

# Scabby Range Nature Reserve

---

*Prepared by Sydney Rockclimbing Club Inc  
September 2008*



## **Introduction:**

This submission deals with recreational rockclimbing in the context of Scabby Range Nature Reserve. It concentrates largely on this single activity due to the fact that the Club's main purpose and expertise reside in this field. However, rockclimbers may also enjoy other recreational activities available within the remote and unique setting that the Reserve provides.

Sydney Rockclimbing Club (SRC) has been in existence for 56 years. In that time there has been significant growth in the numbers attracted to the sport. In recent years, aware of the potential for increased impacts, we have worked with land managers, and climber-initiated groups such as Blue Mountains Cliffcare, to address problems resulting from our activity and to educate climbers in best practice procedures.

Rockclimbing is a legitimate recreational activity and is undertaken in many countries around the world. Consequently there is a considerable body of knowledge dealing with the management of rockclimbing in protected areas.

By consulting and working with bodies such as NPWS we believe climbers can develop opportunities to engage in our recreation in a way that does not compromise the natural and cultural values of Scabby Range Nature Reserve.

### **Acknowledgments:**

The Sydney Rockclimbing Club Inc acknowledges that this reserve lies in the traditional country of the Walgalu people. We further acknowledge there are indications that people of the Ngunnawal tribe would have used the area and that the Monaro-Ngarigo people also shared a boundary with other groups in the area.

### **Comments:**

On Page 1 of the Draft Plan of Management (DPoM) in **1.2 LANDSCAPE** we find ...

*“Scabby Range Nature Reserve protects areas of native grassland and moist montane and sub-alpine forests and the fauna species they support. The ecosystems within the reserve are relatively intact as clearing and grazing have not been carried out on a large scale within the reserve.*

*Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people place cultural values on natural areas, including aesthetic, social, spiritual, recreational and other values. Cultural values may be attached to the landscape as a whole or to individual components, for example to plant and animal species used by Aboriginal people. This plan of management aims to conserve both natural and cultural values.”*

It should be noted that rockclimbers were active in this area before it was declared a nature reserve, with the earliest recorded climbs dating back to April 1979. Since that time climbing activity has been intermittent and essentially confined to the feature known to climbers as “Silhouette Slab”.

As a consequence of its remote location, the Scabby Range has not evolved as a major climbing destination remaining instead the preserve of those who seek and enjoy a true wilderness climbing experience. Here, remote from the trappings of modern society, today’s discerning climbers can engage in their recreation much as the earliest practitioners of the activity did in times past. For these climbers, the Scabby Range Nature Reserve protects a valuable and irreplaceable resource.

Wilderness climbers would argue that their recreation imposes no more impact on the environment than bushwalking and may even be less damaging as the more concentrated aspects of the activity occur on the rocky and thus more durable surfaces.

But notwithstanding this, it is still desirable that climbers and land managers are in agreement on the need for a practical management approach for the area.

**Issues:**

1) On Page 2 of the DPoM under the heading **2.2.1 Nature Reserves** we find ...

*“Nature reserves are reserved under the NPW Act to protect and conserve areas containing outstanding, unique or representative ecosystems, species, communities or natural phenomena.*

*Under the Act, nature reserves are managed to: (among other things)*

*• promote public appreciation, enjoyment and understanding of the reserve’s natural and cultural values; and*

*Nature reserves differ from national parks in that they do not have, as a management principle, to provide for visitor use”*

We would suggest that climbers who venture into the Mount Scabby Nature Reserve actively seek to appreciate, enjoy and understand the reserve’s natural and cultural values. Indeed it is a large component of the reason they choose to visit the area.

Furthermore, they seek nothing more than preservation of the reserve itself, being totally self-reliant in their visits to the area and needing no introduced facilities.

In the longer term, were there to be any measurable impacts identified with wilderness climbing activity in the area, land managers should consult with the climbing community and discuss the options for preservation before implementing any restorative works.

2) On Page 3 of the DPoM in **2.2.2 Australian Alps Agreement** the Scabby Range Nature Reserve is included with others in the region and described as;

*“an outstanding outdoor recreation resource for Australians including important tourist attractions; ....”.*

But being somewhat remote from major population areas and requiring a degree of physical activity from visitors it is unlikely that the Scabby Range Nature Reserve will become an ‘important tourist attraction’. Instead, as is suggested on Page 3 of the DPoM in sub-section **2.2.3 Wilderness** ...

*“An important purpose of wilderness areas is to provide opportunities for solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation”.*

Wilderness climbers readily accept these parameters and indeed value them as an important component of their chosen recreation.

**In conclusion:**

- The Scabby Range Nature Reserve should be retained as a low profile protected area.
- Any identified environmental impacts of climbing within Scabby Range Nature Reserve can be managed to ensure continued sustainable use.
- Reasonable climbers are prepared to accept sensible restrictions on their activities where it can be adequately demonstrated that such controls are appropriate.
- “By using the authority of the resource, rather than difficult-to-enforce restrictions, land-management agencies may see increased compliance by concerned recreationists.”<sup>1</sup>
- Sydney Rockclimbing Club Inc is always willing to engage in dialog with land managers and other stakeholders to discuss identified problems, and the Club can also act as a conduit to convey information to the wider climbing community.

We thank the National Parks and Wildlife Service for providing us with the opportunity to comment on the Scabby Range Nature Reserve Draft Plan of Management and hope that this submission can constitute a worthwhile contribution to the planning process.

Kevin Westren  
*Access & Environment Officer*  
*Sydney Rockclimbing Club Inc.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Camp, R. J. and Knight, R. L. (1998) **Effects of Rock Climbing on Cliff Plant Communities at Joshua Tree National Park, California.** Conservation Biology, Volume 12 Number 6.