Rock Climbing in Regional Victoria

Rock climbing is a very significant activity in regional Victoria. In particular Mount Arapiles – Tooran State Park, Grampians National Park and Mount Buffalo National Park. However, there are few regions that do not have some climbing sites. Tourism Victoria and Parks Victoria both publicise climbing as a key activity in many of their promotions. The Victorian Climbing Club is the only representative body for climbers in the state, we therefore, would like to make this submission to the inquiry. Unfortunately, we became aware of the inquiry only very recently, so can only put a short submission together.

(1) The Economic Benefits of Tourism in Regional Areas.

Other than those who have specifically moved to towns such as Natimuk, near Mt Arapiles, the vast majority of climbers live in the cities or come from overseas. Therefore, any money spent is new money to the region. Rock climbing is an increasing sport catering to people from a diverse range of backgrounds and incomes. From a financial perspective, climbers impact on the local economy is consistent and as noted, has the potential to grow. There are commercial rock climbing tour promoters based at Mt Arapiles, The Grampians and Mt Buffalo. These groups are run by people that have moved to the regional areas, so the money stays in the regions.

(2) Potential Impediments to the Sustained Growth of Regional Tourism, Economic Activity and Jobs.

The greatest threat to rock climbing tourism is the loss of access to climbing areas. In the recent past this was a serious concern. However, the VCC has been working very closely with land managers, in particular Parks Victoria, to allay concerns about climbing. The VCC has established an entity called Cliff Care, which promotes minimal impact climbing and works with land managers to protect the environment. Many people/climbers visit these areas to experience the wilderness, if they don’t experience this maybe return visits/business will drop – growth in tourism should be targeted more to the surrounding town area.

(3) The Effectiveness, at a National, State and Local Level, of Current Programs to Promote and Enhance Tourism in Regional Victoria.

There is little that current formal programs can do to promote climbing tourism. The target market needs to be specifically targeted. This can be done through VCC publications (guidebooks, monthly magazine, website) or rock climbing publications such as “Crux” and “Rock.” In the various regions/parks where climbing is available, consistent and supportive promotion of climbing can add to the appeal of the area.
(4) **Initiatives to increase both international and domestic visitor nights in regional Victoria.**

Most climbers camp in National or State Park campsites. Longer stays could be encouraged by having facilities such as showers in areas that do not have them, at present. Mt Buffalo is the only major climbing area with such facilities. Any development along these lines must take into consideration the resources available, especially water supply.

Low cost accommodation and food would also be an advantage. The development of Cresta and/or the Chalet at Mt Buffalo, should consider this.

(5) **The efficacy of existing mechanisms at a National, State and local level to address the impact on regional tourism of natural events such as bushfires, floods and drought, and effective measures to drive long term economic recovery.**

The VCC has been closely involved with Park Victoria in the Grampians after the bush fires two years ago. There are still some areas that are still inaccessible to climbers and the general public. This has been primarily due to the lack of financial and human resources to do all the work. It is imperative that adequate resources are provided to repair roads, bridges and tracks, after a fire.

It would be even better to have infrastructure that is more fire resistant, wooden bridges burn.

We hope that these comments are beneficial to your enquiry.

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President