



# **Rockclimbing Adventure Activity Standard (AAS) Guidelines for Dependent Groups**

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The information contained in this publication has been gathered through widespread industry consultation. All reasonable attempts have been made to ensure that it is accurate, relevant and current at the date of publication. Nevertheless, the Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) are only advisory and general in nature and should not be relied upon to meet individual or specific requirements. They are recommendations for voluntary application to adventure activity providers and participants. They are not binding on any person or organisation and have no legal force.

The AAS will not cover each and every circumstance of an adventure activity. Nor can they, when adhered to, entirely eliminate the risk or possibility of loss or injury. Consequently they should be used as a guide only. Whenever using the information contained in this publication or any AAS, all adventure activity providers should carefully evaluate the specific requirements of the intended adventure activity and the persons participating in it. If necessary, advice should be obtained from a suitably experienced and qualified professional person.

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# Guidelines for organisations and leaders conducting rockclimbing for commercial and non-commercial dependent groups

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## 1 Introduction

The Victorian Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) have been developed to assist organisations and leaders to plan and safely undertake outdoor adventure activities with dependent participants. The AAS should be used in the preparation of the organisation's risk management program.

Participants may already have a degree of skill and experience in the particular adventure activity and so be less dependent upon the leader for guidance and instruction. In these situations the AAS should be adapted to reflect the experience of group members and the particular circumstances of the adventure activity.

Regardless of the extent to which the AAS are adapted, each organisation, and leader has a duty of care to the participants to have completed a risk analysis of the activity and developed strategies to address possible risks.

The AAS have been prepared with the involvement of a wide cross-section of Victoria's outdoor industry, and reflect commonly accepted practices for planning and undertaking outdoor adventure activities with inexperienced and dependent participants.

### 1.1 Applying the Adventure Activity Standards

The likelihood of injury and loss can be minimised by having suitable risk management programs in place and applying the advice provided in the AAS to suit the particular circumstances of the activity or organisation. Organisations may use the AAS to demonstrate that the delivery of an activity meets commonly accepted industry practices.

AAS are voluntary guidelines for undertaking adventure activities in a manner that:

- promotes safety for both participants and providers
- provides assistance for providers against legal liability claims and criminal penalties
- provides assistance in obtaining insurance cover.

While the AAS are NOT statutory standards imposed by law, some agencies/organisations may make application of the AAS mandatory (for example Crown land licences for trade or business insurers).

### 1.2 Legal aspects

The ORC web site [www.outdoorsvic.org.au](http://www.outdoorsvic.org.au) has general additional information about:

- the basis of legal liability
- claims in contract
- claims in negligence
- defences against claims by participants
- Good Samaritans, volunteers, apologies
- limitation on claims for personal injury damages.

However all organisations should obtain their own legal advice.

### 1.3 Review of AAS

The AAS are not fixed documents. They are reviewed periodically in the light of changing knowledge or practices. New equipment or technology, changing understanding of the environment, reports of incidents or near misses in Australia or overseas are possible triggers for a review of an AAS.

## 2 Activity description

For the purposes of AAS, rock climbing is the process of ascending natural cliffs.

It should also be noted that climbing AAS are written primarily for novice to intermediate dependent groups participating on single pitch or basic multi pitch climbs on natural surfaces only. A separate AAS is available for climbing on artificial climbing structures.

AAS are written specifically for formal groups (commercial and non-commercial organisations) undertaking organised activities and are intended to provide guidance towards satisfying the legal obligations inherent in delivering such activities. For this reason it is important to ensure that each leader or organisation interprets the AAS for the specific group, area or location and duration of each activity.

### 2.1 Associated activities

#### Bouldering

Bouldering may take place on natural rock and/or artificial structures. It involves rock climbing within 2 metres of the ground where adequate safety can be implemented by 'spotting' rather than requiring additional systems of harness, belay, ropes etc.

Bouldering serves many purposes including warming up, introduction to climbing techniques and advanced skills training. The following are brief bouldering activity standards and are intended to be interpreted in conjunction with the following AAS.

#### **Location**

Areas with potentially hazardous ground areas (impact zones) must not be used for bouldering activities involving groups of dependent participants.

#### **Procedure**

1. The emergency strategy for bouldering activities must be consistent with that of the relevant climbing standards (Natural surfaces and /or artificial climbing structures).
2. Bouldering must not be conducted above 2 metres from the ground unless significant additional measures are undertaken to control a fall.
3. Constant supervision by a competent person must be provided with participants in constant visual contact at all times.
4. The ground surface must be considered adequate to minimise injury resulting from a fall and must have a uniform surface with no gaps (i.e. foam blocks, mattresses, and/or gymnasium pads with a single tarpaulin cover ensuring no spaces and spotting is strongly recommended).
5. Where 4. is not possible (In natural environments), participants must be 'spotted' and appropriate spotting techniques must be demonstrated and practiced before participation.

### **3 Planning**

In any adventure activity planning is essential in order to achieve objectives, have fun and to minimise the inherent risks to participants. There are many acceptable ways to plan an activity and AAS recognises that each group will approach this differently. This section is intended to provide a framework for planning activities to minimise the risks to participants.

#### **3.1 Activity plan:**

An activity plan should be prepared for all activities. Each organisation must determine if the plan needs to be documented. The following is a list of factors that should be addressed prior to any activity:

##### **People**

- objectives of the activity (desired outcomes) and participant expectations
- duration of activity
- age, experience, fitness, skill level, disposition, and known medical conditions of participants
- size of group
- standard of care (education, commercial or community organisation)
- leader to participant ratio.

The leader(s) selected for the activity must have the required skills, experience and competency to conduct the activity, effectively manage incidents and satisfy the planned objectives.

At least one leader should be suitably familiar with the area being visited (the level of familiarity will vary according to the objectives and circumstances of the group.)

Leaders must have passed the Working With Children Check if independently supervising participants under 18 years of age (see [www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren) for requirements and exemptions).

##### **Equipment**

- group equipment including first aid and communication equipment
- personal equipment including clothing, food and dietary requirements, and personal medication
- availability of specific activity equipment for participants
- condition and suitability of all equipment
- support/evacuation resources (vehicle, local bus company, etc.) and availability and access of emergency medical assistance (e.g. air ambulance flight times, SES, etc.).

##### **Physical Environment**

- area and route selection and intended route
- availability and suitability of maps and other area specific information
- ability of site to withstand visitation with minimal impact
- terrain (route characteristics) and associated implications including remoteness and access
- land managers requirements (access restrictions, group sizes, permit requirements, booking requirements)
- seasonal factors (snow, fire, availability of drinking water, tides, river levels, track conditions, other users)

- expected weather conditions and implications (hypothermia, hyperthermia).

Site and route selection are the most important considerations when creating an activity plan. Organisations and leaders must select known sites that meet the objectives of the activity. To do this, the following considerations are to be included:

- rock type (granite, sandstone etc.)
- cliff characteristics (grade, difficulty, height)
- cliff access (top, bottom, descent routes).

### Guidance Note

The activity plan should take into account the possible impact of severe weather on the safe conduct of the activity. The Guidance Note 'Management of Outdoor Activities for Severe Weather Conditions' provides information and commonly agreed procedures for planning and responding to severe weather in the outdoors that involve led activities with dependent participants in Victoria. The Guidance Note is available from the ORC website [www.outdoorsvic.org.au](http://www.outdoorsvic.org.au)



Guidance Note

### General

Factors that may cause an activity to be cancelled, modified or postponed include, but are not limited to, forecasted or current adverse weather conditions, insufficient equipment, restrictions dictated by the land manager and environmental factors (flood, drought, fire).

## 3.2 Pre-activity documentation

There are certain details that a leader and/or organisation must document to maximise safety.

The following information must be documented, taken on the activity and a copy must be made available to a non-participating contact:

- activity plan (at least a route plan explaining from where to where, how long it should take and expected hazards)
- emergency strategy
- name, address and emergency contact details for all participants and staff.
- any medical conditions of participants, including teachers and supervisors, that are likely to affect performance. For example asthma (details of management plan including medication), diabetes, epilepsy, fainting/dizziness, specific allergic reactions, blood conditions which may affect bleeding/ blood clotting, conditions affecting balance, recent or long-standing injuries (e.g. back, knee, ankle), disability or other relevant medical conditions (e.g. pregnancy, repetitive strain injury (RSI), heart and any relevant medication. Throughout the activity, the leader must take reasonable steps to manage any known specific participant medical requirements.
- after a full explanation/briefing participants should be asked to sign an acknowledgement of the inherent risks involved in the specific activity
- the signature of a parent/guardian for participants under the age of 18 authorising participation.

## 3.3 Competencies

To lead activities a leader must be confident of having the skills and experience at least equivalent to that described by the following Units of Competency. A leader can acquire these skills and experience through training with community organisations such as clubs, via employers, TAFE colleges, universities, registered training organisations (RTOs), in-house training and by attaining international qualifications.

Details of these Units of Competency can be found at the National Training Information Service website at [www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au). NTIS is the official national register of information on Training Packages, Qualifications, Courses, Units of Competency and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). See also Service Skills Australia [www.servicesskills.com.au](http://www.servicesskills.com.au) These competencies are used to describe the skills required to undertake a specific role within the outdoor industry.

In non-commercial activities participants are often peers/club members with known experience/skills. Where this is the case, the leader may not require all of the skills listed below but may prefer to delegate some aspects to other members of the group. The group needs to assess the list of skills described below and ensure that the relevant skills are available within the group for the particular activity.

A statement of attainment for these units is not required but the inclusion of this section is intended to provide a suitable benchmark describing the skills that leaders should have, although not all of the skills listed below will be applicable on all activities. It is recommended that leaders keep a diary record of activities they participate in and/or are responsible for as relevant experience is also extremely important.

	<b>GENERIC</b>	<b>UNIT CODE</b>
These units relate to the generic competency expected of any individual in a position of Leadership or Management in the outdoors.	<b>Leadership and Management Skills</b>	
	Respond to emergency situations	SRXEMR001A
	<b>See the First aid section in this AAS</b>	
	Facilitate a group	SRXGRO001A
	Deal with conflict	SRXGRO002A
	Undertake risk analysis of activities	SRXRIK001A
	Apply sport & recreation law	SRXINU002A
	Follow defined Occupational Health and Safety policy and procedures	SRXOHS001B
	Manage risk in an outdoor activity	SROODR006A
	Plan for minimal environmental impact	SROOPS002B
These additional skills may be required when the activity is more complex, conditions more variable, location is more remote, etc.	<b>Outdoor Recreation Skills</b>	
	Provide leadership to groups	SRXGRO003A
	Plan outdoor recreation activities (advanced)	SROODR003A
	Guide outdoor recreation sessions	SROODR005A
	Apply weather information	SROOPS003B
	Coordinate emergency response	SROEMR002A
	Operate communications systems and equipment	PUAOPEO02A
	Navigate in tracked or easy untracked areas	SRONAV001B
	Navigate in difficult or trackless areas	SRONAV002B
	Use and maintain a temporary or overnight site	SROOPS006B
	Apply search and rescue skills	SROOPS005B

	<b>CLIMBING GUIDE</b>	<b>UNIT CODE</b>
<b>Single pitch guide (restricted)</b> It is the firm position of the ACIA that any climbing guide must be capable of basic lead climbing at a standard satisfying the requirements of SROCLN004A. As such, ACIA do not recognise this level of competency.	Guide climbing activities on natural surfaces (restricted)	SROCLN007A
	Including the units:	
	Apply climbing skills on natural surfaces	SROCLN002A
	Establish belays for climbing on natural surfaces	SROCLN003A
	Perform vertical rescues	SROVTR001A
<b>Single pitch guide (other)</b> For non restricted climbing, guides should have all of the restricted guide skills in addition to;	Guide lead climbing activities on natural surfaces (single pitch)	SROCLNO008A
	Including the unit:	
	Apply lead climbing skills on natural surfaces	SROCLN004A
<b>Multi pitch guide</b> Multi pitch guides should have the skills and experience of a single pitch guide in addition to;	Guide lead climbing activities on natural surfaces(multi pitch)	SROCLN010A
	Including the units:	
	Apply multi-pitch lead climbing on natural surfaces	SROCLN005A
	Establish belays for multi-pitch climbing on natural surfaces	SROCLN006A
	Perform complex vertical rescues	SROVTR002A

<b>CLIMBING GUIDE</b>
<b>Single Pitch Guide (Restricted)</b> Specifically applicable only for routine top-rope climbing activities on a natural surface, where there are clearly defined operating procedures for the climbing site. Climbing site must have easy access to the top and the bottom of

the climb(s), be free from complex set up and/or operating issues, and be free from hazards. Anchors at the site should be obvious and easily accessible, and should be either fixed or natural.

All climbing leaders should be aware of the complexity of this activity and the importance of experience. As such, a personal log book should be maintained to record climbing experience at or above the level you guide and/or instruct.

### 3.4 First aid

To lead any activity a leader of a group (or a delegated other) must have a level of first aid training that is relevant to the situation. The factors that determine the level of first aid training and support include:

- the size of the group
- the age of the group
- the remoteness of the activity
- the ease with which the emergency services can be contacted; this may depend on the remoteness of the activity and the type of communication equipment available
- the likely time for emergency services to reach the injured person
- the nature and severity of likely injuries.

A common approach is given below. The time limits are guidelines only and the leader needs to make a judgement, based on the circumstances of each activity, about the level of first aid training required. The codes refer to the Health Training Package available from [www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au)

**Urban:** This applies in parks and urban areas supported by a professional (not volunteer) ambulance service. Distance from road heads should be at no time more than 15 minutes.

No formal first aid qualification may be necessary but a leader should at least be able to care for someone who is unconscious or who is choking, treat for shock, manage severe bleeding and provide CPR. After consideration of such factors listed above it may be judged that first aid training equivalent to HLTFA201A (Provide Basic Emergency Life Support) is necessary.

**Standard:** This applies to any situation where access to professional medical care is less than 1 hour.

It is recommended that leaders have a level of first aid training equivalent to HLTFA301B (Apply First Aid). After consideration of such factors listed above it may be judged necessary to increase this to HLTFA402B (Apply Advanced First Aid).

**Remote:** This applies to any situation where access to professional medical care is greater than 1 hour.

It is recommended that leaders have a level of first aid training equivalent to HLTFA302A (Provide First Aid in Remote Situation). After consideration of such factors listed above it may be judged necessary to include additional training to the level of HLTFA402B (Apply Advanced First Aid).

More information:

Ambulance Victoria ([www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/Main-home/First-Aid.html](http://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/Main-home/First-Aid.html))

Red Cross (Victoria) ([www.redcross.org.au/vic/](http://www.redcross.org.au/vic/))

Royal Life Saving (Victoria) ([www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au/](http://www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au/))

St Johns Ambulance (Victoria) ([www.sjaa.com.au/](http://www.sjaa.com.au/))

Wilderness Medicine Institute ([www.wmi.net.au/wmi/](http://www.wmi.net.au/wmi/))

On activities for participants with disabilities, for multi day activities and/or walks in remote areas, more specialised first aid knowledge may be required.

Other organisations such as clubs/community groups have a responsibility to manage likely incidents requiring first aid. Where such a group cannot ensure that one group member has adequate first aid ability then it is essential that participants understand this and, where possible, other measures are put in place to manage the risk of injury or illness.

### 3.5 Risk management

Risk is inherent in all outdoor activities and the AAS can help manage that risk. However it is not possible to eliminate all risk and the leader and organisation need to accept that some risk remains and they should ensure that it is managed according to recognised methods.

Risk management is a series of 'well-defined steps which, taken in sequence, support better decision making by contributing a greater insight into risks and their impacts' (Australian Standard AS/NZS 4360 Risk Management).

The five step approach is

Step 1: Identify all hazards

Step 2: Assess and prioritise the risks these hazards create, deal with highest priority risk first

Step 3: Decide on measures to control the risks (e.g. eliminate the risk, substitute a venue, use personal protective

equipment)

Step 4: Implement appropriate control measures

Step 5: Monitor the control measures and review the process.

More detail about the steps involved in risk management can be obtained from the ORC web site or from a general web search.

The identification of risks could be considered under the headings of 'people', 'equipment' and 'environment'. Examples of risks associated with 'people' could be the lack of necessary skills or inadequate fitness. Risks associated with 'equipment' could include inadequate clothing for the area, and insufficient or incorrect equipment. Risks associated with 'environment' could include adverse or unseasonal weather, sudden changes in river levels or high winds.

For the activity being undertaken and the group involved, foreseeable risks should be noted and strategies should be developed to avoid or minimise these risks. The strategies should be included in the activity plan.

Some activities and some organisations (such as clubs and commercial operators) may have established risk management guidelines which should be used.

Activity leaders must assess the chosen climbing site for any unexpected hazards and change the activity plan if necessary. Information of any new hazard must be made available within the organisation, to the climbing community and to the relevant land manager.

### **3.6 Emergency strategy**

An emergency strategy must be devised from the risk assessment to manage foreseeable incidents and minimise their escalation. This strategy should be documented.

Activity leader(s) and a non-participating contact must be aware of the emergency strategy and have a copy of it.

The emergency strategy for an activity must be specific to each activity and will contain:

- emergency access and emergency escape routes (where possible)
- assembly points where appropriate
- emergency contact details for key organisations (land manager and police) and how they are best contacted (mobile phone, satellite phone, radio)
- planned start and finish time of the activity
- the emergency trigger time for the non-participating contact to inform emergency services (on failure of group to return/check-in)
- specific communication being carried by group
- relevant aspects of the land manager's emergency strategy
- strategies adopted peculiar to specific areas being visited (e.g. the rock scramble or river crossings)
- a strategy for maintaining supervision ratios should any changes to the planned activity eventuate (adverse conditions, injured leader, participant(s) pull out of activity).

The activity leader must communicate with the relevant non-participating contact at designated time(s). If this does not happen, the non-participating contact must commence the agreed steps of the emergency strategy which would ultimately lead to the police being notified. There may be certain trigger times for various stages of the emergency strategy to be implemented.

A summary of the emergency strategy must be provided as a component of the pre-activity briefing.

### **3.7 Restrictions to participation**

Participants may be excluded or removed from an activity (or an activity may be modified) at any time prior to departure at the leader's discretion. This may also be done during the activity if safe to do so.

Participants may be excluded for reasons that include (but are not limited to) being under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including prescription drugs which may affect performance), being unable or unwilling to follow instructions, lacking suitable equipment, having an inadequate level of fitness, physical ability and experience for the particular activity

Operational restrictions to a climbing trip include weather and restrictions as advised by the land manager or otherwise (including drought, fire, seasonal closure of sites).

### **3.8 Pre-activity briefing**

It is essential that all information is accurately disseminated to potential participants in adequate time for an informed decision to be made about their participation.

Groups and organisations may have their own preference for how the pre-activity briefing will be delivered and the

method may depend on the length and complexity of an activity. The briefing should be delivered in a way that ensures that all participants are aware of the following:

- identity and role of activity leader(s)
- an outline of the activity plan and objectives
- the nature of the activity and its inherent risks
- essential equipment and clothing
- correct use and/or fit of equipment
- recommendations on the type of food, the amount of food and water required and the availability of water
- strategies for conservation including protection of flora and fauna, rubbish removal and sanitation
- a summary of the emergency plan or sufficient information to allow participants to act appropriately in the event of an incident or emergency, including methods of emergency communication
- explanation of what is expected of participants and the participant's responsibility to act as requested (conduct etc.)
- restrictions to participation
- agreed methods of communication within the group (signals and calls) devised before the activity commences
- final check that all documentation is completed and submitted.

Leaders should receive acknowledgment that participants have understood the content of the briefing

Leaders must offer participant the opportunity to voice any concerns

### **3.9 Ratios**

The ratio of participants to leaders is determined by a number of factors. In some circumstances the leader may judge that a smaller number of participants per leader/assistant leader is necessary. The leader should consider the supervision ratio based upon the:

- experience of the leader
- expected capabilities of participants (experience, competence, fitness, etc.)
- conditions (environment, remoteness, weather)
- land manager's requirements
- planned duration of the activity
- remoteness of the activity
- suitability and availability of equipment.

Land managers or relevant authorities may also suggest ratios that differ from AAS and where these are within AAS (fewer participants per leader) they must be regarded as minimum requirements.

Other variables include the site and route (grade, height, complexity, environmental sensitivity) and the group (experience, competence, fitness and available equipment)

Regardless of these factors:

- if leading a group alone (one leader), the activity leader must ensure that at least one participant is aware of and understands the emergency strategy in the event that the leader becomes injured or incapacitated.
- provided extra care is taken to ensure constant and clear communication, appropriate supervision and site route selection are suitable, experienced groups (Multi pitch climbing) may be managed by one qualified leader
- the leader in charge must remain at the site of the activity at all times during the activity session.

The following apply as a minimum ratio of leaders to participants in various climbing scenarios.

#### **Top rope single pitch bottom belay**

The recommended maximum ratio for top rope single pitch bottom belay climbing is 1:9. AAS acknowledge that with experienced climbers and appropriate consideration of the variables mentioned above, a ratio of 1:12 using 4 ropes may be manageable.

In all cases, each rope / belay must be in close proximity and these ratios are for one climber with a belayer and a backup belayer per rope/belay system.

If the objectives of the activity session are to use a single belayer, no more than 3 ropes should be used (1:6 ratio) and extra consideration should be given to the competence of the belayers.

#### **Top rope single pitch top belay**

A ratio of 1:6 should not be exceeded. Again, each rope / belay system must be in immediate and close proximity and must utilise a belayer and a back-up belayer for each system

#### **Multi pitch climbing (For more experienced participants)**

The recommended maximum ratio for multi pitch climbing is 1:4. AAS acknowledge that with experienced climbers

and appropriate consideration of the variables mentioned above, a ratio of 1:5 may be manageable.

It is recommended that a leader be stationed at each belay when using a 'tramline' system

### **3.10 Group size**

Group size is an essential component of group management. Maximum and minimum group size must be carefully decided based upon the following:

- the safety of the group and individuals
- the objectives of the activity
- specific restrictions imposed by the land manager (e.g Parks Victoria)
- expected environmental impact of the activity
- experience of the leader and participants
- the potential impact of other users
- conditions (environment, remoteness, weather)
- equipment available.

Where a large group is split into a number of smaller groups each resultant group must have its own leader and independently adhere to AAS.

For the safety of both the group and the environment, the maximum group size for a climbing activity involving a dependent group must be 15 ( leaders, participants and support)

This is the maximum number of participants and leaders which is acceptable at one site/climb. Larger groups must be split and must not use the same climb, safe area or belay station while another group is operating.

It may be possible for a larger group size to at a single site to be arranged with the relevant land manager.

## **4 Leader roles**

In the AAS leaders, assistant leaders and other roles are defined by skill levels, not by titles. The skill levels are described in the section on competencies. Some activities may refer to 'guide', 'supervisor', 'manager', 'whip' or 'instructor' because the terminology has been used in the activity for many years. The actual title of a person in a particular activity is irrelevant. Regardless of the terminology, there must be an individual who has the responsibility of 'leader' and is in charge of the conduct of the activity. There may also be other people (one or more) who are assistants to the leader.

### **4.1 Leader**

The leader of the activity will

- have the skills and experience to carry out the activity plan
- be responsible for delegating tasks to assistant leader(s)
- be responsible for conducting the activity on-the-ground without external supervision
- have activity skills as well as group management skills.

### **4.2 Assistant leader**

The assistant leader of the activity will generally not be required to have the same skill level as the leader but will:

- have skills specific to the conduct of the activity
- be able to undertake activity-specific tasks delegated by the leader
- be able to manage the safety of the group, including in an emergency, if the leader is incapacitated.

An assistant leader would normally be included in the leader ratio.

A teacher without these skills may be responsible for the welfare and supervision of students but would not be considered an assistant leader nor included in the ratio.

A teacher with these skills may be an assistant leader and be included in the leader ratio.

There may be a number of assistant leaders with responsibility to the leader.

### **4.3 Other leader roles**

In some large organisations the leader may be appointed by an activity manager who:

- is responsible for selecting staff with the necessary skills and experience
- is responsible for appointing leaders and assistant leaders – in large groups there may be more than one leader for an activity

- is responsible for ensuring the activity plan is properly completed
- will not necessarily take part in the activity.

#### **4.4 Specific responsibilities of the leader**

In addition to actual leading the group, the leader has a range of responsibilities for the duration of the activity including:

- take reasonable steps to ensure that the level of knowledge, ability, skill and equipment of each participant is adequate for the level of difficulty and complexity of the activity
- ensure that a process has been undertaken to research and plan for likely hazards, and that the leader is familiar with the measures required
- introduce themselves as leader and introduce any other key people
- ensure that minimal environmental impact message is conveyed and adhered to
- manage and minimise the impact to the environment that may be caused by the activity
- where considered necessary nominate an assistant leader (or assistant leaders) who has/have known skills and experience relevant to the activity and are willing to perform defined duties
- ensure a briefing is conducted and understood by all participants
- undertake headcount before, during and immediately following the activity
- maintain awareness of the physical and psychological condition of the group
- control the pace of the group
- delegate responsibility to other group members as necessary (whip, navigation, first aid, etc.)
- notify relevant people of safe completion of the activity
- ensure that any incidents are managed, reported and recorded
- manage the group to avoid or minimise the effects of hazards
- ensure land manager's requirements are followed
- confirm the activity plan
- ensure that the group has access to safe drinking water
- check suitability, condition and use of all group equipment prior to departure and on return
- ensure group equipment is secured and stored correctly at all times
- ensure to the best of their ability that group members do not get into situations beyond their capabilities
- check first aid kit equipment prior to activity
- check communication equipment prior to activity
- frequently check weather forecasts prior to the activity and, if possible and relevant, during the activity
- ensure all documentation has been completed and collated
- arrange for the signing of waivers where these apply.

Individual tasks may be delegated but the responsibility remains with the activity leader.

Participants are responsible for their own actions both in relation to obvious risks that may be encountered and also in following the directions/instruction of the leader on any activity.

#### **4.5 Specific responsibilities of the assistant leaders**

If an assistant to the leader is appointed, they must be familiar with the requirements of the activity in order to be able to assume an effective assistant leader role including undertaking activity-specific tasks delegated by the leader, and being able to safely manage the group, including in an emergency, if the leader is incapacitated.

## **5 Equipment**

Equipment requirements vary with the objectives of the activity plan and the environmental conditions likely to be encountered. When planning equipment requirements for a climbing activity it is important to plan ahead as much as possible for all eventualities taking into account any appropriate information including forecast weather conditions.

### **5.1 Group equipment**

As rock climbing is essentially an individual activity, it is common for all equipment to be allocated to the participant or the leader so there is no requirement for group equipment.

## 5.2 Participant's equipment

The following equipment requirements apply to all dependent participants:

- helmet specifically designed for rock climbing and which adheres to UIAA, CE or equivalent must be worn throughout the activity session
- harness specifically manufactured for rock climbing and which adheres to UIAA, CE or equivalent must be used
- clothing appropriate to the requirements of the climb and weather conditions
- any personal medication must be carried and the activity leader must understand the requirement
- appropriate footwear must be worn both to access the climbing area (where relevant) and for the climbing session.

## 5.3 Leader's equipment

The following equipment requirements apply to all leaders conducting dependent group climbing activities:

- helmet specifically designed for rock climbing and which adheres to UIAA, CE or equivalent must be worn through out the activity session
- harness used must be specifically manufactured for rock climbing and which adhere to UIAA, CE or equivalent
- ropes and all protective equipment (karabiners, slings and chocks) must be manufactured specifically for rock climbing and used according to the manufacturers specifications and accepted climbing practice. (for example dynamic ropes)
- an additional rope, equivalent to the longest pitch should be accessible for rescue, should it be required.
- a rescue pack of pulleys, ascenders, and a belay device should be accessible for rescue, should it be required
- emergency communication equipment (Mobile Phone, Radio, EPIRB if in remote area, etc.)
- first aid kit.

## 5.4 Storage and maintenance

All equipment used in climbing activities must be used, maintained and stored according to manufacturers specifications where applicable.

All equipment used must be checked before and after each activity.

It is recommended that all issued equipment be carefully washed after each activity where relevant. (Helmets, shoes, clothing etc.) All harnesses must be supplied in a clean and serviceable condition.

It is essential that where appropriate (where equipment is stored and issued by the organisation) a log of all equipment use and maintenance be kept current.

## 6 Minimal impact

The leader and organising body should be satisfied that participants are aware of their responsibilities as members of the group in respect to the environment and the community by following principles of minimal impact practices.

Parks Victoria has a 'Camping Code' to help you minimise your impact regardless of the type of camping or activity you undertake. See it at [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1process\\_details.cfm?note=19](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/1process_details.cfm?note=19)

The following recommendations draw on the principles of Leave No Trace Australia [www.lnt.org.au](http://www.lnt.org.au).

### 6.1 Travel and camping

- Stay on track.
- Stay on durable surfaces, which include established tracks, rock, gravel and dry grasses.
- Do not create new tracks.
- Always walk on the track even if wet and muddy, on narrow paths walk in single file as much as possible to avoid widening it (with the exception of Phytophthora areas where one should avoid mud).
- Do not disturb vegetation as this will encourage erosion and promote the spread of pest plant species.
- Avoid revegetation areas altogether.
- Find out about local vegetation to learn about those that are fragile and those that are resilient.
- Try to unload gear and take breaks on large flat rocks or other durable ground to avoid damaging vegetation.
- In natural areas spread out and walk carefully to avoid trampling.
- Avoid steep areas that are more prone to erosion once disturbed.
- Use established campsites. Take care not to create new ones. Otherwise camp on rock, sands, or gravel where impact is smallest. When these can't be found, then on areas with durable grasses or weeds.
- Actively manage the group at the site to minimise trampling and damage to the surrounding vegetation. (The leader

might choose to educate the group and select tent sites for them.).

- Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- Avoid digging, landscaping and trenching around tents.
- When leaving a campsite, "naturalise it". Fluff up flattened grasses, brush away boot prints and replace any rocks that have been kicked or moved.
- Avoid damaging live shrubs, woody plants or branches.
- Protect water sources by camping at least 100 metres from rivers and billabongs.
- Keep the group size small.
- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and tracks.
- Choose durable surfaces for tents and cooking areas.
- Avoid places where impacts are just starting to appear.
- Stay only one night.

## **6.2 Disposal of waste**

- Pack and carry out all packaging rubbish and leftover food including organics in sturdy bags.
- Inspect the campsite and rest areas for rubbish and spilled food before leaving.
- Do not burn rubbish.
- Be careful not to drop rubbish while walking on tracks.
- When available, use established toilet facilities.
- In other situations, carry a trowel and deposit solid human waste in shallow holes dug in topsoil – usually 10-15 centimetres deep and at least 100 metres from water, camp and tracks. If toilet paper use is necessary, use it sparingly and bury it deeply or preferably, carry it out. Cover and disguise the hole when finished. (In water catchment areas, human waste should be carried out.)
- Urinate on bare ground away from vegetation, routes and tracks.
- Pack out all hygiene products in a suitable container.
- For personal washing or dishes, carry water 100 metres from streams and pools. Avoid using any soaps or detergents; if they must be used, use only small amounts of biodegradable soaps and detergents. Scatter strained dishwater.
- Hand sanitisers are a good alternative for personal hygiene.
- All campsites must be located at least 20 metres from any waterway.

## **6.3 Do not disturb**

### **Preserve Nature/Respect Culture**

- It is illegal to excavate, disturb or remove archaeological, historical and cultural artefacts from any public or wilderness lands.
- Avoid bushwalking close to Indigenous sites out of respect for the culture and to ensure their longevity. Land managers can advise on these locations. Seek appropriate permission.
- Do not touch rock art, which can be damaged by the natural oils from human skin.
- Preserve the past: observe but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artefacts.
- Avoid bushwalking in areas where rare and vulnerable plants or animals are found. Land managers can advise you of these locations.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as they are.
- Do not build structures, furniture or dig trenches.

### **Introduced Species**

- Avoid spreading non-native plant and animal species that are generally impossible to eradicate once they are introduced. Do not transport flowers, weeds, wood or aquatic plants into or out of the wilderness.
- Avoid spreading diseases like Giardia (a human bacterial parasite causing chronic diarrhoea) or Cryptosporidium (a single-celled organism that can cause gastro-intestinal illness with diarrhoea in humans) by properly disposing of human waste at least 100 metres from water.
- Know non-native species and report sightings of them to appropriate sources.
- Do not travel through Quarantine Areas.
- If a trip crosses areas known to contain pathogens (bacteria or viruses), visit the un-infected area first.

- Avoid transporting mud in boots, equipment and tyre treads which may contain Phytophthora (dieback fungal spores) by washing thoroughly before and after travelling. Use wash stations immediately where provided.
- Check clothing and all gear and burn or dispose of all hitchhiker type seeds before and after travelling in different areas.
- Help landowners and managers initiate control efforts by alerting them to infested areas.

## 6.4 Fire impact

- Fires can cause devastating and lasting impacts to the bush.
- Check area regulations for fire bans. No fire (including a fuel stove) 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 that cover the route.
- If a Total Fire Ban has been declared, consider cancelling your trip to the area for safety reasons.
- Leaders MUST know applicable fire regulations in advance of the trip, as fire regulations are the LAW.
- Contact your local fire authority or local land manager for details regarding your local responsibility.
- Preferably use a lightweight fuel stove for cooking and enjoy a candle or gas lantern for light. Consider using candles standing in sturdy clear plastic bags or containers for light instead of fire (non-drip church candles are recommended). Don't leave wax residue.
- Avoid lighting an open fire (even if permitted).
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires. Dismantle and naturalise any extra fire rings.
- Do not dig fire-pits.
- Judge the wind, weather, location and wood availability.
- Do not make a fire if fuel is scarce. Choose small dead pieces of wood that are found on the ground. Do not break off branches from trees or bushes.
- At least three metres around the fire must be clear of flammable vegetation.
- Keep fires to a minimum size necessary for cooking and minimise disturbance to the surrounding area.
- Manage your fire. Do not leave it unattended.
- Burn wood down to ash. Fires must be completely extinguished with water before leaving the campsite.
- Clean out campfires rings after use.
- Fires should not be used to create heat unless it is an emergency. Carry enough warm clothing so that fires for warmth are unnecessary.
- Be careful of improper cigarette butt disposal. Take butts with you.

## 6.5 Wildlife

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Understand through education the role each species plays in each environment in order to realise the importance of its position within an ecosystem.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, and raising young. Touching nests or young animals may cause their parents to abandon them.
- Never feed wild animals or birds. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviours, and exposes them to predators and other dangers. Store food and rubbish securely.
- Control pets at all times or better yet, leave them at home. All National Parks restrict pets so check regulations first.
- Report any injured animals to the local land managers. Do not attempt to handle the animal.

## 6.6 Consider others

- Take the responsibility to ensure that your group behaves with respect for the hosts and other users. Set out reasons and expectations early in the trip.
- Learn about the cultural history of the land. Recognise, acknowledge and respect local knowledge.
- Respect the wishes and regulations of all hosts. (e.g. Indigenous, pastoral, land managers and locals).
- Never visit places where you have not obtained permission. Seek permission and/or a permit.
- Respect others' wilderness experience by examining the group's behaviours to minimise any negative impact.
- Make reasonable efforts to minimise the impact of the group on others.
- Assist other parties in difficulty provided that this action does not adversely affect the safety of your group.

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience. Be diplomatic with other groups and other recreational users of the area.
- Be courteous. Give way to others on tracks and roads.
- Do not block paths or tracks with people or equipment. Have rest breaks in discreet places to minimise impact on other groups.
- If possible camp out of sight and sound of other visitors.
- Let everyone enjoy nature's sounds. Keep noise to a minimum. Talk quietly especially when in large groups.
- Avoid the use of bright lights, radios, electronic games, mobile phones and other intrusive urban devices.

## **7 Definition of terms**

In the AAS the following terms are used

### **Organisation or activity provider**

This is a commercial body (for profit) or non-commercial body (not-for-profit / community group) which undertakes to provide an activity.

### **Leader**

This is the person who has the responsibility for the conduct of the actual activity. The leader will have a level of skill appropriate to the activity and may be supported by one or more assistant leaders.

### **Assistant leader**

This person will be delegated tasks by the leader and will have a level of skill appropriate to those tasks.

### **Participants**

A person whose welfare is the responsibility of leader or assistant leader and/or who participates in an activity for recreational or educational purposes but not in a leadership role.

### **Terminology**

Some activities have specific terminology for various roles e.g. 'trip leader'. In the AAS the roles are related to the skills, not the title.

Glossary of abbreviations.

AAS - Adventure Activity Standards

ORC - Outdoor Recreation Centre Inc. Victoria

NTIS - National Training Information Service

## **8 Further information**

Further climbing information can be found at:

- Australian Climbing Instructors Association ACIA [www.acia.com.au](http://www.acia.com.au)
- Professional Association of Climbing Instructors PACI [www.paci.com.au](http://www.paci.com.au)
- Victorian Climbing Club VCC [www.vicclimb.org.au](http://www.vicclimb.org.au)

Land managers such as Parks Victoria [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) and Department of Sustainability and Environment [www.dse.vic.gov.au/](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/) will also have important safety and environmental information that will be important for the planning and conduct of activities.

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Version 3.1 – changes made to Section 3.1 Activity plan

Grouping of items and reference to Guidance Note 'Management of Outdoor Activities for Severe Weather Conditions'