



Aboriginal cultural heritage rediscovery at Taylors Rock

Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park

Background

Last year, Aboriginal cultural heritage, including rock art sites, was rediscovered at Taylors Rock (Declaration Crag) in Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park.

The rediscoveries are enormously important to Traditional Owners the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples, who have occupied the lands around Mount Arapiles – known as Dyurrite – for thousands of years.

Following announcement of the rediscoveries, Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council, which co-manage the park, installed signage advising people to not enter the area around Taylors Rock area.

What are the rediscoveries?

In addition to quarry sites and artefact scatters, rock art has been rediscovered. There are dozens of motifs in charcoal and red ochre, including a decorated oval reminiscent of designs painted on Aboriginal shields.

How were they rediscovered?

Observations indicating rock art were initially made during a routine visit by Traditional Owners and Parks Victoria staff. The sites were subsequently verified by an independent expert and assessments undertaken by Traditional Owners, Aboriginal Victoria and Parks Victoria. The sites were then added to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage register.

How are these cultural values being protected?

Onsite signage has been installed advising people of the presence of significant Aboriginal cultural heritage and to not enter the area. This signage will remain in place for the foreseeable future while a management strategy is developed in partnership with Barengi Gadjin Land Council.

Park Rangers and Aboriginal Heritage Officers are regularly visiting the site to make visitors aware of its cultural significance.

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* protects Aboriginal cultural heritage and financial penalties apply for harm caused by individuals or corporate bodies.

How does this impact visitor access?

Signage has been installed at Taylors Rock requesting visitors to not enter the area. There is otherwise no change to visitor activities such as rock climbing, bushwalking, camping and cycling in the rest of the park.

Does this mean people can't climb Taylors Rock?

Yes. Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council request that people respect the area's Aboriginal cultural significance and not enter the area – this includes climbing on the rocky outcrop and boulders.

There is otherwise no change to visitor activities in the rest of the park.

Will there be further restrictions in the park?

Sustainable recreation, including no-impact rock climbing, is supported by Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council.

There is no review into rock climbing at Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park.

What happens now?

Until a management strategy for Taylors Rock has been decided, the restriction on access to the site will remain in place.

Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council will continue to keep park users, the local community and other stakeholders such as licensed tour operators, informed about protections for Taylors Rock.

Parks Victoria hopes that all parties can work together to protect and communicate this significant rediscovery, and celebrate the area's rich Aboriginal history.

There is otherwise no change to visitor activities in the rest of the park.

Will this impact tour operators or local businesses?

Parks play an important role in regional and local economies. Parks Victoria supports sustainable nature-based tourism that contributes to productive, healthy and prosperous local communities.

Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council understand that Mount Arapiles is a world-class rock climbing destination that draws local, national and international visitors. For thousands of years it has also been an incredibly important part of the cultural landscape for Traditional Owners.

Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council will continue to keep licensed tour operators, local business and the community updated on protections required at Taylors Rock.

Cultural heritage and environmental values are not incompatible with recreation – people can enjoy a range of activities in almost all of Victoria's parks and reserves.

Victoria's rich Aboriginal cultural heritage can be celebrated by all, and can also be a driver of visitation and economic opportunities for the region.

What if other Aboriginal cultural heritage is found?

As with most parks and reserves in Victoria, Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park contains Aboriginal cultural places – the full extent of which is still being understood.

Parks often contain localised cultural heritage sites – such as rock-quarries, artefact scatters and scar trees. As well as these important places, there can be other significant places that are associated with story lines and other intangible values.

Over time, as assessments reveal more details of Victoria's incredible cultural history, we will look at whether new park management strategies are required to protect and preserve them.

Cultural heritage and environmental values are not incompatible with recreation – people can enjoy a range of activities in almost all of Victoria's parks and reserves.

Isn't this why climbing was restricted at the Grampians?

The heritage-listed Grampians National Park is home to one-third of Victoria's flora and the majority of surviving Aboriginal rock art places in south-east Australia. To protect these values there are restrictions on most recreation activities within the park's Special Protection Areas, which are established under the park's management plan and cover around 33 per cent of the park. No-impact abseiling and rock climbing is permitted in the 100,000 hectares of national park that are outside of these Special Protection Areas.

Cultural heritage and environmental values are not incompatible with recreation – people can enjoy a range of activities in almost all of Victoria's parks and reserves.

Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park is managed according to its own park management plan and legislation, and with input from stakeholders. The park has been co-managed with Barengi Gadjin Land Council under a Cooperative Management Agreement since 2005.

When will more information be available?

Parks Victoria and Barengi Gadjin Land Council will continue to discuss cultural heritage protections at Taylors Rock and make new information available on the Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park page of the Parks Victoria website.