

## **YOU YANGS ANCHOR TESTING AND REPLACEMENT**

(this is a response made in relation to discussion on the Chockstone forum – [www.chockstone.org](http://www.chockstone.org))

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As I mentioned on this post earlier this week, there have been some changes and developments in regards to the anchor testing at a number of commercial climbing sites around Melbourne. I have had a number of meetings and discussions with PV and Vertigo, reiterating some of the previous concerns many of you have and further discussing other points of concern I have noted on Chockstone and other feedback I have since received. I shall try and provide as much information as clearly as I can. Excuse me if it seems dry but I am trying to present the information as discussed, questions and answers and taking into account the present situation with these sites and commercial groups rather than what would have been a better way to handle it in the past. Also, please excuse me if I'm explaining to some of you, how to suck eggs. This may sound a little (condescending, but it's not meant to) it's just that others don't have as much background info. The following information is in regards to commercial climbing activities. At the end I will make some note of the separate issue of recreational (that's us) climbing

### **PVs STANCE**

This testing is in direct response to the relationship and responsibility that PV has with the commercial groups it books into certain areas where in order to use the area they need to use fixed anchors as there is little or no opportunity to use natural (such as the case with Summerday Valley, Araps etc). The impetus for this has no connection with recreational climbing although of course, we use the same areas and therefore what happens to that area does impact on us.

Commercial group booking system – this is a system that is already in place and has been for quite a while. The booking system was originally set up to help manage the various commercial groups to be able to access and use the areas fairly and efficiently. Before this, numerous commercial groups would all flock to the same areas on the same day, trying to arrive early in order to set up their ropes and guarantee their jobs. For the groups, this meant often trying to resolve issues with other groups. The areas noted are the prime ones for commercial groups for a variety of reasons – ease of access, short distance, easier routes. Their choice of anchors to use is pretty much limited to what is installed.

So the booking system is in place and therefore PV, by booking them into that area where the only anchor to use is a fixed one, does have a duty of care to ensure, that to the best of their knowledge, there are anchors in place which match an acceptable standard (and yes, this is a grey area)

### **TESTING**

Test is: as previously noted a 7kn pull test for 2 minutes. The area of standards and tests, as those who know, can attest to, is one that does have grey areas. And especially in rockclimbing. Australia at present time does not have a standard for rock anchors. So the accepted one widely used is European standard EN 959. EN 959 of 15kN in the axial direction and 25kN in the radial. Australian industry standards state it must meet 50% of the total load. (Feel free to correct me here as I

am explaining in laymans terms!) This test hasn't been randomly picked out of the sky. It has been discussed with those already in the business of anchors, testing, load bearing and PV were advised accordingly that this was best practice for standards currently used. You can find more info and reference to this standard on the following links

VCC bolting policy - <http://www.vicclimb.org.au/index.php?location=downloads>

CSIRO testing - <http://www.vicclimb.org.au/index.php?location=downloads>

Steven Hawkshaw sandstone bolting -

<http://www.sydneyclimbing.com/SandstoneBolting.pdf>

## OUTCOMES

In all of the areas marked for testing, there are a variety of anchors. Some such as Werribee Gorge have bollards installed by PV, others at Staughton Vale have some anchors that have been professionally installed using the EN 959 standard already. There was little concern that these would fail. The main concern was for the anchors at the You Yangs sites. Predominantly carrots, their history is unknown – bash in, glue in, many are very old. They don't conform in a number of ways to the EN standard. The other added concern with testing carrots is that while many may pass the pull test, there is the chance that the bolt placement can be comprised by the test and there is no way of knowing. Big Rock anchors were tested – most passed but a few failed with very low loads.

Original procedure was to test the anchors. What failed would be removed and then placed under review for replacement. Since the testing began and along with the feedback from everyone and further discussions with Vertigo, PV under advice, will now only test the anchors that are not carrots. Due to the concerns of compromising the integrity of the carrot anchors, these will not be tested. All the anchors that are carrots and were due to be tested in the commercial group sites will be removed and replaced. They will be replaced with Petzl Batinox <http://www.petzl.com/en/pro/rock-and-concrete-anchors/batinox> These are large solid rings, conforming to the EN959 standard. They will be glued in, using adhesive that conforms to the standards set by Petzl for best practice for that product. These are also the rings that are used at the top of many European cliffs.

In order for the commercial groups to know the anchors that have been tested in the commercial site, they will be tagged. I have been informed that this will be a small plaque that will be glued to the rock close to the anchor. For employees of the commercial groups, they will be able to identify them easily. As far as ongoing maintenance, at this stage, the advice is a visual test yearly and five yearly physical test.

My apologies for stating incorrectly that the test will not be made public. They will be – the plaques being evidence of this.

## TIMEFRAME

The two anchors that failed at Big Rock will be replaced next week. The rest of the carrot anchors – 32- will be removed and replaced in approximately 5 weeks when hardware arrives.

It was stressed that no other fixed protection at those sites or any other sites will be tested, removed or replaced. If commercial groups wish to engage in lead climbing, there or elsewhere in the parks the responsibility is theirs. They should be aware of the protection that is there and make the choice whether to use it or not. As noted, it is only when the only option for an anchor in a booked commercial site is a fixed one.

THE ABOVE IS FOR COMMERCIAL GROUPS AND THE CLIMBING SITES THAT PV BOOK THEM INTO NAMELY:

You Yangs – Big Rock

Urinal Wall

Gravel Pit Tor

Nightfall Pinnacles

Cathedral Ranges – Main Wall

Sugarloaf Boulders

Werribee Gorge

Staughton Vale

So, while many of you will still not be happy with the state of play, ie PV testing commercial climbing group sites, your concerns re the carrots compromised safety and loss of some anchors has been taken on board.

## RECREATIONAL CLIMBING

All of the issues and concerns that have been raised by visitors to this forum and outside feedback I have received, have been put forward and discussed. The issues of recreational climbing, its responsibilities, liabilities etc. whilst entwined in the areas affected, are separate issues and ones, that from my discussions anyway, PV are keen to work with us on, and it is not linked to the action that is being taken at these particular commercial sites. While I did briefly discuss commercial groups and their responsibilities, to be honest, this is a separate ball game and one that needs to be discussed and developed between PV and those commercial groups. It's important to be aware obviously, of the big picture because it can and does impact on us – as this episode has shown.

## MY RANT

I, as much as anyone have concerns that this is the thin end of the wedge. But what I also believe, is that as far as recreational climbing goes, we have the opportunity to put more effort into setting things in place, be it better education about fixed protection – placing it and using it. And the age old, age old I always quote – looking after the areas that we do use. Having an understanding also, that there are some areas that should be left as is. For the most part and for many years, we do and have self regulated but that doesn't mean that there isn't room for self assessment. And being proactive about issues before an issue actually explodes. As I have mentioned in various reports over the years, due to events and issues that have occurred, there has always been suggestions, questions and queries from those I deal with at PV on how we can best work together. So that those, especially on the ground, can deal with us, and us with them, fairly. What I don't have, or at least haven't had, is demands of ending this or ending that or of herding everyone into small contained areas. And I will be doing my best to do as much as I can to ensure

this doesn't happen. It would be a lie to say that I don't experience resistance in discussions I do have and it would be a lie also to say that some PV employees don't take as kindly to climbing as others do. And the same for other user groups that we have to work with and share the park with.

Anyone, who wants or is interested in putting effort into areas like Codes of Conduct, and Memorandum of Understanding for the different areas we use - it would be great to have your input and help. And that doesn't just mean VCC members. I would hope that, at least for some issues, that we are all pretty much on the same page....or thereabouts. Getting involved in working groups on possible future issues. It's about being prepared.