

ARGUS

Victorian Climbing Club Newsletter

December 2020



VCC

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Farewell Claire!

VCC Committee member and Membership Officer Claire Grubb will be leaving us to take up a new position in Tassie. Congratulations Claire, and thanks for all your hard work over the past 18 months. We wish you all the best.

*The VCC is based in Naarm / Melbourne.
We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land, the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Australia on which we climb.
We recognise sovereignty was never ceded, and pay our respects to your Elders, past, present and emerging.*

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ARGUS

Editor/Designer

Leigh Hopkinson

Submissions

Send your submissions to argueditor@vicclimb.org.au
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Back Issues

For a selection of previous Argus issues, please follow this link: <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/tep/129542>

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Front Cover

Peter 'I think Lamplighter's in here somewhere' Upton
Photo: Nic Low

Back Cover

Ben Wright stretching it out on Maiden China (15)
Photo: Peter Upton

EDITORIAL



Dear Members,

The draft Greater Gariwerd Land Management Plan, released last month, represents a turning point in the way our National Parks will be governed. It is refreshing to see that Gariwerd's Traditional Owners have shaped this document, that their interests and visions for

this landscape are finally being recognised. The draft Plan represents a genuine attempt at a partnership between the State and Indigenous Australians. This is long overdue.

The draft Plan, along with Barengi Gadjin Land Council's recent media release, confirms—for those of us who had any doubt—that Traditional Owners have been instrumental in this process. Parks Victoria (PV) has simply been tasked with responding to the legislative changes that made recognition of Indigenous rights in this landscape possible.

Given how badly PV has handled the climbing restrictions and how singularly it has accused climbers of causing harm to cultural and environmental values, it is easy to blame PV for our current situation. *SavetheGrampians* has relentlessly pushed this line (without exploring the impact unauthorised crag development may have had). Climbers must continue to point out inconsistencies in PV's approach, suggest better alternatives and keep the dream of climbing in wild places alive. But it is useful to remember that PV is an underfunded bureaucracy with poor organisational memory, and it has been tasked

with doing something unprecedented in its history: giving effect to the wishes of Traditional Owners.

It is easier for us to blame PV than to acknowledge the wishes of Traditional Owners. The latter requires recognising that Traditional Owners have rights, and that these rights have been legitimised. For so long, Indigenous Australians have had few or no rights in this country. As a result, I think some climbers could not fathom that Traditional Owners not only had a seat at the table, but were—as Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) spelt out recently—driving this process.

To acknowledge that Traditional Owners don't want us to climb in areas of Gariwerd means coming face-to-face with our own prejudices and privileges. It can be an uncomfortable place to sit, especially if reconciliation is a subject we don't know a lot about. It can be all the more uncomfortable if we have something to lose.

As a New Zealander with a Māori partner and son, Indigenous politics are never far from our kitchen table. When I first met my partner, I was largely ignorant of my own country's history and politics—I'd never needed to be curious, because I didn't have anything at stake. Having something at stake is an opportunity to learn and grow, and this is how I have been approaching the access issues in Gariwerd and now Dyurrite. I'm embarrassed about how little I knew of Australian history when I started this journey. I'm still embarrassed about how little I know. But we all have to start somewhere.

Since late 2019, the Gariwerd Wimmera Reconciliation Network has been quietly going about earning the trust of Traditional Owners. I believe they have succeeded in part because they are not attached to an outcome for climbers. They are prepared to listen, to be respectful and to be patient—as they have advised us to do. Climbers have been waiting for two years for an outcome. Traditional Owners have been waiting for two hundred.

From both the draft Plan and BGLC's media release, it is apparent, now more than ever, that building relationships with Traditional Owners is key. Yes, some of us have been trying to engage with Traditional Owners, but most of us have been prioritising our own agendas ahead of the process. PV has continually reiterated the need for safe spaces and respectful conversations in order for Traditional Owners to take part. Let's be clear: Traditional Owners are not required to meet with us as part of this process. And why would they, when questions asked in Engage forums attempt to undermine their legitimacy, and when a vocal minority on social media continue to exhibit racist tendencies? On that ill-fated Goatfest night, climbers were warned how

they presented themselves on social media would be noticed, and would affect how our whole community was perceived. Yet this mistake continues to be made. And all of us are affected as a result.

Within the climbing community, alternative voices to the 'blame Parks' narrative have been shut down repeatedly on social media. A brave few persist. The positive response to Wendy Eden's recent blog post (republished in this *Argus*) illustrates there are many who continue to support a reconciliatory approach.

BGLC has endorsed the management plan process and made its position on legal action very clear. Should we continue along the path we've chosen, we're likely to erode any good will we have left. I say this not to undermine the huge body of work being carried out voluntarily by our elected representatives, especially by Kevin Lindorff, whom I have much respect for. I say it because BGLC have communicated that they view the legal challenge 'to be counterproductive and a direct challenge to our rights and cultural responsibilities'. If this alone is not enough, remember we will need to work with Traditional Owners in the future, regardless of whether or not a legal challenge is successful in the short-term.

BGLC will be jointly managing Mt Arapiles – Tooan State Park when native title is granted (reportedly within 12 months). From a purely selfish perspective, climbers must recognise that our continued access to Dyurrite is largely up to BGLC. However, even this is putting our own narrow interests ahead of the wider issue that's really on the table. What's happening right now is bigger than us and our community. This is about reconciliation and starting to address the injustices of colonisation. It's about acknowledging the legitimacy of Australia's First Nations people and the fact that they now have some rights to decide what happens on their ancestral land. And it's about being prepared to work together for an outcome than benefits us all.

Yes, I want to be able to climb. I want to be able to share the landscapes I love with you, and with my partner and my son. But access is not a right and I don't want to climb where I'm not welcome.

Yes, for many of us, climbing is our life. Consider for a moment what a privilege that is.

Leigh

GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi all,

It's been a busy month.

1) The draft Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan has been released for comment.

Parks Victoria, Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, and Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation have prepared the draft management plan for the Gariwerd landscape.

It can be viewed at <https://engage.vic.gov.au/gariwerd-management-plan>

It is a lengthy document so I'd recommend you have a read yourself.



Key proposals include:

- To not allow dispersed (bush) camping.

Climbing-specific:

- To only allow climbing in designated areas that have been assessed for cultural and natural values, and therefore where it has been determined that the activity can take place with low impact.
- To climb in the designated areas, climbers will be asked to obtain a climbing permit (at no cost and valid for one year). The purpose of this permit is to provide a mechanism to keep climbers updated about how and where they can climb in the landscape and to ensure everyone is aware of the conditions specific to climbing in the Gariwerd landscape.
- For areas where climbing cannot continue due to the presence of significant cultural or natural values, rehabilitation may be necessary to remove the impacts of unauthorised tracks, soil compaction, vegetation loss and bolting.
- Once the plan is finalised no new climbing areas will be established.
- No fixed anchors can be made in the landscape without the consent of land managers. Temporary protection will be allowed.
- Use of appropriate coloured chalk only, not white chalk.
- Rock climbing competitions will not be allowed in the landscape due to the higher number of users present at a location during a competition.

Note that crags/cliffs/climbing areas have been classified into four categories: climbing allowed; climbing only allowed with an LTO; climbing not allowed; the climbing area has yet to be assessed (so climbing is not allowed until assessments have been completed).

Bouldering-specific:

- Bouldering and the use of bouldering mats will only be allowed in some designated climbing areas where the potential impacts to natural and cultural values can be managed.
- Bouldering will not be allowed in Remote and Natural Areas.
- Bouldering competitions will not be allowed in the landscape due to the higher number of users present at a location during a competition.

The devil is, of course, in the detail. The VCC Committee has been reading through this detail and are drafting a response with recommendations on behalf of the club. But that should not deter you from making your own individual submissions, providing feedback to PV about elements of the draft plan as you see fit. The greater the number of constructive submissions that PV receives from climbers, the better.

Potential problems that have been noted include:

- Problems with the defined climbing areas—some of them are very large.
- Identified cultural or environmental values in one sector along a lengthy swathe of escarpment appears to mean that the whole area, by default, is consequently classified as out of bounds.
- Many, many crags are not indicated in PV lists in the Plan at all.
- Uncertainty/lack of clarity with timelines (when will PV get around to assessing the hundreds of climbing and bouldering sites that have yet to be assessed?)
- Problems channelling climbers into significantly fewer climbing sites.
- Problems with assumptions and recommendations in regard to bouldering (most bouldering seems to be vaporised by these draft proposals).
- Adverse economic impacts on the regional economy. No attempts have been made to quantify the effects of the planned climbing bans or to mitigate the negative economic impacts.
- Problems with the proposal to forbid the addition or replacement of fixed protection or the development of any 'new' climbing areas.
- Problems with the proposal for removal of fixed protection from areas/sites where future climbing will be prohibited (using the ADF rather than high-access professionals with expertise in harm minimisation when removing fixed gear).
- The lack of a suggested mechanism for genuine, ongoing consultation or

- collaboration with recreational user groups.
- The lack of emphasis on proactive options for ongoing management of recreational users.

Of course, the submission that the Committee is developing should not just point out problems with some of the draft proposals but must suggest well-considered, detailed and constructive solutions to these problems. These suggestions/recommendations, we believe, can help deliver PV and the Traditional Owners the sort of strong protection of cultural and environmental values that are central to their roles, but in ways that do not inordinately disenfranchise recreational user groups, including climbers, or impact unnecessarily heavily on the regional economy.

You can provide written feedback in two ways:

**Complete the engage.vic.gov.au online survey, or
Send a written submission to parkplan@engage.vic.gov.au
Electronic submissions are preferred, but if you would also like to provide a hard copy you can mail it to: Manager Park Planning, Parks Victoria, Level 10, 535 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000**

Parks Victoria will be accepting feedback until the end of Sunday 24 January 2021.

2) While ongoing assessments of climbing areas by PV and Traditional Owners continue and where temporary exclusion zones have been created, we would ask VCC members (and the climbing community in general) to **please comply with PV requests where they put up signs asking for people to refrain from entering particular sites.**

3) CliffCare was involved in a very successful tree planting at Centenary Park at Dyrurrite / Mt Arapiles on Saturday 21 November. There were 37 people who signed the log sheets and pitched in to dig holes, plant and water the trees in the campgrounds and make tree guards for the new plantings. It was wonderful to be part of such a worthy endeavour and witness the positive spirit and sense of common purpose among the helpers. The challenge now will be keeping the new plantings watered over the summer.

4) Climbing Governance Report. This includes some recommendations from Outdoors Victoria and a call for feedback. See p10 in this *Argus*.

K.L.

UPDATES

VCC Response to BGLC Position Statement

The VCC has sent a letter to the Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC) in response to its [position statement](#), released on 20 November.

In this letter, we welcomed the more detailed explanation of BGLC's position regarding heritage protection in Dyurrite and Gariwerd, and recognised this would help further reinforce recreational users' understanding of the primary and critical importance of Traditional Owners' connection to these landscapes.

We also expressed our disappointment in response to the suggestion that the VCC has failed to engage with BGLC in an informed or respectful manner. The VCC President had a long and courteous face-to-face dialogue with the BGLC CEO back in March, followed by a number of mutually respectful telephone conversations. VCC Committee members had a respectful dialogue via zoom with both the BGLC CEO and the Gariwerd Wimmera Reconciliation Network later in the year, while another Committee member communicated on numerous occasions with BGLC about the draft Victorian Climbing Management Guidelines, seeking ways it might be improved to better reflect Traditional Owner views and aspirations. These efforts were all initiated by the VCC.

While acknowledging that BGLC had their reasons for their reluctance to engage directly with the rock climbing community, we conveyed our sadness at the missed opportunities over the last two years to dispel misunderstandings and to work together for mutually beneficial outcomes.

We reiterated that the legal action against Parks Victoria was not and was never intended to challenge the rights of Traditional Owners to secure and strengthen protections for cultural values, rather was about procedural unfairness. We believe that recourse to legal avenues to ensure lawful implementations of statutes is the right of all groups and individuals.

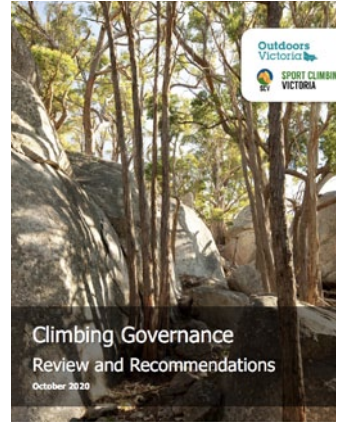
Regarding the suggestion that we are promoting extremely misleading information, we welcomed feedback on our communications and stated our willingness to correct or retract any information that is incorrect.

Lastly, we expressed our hope that we can move forward together in a spirit of reconciliation that will deliver the protections and assurances we are all wanting.

Climbing Governance Report Released by Outdoors Victoria

Outdoors Victoria has released an updated version of its Climbing Governance Review and Recommendations Report outlining possibilities for a peak body for rock climbing in Victoria.

The initial report was discussed by climbing community representatives in an online forum in late August. VCC President Kevin Lindorff summarised concerns and feedback to the initial version, which can be found on our website. <https://vicclimb.org.au/2020/09/the-founding-council-and-climbing-governance-recommendations/>



Outdoors Victoria has taken onboard aspects of the feedback provided, however other concerns have not been addressed. These include:

- The need for Outdoors Victoria to provide concrete examples of its 'runs on the board'. How has Outdoors Victoria's advocacy for the recreational user groups affiliated with it been of significant help?
- In addition to the options provided, there needs to be an option for an independent peak body that is not saddled—at least not in the first few years—with the financial impost of a significantly large salary for the person(s) doing much of the work.
- The need to ensure that any peak body did not grant equal voting rights to micro-organisations with non-elected, closed memberships measured in dozens, compared to larger organisations such as the ACAV and the VCC, with democratically elected leadership and many hundreds of financial members.

Outdoors Victoria is asking for feedback by 13 December. To read the report and/or provide feedback, visit <https://outdoorsvictoria.org.au/victorias-state-climbing-peak-public-consultation-open/>

Engage Vic Discussion Forums on Draft GGLMP

Have you taken part in a discussion forum on the draft Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan? It may not be too late! The last two forums are on 1 & 2 December. To sign up, go to Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/parks-victoria-29144363397>

Engage Vic—Draft GGLMP

As most of you will be aware, Parks Victoria (PV) has held several online community engagement sessions about the recently released draft Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan. I tuned in to the information session on 19 November and took part in a discussion forum on 26 November.

Some points from both I thought worth sharing:

- The final Plan will indicate where climbing is permitted. All areas where climbing isn't expressly permitted will be considered off-limits.
- Climbing areas not included in the draft Plan need to be brought to the attention of PV for consideration. There are many areas missing (the VCC Committee will be addressing this in its response). These areas will not be considered for climbing once the Plan has been finalised.
- Cultural and environmental assessments are required for all climbing areas. PV encourages climbers to highlight areas they would like prioritised for assessment. (To date, prioritisation has been based on the most popular areas on *theCrag*.) PV aims to complete evaluations for the highest priority areas within 12 months of the release of the final Plan. Areas not completed within that timeframe will be evaluated on the basis of 'demonstrated need.'
- Similarly, areas where bouldering will be allowed have not yet been decided.
- Climbers will require a permit in order to climb, and permits will only be issued following a cultural induction. If you believe there's benefit in other user groups also undergoing a permit process—to learn about cultural values, for example—then please suggest this in your feedback.
- According to maps, the Victoria Range is considered a Visitor Experience Area (VEA), but the relevant text is missing from chapter 5.4. This will be made available online soon.
- At this stage, there's no definitive reopening date for the Brambuk National Park and Cultural Centre, only that it is 'imminent'.
- A local team will be reviewing the threat by walkers of damage to cultural values at Hollow Mountain.

Most likely, you're tired of writing letters, but this is the critical stage of the process and we've only 10 weeks to respond, so please make it a new year's resolution if you're not onto it already! It's worth noting that a mere 452 members of the public provided input into the initial development of the Plan, which isn't a lot, given the number of people who visit Gariwerd.

Leigh Hopkinson

RESUMING CLUB TRIPS AND COURSES



VCC trip to Moonarie, October 2017

We are anticipating a resumption of our club trips at some point in December. You will have noticed that Steve and Paula Toal's Mt Buffalo trip in late January has already been advertised on the VCC website. Prior to the resumption of trips and activities, the club needs to develop a comprehensive Return to Play Plan, or a COVID-19 Safety Plan. Basically the VCC needs to have a Return to Play Plan that has been carefully considered by the Committee and then submitted to our State Sporting Association (SSA) for approval. The guidelines for this plan are provided by the Outdoor Council of Australia.

As part of our Return to Play Plan, trip participants will be required to complete a separate COVID-19 register, in addition to the normal trip register. This will facilitate contact tracing in the event that someone tests positive after the trip. The option of completing this online will be investigated.

Prior to any trip or activity, all participants will be given a copy of the VCC's COVID-19 Advice to Participants on Club Trips. This will provide advice and guidelines for behaviour on trips. Obviously there will be a focus on maintaining physical distancing as much as is practical, and minimising the sharing of climbing gear and climbing partners on trips.

There to be no sharing of harnesses, helmets, drink bottles, chalk bags or personal items. Another interesting point to ponder is the habit of lead climbers—both in trad and in sport climbing—of placing the rope in their mouth during the clipping process. This habit needs to be discouraged for obvious reasons.

Participants will be advised to download and use the COVIDSafe App on their mobile.

Carpooling?

The usual VCC carpooling spreadsheet will not be used to facilitate carpooling on VCC trips. Individual members will need to make their own travel arrangements.

Finally, any participant who develops any COVID-19 symptoms whilst on a trip will be required to isolate immediately and return home as soon as possible.

Trip Leaders

As part of this plan, there will be two new requirements for our trip leaders. The first one is that trip leaders will need to have a current basic first aid qualification. While most of our current trip leaders already meet this requirement, the VCC Committee is prepared to support trip leaders to obtain a current first aid qualification if they do not have one already. The Committee will make a contribution towards the cost of a first aid course. (The actual amount is yet to be determined by the Committee.) So existing and new trip leaders should look into completing a basic first aid course before they offer to lead a trip.

The second requirement will be that our trip leaders will need to complete an online government training module. This module educates trip leaders in COVID-19 infection control and related matters. This can be completed via this link: <https://covid-19training.gov.au/register>

The full advice to participants will be published in *Argus* and on the VCC website once it has been finalised.

Michael O'Reilly
VCC Trip Coordinator



In memory of Amber Thiel

It is with great sadness that we share news of the passing of a valued member of our climbing community. Amber Thiel first came into the friendly, casual world of indoor climbing with the Climb Victoria Meetup Group, and she entered without pretension and without fuss. Amber soon became a face we all looked forward to seeing on a Wednesday—she was a good fit with an easy-going, slightly competitive edge. A ‘no-show’ from her was cause for question, and it would be a night without her more assertive commentary on commitment to opportunity.

Amber had many achievements and adventures already ticked off, but it always took a few questions for us to get to the detail. Bicycle camping struck a chord with this group of

outdoor nuts— Amber’s idea for this was not a trip in the Yarra Valley but to ‘do’ a few of the Japanese islands over successive years. Confidence was not at fault when in action and the plan formulated. Rock climbing was a pathway to the big mountains and in no time Amber was booked into ascending a peak in Nepal. Step one was to go to New Zealand for alpine training... yep got that, and she fell in love with the South Island (there were those of us who knew she would).

Climbing started as a pathway to greater confidence at high altitude, and quickly became a passion. Amber joined the Victorian Climbing Club and became a regular feature of the end-of-month Arapiles trips. A love for real rock and trad climbing soon followed, and Amber sought



advice from her climbing buddies as she built up an impressive rack of gear. She thrived on planning her next adventure, whether big or small.

Relentlessly Amber captured the beauty of natural landscapes and the animals in them. Amber was a precise, purposeful person serving the animal world as a vet and she would share many anecdotes, prompted by our questions on the cause of a squashed or bruised face. Working up close with horses requires some guts. Obvious was the omission of people in so much of her mindscape and she shared in a moment of sincerity that she and people were not a good fit.

These COVID-19 times possibly exacerbated Amber's inward questioning. The usual checks and balances of life's framework became skewed and for Amber, and many others, the answers guiding them to the next adventure were not always at hand.

Amber's family would like to share Amber's extensive collection of climbing, mountaineering and hiking

equipment with the community in which she spent so much time. Climb Victoria is hosting an online auction and all VCC members are invited to participate. The proceeds from all auction items will be donated to Amber's preferred charity, the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The auction will run for 10 days from Thursday 3 December to Sunday 13 December.

Visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/atauction/home>

Get help now

If you need help right now, it is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, anywhere in Australia.

In an emergency, call 000.

Lifeline—24-hour crisis line
131 114

Beyond Blue Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service Hotline
1800 512 348

Kids helpline contact
1800 551 800

Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467



TREE PLANTING AT DYURRITE / MT ARAPILES





Saturday 21 November saw about 40 volunteers assist with tree planting in the campgrounds, making short work of it. Photos: Cameron Abraham, John Fischer







It's time: a member's voice

I was given an honorary life membership at the VCC AGM in September 2019. It was a bittersweet moment.

It's taken me a while to gather my thoughts and in all honesty, be brave enough to launch myself back into this space in any kind of way. And finally do what I had intended to do for a bit over a year now. There are a variety of reasons why I didn't and much I could say about it all. This is not the time for it, and there has been enough noise already.

For me, climbing came later in life and it came at a time where the challenges of single parenting and study had relented a bit and gave me a little time to think about doing something for myself and at that stage in my life, to do something new which allowed me to travel in a new direction. I loved my initial forays into climbing, but without friends in that space it was challenging to continue. Enter the VCC. It provided the opportunity to meet new friends, to engage with the outdoors in a way that blended beautifully with a personal love of movement and the sense of community I was missing, and through this and over time, to start to have an understanding of the landscape that is an integral part of our First Nations people.

Never a club kind of person, I signed up for the long haul without even realising it, I suppose. I served on the Committee as a general member, took on the role as Treasurer for a year or so to help out, was the social co-ordinator for a number of years, was *Argus* editor for 6 years, volunteered at every event, and was the VCC's Access & Environment Officer for nearly 12 years—the role which I have to say hand-on-heart I dedicated myself to. Climbing led me to my partner, a move to Natimuk where we were part owners of the beloved Nati Cafe until 2017 and where we currently own a new business. We also own property in the area and gaze out our back door at Djuritte. So I suppose I could say that the VCC had some default hand in all of this as well. I say none of this in any boastful manner, merely to explain my commitment and connection to the club, and also to a town and communities that are working through challenging times.

The reasons I left the role as Access Officer were varied and most of them were painful. Indeed the journey has been a painful one in so many ways. There has been no safety for anyone to speak another narrative than that which has been spoken by two particular climbing organisations in recent times and the loud voices that align with their approach. The VCC being one of them. For me, those voices just became the one voice that was by no

means representative of the many others that were wanting and trying to say and do something different, and were given no respectful space in which to do so.

Taking into account my work history in access and working with the climbing community, I have a pretty fair understanding of the multi-layered and nuanced situation in which we now find ourselves. I don't think now and never did that this wouldn't be challenging, labour intensive and a long, long road. There is no denying that hard work is being done by many, whether you agree with them or not. But hard work does not necessarily mean good work or the right work. For me personally, the work being done by the VCC is not the right work so to remain a member undermines my own integrity. To remain means I am complicit in an approach that I don't agree with and that undermines the hard and challenging work of the local Traditional Owner groups as they forge a new path ahead. It undermines those that are seeking to develop and build relationships for us all to build a new future together. One that is reconciliation-led.

I stand firmly by First Nations people and in particular Barengi Gadjin Land Council and the Traditional Owners of the landscapes we live, work and recreate in. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging, and encouraging them with the space and support they deserve to build their path.

With this letter/statement I advise that I wish my honorary life membership of the VCC to be removed.

Tracey Skinner



GARIWERD / GRAMPIANS IN NOVEMBER

Above: Northern Grampians, looking towards Bad Moon Rising; below left: Hywel Rowlands on By Jovi (23), below right: Dave Singleton sort of getting ready to go.





Above: Peter Upton and Ben Wright finishing Midday Sun (10), Wurzegummage Wall; below: Tribute Wall (left) and Koalasquatsy Wall (right). Photos: Peter Upton



The new kids

Several new bouldering gyms opened their doors during 2020. Starting a business is never easy, especially not during a pandemic. We caught up with Climb West, Boulder Lab, Industry Boulders, Boulder Project and the Crux to see where they're at.



Climb West

193 Maidstone St, Altona, VIC 3018, www.climbwestmelbourne.com.au

Tell us about Climb West

Climb West Melbourne is the first and only dedicated bouldering gym in Melbourne's West! We are located in Altona and offer not only bouldering, but also a separate strength training room, adjustable kilter board and yoga studio with regular yoga classes running each week. We also offer showers, a separate study and chillout space and free wifi. We are devoted to providing a friendly, fun and safe environment in which to exercise, socialise and gain new climbing skills. We focus on providing every climber with an experience that will make you want to come back and be a part of our Climb West community—whether you are experienced or trying bouldering for the first time. Our incredible setting team aims to create exciting, thought-provoking and challenging boulder problems for climbers of all abilities.

When did you open?

We opened on 7 March. We then got shutdown due to COVID-19 on 23 March.

What's it been like, trying to establish a new business during COVID-19?

To be honest, it has been the most stressful time of our lives. It is hard enough opening a new business on a normal day, let alone during a global pandemic! We nearly didn't make it through, but are so stoked to finally be open again now and able to share all of our hard work with the climbing community.

What are you most proud of?

We are so proud of the amazing space that we have created and of the community that we have built so far! We are also so proud of our incredible staff! Climb West wouldn't be what it is without our amazing team and we are so lucky to work with such an awesome bunch of people.

Jess and Kirstie



BL photo courtesy Mind Society Studios

Boulder Lab

Unit 8/1821 Ferntree Gully Rd, VIC 3156, www.boulderlab.com.au

Tell us about the Boulder Lab

Boulder Lab is the combined outcome from lots of planning and thinking from Pat Klein and James Kassay. We have developed a space to cater to all styles of bouldering, and we also have an expansive training area. When designing the gym we utilised our years of experience in route setting,

competing, climbing and visiting facilities across the globe to develop a gym that is bright, open, modern, and caters to everyone. After all, we just want to share our love of climbing. It's a sport for everyone and we love seeing people going from curious newbies to fully-fledged boulderers that share the same passion (and addiction) for the sport as so many of us do.

When did you open?

Boulder Lab opened on 23 February.

What's it been like, trying to establish a new business during COVID-19?

It has been rather difficult to say to the least. After we opened on 23 February, we closed due to COVID on 22 March, In round two we were open from 22 June to 8 July, and now we've been open since 9 November. The prolonged closures hurt all businesses, but for us so soon after opening it certainly made things a little trickier. We are happy to reopen though and the community support has been great so far!

What are you most proud of?

Apart from the gym space itself and the walls we designed, it has to be how quickly our community is growing. Whilst it's still in its infancy it's been great getting to know new regulars and introduce new people to the sport. We can't wait for our community to grow and develop over the next few years!

Pat



Industry Boulders

Industry Boulders

39/8 Lewalan St, Grovedale, VIC 3216, www.industryboulders.com.au

Tell us about Industry Boulders

Industry Boulders was put together by Richard Lodge and myself (Aden Nadoh) to introduce a modern bouldering facility to Geelong. Our aim was to develop a gym to bring together Geelong's bouldering community and we believe we have achieved just that with room to move for future additions.

When did you open?

We opened very briefly in August for two nights between the announcements of introducing the lockdown and then the beginning of the lockdown. Since the easing of restrictions we have now almost been open for an entire month and cannot be happier!

What's it been like, trying to establish a new business during COVID-19?

At the start of planning, COVID-19 wasn't around and then popped up a month after signing our lease. With the lengthy planning and building COVID-19 lingered in the background until we were signed off and ready to open. It's been a challenge to start our business with participant limitations, but it's great to now be able to run at full capacity.

What are you most proud of?

We are very proud that we are where we are today by completing 99% of the work ourselves from start to finish, which makes it feel like it's truly ours. We are extremely grateful for all the help we received from friends and family along the way.

Aden

Boulder Project

48 King St, Prahran, VIC 3181, www.boulderproject.com.au

Tell us about Boulder Project

Boulder Project is the first climbing gym located in the inner-south of Melbourne. It has been designed to deliver a unique climbing experience that reflects the strong social, fitness, and music culture of the Prahran area. At Boulder Project, you can have fun, challenge yourself and find a community of passionate, supportive and like-minded people—it is a place where you will always feel welcome.



When did you open?

Boulder Project first opened on 27 February. We are looking forward to do a full launch open day / weekend as soon as restrictions are eased (further)!

What's it been like, trying to establish a new business during COVID-19?

It's been a bit tricky, going through lockdown twice. We were open for less than two weeks in the middle. Like the rest of Melbourne, we'd been eagerly anticipating the lifting of restrictions. Having built a momentum after our first opening, it was difficult to say goodbye to the new friends we'd made who were as excited as us in watching our community start to grow. We had many of our 'firsts' (first wall reset, training gym launch, etc) staggered across the times we were able to open.

It was heartening to receive messages from people across our different social media platforms rooting for us to open back up (and checking when we would!) Many customers who visited us have decided to become members and/or opt for our 10 passes because of our accessibility and community.

What are you most proud of?

We are most proud of our welcoming space, community, additions since the first opening (!), location and getting through lockdown with the love and support from all who have come through our doors (and of those who hopefully will after reading this article too)!

Julia

The Crux

20 Louvain St, Coburg North, VIC 3058, www.thecruxclimbing.com.au

Tell us about The Crux

The two things we aim for are to have great climbs, and to have a friendly and inclusive atmosphere. Our walls have loads of angle changes so there are tons of cool features to explore on them, and very unique climbs that utilise them. In the rest of the space, we also have a cafe and co-working space, and plan to host movie screenings and workshops. And we would like to have even more community events as time goes on.

When did you open?

We will officially be opening our doors in December!

What's it been like, trying to establish a new business during COVID-19?

There have been challenges for sure. The virus kicked up all sorts of uncertainties about what was going to happen next, including not knowing how long lockdown was doing to last for. It also felt pretty strange to have a completed wall without anyone being able to climb it, after all the time and effort to have gotten to that point. But we had a lot of support from our community and feel really lucky to have them, they really pushed us on through the tough times.

What are you most proud of?

We have an amazing team who are hard working, passionate and all add so much in their own unique ways to make the Crux what it is. We are amazed to have such awesome individuals to work with who bring their best every day.

Asama



Please just stop.

Please just stop with the denial and abuse. Being thoughtful and considerate will lead to better outcomes for both climbing and cultural heritage.

Whilst everyone is busy writing submissions to Parks Victoria (PV), I'd like to point out that they have already been swamped in letters, emails, interviews, meetings and submissions saying the same things that everyone seems keen to restate now—e.g. Climbers do not damage cultural heritage; climbers have a connection to the land; the closures have an economic impact; oh, but what about all the other damage to cultural heritage in the world; we need a more nuanced approach than blanket bans, etc. In case you hadn't noticed, it isn't working. Maybe it's time for more people to join the reconciliation approach, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it might actually lead to mutually beneficial outcomes?

Saying climbing does not damage cultural heritage continues to demonstrate that climbers are not listening. It is not our position to say whether we have damaged cultural heritage or caused offence. The Traditional Owners are saying that we have. Insisting we haven't only demonstrates we are not listening. Please just stop. No conversation about sharing space can happen until

we acknowledge that. Try instead saying that we didn't intend to cause harm, we are sorry we caused harm, we would like together to find ways to share these places without causing harm. How can we hope to be listened to when we aren't listening either?

Those people trying to compare the relative value of different people's connection to land, please just stop. It's not possible to compare these things, it's incredibly rude, presumptive and condescending, it causes hurt and offense, and continues to demonstrate my previous point, that climbers are not listening. It's also kinda irrelevant. The legislation is about Indigenous cultural heritage, not post-invasion cultural heritage. It's trying to take the focus away from what the discussion is actually about, on protecting Indigenous cultural heritage.

Accusing PV of trying to make money out of climbing is just as evidenced as some of their accusations of climbers causing damage. It's the same sort of slander and just as unhelpful. Also, like climbing heritage, the economic impacts of climbing bans are kinda irrelevant. The legislation is about protecting cultural heritage, not the economy. Talking about the economic impacts again is taking the discussion away

from the actual topic. Please just stop. We can't move forward if we aren't actually facing the issues.

Yes, there is a bunch of damage to cultural heritage across the country and the whole country has cultural heritage, but this too is kinda irrelevant. Native title legislation only applies to a very small amount of land. Mining and private property rights override any native title claims. Hence, it is really only in our public lands that the legislation has any effect. So, outrageous as Juukan Gorge was, it has no relevance on our situation. Carrying on about the Peaks Trail is also pointless, because this has already gone through the process of considering cultural heritage and reached conclusions about what can be done to minimise impact. You might not agree with the consolidation of trails and campgrounds to minimise impacts, but that is the choice of the land managers, which include the Traditional Owners, and it is, again, not our situation. Stop trying to talk about other stuff!!!! It demonstrates that we are, again, not listening, and also, that we are failing to take responsibility for our own stuff. Can we move on from this as well please?

Much as you wouldn't think so for the carrying on, PV have actually listened to climbers about selective closures. They haven't said 'the entire Victoria Range is closed'. They have gone through a large number of crags recorded, most of which none of us have every heard of, let alone

been to, and given a crag by crag assessment. A whole bunch of them are still under consideration. You may not like the outcome at some of them, but they have tried to do what we asked for, and have said they will consider further focussing of closures. Try saying thank you, you appreciate they have changed the blanket ban approach, and a lot of work has gone into reviewing many areas, but there are places where the area covered by the crag is extensive, and we would appreciate if they could be broken down into smaller areas to review if some of the crag was still appropriate to climb at, that we would like to be involved in the assessment of areas. The Traditional Owners are also saying they want to support recreational use of their land where possible. This is in fact a positive step forward. Work with it. Of course, we will never be involved in the assessment of areas if we don't stop doing all of those things I pointed out earlier, because climbers are burning bridges with Traditional Owners at a great rate. There is a reason why the reconciliation network are the only climbers invited into the discussions.

The majority of climbers have spent the past 18 months yelling and screaming, and it hasn't gotten us anywhere. This situation isn't going to go away because it makes us upset, uncomfortable, challenges how we have been, what we do and where we go. It isn't just Victoria. Moving to Queensland, or voting for a Liberal government will not make it go

away (and seriously, why would you throw health, welfare, education and the environment to the wind and vote Liberal over protecting cultural heritage?) Climbers say they want to protect cultural heritage and work with the Traditional Owners. Start actually doing what you say then, by listening to the Traditional Owners, by acknowledging what they say, because this is the very first step to having a conversation. And please stop doing the opposite—protest climbs, slander and legal challenges are blatantly rude to the Traditional Owners and it's impossible have respectful conversations when you are busily causing even more offense than you did in the first place.

It's also very easy to go into a conversation with set ideas about its resolution. Think about how you feel when you have a problem, you tell it to someone and they instantly start telling you what to do about it. You don't feel listened to and acknowledged. You don't feel like they have asked how you feel, what you would like to happen or what your preferred outcome is. You feel like they have imposed their solutions on you and assumed that you don't have your own solutions to your problem and that they know better than you. That is what we do when we go into these conversations with our solutions to reconciling climbing and cultural heritage already formed. Solutions need to be formed together, and conversations need to start from a position without expectations first.

Climbers have been doing a bunch of whitesplaining.

There is a whole range of problematic behaviour amongst the climbing community throughout this—from outright racism, to unconscious racism, simple lack of awareness and thoughtlessness, a lack of empathy, and defensive privilege. Please stop calling the reconciliation approach 'woke', 'brown-nosing', or 'giving up climbing'. It's actually just called being a decent human being, and incidentally, the only way we are going to be able to move forward. Yes, I am offended by words and actions of many climbers around this. But I am also frustrated because I too want to be able to climb, and these actions and words aren't just offensive. They are ruining our chance to build relationships that will be the foundation of our access in the future.

I wrote this piece before Barenji Gadjin Land Council made their [press release](#). If you haven't read it yet, please do. Even whilst I imagined this could be how climbers' actions were being perceived, to read their words about it is incredibly confronting. It is quite heartbreaking to think of all of the years that, as someone who thought of themselves as being politically and social aware, I still failed to think about how our actions may affect the Traditional Owners. I don't want to continue to cause that pain, and I don't want to be a part of legal action for our 'right' to

continue to cause that pain. I want a future where we work together to support their culture as well as ours. Access is not a right. We also have no right to know about their culture and rediscoveries. These are privileges which we earn and negotiate. The Traditional Owners have no obligation to work with us to provide access or to consult with us. Despite that, and despite the appalling behaviour of a vocal (hopefully) minority, they remain willing to work with climbers, and their recognition of the reconciliation group as valuable allies is testament to the hard work in very sensitive ground being undertaken by them. Those climbers who try and separate their words and actions from the Traditional Owners by identifying PV as the 'problem' can no longer hide behind that flimsy veil. This isn't a conspiracy. It is people seeking to protect what remains of their culture.

Reconciliation will develop groundbreaking frameworks for addressing these issues, not just in Victoria and not just in climbing. So please reflect on the Land Council's statement, dial up some empathy, become a radical and support a reconciliation approach. The outcomes will be better for everyone.

Wendy Eden

Reprinted with permission

Some reflections on reflections

The VCC has always acknowledged that climbing, like every recreational activity, is bound to have an impact on the environment where it takes place. To pretend otherwise is to be in denial.

The challenge for land managers is to manage such activities, where possible and practical, in ways that protect cultural and environmental values without overly excluding the recreational activity from huge tracts of land.

At two recent forums between Parks Victoria and stakeholder representatives, I made it abundantly clear that I appreciate Parks Victoria has finally taken on board the consistent, constructive suggestions of the VCC and other climbing clubs and organisations which have long advocated for a more granular approach to management of large areas. In line with Wendy Eden's recent on-line suggestion, I have publically given PV credit that they have recently '...changed the blanket ban approach.'

A number of climbing organisations, including VCC, have long conveyed the message that they would be happy to provide input and/or 'on-the-ground' assistance to help inform and expedite a more granular approach to reviewing climbing areas. Such an offer was never a demand to be part of the actual decision-mak-

ing—that was, is, and should be the prerogative of land managers. But such decision-making would likely be more efficacious and sustainable if it was well informed.

Wendy has noted that climbers can and should respectfully suggest that ‘there are places where the area covered by the crag is extensive, and we would appreciate if they could be broken down into smaller areas to review if some of the crag was still appropriate to climb at, that we would like to be involved in the assessment of areas.’ Indeed.

‘A lot of work has gone into reviewing many areas.’ Yes, and that has been duly acknowledged by VCC and others. It is a pity that when such work was undertaken, climbers were not more closely consulted—their involvement could have ensured that the many, many cliffs and bouldering areas that have been seemingly overlooked in the draft GGLMP could have been taken into account and classified within the document. Similarly, such involvement could have ensured that the large areas Wendy referred to could perhaps have been divided into smaller sectors during the assessment process. This would have saved the considerable time and effort that will be required for re-evaluations.

Again, none of this is to in any way suggest that the VCC were, or are, demanding a say in final decision-making. There may be, for example, areas where it is inappropriate that a

larger landscape be subdivided into smaller entities. Traditional Owners will know where there are instances where this is the case. But the consideration of constructive suggestions earlier in the development of a GGLMP would have seen a published draft that was better developed. Nonetheless, we start from where we are, not from where we might have been. The opportunity remains for climbers to make constructive, evidence-based suggestions that are cognisant of the values and aspirations of Traditional Owners and of Park’s Victoria’s responsibility to protect environmental and cultural values.

I would agree with most of what Wendy has said in her post. However, there is one issue on which I would respectfully agree to disagree: ‘Legal challenges are blatantly rude to the Traditional Owners and it’s impossible have respectful conversations when you are busily causing even more offense than you did in the first place’.

Legal challenges are the right of every citizen or organisation, from Eddie Mabo to the humble readers of this newsletter. Laws exist for good reason and anyone should have recourse to them. We would hope that BGLC would not be cowed from seeking legal redress against a government, government agency, organisation or individual by threat of being excluded from discussions.

K.L.

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to new and returning members

Janine Pearson
Bec Hopkins
Sam Gullifer
Peter Bovino
Dave, Anand & Lola Wallis
Emily Frain & Samuel Cowie
Sue Barzda-Ryan
Shane Madigan
Joel Pollard
Andy King
Cameron Abraham
Jason Jacobs
Philip Armstrong
Shaun Baxter
Tara Hickey
Marc Wiesner
Matt Jones
Martin Hadley
Ben Sheppard
Jonathan Roberts
Peter Chaplin
Katherine Matic
Kieran Loughran
Campbell Allen-Craig

Celebrating our life members

Bill & Cheryl Andrews
Tony Brotherton
Peter Canning
Rupert Freeman
Geoff Gledhill
Peter Jackson
Keith Lockwood
Jacqui Middleton
David Mitchell
Stan Mizon
Clive Parker
Barry Revill
Iain Sedgman
Simon Todman
Michelle Tusch
Peter Watling
Peter Watson
Ben Wright

Life members in memoriam

Chris Baxter
Eddy Rawlins
Michael Stone



Be bushfire ready



As we move into bushfire season, its important to be aware of the risks and prepare accordingly when heading outdoors.

The Victorian Government's **Be Fire Ready** brochure is a good place to start, as is the [CFA website](#).

Parks Victoria also has useful information on its website.

<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/safety-in-nature/be-aware-and-prepare/be-bushfire-aware>

Key things you can do to prepare:

- Download the FireReady smartphone app
- Put emergency contact numbers into your phone, including the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (1800 240 667)
- Know your Fire District
- Know your Fire Danger Ratings
- Take a battery operated AM/FM radio with you, pre-tuned to the local ABC station or other emergency broadcaster
- Leave your contact details and itinerary with someone before you go
- Carry hard-copy maps.

Consider what you'll do on Code Red days and don't expect an official fire warning.

Know your fire weather districts

Fire Danger Ratings and Total Fire Bans are determined for each of these nine districts in Victoria:



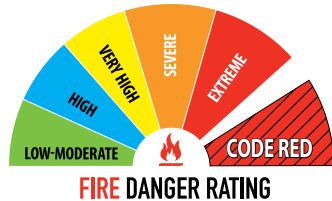
Key tourism destinations in fire weather districts

Central	Dandenong Ranges, Southern Goldfields, Mornington Peninsula, Phillip Island, Yarra Valley, Great Ocean Road (East)
East Gippsland	Gippsland Lakes, Lakes Entrance
Mallee	The Murray (North)
North Central	Yarra Valley, Central Goldfields
Northern Country	Northern Goldfields, The Murray (Central)
North East	Great Alpine Road (West), Alpine Resorts
South West	Great Ocean Road (West), Twelve Apostles, The Otways, Southern Grampians
West & South Gippsland	Gippsland Lakes, Wilsons Promontory
Wimmera	Northern Grampians

Fire Danger Ratings

The Fire Danger Ratings predict how bad a fire would be if one started.

During the warmer months, check the Fire Danger Rating for the area you are visiting every day so that you know when the local conditions are dangerous. The Fire Danger Rating will feature in weather forecasts and be broadcast on radio and TV and appear in some newspapers. It can also be found at cfa.vic.gov.au, on the FireReady smartphone app or by calling the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.



	What does it mean?
Code Red	These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Parks and forests are not safe places to be and they will be closed to the public. Do not enter closed parks or forests and if you are already there, the safest option is to leave the night before or early in the morning. Visit parks.vic.gov.au or call 13 19 63 for a list of park closures.
Extreme	Expect hot, dry and windy conditions. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving.
Severe	Reconsider plans to visit parks and forests. If you are already within a park or forest the safest option is to leave early in the day.
Very High	If a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in these conditions.
High	Check if any fire restrictions are in force. Be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk.
Low Moderate	Plan your activities carefully on hot, dry and windy days.

NEW ROUTES AND BETA

Mt Arapiles

New Image Wall

Antur 18 110m

1. 25m—Start with left moves off left corner of big boulder in the gully about 20 metres left of New Image. Climb to left of big horizontal then follow the gear to ledge near big guano patch. (14)

2. 20m—3 metres left of guano stain climb through roof weakness and steep wall on good pro but tricky moves. Take care of loose boulders at your feet on generous belay ledge. (18)

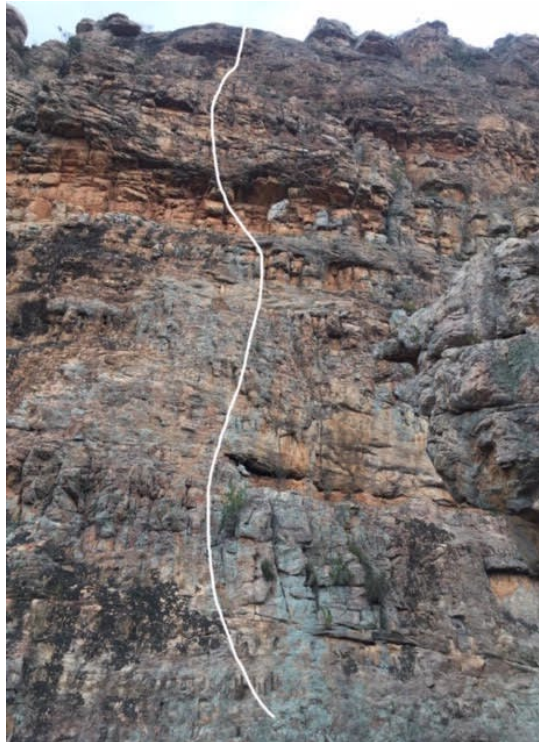
3. 35m—From ledge take easy moves off right side of ledge moving up through slab with limited but sane protection. Tiptoe on clean holds through black moss and head up stripe of clean rock saving a purple cam for an essential pocket. Belay past dead tree at base of shallow corner. (15)

4. 25m—Climb blocky corner left of roof. Easy climbing but be careful of rock in places. (10)

Rap off perfect bollard at back of pinnacle (5m). Walk off up to plateau and right towards Lookout Road, follow road to Central Gully Track, bring shoes. Or walk and rap down to Pan Grove.

(Antur is Welsh for adventure)

First ascent: Hywel Rowlands and Anthony Claxton, October 2020



Heckle and Jeckle Wall

Cimarron 18m 14

Start up Goodbye Gumby to bulge, step left and follow Oklahoma Wigwam for a few moves until it's possible to veer right onto the clean wall between OW and GG. Straight up wall past a prominent knob.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Ray Lassman, 1/10/20

Mitre Rock

Lamentations 15m 12

Follows the blocky diagonal line on the left wall of the buttress marking the left end of the Boring Boring Boring Boring wall. An airy step right just below the top leads into a V corner.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Geoff 'Viking' Lierse, 13/10/20

Sodom 30m 14

This takes the prominent crack on the right side of the Lamentations buttress.

1. 15m—The left-facing crack.
2. 15m—The easy wall above.

First ascent: Keith Lockwood, Geoff 'Viking' Lierse, alternate leads, 20/10/20

The Grampians

Weathered Wall

Tempest 19 37m

Start mid Squall Line and Hurricane and climb up. Gets very thin and then steep at the end on good jugs.

First ascent: Hywel Rowlands and Peter Upton, 15 February 2020



Turning Points

It was Easter 2016. My new boyfriend and I were meeting his mates at Arapiles. They were actual mountaineers with their own banged-up racks and stinky shoes, while there I was in my new Hot Chilis—the white suede still gleaming—and my too-big harness, because I knew better than the guy at Mountain Designs. To date, my climbing experience looked like a handful of evenings at Hardrock, where I'd palpitated my way up 11s and 12s. Plus a bit of home schooling on how to lead belay.

One of these mountaineers and my new boyfriend, Nic, offered to take me up Agamemnon, a three-star classic on the Atridae. I would be the awkward third. I scrambled up the first pitch on my knees to the mouth of the chimney, where I sat where I was told and concentrated hard on belaying. So hard I wasn't paying much attention to the route or how they climbed it.

I hadn't yet been introduced to the fine art of bridging, so when it came to my turn, I was a bit stumped. I managed to get both legs out straight, press my palms into the wall behind me and shuffle my butt up one inch at a time. Eventually, after a couple of metres of this



tricep-burning confusion, I pulled myself onto the face, breathless and relieved. From there, it was a balancing act up the flake to the legendary step-across-the-void. Nic wedgied me across and I topped out soon after, beaming. That value-for-money pitch left me feeling like I'd actually climbed something of significance.

Fast-forward four years and I'd learned to second, then trad lead. My new boyfriend and I had moved in together and had a baby who was somehow almost two. Nic and I had

no family in Oz to babysit, which meant we never got to ramble up low-grade multi-pitches together anymore, but we still climbed whenever we could. The weekend before Melbourne was let out of lockdown, a bunch of us regionals converged on Araps for a final few days of quiet. My mate Jess offered to babysit for a couple of hours—long enough for Nic and I to have our first proper climb together in two years, the legendary Muldoon. (We waited for the howls to echo off the Organ Pipes, but they never came.) In return, I offered to lead Jess up Agamemnon.

I'd been inching my way up the grades as slowly as my first attempt at bridging, and felt ready to lead this, my first 11. The sun baked. The bees buzzed. The bulgy first pitch still brought me to my knees. And

despite emptying half my rack into the crack leading up to the flake, my head was in the game, the step-across proved just another step, and the final jug-haul to the anchor was once again a delight.

It was a turning point in many ways. I'd just led my first multi-pitch. My gear placement had been quick and solid, affirming all the seconding I'd done. Agamemnon was a real route that other people wanted to climb, not just as a warm-up to indulge me. And although I still can't put my helmet on properly, after years of relying on other people's generosity to take me the places I wanted to go, I'd been able to pay forward the experience.

Leigh Hopkinson

Previous page: Jess and I on nearby Clytemnestra Buttress. Photo: Tully Sumner

FlashBACK

to the May '90 issue of the *Argus*

Pumping poms

Two hot young English climbers have been ensconced at Mt. Arapiles for a while. Andy Pollitt has got ever so close to a second ascent of the hardest route in the Southern Hemisphere, PUNKS IN THE GYM (32), and has made the first ascent of the overhung wall 3m right of PROCUL HAREM, to produce NATI DREAD (31).

Nick White has been ticking some great repeats including ANXIETY NEUROSIS (26), THE FORTRESS (27), EXODUS II (27), INDIA (29), MASADA (Nick suggests 29, not 30), and a direct finish to MASADA (which he refers to as a variant on the variant to TROJAN, called MUCHARDER, 30) to name but a few. He has also put up a new route on Lower Taipan Wall, Mt. Stapylton (approx 27) and, back at Arapiles, a direct start to FINGER PRINCE and a bolt protected roof just right of IRON VOID (grades unknown). Both Nick and Andy will probably be going up to Queensland soon to blitz the crags there.

(Ed: If you haven't heard *the Layback Podcast's* excellent interview with the late Andy Pollitt, it's well worth a listen.)



YOUNG CLIFFHANGERS

Stretching advice can be confusing. Here's what you need to know.

Today I want to share with you the research about stretching, so you can guide your young climbers.

Specifically, we'll explore these 3 questions:

- Is stretching helpful for kids and adolescents?
- Does stretching reduce or prevent injuries?
- Are static stretches or dynamic stretches helpful during warm-up?

We'll finish with an example of a solid warm-up routine your child can do confidently—one that considers the insights from multiple studies.

Note: Most of the stretching research isn't specifically targeted to rock climbers and focuses on adults, yet we can still benefit from their conclusions. I've discovered a few studies involving children and teens which I've included.

Is stretching helpful for kids and adolescents?

Stretching research published in 2007 by Santonja and others in the [Journal of Sports Medicine and](#)

[Physical Fitness](#) looked at whether there's any benefit to static stretching in elementary school children. They focused on one stretch in particular, a straight-leg raise. They found 9 months of frequent static stretching improved flexibility in the hamstrings.

The difference between static and dynamic stretching

Rock climbers often lunge sideways to reach footholds. An example of a static stretch is a side lunge held for 30 seconds. A dynamic stretch is a moving lunge repeated that's not held.

What's been discovered for adolescents? Well, Zakas and others studied the effect of stretching in boys aged, 10, 13 and 16. In their 2002 [study](#), published in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies*, they found that stretching greatly improved the boys' flexibility during strength training.

And when it comes to young children: in the 2004 edition of *Science of Flexibility*, author Michael Alter shares that young children are initially supple, though as their



Photo: [Neys Fadzil](#)

bones grow faster than their muscles lengthen, they may find muscle-tendon tightness around their joints. Despite this, it was found young children don't lose much flexibility if they stay active as they grow. Especially as kids tend to keep flexible by simply doing their usual activities, such as running, jumping and climbing.

What needs to be considered is whether instructing young kids to stretch will turn them off it. In the article '[Stretching and Young Children: Should We or Shouldn't We?](#)' Mally highlights it's important for kids to do dynamic, functional stretching in a way that allows them to explore and play. For instance, encouraging kids to reach up to pat an imaginary giraffe or wobbling like jelly would bring the fun into stretching.

Key takeaway: Kids are naturally flexible. Yet as they grow into adolescents, stretching may help them stay flexible. A play-based, functional approach may be more helpful to keep interest for younger children.

Does stretching reduce or prevent injuries?

In a 2019 training [article](#) in *Rock and Ice*, renowned English climbing coach Neil Gresham suggested replacing static stretches with dynamic-mobility exercises during warm ups, to avoid injury.

It's important to note that in a systematic [review](#) published in *Research in Sports Medicine*, researchers shared a confusing mix of results: they discovered stretching sometimes did and other times didn't help to reduce exercise-related injuries.

Of course, no matter what the research, common perceptions and beliefs lead people to do what they do. A July 2020 research paper [‘Stretching in Rock Climbers’](#) found 88% of climbers believed stretching minimised the risk of injuries. They felt they got better at climbing with stretching, they mainly did static stretching, and they stretched while warming up. (Note this was a survey, not a study.)

Key takeaway: Stretching may be helpful, whether it actually prevents injuries or is just a perception.

Are static stretches or dynamic stretches helpful during warm up?

It’s common to wonder if climbers should do static stretches during warm-up, as it’s been said to reduce performance or cause injury.

In his paper, [‘Current Concepts in Muscle Stretching for Exercise and Rehabilitation’](#), researcher Phil Page found all types of stretching can improve flexibility. He discovered static stretching isn’t helpful to warming up when running or jumping—it decreases strength and performance. Yet it helps athletes that depend on flexibility, such as gymnasts and ballerinas. Climbers can fall into that category too.

Another [study](#) looking at the effects of dynamic and static stretching within general and activity specific warm-up found dynamic warm-ups can improve sprint performance. Static stretching helped more than

dynamic stretching to improve flexibility. And neither type of stretching made any difference to jump heights or movement speed.

These two studies, along with others shared in this piece has found both static and dynamic stretches may help with flexibility. Yet it’s understandable you might still be wary about static stretching during warm-ups.

Well, after a 2015 systematic [review](#) of hundreds of stretching studies, researchers at the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) discovered static stretching in a warm-up isn’t bad—as has often been thought—but it shouldn’t be the only thing done to warm up. Their recipe for an ideal warm-up involved an initial aerobic component (like walking), followed by static and dynamic stretching, then sport-specific activities.

Key takeaway: A solid warm-up includes static and dynamic stretching, along with aerobic activity and climbing-specific activities.

So what kind of stretching routine can we safely take our kids through?

I’ve put together a simple warm-up routine based on the CSEP’s format:

- Begin with aerobic activity, such as running on the spot or star jumps. Or if heading to a crag, the approach is usually enough to get warm.

- Continue with static stretches, such as chest stretches, glute or hamstring stretches. Follow these with dynamic stretches, such as moving side lunges, arm circles and spinal twists. Younger children could pretend to climb a mountain or jump like frogs.
- Then complete the warm-up by climbing low-grade routes, so your young climbers' bodies gently ease into actual climbing movements.

Summary

The research is divided about whether stretching prevents injury, or if it's just a perception. Yet perhaps even the belief that stretching avoids injury is enough to make it worth doing. What's clear is this: stretching is helpful for flexibility when it comes to rock climbing.

Younger kids are naturally flexible. Yet as they grow, stretching may help adolescents stay flexible. A play-based, functional approach may be helpful to keep children interested.

An ideal warm-up includes static and dynamic stretching, along with aerobic activity and climbing specific activities. Now, you've got an example of a stretching warm-up routine you can run through with your kids that takes into consideration the research available. Please share, and have fun stretching with your kids—stretching is great for all of us!

Cynthia Marinakos

GOAT OF THE MONTH!



Photo: [Muhammed Nuri Çiçenoğlu](#)

December's goat comes to us from Rize, Turkey. What a character! And what a haircut. Anyone who's cut theirs during lockdown can probably empathise.

GOAT OF THE YEAR!



Photo: *Simon Corbett*

This highly contested accolade goes to Hazel, February's goat! How could it not? Congratulations, Hazel, a bag of washing is coming your way.

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