

Australis

**The New Zealand Alpine Club Australia Section Newsletter
Summer 2024, No. 1**

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Summer 2024, No. 1

Editor & Designer

Gautam Mishra

Cover Image

En route to Mount McPherson, Fiordland National Park, New Zealand. Gautam Mishra

Section Committee Page Images

Images from the Mount Arapiles Climbing Meet, Victoria, Australia. Craig George



Australia Section Chair Report

We hope everyone had a joyous and safe Christmas with family and friends. May 2025 be even more exciting and be filled with many memorable outdoor adventures.

All the best for 2025 from the Section management committee.

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2024 in reflection

As the temperatures across southeast Australia start to climb into the 30s, we know summer has arrived and Christmas is just around the corner, marking the end of the year. 2024 wasn't blessed with the weather we hoped for, particularly during the winter. One of the poorer snow seasons we have experienced for quite a while meant that, as a club, we weren't able to undertake the ever popular winter sojourns to Blue Lake. Even outside of the winter period weather forecasts were not very favourable for a number of planned Section trips and meets - as such these had to be cancelled. We hope for a better performance in 2025.

Membership of the Section has declined since last year to around 325. This is disappointing and the reasons for this are not clearly understood. Pre-COVID membership was 550. Our Facebook presence, on the other hand has grown strongly throughout the year and now stands at 548, although the Facebook page is open to non-members as well.

The Arapiles climbing meet held in May 2024 was the highlight of the annual events program for 2024. A big shout out to Craig George for organising this.

Annual events program 2025

We again seek feedback from members about the 2025 program. We encourage members to provide feedback to the following:

1. The types of activities you would like to see on the annual program.
2. Your recommendations for the locations/venues for such activities.

Help us make the 2025 program bigger and better by providing some feedback.
australia.chair@alpineclub.org.nz.

Members interested in these events should contact the Events Coordinator for further details, or if one is not assigned, the Events Coordinator on australia.events@alpineclub.org.nz.



Australia Section Chair Report

Event convenor opportunities

One of the factors limiting our annual events program is the lack of Section approved convenors to organise and run these events. We encourage experienced members who wish to lead some trips or organised meets to contact the committee. This represents a rewarding experience and provides a valuable service to the Section.

We understand that many are unfamiliar with the role and responsibilities of an Event Convenor, and others would find it a bit daunting to take on such a role; a “fear of the unknown”. So, if there’s enough interest, the Section is proposing to hold a Event Convenor evening information session via Zoom where we’ll go through all responsibilities and functions of the role together with an in-depth discussion of the documentation that is required. The mystery will all be explained.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in such a discussion at australia.chair@alpineclub.org.nz.

Section management committee

Earlier this year we were saddened to receive the news that Section Vice-Chair, Warwick Williams passed away unexpectedly. Warwick was a 50 year veteran member of NZAC and was a very experienced and dedicated climber. He greatly assisted the Section over a number of years in the role of Vice-Chair. His expertise and personality will be sorely missed in the club.

At the 2024 AGM, a decision was taken to reduce the size of the management committee from seven to six positions. Refer to contact list above for details.

Gareth Bowen has moved to the Events Coordinator role whilst Gautam Mishra has taken on the Newsletter Editor role. I welcome and thank Gary & Gautam for continuing to support the Section in these roles.

Currently the role of Vice Chair remains vacant. Members interested in helping the Section in this role please contact me at australia.chair@alpineclub.org.nz.

An ending note

My sincere thanks to all members and committee members who have supported the Section throughout the year.



Australia Section Chair Report

Committee work can be challenging but rewarding at the same time, and helps the Section provide a variety of services and benefits to all members.

I encourage members willing to take on a leadership role within the Section to contact me for more information.

Enjoy our wonderful outdoor environment, and stay safe in your chosen activities.



Above: Climbers at a Blue Lake Mountaineering Meet, NSW, Australia. Mike Pryjma

- Mike Pryjma
Chair, Australia Section



Editor's Note

G'day!

I hope this Summer 2024 Edition of *Australis* finds you well. It probably looks a little *funky* compared to previous editions - I hope this note will explain what's going on.

I'm Gautam, the new Newsletter Editor for the NZAC Australia Section. Outside of the Section, I'm an undergraduate student in my final year of studying Linguistics and am based in NSW.

I've been a member of the Section for about a year and a half now, and enjoyed the editions of *Australis* that Gareth (Newsletter Editor at the time) was putting out. I read that the committee needed an Events Convenor, and thought to myself: "What the hell? I've got a couple hours a week to kill", and shot an email to Mike. Mike, seeing the situation as it is (*an unexperienced 21 year old wannabe climber wants to be one of the most important roles on the committee? Alright buddy!*), and asked if I would be open to taking over the role of Newsletter Editor from Gareth, whom would instead become Event Convenor. I (graciously) agreed, and here we are.

This new format of *Australis* is my amateur-ish creation. I hope it's better able to showcase images by contributors from trips, and opens up avenues for a greater variety of pieces to be published within it (interviews, opinion pieces, travel plans, etc.) I'll hopefully be leading the charge on these with a new edition every 3-6 months.

Over the next couple of editions, we'll get to know each other better I'm sure!



Above: A personal favourite image of mine viewing Milford Sound from Gertrude Saddle, Fiordland National Park, New Zealand. Gautam Mishra

Below: A pair of my climbing pants after taking a couple hard falls - I swear it's not what it looks like!, Queenstown, New Zealand. Gautam Mishra



Editor's Note

As much as I would like my editorial tenure to start off on a high note, however, to do so would be disingenuous. Weather throughout this year has disallowed a number of club trips, and more broadly, Australian climbing is undergoing a challenging period.

As many of you know, a number of crags in the Mount Arapiles region, Victoria are facing closure without appropriate consultation of the climbing community. Arapiles is a remarkable and deeply influential climbing region integral to Australia's collection of world-class crags. Ongoing discussion and action is a predictably tedious process. Please do what you can to support the cause: sign petitions, stay in touch with movements, and meet with members of government involved in the proposed closure where possible. For those of who involved directly in activism on the front, stay persistent - I wish you the best. For those of you who would like more information, I'll leave some links about it in the *Additional Information* section of this newsletter (pp. 14-15).

Here in NSW, *The Ledge Climbing Centre* at the University of Sydney received news from the university's board that it must shut permanently from this year. This hit particularly hard for me. *The Ledge* is my local climbing gym, where I've been trying my hand at indoor climbing twice a week over the past year. *The Ledge* is - was - my third space; a space where I found challenge and triumph within its walls. I will miss it, and the community surrounding it, dearly.

And, above all to the Section, is the aforementioned passing of Warwick. I will leave parting words to Bruce, whom has written an obituary published here which is also set to be published in the next edition of the *New Zealand Alpine Journal* in the coming months. In my brief interactions with him, Warwick was wise and invested member of the committee. I hope he, alongside his family and friends, find peace. Vale Warwick Hamilton Williams.

I wonder how you persevere through circumstances like these. When decisions out of our control change your life, how do you stay optimistic? Life, as with much of climbing, seems to be like taking steps in the face of howling wind with your progress uncertain and your mind weary.

In the new year, may the winds howl in our favour. And should they not, may we find the strength keep taking another step.

Stay safe in the mountains, and see you out there.

- *Gautam Mishra*
Newsletter Editor, Australia Section



Warwick Hamilton Williams

30 June 1947 - 07 September 2024



A man of the mountains I met through UNSW clubs, Warwick became a strong friend with whom I shared many a day in the mountains. His passion in life was rock climbing and many admired his ability to put us to shame with his graceful moves up the face.

Warwick's passion for rock climbing started in his school years where he would scamper off to local crags with friends whenever school wasn't getting in the way. This early passion would continue as his lifetime loves.

The Blue Mountains west of Sydney would become his playground as it did for many Sydney locals and the early days of piton hammers and carrot bolts morphed into Hexentrics and eventually Camalots.



Warwick Hamilton Williams

30 June 1947 - 07 September 2024

Warwick's climbing life saw many changes as did his activities. His love for the rocks was evident in the early guidebooks that bear his name such as those of the Snowy Mountains and Dargan's Creek. We also spent many times together on bushwalks and in canyons seeking the outdoors as not just a recreation but it's influence on our lives.

NZ climbing came and went as it did for many Aussie climbers and the world beckoned with the United States being a well visited location with many of the well known rock areas ticked off over several visits.

Recent years saw the Dolomites as the place to be with climbs and via ferrata drawing Warwick inexorably back to the rock.

Warwick spent several years in Antarctica with stints at Scott Base, Mawson, Davis and Heard Is. Several of his years in Antarctica were shared by Lynn and their love of the outdoors was inevitably strengthened by these times together.

Books have always played a vital part in Warwick's life as a collector and recently as a restorer having recovered many books found in bookshops both overseas, in the Blue Mountains and of course on-line. The subject of his extensive collection of course would be climbing with many

Warwick and Lynn were always the couple I knew as they came into my life in the late '70s and had been a couple before I met them. Over many coffees after the climbing gym Warwick and I would discuss the many benefits of grandparenthood and the joys it created in our lives.

I can't believe you are gone.

The friction of skin and rubber on rock was something I knew often together with you. Your leaving shows the mortality we all have and the risks you took on the rock were known compared with those unknown that life throws us.

Farewell my friend and go forward to that never ending route that lies beyond.

- Bruce Spry
Secretary, Australia Section



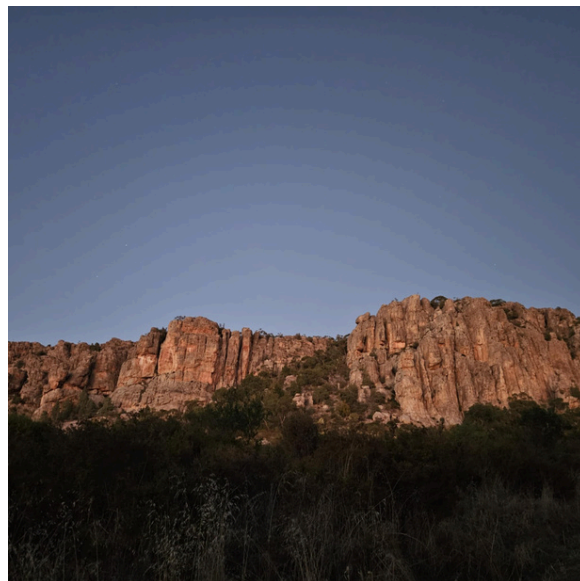
Trip Reports

Mount Arapiles Climbing Meet - Victoria, Australia

May 2024, Words & Images by Craig George

You're not a rock climber until you've made the pilgrimage to Arapiles...

That's what a friend told me enthusiastically a few years ago when he was talking up the overall ambience of this unassuming jumbled pile of rocks in the middle of nowhere (far western Victoria). It took me a while to get down there but boy, it was worth the wait! In May this year I was finally able to organise a climbing meet to make the pilgrimage to the trad Mecca, and it lived up to the hype in my eyes.



A truly spectacular place, outrageous climbing for every grade and ability with climbs as easy as grade 13 with the type of exposure usually only found on climbs in the mid-20 range (so accessible if I discount the 13 hour drive to get there 😊). I think I definitely got my money's worth outta this trip - I went down with a substantial list of climbs to get on and managed to tick quite a few of them off, including the incredible Watchtower crack: an absolutely commanding line, ★★ ★.

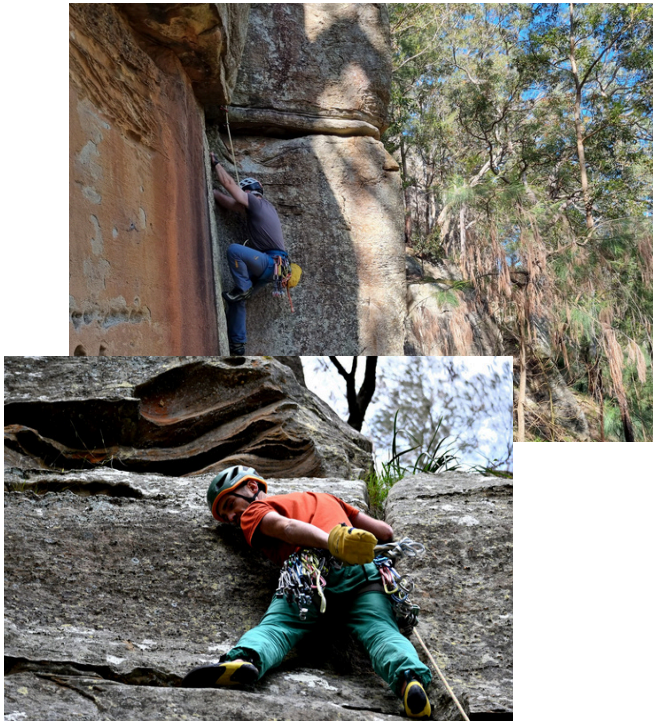
I built this climb up in my head after reading a description in a guidebook about "*still being able to hear the whimpering cries of a thousand lead climbers*" or something to that effect. A truly memorable climb amongst a week of excellent climbing, it's not hard to understand why many climbers arrive at this place and simply never leave. It is a true gem of a place. I am grateful for the opportunity to organise this trip through the prestigious New Zealand Alpine Club, I will certainly be planning to return to Arapiles year after year now...



Trip Reports

Watagan Mountains Climbing Meet - NSW, Australia

September 2024, Words & Images by Craig George (edited and abridged from Facebook)



Over the weekend, 6 members of the Section attended a climbing meet in the Watagan Mountains (about 90 minutes north of Sydney) at the historic *Monkey Face* crags. It's an adventurous climbing area with one of the oldest crags in the Hunter region and sandbags abound. It's primarily a trad-climbing area with some excellent crack climbs, including the infamous *Joe's Climb A Burly Roof Crack*, which was the most difficult climb in the Hunter for several years. Attending members got to sample some of the other crag classics like *Chutney*, a beautiful corner crack system, and *Stopper*, which features some laid back laybacking before an awkward off-width second pitch.



Overnight, members camped below the crags at the lovely Bangalow Campground just a short 5-minute walk from the climbing area. Surrounded by ferns, grass trees, and an abundance of wildlife, newly introduced members shared stories of their days climbing, stories of their trips to bigger white hills abroad, and their ambitions and desires for future trips. This for me is one of the core reasons for joining the Section - to meet like minded members and get to know them before scheming bigger plans overseas...

On the second day some repeat ascents were made, as well as some onsights of some great crack climbs such as the *Orang-utan* and *Inertia*, before moving around to the south face to climb the rarely visited *Paul's Peril*; possibly the best crack line at *Monkey Face*.



Photos From Around The Club



On this page: Images from the Mount Arapiles Climbing Meet, Victoria, Australia. Craig George



Photos From Around The Club



On this page: Images from the Watagan Mountains Climbing Meet, NSW, Australia. Craig George



Additional Information

Merchandise Availability

The Section has a handful of pieces of merchandise available for purchase, including:

- Full-brim sun hats
 - 1 * 57cm
 - 3 * 61cm
- Sports caps
 - 6 * One size fits most
- Beanies
 - 1 * One size fits most
- Polo shirts
 - 1 * Womens, size 10 short sleeve
 - 1 * Womens, size 12 short sleeve
 - 2 * Mens, size small short sleeve
 - 1 * Mens, size medium short sleeve
 - 1 * Mens, size large long sleeve

For more information, email Brent McNeil, Treasurer, Australia Section: australia.treasurer@alpineclub.org.nz.

Training Courses Subsidy

For relevant training courses taken by an approved provider in Australia or New Zealand, a \$200 subsidy is available on provision by the Section. Email Mike Pryjma for more information: australia.chair@alpineclub.org.nz.

Membership Discounts

As part of your NZAC membership, a variety of discounts are available in Australia and New Zealand. For more information, visit here: <https://alpineclub.org.nz/member-discounts>.

Newsletter Submissions

We are always looking for new submissions to the newsletter! Images, nonfiction, fiction - all is welcome. If you have something that you want to contribute, please do so here: <https://forms.gle/LxBqVor4Ap2XE1SS8>.



Additional Information

More Information about Arapiles Closures

As aforementioned, a number of crags in and around Mount Arapiles, Victoria are facing closure without appropriate consultation of the climbing community. For more information about these closures, movements against these closures, as well as discussions and petitions, visit the below links. Many of the links here (as well as those circulated online) are quite emotionally and politically charged. I hope the links below serve as a launchpad for you to undertake your own research and come to your own conclusions on the matter.

Political statements (ordered by press release date):

- <https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/statement-minister-environment>
- <https://www.annewebster.com.au/media/shadow-ministers-victorian-federal-coalition-mps-sign-arapiles-declaration-amid-parks-victoria-cultural-heritage-fiasco---media-release>

Media coverage (ordered by publication date):

- <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-11-07/traditional-owners-welcome-arapiles-protection-climbers-unhappy/104566984>
- <https://www.climbing.com/news/major-climbing-destination-closed-climbers/>

Social media posts and groups:

- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ACAVdiscussion>
- <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15iqD5mqB3/>

What to do about it:

- <https://savegrampiansclimbing.org/>
- <https://acav.climb.org.au/>
- <https://savegrampiansclimbing.org/save-arapiles-climbing-we-need-your-help/>
- <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/petitions/rock-climbing-in-mt-arapiles/>
- <https://engage.vic.gov.au/project/dyurrite/survey/5408#sub-nav>





Above: Climber escalating a crack in the Watagan Mountains, NSW, Australia. Craig George



