

VAGO CONTACT US FORM

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Subject	Performance Audit Parks Vic Archaeological Reports
Sector	Environment
Comments	<p>This request is a follow up to a previous audit, completed as part of "Managing Conflict of Interest in Procurement", issued by VAGO in September 2021. This audit request proposes further review of the reports identified within the fourth case study in that audit, concerning the actions of Parks Victoria in procuring archaeological surveys in the Grampians/Gariwerd and Mount Arapiles/Dyurrite regions.</p> <p>These archaeological reports have been instrumental in bringing about rock climbing bans on a scale that is unprecedented throughout the world. In November 2021, Parks Victoria issued The Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan, incorporating stringent rock climbing restrictions, based upon these archaeological findings.</p> <p>In the previous case study, the Auditor General reported on several failings surrounding Parks Victoria procurement processes. It was noted within the audit that the relevant Parks Victoria Contract Manager (Mr Goodes) was co-author of two key archaeological reports along with the sole-supplier Archaeologist (Mr Gunn).</p> <p>Report 1: "Rock Art and Rock Climbing: An Escalating Conflict." (attached)</p> <p>Report 2: this has not been made public, but the presence of a second Goodes/Gunn report was noted in the previous VAGO audit.</p> <p>I request a Performance Audit of these two reports, seeking to establish that these reports fail to demonstrate "evidence-based park management" as required in the Statement of Obligations made by Parks Victoria to the Minister for Environment. Clause 9.3.2 "Parks Victoria must employ adequate senior scientific staff, including a Chief Conservation Scientist, to support evidence-based park management and decision making".</p> <p>I contend that these reports are fundamentally flawed as they fail to show</p>

	<p>an evidence-based and scientific approach.</p> <p>Key failings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Conflict of interest having Mr Goodes as co-author. * The title of the first report "Rock Art and Rock Climbing: An Escalating Conflict" is wholly inappropriate as it seeks to ignite the very conflict that it claims to report upon. This report fails to demonstrate that any conflict exists. I would argue that this report started the conflict that it claims to be reporting upon. * There is no documented evidence of rock art damage attributable to rock climbing, anywhere in the State. * The report claims that climbers were responsible for deliberately creating graffiti and damaging rock art in a cave at Lil Lil in the Black Range State Park. <p>Report 1, Page 90 : "particularly at Lil-Lil, it is all too apparent that rock climbers are at fault. At Lil-Lil some graffiti have been deliberately placed over rock art, and the damage is permanent".</p> <p>The cave in question is at ground level within 200 metres of a popular camping site. The authors have no evidence to accuse rock climbers of causing graffiti when hundreds of campers frequent this location throughout the year. The accusation of deliberate damage by climbers is hearsay and this inflammatory reasoning has no place within a scientific report of such far-reaching importance.</p> <p>Should the Auditor General find that these two reports are flawed and unscientific in the manner suggested, I would contend that these reports should be nullified and the rock climbing management restrictions noted within The Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan 2021 should be cancelled and reviewed under genuine scientific grounds to ensure the proper protection of the environment and of cultural heritage. The recommendations contained within The Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines (linked below) represent world's best practice in this field.</p> <p><u>Reference links:</u></p> <p>https://acav.climb.org.au/2020/09/21/victorian-climbing-management-guidelines-version-4/</p>
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