

**“RECREATIONAL SERVICES  
(LIMITATION OF LIABILITY) ACT 2002”**

**ROCK CLIMBING IN A NATURAL  
ENVIRONMENT**

**SAFETY CODE OF PRACTICE**

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# RECREATIONAL SERVICES (LIMITATION OF LIABILITY) ACT 2002

## ROCK CLIMBING IN A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### SAFETY CODE OF PRACTICE

#### 1. Defined Terms

##### 1.1 In this code defined words mean

- ACIA - Australian Climbing Instructors Association
- Act - *the Recreational Services (Limitation of Liability) Act 2002 (SA)*.
- Activity – Rock Climbing as described in clause 2(a) of the Code also known as (but not limited to) Bouldering, Single Pitch, Multi Pitch climbing.
- Activity Leader – A senior guide who assumes the responsibility of the guide and coordinates the entire group “including the guides” to satisfy the objectives of the Activity.
- Activity Plan – created by the Provider/Leader/Guide and outlines important information for the conduct of the activity.
- Anchors – a means of securing ropes and climber(s) to the cliff.
- Belay – using the rope to secure climbers while climbing.
- Bolts – fixed anchors secured into a pre-drilled hole.
- Bouldering - 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.
- CEN (or CE) – Comité Européen de Normalisation (European Committee of Standards).
- Code – this code including any amendment to this code.
- Dependant group or individual – a person or a group who are unable to complete the activity of rock climbing without the instruction or direction of a leader, who otherwise may be defined as an ‘inexperienced participant’
- Guide – a person who assumes the responsibility for a group of participants with the intention to offer the experience of the Activity and to satisfy the objectives of the Activity.
- Harness – specifically designed for rock climbing and adheres to UIAA, CE or equivalent.
- Helmets – specifically designed for rock climbing and adheres to UIAA, CE or equivalent.
- Inexperienced participant – a person who, regardless of his or her age, either describes him or herself as a beginner or inexperienced climber or declares that he or she has climbed on very few occasions in the previous 12 months.
- Karabiners – alloy snap-links with spring-loaded gates; often called biners or krabs.

- Land Manager/Owner – the legal authority responsible for a site used for rock climbing.
- Leader – a person who has the necessary technical and leadership competencies to guide and lead Participants.
- Multi Pitch Climb – a climb that requires climbers to ascend one section before being belayed for subsequent sections of the climb.
- Participant – a person (but not a Leader or Guide) of full age and capacity, including an inexperienced participant whose welfare is the responsibility of a Leader, Guide or instructor whilst participating in the Activity.
- Provider – any person or organisation who, whether for profit or not, provides recreational services comprising provision of the Activity in the State of South Australia.
- Risk Warning – a warning in writing of the nature of the inherent risks of rock climbing in a natural environment
- Rock Climbing – the process of scaling natural cliffs, wearing protective equipment attached to a dynamic rope and belayed by another person.
- Ropes – manufactured specifically to arrest falls while rock climbing.
- Single Pitch Climb – a cliff that can be ascended completely within a single top-rope belay.
- Single Pitch Climbing Guide – able to conduct a group rock climbing and/or abseiling session in a single pitch top-rope environment.
- Single Pitch Rock Climbing Instructor – able to conduct rock climbing instruction for those wishing to be Single Pitch Climbing Guides, and is endorsed to teach anchor fixing, advance rope work or lead climbing.
- Top Rope – belay of a climber from the bottom or top of a single pitch climb with the rope passing through a secure anchor at the top of the climb.
- Tramline system – multiple participants at various belays on multi pitch routes. Usually with an instructor/guide at each belay station.
- UIAA – the Union Internationale des Associations D’Alpinisme – an international climbing organisation.

## **1.2 Interpretation**

In this code, except where the context requires otherwise:

- (a) the singular includes the plural and vice versa, and a gender includes other genders;
- (b) another grammatical form of a defined word or expression has a corresponding meaning,
- (c) a reference to a paragraph is to a paragraph of this code,
- (d) a reference to a person includes a natural person, partnership, body corporate, association, government or local authority or agency or other entity,
- (e) a reference to a standard, statute, ordinance, code or other law includes regulations and other instruments under it and consolidations, amendments, re-enactments or replacements of any of any of them; and

(f) headings are for ease of reference only and do not affect interpretation.

## 2. Description of Activity and Recreation Services

(a) This Code relates to the participation by a person in Rock Climbing on public or private land and that individual circumstances of each location and route may vary depending upon the cliff environment, and the experience of the Leader and Participant;

(b) Similarly, this Code relates to recreational services that consist of the provision of the activity described in paragraph (a).

## 3. Advice to the Participant

The Provider must give a Risk Warning to each Participant before the activity begins.

## 4. Leaders and Guides

(a) The Provider must ensure the Leader and Guide/s are currently competent as defined by the National Outdoor Recreation Training Package SRO003 in the following units of competency.

GENERIC	UNIT CODE
<b>Leadership and Management Skills</b> Respond to emergency situations Provide First Aid Facilitate a group Deal with conflict Undertake risk analysis of activities Apply sport and recreation law Follow defined Occupational Health and Safety policy and procedures  <b>Outdoor Recreation Skills</b> Plan outdoor recreation activities Guide outdoor recreation sessions Plan for minimal environmental impact Apply weather information	SRXEMR001A SRXFAD001A SRXGRO001A SRXGRO002A SRXRIK001AS RXINU002A  SRXOHS001B  SROODR002A SROODR005A SROOPS002B SROOPS003B

<b>CLIMBING GUIDE</b>		<b>UNIT CODE</b>
<p><b>Single pitch guide (restricted)</b> It is the firm position of ACIA that any climbing guide must be capable of basic lead climbing at a standard satisfying requirements of SROCLN004A.</p>	<p><b>Guide climbing activities on natural surfaces (restricted)</b></p> <p>Including the units:  <b>Apply climbing skills on natural surfaces</b>  <b>Establish belays for climbing on natural surfaces</b>  <b>Perform vertical rescues</b></p>	<p>SROCLN007A</p> <p>SROCLN002A SROCLN003A</p> <p>SROVTR001A</p>
	<p><b>Guide lead climbing activities on natural surfaces (single pitch)</b></p> <p>Including the unit:  <b>Apply lead climbing skills on natural surfaces</b></p>	<p>SROCLN008A</p> <p>SROCLN004A</p>
	<p><b>Guide lead climbing activities on natural surfaces (multi pitch)</b></p> <p>Including the unit:  <b>Apply multi-pitch climbing on natural surfaces</b>  <b>Establish belays for multi-pitch climbing on natural surfaces</b>  <b>Perform complex vertical rescues</b></p>	<p>SROCLN010A</p> <p>SROCLN005A SROCLN006A SROCLN002A</p>
	<p><b>Multi pitch guide</b> Multi pitch guides should have the skills and experience of a single pitch guide in addition to;</p>	

## **5. Activity Plan**

(a) Provider, leaders/ guide(s) must prepare, finalise and implement an Activity Plan regardless of its nature, location or duration

(b) Providers must select known sites that meet the objectives of the Activity by considering the following:

- i. Leader/Guide to Participant ratio;
- ii. Weather conditions;
- iii. Group size;
- iv. Group skill/experience levels, including fitness;
- v. Rock type (granite, sandstone etc.);
- vi. Cliff characteristics (grade, difficulty, height);
- vii. Ability of site to withstand visitation with minimal impact;
- viii. Access to and remoteness of cliff;
- ix. Cliff access (top, bottom, descent routes); and
- x. Equipment requirements.

## **6. Safety Procedures**

(a) Prior to commencement of the Activity, the Provider/Leader/Guides must instruct, or demonstrate the following behaviours to every Participant and the participant must then demonstrate those to the leader until the leader is satisfied that the Participant can:

- i. act safely on and around cliff face;
- ii. wear a harness and helmet correctly;
- iii. access evacuation routes;
- iv. identify assembly points where appropriate;
- v. handle the equipment correctly;
- vi. use climbing call signals correctly;
- vii. request help or assistance from a Leader or Guide; and

(b) A Leader or Guide must signal to Participants any hazards which pose a risk to them and inform them of the nature of the hazard and give appropriate directions to manage the risk.

## **7. Equipment**

Before the Participant joins in the Activity or resumes it after a scheduled break, the Leader or Guide must conduct a gear check to establish that:

- (a) the Participant is wearing a correctly fitted harness and helmet specifically designed for rock climbing and adheres to UIAA, CE or equivalent;
- (b) the Participant is wearing footwear which is suitable for natural rock climbing surfaces;
- (c) ropes and all protective equipment (karabiner, 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);
- (d) the participant is not wearing any loose jewellery or objects protruding from the hair or body.

No Participant must be allowed to begin or resume the Activity unless the matters referred in (a) – (d) above inclusive are established to the Leader's reasonable satisfaction.

### ***Equipment Checks***

Prior to an Activity involving exposure to heights the Provider shall ensure an inspection of equipment has been carried out to determine its current status of "pass" or "fail". Equipment that has failed will be isolated from use.

Equipment will fail if any of the following conditions occur:

#### **Ropes**

- Increase of more than 5% beyond original (new) recorded length despite a 24 hour period of rest;
- Inner core is visible through sheath;
- Ratio of damaged to undamaged sheath fibres exceed 50% of the length of the rope;
- Exposure to acids or corrosive substances;
- Normal life span 5 years, reassess against original benchmarks to determine if suitable to continue use for maximum of 1 more year; or
- Where the log of rope use equals or exceeds the manufacturer's recommendation for retirement of the rope.

#### **Karabiners**

- Fracture lines and cracks evident;
- Deformation or excessive wear (visible change in diameter);
- Corrosion;
- Undue lateral movement of gate in open position; or
- Dropped from height more than 5 metres onto hard rock surface.

#### **Belay/descending devices**

- Fracture lines and cracks evident;
- Deformation;
- Corrosion; or
- Dropped from height more than 5 metres onto hard rock surface.

#### **Helmets**

- Structural cracks evident;
- Damage evident to load bearing stitching of internal harness; or
- Sustained a severe impact.

## **Harnesses**

- Damage evident to load bearing stitching of internal harness;
- Exposure to acids or corrosive substances;
- Cross sectional damage to direct load bearing material exceeding 10% penetration of material thickness; or
- Over 5 years old (any nylon should be retired after 5 years).

## **8. Ratios of Activity Leader and Guides to Participants**

A number of variables will affect the Leader/group ratios. These include the site and route (grade, height, complexity, environmental sensitivity) and the group (experience, competence, fitness and available equipment) and the experience of the Leader/Guide. There are situations where judgement by the Provider/Leader will dictate the requirement for small numbers of participants per Leader/Guide.

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.

One qualified Leader may manage experienced groups, that is, Multi Pitch Climbing provided extra care is taken to ensure constant and clear communication, appropriate supervision and safe route selection.

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 Leader/Guides to Participants in various climbing scenarios.

### **(a) Top rope single pitch bottom belay**

The recommended maximum ratio for Top Rope Single Pitch bottom belay climbing is 1:9. 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.

### **(b) 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.

### **(c) Multi pitch climbing (for more experienced participants)**

The recommended maximum ratio for multi pitch climbing is 1:4. 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/Guide be stationed at each Belay when using a 'Tramline' system.

## **9. Group Size**

For the safety of Participants and the environment, the maximum group size for a climbing trip involving a dependant group must be 15 (including Leader(s), Guide(s), Participants and support).

This is the maximum number of Participants and Leader(s)/Guide(s) 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.

## **10. Environment and Conduct**

The Provider/Leader/Guide are expected to test and assess the condition of every artificial addition to a cliff face before relying upon its stability.

### **Applicants Details**

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