail work has involved Cliffcare funds, Government grants and collaboration with Parks Victoria and Cliffcare volunteers for the significant reconstruction and stabilisation of this trail. A

professional stonemason was hired to do the stone work and Cliffcare volunteers used to move stone to the required locations.

2016–18 Parks Victoria and Cliffcare. Central Gully Repair Project (Mt Arapiles/Dyurrite). Like the Pharos gully this trail work has involved Cliffcare funds, Government grants and collaboration with Parks Victoria and Cliffcare volunteers for the significant reconstruction and stabilisation of this trail. A professional stonemason was hired to do the stone work and Cliffcare volunteers used to move stone to the required locations.

2019–20 Parks Victoria and Cliffcare. Upper Central Gully Walking Track Repair Project (Mt Arapiles/Dyurrite) – Pick My Project winner, State Government funding. Ongoing.

Appendix B - Current Gariwerd Access Issues; A Chronology of Recent Events

May 2015. The Grampians Peaks Trail plan is released. The 144km walk is estimated to more than triple hikers using the park from 13,800 in 2015 to 34,000 by 2025. This brings with it the requirement for extensive cultural heritage surveys

December 2015. Parks Victoria (PV) informs the VCC's AEO Tracey Skinner about graffiti at Lil Lil /Black Ian's Rock, which has damaged rock art. Though there is absolutely no indication that climbers were involved in this graffiti, the VCC nonetheless alerts the climbing community of the seriousness of this offence via its CliffCare website, its newsletter *Argus* and social media. Information includes the fact that Gariwerd contains more than 80% of registered rock art in Victoria, as well as how to identify it and what to do if you come across it. The VCC also suggests that climbers stick to established locations and minimise the use of chalk.

May 2016. A coalition of Traditional Owners, including the Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, file for native title over the Grampians National Park (the claim has since been dismissed by the Federal Court).

November 2016. Traditional Owners from Barengi Gadjin Land Council, rangers from Parks Victoria and staff from Aboriginal Victoria meet with an art conservator to begin the process of removing the graffiti from Lil Lil and from a second site in the Black Range. The VCC's AEO conducts a site visit in **March 2017.**

October 2017. The AEO requests a stop to all future route development in the Black Range, after two incidents of bolting above and near rock art. During the removal of the graffiti the year before, concern was expressed over the amount of fixed protection appearing in the Grampians. The impact of climbing on cultural heritage is now a live issue. The AEO alerts climbers of the significance of these sites and their obligations under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (2006). Under the Act, Aboriginal Victoria (AV) can issue fines of up to $1,580,700 for harming Aboriginal cultural heritage, including seeking damages from Parks Victoria.

Mid-2018. Parks Victoria considers self-regulation and community compliance by climbers to be failing, and bolting out-of-hand. The AEO initiates a discussion on Chockstone to draft fixed protection guidelines.

12 September 2018. The new Parks Victoria Act (2018) comes into effect, giving PV direct responsibility for land management. Previously Parks Victoria reported to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). Now recreated as an independent statutory authority, responsibility is transferred directly to PV's Board.

5 October 2018. VCC and CliffCare representatives meet with PV to discuss the impact of climbing on cultural heritage. PV called the meeting after submitting noncompliance reports to Aboriginal Victoria over the bolting incidents. In an attempt to prevent wide-scale bans on climbing, the VCC proposes a new Climbing Code of Conduct, recognising the existing PV policy—part of the Grampians National Park Management Plan (2003)—was outdated. (The plan did not, for example, mention bouldering, which has become increasingly popular in the park since 2015.)

Key Points: Gariwerd / The Grampians contains more than 80% of registered rock art in Victoria, making it a place of huge cultural significance. Legally, the exact locations of cultural heritage sites cannot be disclosed to recreational user groups such as climbers, as a means of protection. The Parks Victoria Act (2018) gives Parks Victoria direct responsibility for land management. Prior to this, responsibility fell to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). Under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (2006), Aboriginal Victoria can issue fines of up to $1,580,700 for harming Aboriginal cultural heritage, including seeking damages from Parks Victoria. Climbing was not permitted in Special Protected Zones (SPZs), a feature of the 2003 Park Management Plan. Popular crags such as Eureka Wall, Muline, Red Rocks and the Gallery fell within an SPZ. However, Parks Victoria chose not to enforce restrictions and, indeed, had worked with climbers to realign tracks to facilitate climbing access to various crags such as those at Red Rocks, Muline and The Gallery. Most climbers would not have been aware that the Special Protection Areas or Zones actually existed. Parks Victoria was complicit in enabling and encouraging climbing in these areas.

The VCC outlines a Cliffcare-initiated campaign to educate climbers on key issues facing them as a user group, which PV supports. It also proposes a voluntary moratorium on establishing new routes in the Grampians. This moratorium proposal elicits a mixed response from climbers (and indeed, from VCC members); some are happy to do whatever was asked for by VCC as a show of good faith to Parks Victoria and traditional owners, whilst others demand far more detail and transparency from the VCC and PV about what actual harm was occurring (or had the potential to occur) to cultural heritage and wanted the chance to have meaningful input into developing sustainable ‘win-win’ solutions.

3 November 2018. Two rangers visit climbers at sites in the Victoria Range and ask them to leave the area immediately, in an action unsanctioned by Parks Victoria. Climbers are presented with fliers and a map that is later identified as a draft internal document.

12 February 2019. Parks Victoria meets with representatives from VCC to inform them that eight areas in the Grampians will be closed to climbing. Signage would be erected at these areas and people ignoring the closures issued with fines of up to $1,600. Parks Victoria has implemented the closures because Aboriginal Victoria believes Parks Victoria has failed to protect cultural sites under its jurisdiction. The VCC seeks clarification on these areas from PV and interprets the information provided for climbers. The Special Protection Areas (SPAs) include areas categorised as Special Protection Zones (SPZs) under the 2003 Park Management Plan, as well as new areas. (Importantly, climbing was not permitted in SPZs under the 2003 Plan, but this was never enforced by PV.) Popular crags such as Eureka Wall, Muline, Red Rocks and the Gallery

fall with SPAs, as does Summerday Valley. Legally, the exact locations of cultural heritage sites within the SPAs cannot be disclosed to recreational user groups such as climbers, as a means of protection.
February 2019. In response to the criticisms of some climbers that those individuals liaising with PV on behalf of the VCC have lacked the critical skills, experience and expertise (legal, media, cultural heritage expertise) to satisfactorily address access issues and adequately represent and advocate on behalf of the broader climbing community, the VCC forms the Grampians Access Working Group (GAWG) and co-opts some members with appropriate expertise into its ranks.

3 March 2019. CliffCare holds its annual Clean-up Australia Day in the Grampians.

April and May 2019. GAWG representatives meet with climbers after Goatfest at Natimuk to bring them up-to-date. The reps face heated criticism. In response to the clamour of many climbers over the preceding months for the formation of a representative state climbing body with a prime focus on access, The Australian Climbing Association Victoria (the ACAV) announces its formation. It outlines its vision for how, with the backing of an overarching national access fund, it will focus on the legislative framework within which land managers will be held to account to appropriately serve climbers as a legitimate recreational land user group.

In the wake of conflicting information from PV, climbers continue to demand clarity from PV in regard to the exact location of the SPAs. ACAV and VCC take preliminary legal steps to clarify PV's reasons for the bans, as a means to understand on what legitimate and ethical basis access might be re-negotiated, and lodge FOI applications.

The GAWG begins a Change.org online petition that quickly garners almost 25,000 signatures.
ACAV alerts politicians to some of the anomalies apparent in the promulgation by PV of the climbing bans. Specifically, it notes concerns that due processes were not followed, the devastating economic impact that the bans were having and the legally dubious pathway taken by PV in applying laws and regulations selectively to the disadvantage of some user groups (climbers) viv a vis other user groups (walkers/'casual' tourists) in relation to potential and actual harm to cultural heritage.

It initiates a motion that is put to the legislative assembly pushing for comprehensive consultation between key-stakeholders in relation to how cultural heritage might be protected whilst avoiding the need for blanket bans on climbing across vast swathes of the Grampians/Gariwerd National Park.

VCC representatives meet with PV staff, including CEO Simon Talbot, on 1st May to discuss the development of the new Grampians Landscape Management Plan. This plan will replace the outdated 2003 Plan.

CliffCare partners with gyms all over Australia to raise funds and awareness of access issues in the Grampians. Climb for Grampians May 8 raises more than $10,000. The Access Is No Accident Campaign is launched on the same day.

A peak climbing body to represent climbers from all climbing clubs and organisations in Victoria is proposed. A number of clubs sign a memorandum of understanding to pursue the idea further with a view to establishing such a body.

5 June 2019. In response to numerous requests from ACAV to meet with Parks Victoria Chief Operations Officer to discuss the climbing bans, such a meeting is convened. Representatives from Aboriginal Victoria, together with the Advisor to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Minister Lily D'Ambrosio and a VCC representative are also invited to attend. ACAV and VCC expressed disappointment at the lack of consultation with regards to the current bans and conveyed to attendees the urgent need for a Climbing Management Plan to facilitate sustainable access and provide guidance on underlying policies to support climbing. The VCC also sought some level of guidance on how to commence building relationships with the Traditional Owners and have been provided with some basic but limited information from Aboriginal Victoria. ACAV and the VCC continue to seek an audience with the Minister, Lily D'Ambrosio, as well as Minister Gavin Jennings, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and Minister Martin Pakula, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events.

25 June 2019. PV invites selected individuals to be part of Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) meetings to have a voice in the development of the new Grampians Landscape Management Plan (GLMP). It invites Paula Toal as a representative of the Founding Council of the still-to-be-formed peak body to represent climbers.

July 2019. Many from the climbing community write to politicians, to the COO of Parks Victoria and to the Chair of Parks Victoria to object to the choice of someone from a yet-to-be established body (that is not incorporated, and has neither membership nor elected officials) as their representative. In response, the Chair of Parks Victoria, Jeff Floyd, initiates Roundtable meetings, so that a more broadly representative group of different voices from the climbing community can be heard.

August 2019. At the first Roundtable meeting, ACAV proposed that, in consultation with PV and VCC, it further develops Climbing Management Guidelines for Victoria, as well as develop more nuanced, crag-sector by crag-sector evaluations and climbing management strategies for Gariwerd/Grampians that can be referred to by the GLMP.

Appendix C - Key Victorian Rockclimbing Clubs and Associations

ACAV - Australian Climbing Association Victoria

ACAV was formed in April 2019 to represent the interests of the Victorian climbing community at a legal level, and to promote and protect access to rock climbing in Victoria while being respectful of unique cultural and environmental values.

The purposes of the Association are:

- To be the pre-eminent representative body for climbing access in Victoria.
- To inform and educate climbers regarding access issues.
- To accumulate monies obtained from membership fees, donations and other sources into a trust fund, (The Climbing Access Fund), to be used for matters that affect rights to access climbing sites in Victoria.
- To share assets and resources with bodies that have similar purposes to the Association and which are not carried out for the profit or gain of its individual members.
- To ensure that the legislation, regulations, policy documents and other instruments which affect climbing are lawful and appropriate and are being correctly interpreted and applied by land managers and governments at all levels.
- To work with land managers and governments at all levels to promote and support climbing and to help develop climbing related policy, regulations and other instruments.
- To work with climbers, climbing entities and other related industry bodies to form and maintain a strong climbing community and to support the transition into climbing for climbers.
- To ensure the full recreational value of public land is recognised and utilised, such public land being managed under the *Parks Victoria Act 2018* (Vic), the *National Parks Act 1975* (Vic), the *Conservation, Forest and Lands Act 1987* (Vic), the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* (Vic), the *Land Act 1975* (Vic), the *Forests Act 1958* (Vic), the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), the *Traditional Owners Settlement Act 2010* (Vic), and new or any other relevant Act and/or subordinate legislation and/or statutory instruments.
- To work with Traditional Owners to understand, and communicate an understanding of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage to climbers, and to ensure that the requirements of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic) are being correctly interpreted and applied by land managers.

Victorian Climbing Club

The Victorian Climbing Club is a social club that was formed in 1952 and incorporated in 1985. The aim of the Club is to promote and protect recreational climbing.

The VCC has a number of areas of focus including:

- climber education and awareness,
- promotion of climbing practices that are safe and are respectful of surrounding environments and cultural heritage,
- organisation or facilitation of club trips,

- facilitation of ‘learn to lead’ courses for members,
- promotion of climbing-focussed social ‘events’ and interactions between members,
- dissemination of climbing news, and
- promotion of environmental maintenance work in climbing areas in collaboration with the relevant land managers.

Unlike other climbing clubs that are derived from tertiary education institutions and are populated by the members of these institutions, or clubs that are largely regional in their outlook or membership, the VCC is open to anyone who climbs or has an interest in climbing. It has catered for a very wide demographic, including people of all ages and backgrounds, for many decades. It has catered for traditional and sport climbers, boulderers and mountaineers. It has been the traditional source of support and funding that has enabled scores of guidebooks to be produced that have facilitated the development of rock-climbing in Victoria. It has been the body that Victorian climbers have looked toward to take the lead in advocating for climbing causes with governments and land managers.

It has, in short, been the de facto peak body for outdoor recreational climbing in Victoria for many decades.

Cliffcare

The Victorian CliffCare Trust was set up in 1998 and is administered by the Victorian Climbing Club; in simple terms it is the environmental arm of the club.

The purposes of the Victorian Cliffcare Trust are to

- organise and promote practical activities which assist in the protection and enhancement of the natural environment where this relates to the undertaking of climbing and allied activities and
- provide information and education programs designed to influence the behaviour of those who participate in climbing and allied activities in ways which promote the protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage

A special CliffCare Fund allows Cliffcare to raise money to mobilise climbers to help take care of climbing environments; crags, their surrounds and access tracks. This is seen to be an important aspect of maintaining access. Since 1998, the VCC has employed Australia’s first professional Access and Environment Officer who works in three ways:

1. Education – promoting ‘low impact’ climbing
2. Advocacy – negotiating with land managers to maintain access and re - open popular cliffs
3. Protection – organizing work parties and raising money to preserve the cliff environment

Appendix D - Contacts, References and Links

Australian Climbing Association Victoria
Email: acav@climb.org.au Web: http://acav.climb.org.au/

Victorian Climbing Club Incorporated
GPO Box 1725, Melbourne Vic 3001
Email: info@vicclimb.org.au Web: www.vicclimb.org.au

Aboriginal Heritage Identification Guide
https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/-/media/project/pv/main/parks/documents/managing-country-together/aboriginal-heritage-identification-guide.pdf?la=en&hash=4BE2D051D87358E336AE4981EE9FA6C0CBC71745

A Guide to Climbing Issues and the Production of a Climbing Management Plan.
Compiled by Aram Attarian, Ph.D. and Jason Keith, Access Fund Policy Director.
https://www.accessfund.org/uploads/ClimbingManagementGuide_AccessFund.pdf

Bidjigal Reserve Plan of Management
https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/175053/Bidjigal-reserve-pom-April-2012.pdf

Brambuk - The National Park and Cultural Centre
http://www.brambuk.com.au/education.htm

Cliffcare Resource Centre
https://www.cliffcare.org.au/resource-centre

Climbing and Respect for Indigenous Lands
https://www.accessfund.org/open-gate-blog/climbing-and-respect-for-indigenous-lands?fbclid=IwAR0Dx0PJKXL8a4HQQ6S9nHkFTXtmOwrL9Bw5OtN_XuMD0m36F00UgNLCkEY

Conservation Management Strategy - National Consistency - Bolting Anchors
New Zealand - Department of Conservation

Cooperation in the European Mountains 33 The sustainable management of climbing areas in Europe. Brigitte Hanemann, IUCN The World Conservation Union
https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/EEP-ER-014.pdf

Economic Impact of Climbing in Red River Gorge
http://www.maplesresearchgroup.com/uncategorized/red-river-gorge-climbers-spend-3-6-million-annually/

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318518186_Climbing_out_of_Poverty_The_Economic_Impact_of_Rock_Climbing_in_and_around_Eastern_Kentucky's_Red_River_Gorge

Parks Victoria Code of Conduct for Climbing
https://cliffcare.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/parks-victoria-code-of-conduct-for-climbing1.pdf

Rock Climbing on QPWS managed areas
Queensland Department of National Parks Sport Recreation and Racing
https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/policies/pdf/op-pk-vm-rock-climbing.pdf

Rumney Rocks Climbing Management Plan
https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd510683.pdf

South Australian Climbers Code of Conduct
http://www.qldclimb.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/South-Aust-Rock-Climbers-and-Aseilers-Code-of-Conduct.pdf

To Bolt Or Not To Be
Discussion on bolting by the UIAA Mountaineering Commission, 6/28/1998
www.uiaa.ch/webstorage/download/36/tobolte.doc

Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinism (UIAA)
www.uiaa.ch

UIAA Standards for Mountaineering and Climbing Equipment 123 Bolts (references EN 959)
www.uiaa.ch/webstorage/download/34/Std123n.doc

Victorian Climbing Club Bolting Policy
http://www.vicclimb.org.au/file/id/72

Appendix E - Glossary of Terms

ACAV - Australian Climbing Association Victoria
Anchor – point of attachment to the rock, a piece of natural or fixed protection.
Belay/belaying – secure position and the system of controlling the safety rope while climbing.
Safety Bolt – types of metal pin used for fixed protection, requires a hole to be drilled in the rock for placement.
Bolting – act of placing bolts.
Bolt-plate/bracket – removable bolt hanger, plate with a keyhole slot to put on a hangerless bolt and kept in place by
clipping in a karabiner.
Bouldering problem – usually a short sequence of climbing moves close to the ground that do not require a safety
rope.
Carrots – most often machine bolts that are filed down to a taper then hammered into a slightly under - sized hole.
D-shackle – type of coupling link with threaded bar for gate closure. Not designed for rock climbing use.
Dynamic loading – force being applied to anything by a moving object, i.e. a climber falling onto a rope would be
dynamic loading of the rope.
European standard – standards defined by the European Union which products must meet before sale in the EU.
Australia has no equivalent for rock climbing equipment.
Expansion bolt – type of bolt with threaded sleeve and wedge, when the bolt is tightened the wedge forces the sleeve out to grip the rock.
Factor two fall – falling twice the distance of the rope paid out, i.e. directly onto the belay with no other protection.
Produces severe shock loading on the belay system.
First ascensionist – a person who first successfully completes a climb is given particular rights and responsibilities for it, e.g. naming it.
Fixed hanger – hanger that is permanently attached to a bolt.
Fixed protection – permanent anchor, usually made by drilling a hole and inserting a bolt.
Fixed wire/sling/rope/cord – natural protection that is left in place on a climb, usually when it provides an essential
point of protection.
Ground fall – to fall and hit the ground, great potential for serious injury.
Hanger – usually a piece of angled stainless steel, connects a karabiner to a bolt.
Hangerless bolt – less visually obvious, but less easy to use than a Fixed hanger, as they require the climber to place
a bolt-plate on the bolt.
Karabiner – type of coupling link with sprung hinged gate closure.
Load testing – load shear and tension with a quickdraw chain or slings whilst on top-rope (jump up and down on it).
Check fixed hanger will not slip, or bolt-plate will fit over the bolt head.
Lower offs – permanent anchors at the top of a climb positioned for easy descent.
Maillon rapide – type of coupling link with threaded sleeve for gate closure.

Natural protection – utilizes rock features (cracks, spikes, holes) to place anchors that can be removed without having
altered the rock.
Piton – metal spike that is hammered into a crack as an anchor. A staple of early climbers, they are not widely used
anymore.
Piton scar – the mark left in a crack once a piton is removed.
EN 959 – European standard applying to Rock anchors: Anchoring equipment with an eye in which a connector can
be attached for belaying purposes by inserting into a drill hole in rock and kept in place by gluing or expansion forces.
Protection – safety equipment placed to minimize the length of a fall.
Rappel/Abseil – Descending by sliding down a rope. Often used as a way to get off a climb.
Retro-bolting – adding or moving bolts after the first ascent, can change the feel of a climb.
Ring bolts – single shafted stainless steel rods bent and welded at the end to form an eyelet through which a
karabiner can be attached.
Self tapping/self drilling bolt – types of expansion bolt that include their own drill bit, often used in caving.
Sling – band of nylon webbing usually tied or sewn into a loop.
Sports climb – usually 1 or 2 pitch climb protected by bolts.
Top-rope – where the rope is anchored above the climber either by belaying from above or setting up a pulley system above the climb and belaying from below.
U-staples – 'U' shaped glue in bolt, requires two drilled holes.
UIAA – Union International des Associations d'Alpinisme is a climbing organization that tests climbing equipment, see
web address below.
VCC - Victorian Climbing Club.

Appendix F - ISO 31000:2018 Risk Assessment Climbing Template

- see attached A3 risk assessment template for a sample location: Castle Rock

ID No.	Area Name	Description of Hazard/Aspect/Oppourtunity	Hazard Impact / Oppourtinity Impact	Inherent Risk Level					RiskControls	Monitoring Method	Mitigated Risk / Opportunity					Risk Status
				Probability / Likelihood		Consequence / Benefit / Impact		Level			Probability / Likelihood		Consequence / Benefit / Impact		Level	
RISK																
1	**Castle Rock** Characteristics: Isolated small peak in the central Grampians. Minimal usage. Long approach, along defined little used track. Both multi pitch and single pitch traditional climbing with no safety bolts. 11 established climbs.	Erosion and movement of soils	Contaminated water and sediment leaving site and impacting on downstream environments - leading to environmental harm. * Fines/prosecution * Reputation * Financial loss.	4	Likely	3	Moderate	Low	Designated walking tracks, clearly identified no go zones for at risk areas, PV environmental guidance and induction. ACAV environmental training program.	Annual inspection completed between ACAV and PV. Reporting systems to be established to allow climbers to assist with early intervention of areas where erosion may be an issue. Staged shutdown of area to allow for regeneration.	1	Rare	3	Moderate	Low	Open
2		Generation of waste (litter, toilet paper, plastics)	Contaminated Materials. Environmental incident.. Fines. Polution of waterways/streams.	3	Possible	3	Moderate	Moderate	ACAV environmental training program, installation of signage at campground area	As above	1	Rare	3	Moderate	Low	Open
4		Invasive flora	* Spread of Noxious weeds	1	Rare	4	Major	Low	Designated walking tracks, clearly identified no go zones for at risk areas, PV environmental guidance and induction. ACAV environmental training program.		1	Rare	4	Major	Low	Closed
30		Climbing activity within or adjacent to signficiant heritage sites or areas	* Impacts to heritage sites or objects during climbing leading leading to environmental harm, fines/prosecution, reputation, financial loss. * Chalk/bolts in or adjacent to aboriginal art sites.	3	Possible	5	Substantial	High	Cultural Heritage Management plan to be commissioned. No-Go Zones fencing and signage if required. Cultural heritage inductions to be arranged as required. Designated walking tracks, clearly identified no go zones for at risk areas,		1	Rare	4	Major	Low	Open
40		Causing harm to vegetation	Impact on No-Go Zone areas. Enviro incident. Degredation of environemnt.	4	Likely	3	Moderate	Low	No Go Zones to be defined within Environment Management Plan around protected vegetation. Designated walking tracks, clearly identified no go zones for at risk areas, PV environmental guidance and induction. ACAV environmental training program.		3	Possible	4	Major	Low	Open
41		Use of climbing hardware (e.g. bolts)	Visual impact, damage to rock	4	Likely	3	Moderate	High	Only existing safety bolts to be utilised. New route policy to be advised. Other climbing equipment not be left in place. ACAV to maintain bolt register database for maintenace. Bolts/hangers to be painted to suit colour of rock in high visibility areas to minimuse visual impact.		3	Possible	4	Major	Low	Open
42		Use of chalk	Visual impact discolouring rock, long term staining of orange rock	3	Possible	3	Moderate	Low	Climbers to minimise chalk use. Use of colored chalk. Annual cleanups		3	Possible	4	Major	Low	Open
43		Impact on Fauna	Brush Tailed Rock Wallaby known environment and release programme location	5	Almost Certain	5	Substantial	Extreme	Access to Area prohibited by instigation of Reg 20 of NP Regulations 2018		1	Rare	4	Major	Low	Open
90																
98																
OPPORTUNITY																
O1	All areas	Additional resources for PV to assist in management of area.	Identification of new art sites, Rubbish clearing, track maintenance, early intervention to address environemntal impacts.	1	Rare	3	Moderate	Low			4	Likely	3	Moderate	Low	Open
O2	All areas	Increased Tourism.	Financial benefit for local economy.													