



Draft In-Confidence

**Collaborative Action Plan To Rectify Environmental Damage
Caused by Climbers in the Grampians National Park**

Executive Summary

Problem

Over recent decades, the cumulative environmental impact of rock climbing has arguably resulted in a breach of the National Parks Act 1975, due to erosion caused by access tracks, belay zones, and bouldering zones; the removal of, or damage to vegetation on climbing routes and at rappel points; and, in high-traffic bouldering areas, the negative impact of an accumulation of climbing chalk on the scenic value of the National Park.

Objectives

The objectives of this proposal are:

- to unlock the benefits of the Grampians for the climbing community;
- to rectify the problem by drawing on energy from within the climbing community, and on the knowledge and expertise of staff from the Environment and Science Directorate of Parks Victoria; and
- to ensure the recreational use by this generation of climbers is environmentally sustainable, so that the Grampians National Park is preserved for future generations.

Issues

We consider the following are the essential issues that need to be resolved to rectify environmental damage for the short term:

- how the exact nature and extent of unacceptable damage to the environment at a given crag is to be determined and recorded;
- what indicia are to be used to determine the high priority crags for immediate repair;
- what are the practical remedies for each type of unacceptable damage at a priority crag;
- whether a joint climbing community/Parks Victoria work schedule (to carry out the necessary repair work) is feasible;
- what post-repair monitoring criteria and process (to assess the efficacy of the repair work) will effectively provide feedback to Parks Victoria management and to the climbing community;
- what indicia are to be used in field surveys to identify and prioritise crags on an ongoing basis.



We wish to discuss these issues and identify other issues in collaboration with senior scientific staff from the Environment and Science Directorate.

Collaborative Environmental Action Plan

In collaboration with the Environment and Science staff, to rectify environmental damage in the short term, we consider the following schedules and tables will form the basis of an effective action plan:

- a risk matrix table for each crag that conforms with International Standards Organisation ISO 31000; and
- an issues and remedies table for each crag that identifies the damage at the crag, that states the remedy/ies to correct that damage, and that provides a timeframe in which the work should be carried out (e.g. photographs of trees damaged from rappelling, and of flora damage and erosion caused by access tracks; the installation of rappel anchors, track hardening work, specific revegetation work); and
- a work schedule for each crag that includes an estimate of the number of hours (or days) needed to rectify the damage, with contact details for a designated Parks Victoria field officer and ACAV crag representatives; and
- a monitoring schedule that states when Parks Victoria field staff will assess the efficacy of the work that has been done, and when Parks Victoria will notify the ACAV of the outcome of that assessment; and
- a field survey schedule that identifies the next group of crags to be assessed, repaired, and monitored.

We wish to develop these tables and schedules in collaboration with senior scientific staff from the Environment and Science Directorate, and implement the finalised action plan at the earliest opportunity.

Collaborative Framework for Ongoing Management and Damage Mitigation

Finally, in collaboration with the Environment and Science staff, we wish to develop a framework for the long-term that will ensure use by the current generation of rock climbers and boulderers is environmentally sustainable, so that the environment is preserved for the benefit of future generations. We consider some essential aspects of such a framework are:

- a code of conduct specifically targeted at ensuring environmentally sustainable use of access tracks, bouldering locations, cliff faces and descent routes; and
- scientifically monitoring and recording climber impact on a Crag by Crag basis; and
- official quarterly feedback from Parks Victoria to the climbing community of such monitoring; and



- quarterly meetings between Parks Victoria's Environment and Science Directorate and the ACAV and VCC, specifically to alert the community to problem areas so that remedial work may be implemented; and
- broadly, a formalised Parks Victoria Practice Statement that sets out clear principles and tests that will, when applied to a given crag, evidence the need for a regulation 65 determination in respect of that crag. We envisage that such a practice statement need not be exhaustive in its terms, but that it will provide guidance to both Parks Victoria staff and to the climbing community as to why and when a regulation 65 determination may be made in general cases.

Ideally, the final action plan and the framework for the Grampians can be used as a blueprint for all national parks across Victoria e.g. Mt Arapiles and Mount Buffalo.

Draft approved:

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