

Ipswich Rock Climbing, Bouldering & Abseiling Investigation



Image: Phil Box

City of Ipswich has engaged TouchPoint One to lead the Suitability Investigation for rock climbing, bouldering and abseiling within the Conservation Estates on land managed by Ipswich City Council.

Purpose

The aim of this project is to establish a long-term policy position for the provision and management of rock climbing, bouldering and abseiling opportunities on land managed by Ipswich City Council.

The intent is that the policy position will set **clear guidelines** for the management of rock climbing, bouldering and abseiling to reduce risk to participants and Council, and protect the ecological and cultural heritage significance at sites where these activities occur.

The Team

TouchPoint One has assembled a team comprised of Epic Environmental, an environmental engineering consultancy; Seima Safety, rope access technicians and safety specialists; and QORF, the peak body for outdoor recreation in Queensland, to crush this project. QORF's role in this project includes community consultation and engagement.



Background

There are a number of questions that Council wants to address through this project, including:

- Are there suitable sites for rock climbing in Ipswich?
- Are there any rock climbing sites within Ipswich that have no cultural heritage or ecological/environmental significance?
- What can be done to reduce or minimise impact of rock climbing on sites of cultural heritage or ecological/environmental significance?
- Are there sites within Ipswich that enable rock climbing activities to be undertaken in a safe manner while protecting ecological values and cultural heritage significance?
- Are identified rock climbing sites geologically/structurally suitable to enable rock climbing activities to occur in a safe and sustainable manner?
- Can safe access be provided to rock climbing sites, and can the activities be made safer for participants, no matter their ability, while reducing risk and liability for the participant and Council?

Objectives

The objectives of the project are as follows:

- a) Gain a greater understanding of current and future demands and participation in rock climbing, bouldering and abseiling activities on land managed by Ipswich City Council.
- b) Identification and assessment of the suitability and appropriateness of known and potential rock climbing, bouldering and abseiling sites on land managed by Ipswich City Council.
- c) Protect sites of cultural heritage significance.
- d) Protect sites of significant ecological value.
- e) Establish a policy and management position for rock climbing, bouldering and abseiling on land managed by Ipswich City Council.
- f) Provision of appropriate opportunities, where feasible, for rock climbing, bouldering and abseiling on land managed by Ipswich City Council, for all members of the public that is safe and reduces risk to participants and Council.



Site Evaluation Methodology

The project team implemented a logical site suitability assessment methodology to evaluate the sites. This involved a desktop assessment of the sites followed by field work to confirm and validate evaluation outcomes.

The desktop evaluation methodology involved the following:

- a) Performed a climbing suitability assessment, focussing on the following:
 - Suitable structure / size
 - Available pitches / problems
 - Ease of access to site
 - Infrastructure required (tracks, bolts, etc.)
- b) Performed an environmental assessment, focussing on the following
 - Literature review
 - Data set overlay / evaluation
 - Likelihood of occurrence assessment
- c) Conducted a site suitability assessment based on collated data
- d) Identified sites that meet suitability criteria and require further detailed field evaluation

Field evaluations were performed on sites that were identified as viable for climbing and bouldering following the desktop evaluation phase.

The purpose of the field evaluations was to:

- a) Verify the findings of the desktop evaluations
- b) Validate the presence (or absence) of fauna and flora
- c) Identify issues that will require management action.



Evaluation Outcomes - Flinders Goolman Conservation Estate

The outcomes of the desktop and field evaluations of rock climbing sites in the Flinders Goolman Conservation Estate are summarised in the table below.

Site	Outcome
Mt Catherine	Suitable for rock climbing
Mt Blaine	Not Suitable for rock climbing Limited climbing opportunities Difficult access
Cliff overhanging Flinders Plum	Not Suitable for rock climbing Limited climbing opportunities Minimal rock on Council land Difficult access
Mt Goolman	Not Suitable for rock climbing No detailed assessment performed due to remote location
The Den Site	Not suitable for rock climbing Limited climbing opportunities Known BTRW habitat Some bolting has occurred in this area
Flinders Peak/Mt Flinders Saddle (western ridge)	Not suitable for rock climbing Confirmed BTRW habitat
Scott's Scrub Pinnacle	Suitable for rock climbing
Flinders Peak (Secret Cave) *	Rock climbing not supported until consultation can occur with traditional owners Culturally significant site Confirmed BTRW habitat
The Bommy	Not Suitable for rock climbing Limited climbing opportunities Known BTRW habitat

*The Secret Cave area is registered in the DATSIP Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Database.



As a result of a new native title claim lodged by the Yuggera and Ugarapul people in 2017, the existing native title claim (by the Jagera group) has been discontinued. Until a new native title claim is officially recognised, Ipswich City Council is unable to undertake consultation regarding rock climbing at the Secret Cave site.

Evaluation Outcomes - White Rock – Spring Mountain Conservation Estate

The outcomes of the desktop and field evaluations of bouldering sites in the White Rock – Spring Mountain Conservation Estate are summarised in the table below.

Site	Outcome
The Boardwalk	Suitable for bouldering
Little White Rock	Suitable for bouldering
Slab Land	Suitable for bouldering
The Bat Cave	Rock climbing not supported until consultation can occur with traditional owners The site is not on Council land. Significant aboriginal cultural heritage site with opportunities to embellish as a focal point for cultural tours. Bouldering is not appropriate at this site.
Super Hard to Miss	Suitable for bouldering
So Long Gravity (cave)	Rock climbing not supported until consultation can occur with traditional owners Significant aboriginal cultural heritage site with opportunities to embellish as a focal point for cultural tours. Bouldering is not appropriate at this site.
The Underground	Rock climbing not supported until consultation can occur with traditional owners Significant aboriginal cultural heritage site with opportunities to embellish as a focal point for cultural tours. Bouldering is not appropriate at this site.
Super Hard Wall	Suitable for bouldering



Site	Outcome
Tatooine	Suitable for bouldering
White Rock	Not suitable for bouldering or rock climbing Significant aboriginal cultural heritage site with opportunities to embellish as a focal point for cultural tours. Bouldering is not appropriate at this site.

What's Next

The project team are working with Council to develop site-based management plans to support and manage rock climbing and bouldering at Flinders Goolman and White Rock – Spring Mountain Conservation Estate's.

In addition, a discussion paper is being written to help guide Councils' policy position in relation to rock climbing and bouldering.

View online: [Ipswich Rock Climbing](#)



Image: www.discoveripswich.com.au

