



Australian Climbing Association (Vic) Inc.

08 June 2022

Attn: Jason Borg
Regional Director, Western Region
Parks Victoria
Level 10, 535 Bourke Street
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From: Mike Tomkins
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Australian Climbing Association (Vic) Inc.
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Dear Jason,

Re: Grampians Gariwerd Climbing and Hiking - Safety Equipment and Liability

On 18th February 2022, you answered some queries from Open Spaces Publishing regarding climbing, scrambling and hiking. You made the following statement:

“A rope may be used to assist hikers on a designated trail. However, the use of additional equipment outside of a designated climbing area is not permitted.”

[Link to your letter to OSP on 18/02/2022](#)


Your instructions have been made public by Open Spaces in its capacity as a publisher of outdoor adventure guidebooks.

This prohibition of safety equipment presents a glaring safety risk, exposing Parks Victoria and its policy-makers to litigation in the event of an accident. We anticipate that we may be called upon to offer an expert witness for a future coronial inquest and we see it as our duty of care to raise this matter now.

Many experienced climbers and hikers will be aware of a tragedy that occurred on the first ascent of the Matterhorn, Switzerland in 1865. Four people died on the descent when one person slipped and pulled three others off the mountain to their deaths. They were simply roped together with no point of attachment to the rock.

[First Ascent of the Matterhorn - Hiking and Climbing](#)

Outdoor safety equipment has improved enormously since 1865. Yet Parks Victoria seeks to prohibit these essential safety items. On steep hiking and scrambling sections, you propose a rope but no karabiners, no slings, no belay devices, no stoppers and no camming devices. Imagine a group of children, all roped



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together on the edge of a precipice, not fixed or secured at any point. Is that your intent? Please be aware that all of the equipment listed above leaves no trace. It is secured to the rock briefly, then it is removed and carried.

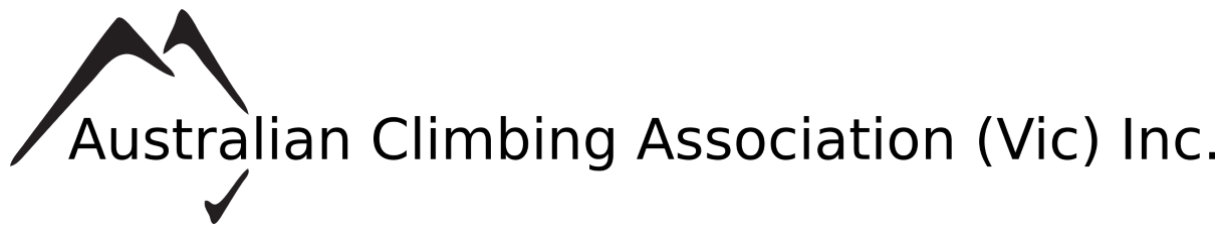


Tragedy on the first ascent of the Matterhorn, 1865 - drawn by Gustave Doré

Should one of our members receive an infringement notice for the use of such safety equipment under these circumstances, we advise that we would be prepared to contest any such penalty in court.

Please carry out an urgent review of this dangerous policy and issue updated advice to the public with some urgency. We are concerned that serious accidents may occur if essential safety equipment is not carried, for fear of prosecution.

We respectfully ask that you refrain from making such policy without holding adequate knowledge of the subject matter. ACAV remains available to assist in the implementation of the [Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines](#). Open Spaces Publishing and others have offered specialist climbing, scrambling and hiking advice. It is incumbent upon Parks Victoria and its employees to properly consult and then act appropriately upon receiving this technical and safety advice.



Kind Regards,

Mike Tomkins
President
Australian Climbing Association Victoria Inc.
president.vic@climb.org.au

Further reading, describing associated issues that have been raised, but not resolved:

Open Spaces Article:

[Have Parks Victoria Really Banned Scrambling in the Grampians National Park?](#)

KEY POINTS

- Parks Victoria are in the process of banning class 3 scrambling in the Grampians National Park.
- Bushwalkers are potentially facing large fines should they be caught class 3 scrambling on non-designated hiking trails.
- According to Parks Victoria their class 3 definition is that ascending a given section of rock (whether it is 5m in length or 100m in length), whether with or without “ropes and other safety equipment” is “scrambling” if that section of rock is on a “designated hiking trail”; however, ascending that identical section of rock (whether with or without ropes and other safety equipment) is regarded as “rockclimbing” if it is not on a designated hiking trail. In other words, simply by designating a trail or by removing its designation, an ascent (whether with or without ropes and safety equipment) can be assessed as either class 3 scrambling or rockclimbing according to Parks Victoria’s whim.