

# **THE ROCK CLIMBERS AND ABSEILERS CODE FOR USING N.P.W.S.A RESERVES**

(Abseiling is included where the term 'rock-climbing' is used)

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## **General**

1. Use only areas designated for that purpose.
2. Any person instructing others requires a permit to do so and public liability insurance coverage to the minimum value of \$10 million.
3. Special conditions may apply to a particular area, e.g. the use of fixed gear and artificial holdfasts, parking, camping, safety, fire and wildlife issues etc. Make sure you contact the regional office concerned to find out what the conditions of use are.

## **Safety**

1. Undertake appropriate training before engaging in the sport of rock-climbing/abseiling. Know your limitations and avoid climbing alone.
2. Use ONLY approved rock-climbing equipment.
3. Adhere to the safety advice described on information signs.
4. Contact the N.P.W.S. regional office for emergency contact procedures.
5. Where holdfasts have been installed please use them rather than anything else in the vicinity, for example trees.
6. Instructors should show consideration for other users regarding shared use of space when conducting group activities in popular areas.

## **Minimal Impact**

Remember that all plants, animals and organic matter are protected in reserves. The following guide-lines must be observed by climbers to ensure that the cliff environment suffers minimal impact:-

1. Stay on existing tracks to prevent erosion and damage to plants and animals.
2. Avoid trampling on plants growing on the rock face and cliff surrounds.
3. Use minimal chalk.
4. Minimise cleaning practices on cliff faces.
5. Avoid defecating in the cliff environment. Choose locations which:-
  - Are well away from water courses,
  - will not offend others, and
  - where you can bury your waste properly.
6. Carry your rubbish out with you.
7. Contact the regional office for fire information.

RECREATION SA has been developing the following wording for climbing and abseiling. Anything here we want to add in?

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## **ENVIRONMENT AND CONDUCT**

- Do not leave or add to fixed equipment on the cliff.
- Avoid using trees or other vegetation for belay points, if there is no alternative, protect them from rope damage to the best of your ability by using rope protectors for webbing.
- By law, all plants, animals, historical and archaeological sites and geographic features are protected so disturbing any of these is illegal and must be avoided.
- Always utilise recognised tracks to approach and move between climbs. Where this is not possible or multiple tracks exist, take a moment to decide which track is the most appropriate and/or control the group to have minimal impact. (even if it means taking a longer way around.)
- Try to avoid steep access and descent tracks which will be intrinsically more prone to erosion, especially with larger group activities. Use abseil descents where practical.
- Do not disturb vegetation as you will encourage erosion and promote the spread of pest plant species.
- Avoid sites with steeply sloping soil covered bases that will be particularly prone to erosion.
- Where ever possible choose sites that have a rocky base and top that can tolerate groups without causing vegetation damage and erosion of the area around the climbs.
- Actively manage your group at the climbing site to minimise trampling and damage to the surrounding vegetation.
- Choose shaded cliff faces, not only for the comfort of participants, but also to reduce the tendency for waiting participants to push back into surrounding vegetation to find shade.
- Do not block footpaths with equipment or belayers.
- Be aware of and diplomatic with other groups, individual climbers and other recreational users of the areas. Do not assume you have a right to occupy certain climbs simply because you were there first. Negotiate!
- Try to minimise noise at the climbing site.
- Take the responsibility to ensure that your group behaves with respect of other users, especially at campsites, whether camping with the group or not.
- Do not brush moss or lichen from the cliff unless absolutely necessary for safety reasons.
- Wash all soil from camping and personal equipment, vehicles and river gear before leaving home or moving between locations to avoid transporting seeds or soil – borne pathogens such as Phytophthora.
- All campsites must be locate at least 20 metres from any waterway.
- Faecal matter must be buried at least 100 metres from any waterway and should be carried out form any water supply catchment areas.
- Carry out all rubbish, including food stuffs as they may harm native wildlife.
- Always use biodegradable soaps and detergents. Dispose of washing water al least 100 metres from any waterway.
- No fires may be lit on a day of Total Fire Ban. Total Fire Bans may be implemented regionally so be sure to check daily and be aware of fire regions

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that cover the route. Contact your local fire authority or local land manager for details regarding your legal responsibility.

- Where fires are permitted;
  - Fires should only be lit in a properly constructed fireplace or pit minimum 30 cm deep and a maximum 1 metre wide.
  - At least three metres around the fireplace or pit must be clear of flammable vegetation
  - Do not leave fires unattended.
  - Fires must be completely extinguished with water before leaving the campsite and pits must be backfilled.
  
- Persons are encouraged to use alternative fuel stoves whenever possible.

## **Environmental considerations**

Climbing groups are not to use climbing equipment or techniques that damage the cliff face or any resident wildlife.

Where holdfasts have been installed these must be used rather than any vegetations or natural feature that may be damaged.

Stay on existing tracks to prevent erosion and damage to plants and animals.

Avoid trampling or displacing plants growing on the rock face and cliff surrounds.

Use minimal chalk.

## **3.17 CODE OF PRACTICE – Rock Climbing & Abseiling in parks and reserves**

The Department for Environment & Heritage (DEH) manages many of South Australia's popular rock climbing and abseiling areas within parks and reserves. As the land manager, DEH also carries the legal responsibility for ensuring that the risks associated with any rock climbing site are managed in a way that retains the challenge of rock climbing and abseiling, while minimising any unexpected hazards to users. Only those areas designated by the land manager for rock climbing and/or abseiling may be used for these activities.

### **3.17.1 Cliff stability**

Cliff areas used for rock climbing and abseiling are natural features and as such are subject to a range of ongoing environmental processes that slowly or rapidly change the nature of these cliffs. The stability of any part of the cliff including hand holds, rock outcrops and vegetation is constantly changing, although these changes often go un-noticed to many users. The land manager may undertake an assessment of the stability of a cliff for rock climbing and abseiling prior to approving use in a

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management plan. The land manager cannot guarantee the stability of the cliff face and its features at any one point in time.

## **3.17.2 Artificial features on cliffs**

Artificial additions to cliff areas include bolts, holdfast, anchors and chains. Climate and use can hasten the deterioration of the strength of this equipment over time. The land manager undertakes to regularly inspect and test equipment the land manager itself installs to support rock climbing and abseiling, but this is usually restricted to holdfasts placed at the top of popular climbs.

The land manager does not regularly check and remove/replace other artificial additions on cliff faces such as bolts, abseil chains and other anchors. These have usually been placed by a variety of climbers over a very long period of time. The land manager cannot guarantee the stability of these features at any point in time.

The land manager will work with members of the rock climbing community to undertake a regular inspection program and where necessary remove and/or replace artificial additions that are considered by experience rock climbers to be unstable or potentially unstable. This process is not meant to imply that any bolt, abseil chain or other anchor is stable at any point of time, but rather it is a process to manage risks of potentially unstable equipment as its condition deteriorates.

All climbers and abseilers are expected to test and assess the condition of every artificial addition to a cliff face before relying upon its stability.

## **3.17.3 Safety considerations**

It is the responsibility of those involved in rock climbing and abseiling to ensure that their leaders and instructors possess the industry accepted competencies to lead and instruct rock climbing or abseiling in Australia. These competencies are designed to ensure the leader or instructor maintains good group control, enjoyment and safety, and respects other users and the environment.

In using cliff faces under the control of the land manager all leaders and instructors must be able to satisfy themselves (and those dependent upon them) that they possess the skills and competencies to lead or instruct the group in these activities, taking into account the rock climbing site and the skills/experience of the participants.

The leader or instructor must arrange for a responsible person to be aware of the group, their location and expected time of return, to raise the alarm in cases of overdue return. The leader or instructor will also inform the land manager of their intention to use the cliff area where this is a condition of use.

Commercial tour operators must hold a current licence from the land manager and abide by the conditions therein.