





Statement of Environmental Effects

Shop 1, 1-3 Moore Road, Freshwater

“CHANGE OF USE OF SUPERMARKET TO INDOOR RECREATION FACILITY (INDOOR BOULDERING CENTRE)”

March 2019

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Statement of Environmental Effects has been prepared by Andrew Martin Planning Pty Ltd at the request of the applicant to accompany a Development Application to Northern Beaches Council (the "Council") for the change of use of an existing supermarket (IGA) to an indoor recreation facility (indoor bouldering centre), at 1 Moore Road, Freshwater. The application includes minor internal works for amenities on the ground floor.
- 1.2. The development site is part of the Freshwater Village Plaza, located on the corner of Albert Street and Moore Road. The complex has roof top parking with access off Moore Lane and basement parking with access off Moore Road. Shop 1 has access to the existing on site parking spaces for the shopping centre. Shop 1 is accessed via the main atrium style entry.
- 1.3. The Bouldering Centre is to cater for 100 - 150 persons at any one time including staff. The bouldering facility does not operate like conventional indoor rock climbing facilities and does not conduct kids parties. The atmosphere is more focused as each user has to set anchors rather than rely on predetermined projections on the wall. A total of 8 lines will be used at any given time. An equivalently sized indoor rock climbing facility would provide double the number of lines when compared to the proposed use. The nature of this use is less intense in terms of numbers hence less parking demand. Parking demand will be less than the previous IGA use.
- 1.4. The site is zoned B2 Local Centre under Warringah Local Environmental Plan 2011 (WLEP 2011). *'Recreation Facilities (Indoor)'* is permissible with consent within the B2 Zone. The proposal satisfies the objectives of the WLEP and the B2 zone and is capable of complying with the minimum requirements for access, traffic, parking and acoustics. A number of reports are submitted with the DA documentation addressing various aspects of the proposal. Reports conclude that the site is suitable and capable of accommodating the proposed bouldering use.
- 1.5. This statement has been prepared pursuant to Section 4.12(9) of the *EP&A Act 1979*, and cl 47 and Schedule 1, Part 1, Clause 2(c) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*, and reviews the applicable environmental planning instruments and development control plans that apply to the subject property as well as the natural and built environmental impacts of the proposal with particular reference to the relevant heads of consideration listed under s4.15 of the *EP&A Act 1979*.
- 1.6. Therefore, it is with confidence that the subject development application is submitted to Council for a favourable determination.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDS

The subject site is legally known as SP 23069, No. 1 – 3 Moore Road, Freshwater. The complex comprises 26 strata units. Shop 1 was previously occupied by an IGA supermarket and is subject tenancy for the purposes of this application. The site has an overall area of approximately 1,800sqm with frontage to Albert Street and side access to the basement level off Moore Road.



Figure 1: Site location

(Source: googlemaps)



Figure 2: Aerial of site location

(Source: Googlemaps)

Shop 1 is the subject site of the Climbing Centre. It has been used as an IGA supermarket over a number of years with parking on the basement level and offices above. Vehicle access to the site is via the existing crossover from Moore Road. The building is generally constructed boundary to boundary (except for the Albert Street pedestrian forecourt) and has roof top park with access from Moore Lane. Other uses

within the Village Plaza include butcher, dentist, liquor outlet, homewares, bakery and various restaurants.

Figures 3 - 5 show the existing building.



Figure 3: View of subject site with supermarket at corner of Albert St and Moore Road



Figure 4: View of subject site from corner of Albert St and Moore Road



Figure 5: View of vehicle entry point from Moore Road

3.0 PROPOSED USE AND WORKS

The proposal is the adaptive reuse of Shop 1 (Supermarket premises) to an indoor recreation facility – Bouldering Centre. The Centre is to be known as “Skywood Climbing”.

The proposed bouldering centre is to cater for between 100 and 150 clients at any one time.

The Centre is proposed to operate from

Mon – Fri: 6am to 10pm
Weekend/Public Holidays: 9am – 10pm

An overview of the operation of the Centre is provided in Appendix A of this Statement.

The centre will be staffed by up to 5 staff, not all required onsite at any one time. Parking for staff vehicles is provided onsite. Travel to the centre will predominantly be via private vehicle and public transport – buses. Given the location of the centre walking and/or cycling is also encouraged. Bike racks will also be provided to support this alternative form of transport. Public transport routes are available in the immediate area of the site.

A new change room, amenities and stretching/warm up area are to be built at ground level to cater for client as well as disabled toilet and amenities. First floor internal works include minor refurbishment of existing bathrooms and demolition of internal partition walls.

Pedestrian access points to the climbing centre are unchanged from the existing supermarket. That is, separate entry and exit double doors, lift or stairs from basement level.

This centre is not targeted at the children party market or at children under the age of 15. Hence, party rooms, parent rooms and child care rooms or kids playzones are not part of this application. The target audience is not children as shown in Figure 6 below a more mature clientele is likely.



Figure 6: Photo of similar bouldering centre

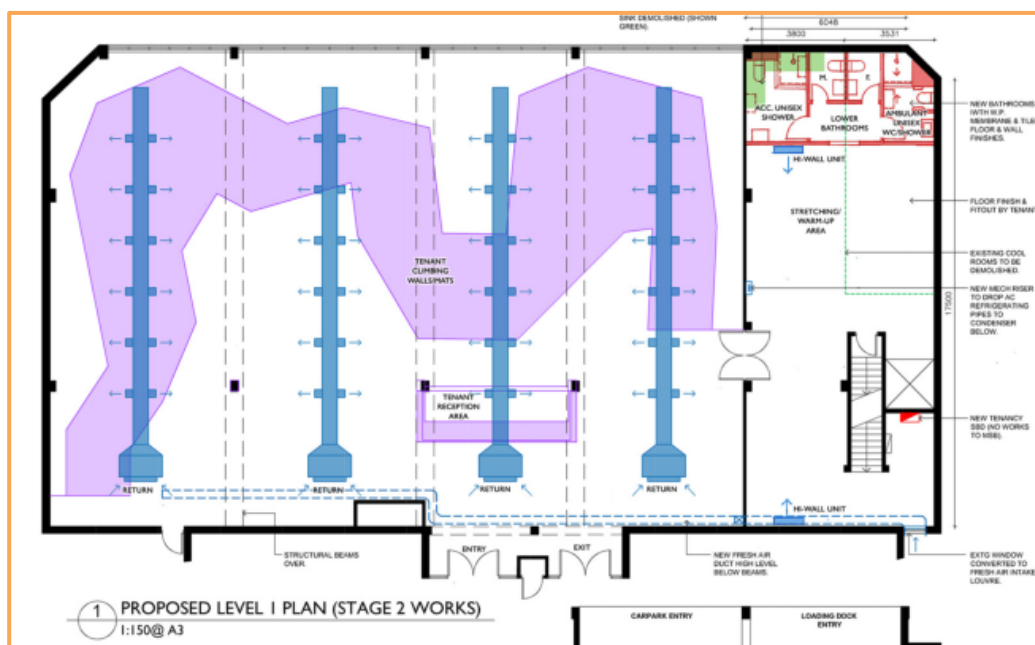


Figure 7: Proposed ground floor plan

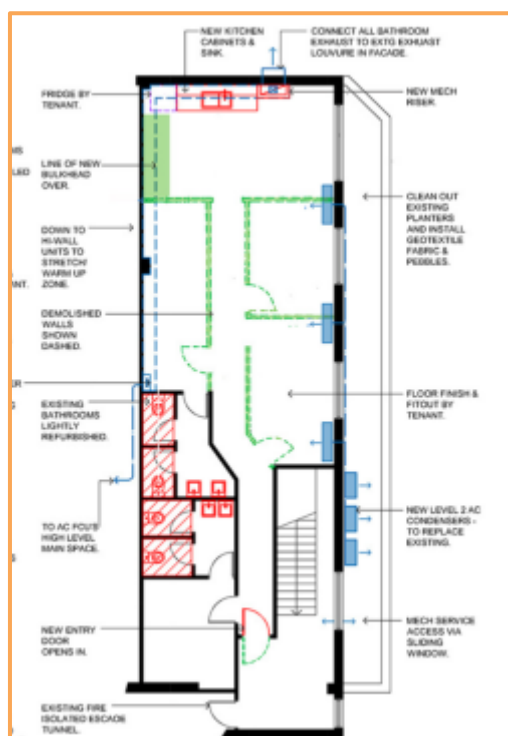


Figure 8: Proposed Level 1 works

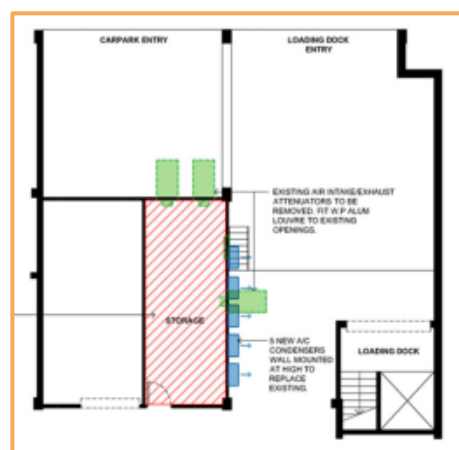


Figure 9: Proposed Lower Level works

4.0 ASSESSEMENT – SECTION 5.15 OF THE EP&A ACT 1979

The assessment of a development application is required to address the matters for consideration listed under section 4.15 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979*, as amended.

4.1 Relevant Environmental Planning Instruments

There are a number of State and Local Environmental Planning instruments that may apply to any given development. The following discussion explores the compliance of the subject development with relevant EPI's.

4.1.1 State Environmental Planning Policy No. 55 - Remediation of Land

SEPP 55 applies to the subject site. Clause 7(1)(a) of SEPP 55 states that a consent authority must not consent to the carrying out of any development on land unless it has considered whether the land is contaminated.

The site has been used as a supermarket for a number of years. As this application does not include any excavation of the site it is considered that the proposed use and fitout will not result in any contamination issues being raised as a result of this proposal. On this basis, no further investigation is considered necessary.

4.1.2 Warringah Local Environmental Plan 2011 - S.4.15(1)(a)(i)

1.2 Aims of Plan

(1) This Plan aims to make local environmental planning provisions for land in Warringah in accordance with the relevant standard environmental planning instrument under section 33A of the Act.

(2) The particular aims of this Plan are as follows:

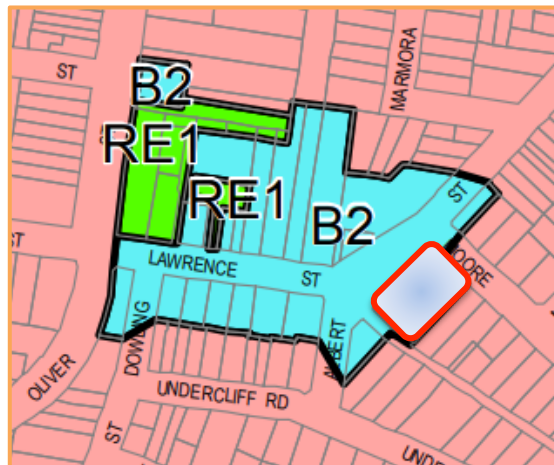
- (a) to create a land use framework for controlling development in Warringah that allows detailed provisions to be made in any development control plan made by the Council,*
- (b) to recognise the role of Dee Why and Brookvale as the major centres and employment areas for the sub-region,*
- (c) to maintain and enhance the existing amenity and quality of life of the local community by providing for a balance of development that caters for the housing, employment, entertainment, cultural, welfare and recreational needs of residents and visitors,*
- (d) in relation to residential development, to:*
 - (i) protect and enhance the residential use and amenity of existing residential environments, and*
 - (ii) promote development that is compatible with neighbouring development in terms of bulk, scale and appearance, and*
 - (iii) increase the availability and variety of dwellings to enable population growth without having adverse effects on the character and amenity of Warringah,*
- (e) in relation to non-residential development, to:*
 - (i) ensure that non-residential development does not have an adverse effect on the amenity of residential properties and public places, and*
 - (ii) maintain a diversity of employment, services, cultural and recreational facilities,*
- (f) in relation to environmental quality, to:*
 - (i) achieve development outcomes of quality urban design, and*
 - (ii) encourage development that demonstrates efficient and sustainable use of energy and resources, and*
 - (iii) achieve land use relationships that promote the efficient use of infrastructure, and*
 - (iv) ensure that development does not have an adverse effect on streetscapes and vistas, public places, areas visible from navigable waters or the natural environment, and*

- (v) *protect, conserve and manage biodiversity and the natural environment, and*
- (vi) *manage environmental constraints to development including acid sulfate soils, land slip risk, flood and tidal inundation, coastal erosion and biodiversity,*
- (g) *in relation to environmental heritage, to recognise, protect and conserve items and areas of natural, indigenous and built heritage that contribute to the environmental and cultural heritage of Warringah,*
- (h) *in relation to community well-being, to:*
 - (i) *ensure good management of public assets and promote opportunities for social, cultural and community activities, and*
 - (ii) *ensure that the social and economic effects of development are appropriate.*

Comment: The proposed bouldering centre is a recreational and leisure service-based operation predominantly for young adults and adults that live in the north shore area. It contributes to an active lifestyle, health, well-being and their social needs. It also is an employer of locals, thereby contributing to a number of objectives outlined in the WLEP. The site is in an accessible area, having good linkages to primary roadways and bus services on Moore Road.

Zone and Permissibility

The subject site is zoned B2 Local Centre under the provisions of Warringah LEP 2011. A recreation facilities (indoor) is permissible in this zone, with the consent of Council.



Zone B2 Local Centre

1 Objectives of zone

- *To provide a range of retail, business, entertainment and community uses that serve the needs of people who live in, work in and visit the local area.*
- *To encourage employment opportunities in accessible locations.*
- *To maximise public transport patronage and encourage walking and cycling.*
- *To provide an environment for pedestrians that is safe, comfortable and interesting.*
- *To create urban form that relates favourably in scale and in architectural and landscape treatment to neighbouring land uses and to the natural environment.*
- *To minimise conflict between land uses in the zone and adjoining zones and ensure the amenity of any adjoining or nearby residential land uses.*

2 Permitted without consent

Home-based child care; Home occupations

3 Permitted with consent

Boarding houses; Child care centres; Commercial premises; Community facilities; Educational establishments; Entertainment facilities; Function centres; Information and education facilities; Medical centres; Passenger transport facilities; Recreation facilities (indoor); Registered clubs; Respite day care centres; Restricted premises; Roads; Service stations; Shop top housing; Tourist and visitor accommodation; Any other development not specified in item 2 or 4

4 Prohibited

Advertising structures; Agriculture; Air transport facilities; Animal boarding or training establishments; Boat building and repair facilities; Boat sheds; Camping grounds; Caravan parks; Cemeteries; Charter and tourism boating facilities; Correctional centres; Crematoria; Depots; Eco-tourist facilities; Environmental facilities; Exhibition villages; Extractive industries; Forestry; Freight transport facilities; Heavy industrial storage establishments; Highway service centres; Home occupations (sex services); Industrial retail outlets; Industrial training facilities; Industries; Marinas; Mooring pens; Moorings; Open cut mining; Port facilities; Recreation facilities (major); Recreation facilities (outdoor); Research stations; Residential accommodation; Rural industries; Sex services premises; Storage premises; Transport depots; Vehicle body repair workshops; Vehicle repair stations; Waste or resource management facilities; Water recreation structures; Wharf or boating facilities; Wholesale supplies

A recreation facility (indoor) is a permissible use and defined as:

“recreation facility (indoor) means a building or place used predominantly for indoor recreation, whether or not operated for the purposes of gain, including a squash court, indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, table tennis centre, health studio, bowling alley, ice rink or any other building or place of a like character used for indoor recreation, but does not include an entertainment facility, a recreation facility (major) or a registered club.”

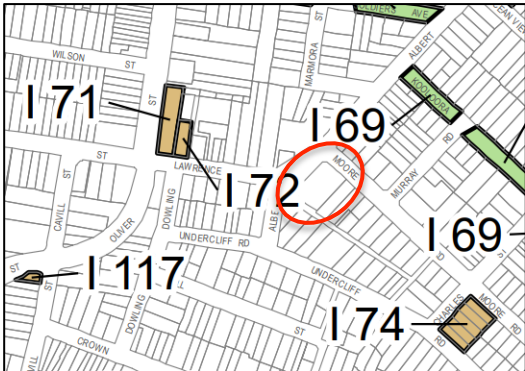
The proposal is considered to satisfies the objectives of the B2 zone as follows:

Zone objective	Assessment comment
<i>To provide a range of retail, business, entertainment and community uses that serve the needs of people who live in, work in and visit the local area.</i>	The proposal is a mix of business, recreation and entertainment that will serve the needs of the local community and visitors to the area.
<i>To encourage employment opportunities in accessible locations.</i>	The proposal provides improved opportunities for full and part time works for local residents.
<i>To maximise public transport patronage and encourage walking and cycling.</i>	The site is located on a bus route which runs along Moore Road. The location is also readily accessible for walking and cycling.
<i>To provide an environment for pedestrians that is safe, comfortable and interesting.</i>	Access into the centre will be available from the basement and street level via lift or stairs. Access is equitable for all persons.
<i>To create urban form that relates favourably in scale and in architectural and landscape treatment to neighbouring land uses and to</i>	No changes to the urban form or design of the existing building.

<p><i>the natural environment.</i></p> <p><i>To minimise conflict between land uses in the zone and adjoining zones and ensure the amenity of any adjoining or nearby residential land uses.</i></p>	<p>No land use conflicts given the impacts of the use are internalized within the centre.</p> <p>An assessment of the potential noise impacts is submitted with the DA documentation.</p> <p>It concludes that “under the most conservative operating scenario, operational noise emission from the proposed development will achieve the established noise criteria at neighbouring commercial and residential receivers.”</p> <p>Impacts are minimised and all parking can be provided within the center. There is no increase of gross floor area.</p>
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Comment: The above assessment demonstrates that the adaptive reuse of the subject site for an indoor recreation facility is acceptable in terms of the objectives of the B2 zone. It is acknowledged that the employment level for this use will be less than the supermarket, however, the centre will provide local jobs (full and part time) and importantly provide a safe use that enhances mental and physical health.

The relevant clauses of WLEP 2011 are assessed as follows:

WLEP 2011 Provisions	Comment
<p>4.3 Height of buildings</p>	<p>The proposal is for the occupation and fitout of the existing building. No change to the height of the building is proposed.</p>
<p>5.10 Heritage Conservation</p> 	<p>The subject site is not a heritage, is not in a heritage conservation area and not in the vicinity of any locally listed heritage items.</p> <p>No further assessment is required.</p>

4.2 Relevant Non Statutory Development Control Plans

4.2.1 Warringah Development Control Plan 2011 (WDCP 2011)

Warringah DCP 2011 is the policy applying to development in the Warringah section of the Northern Beach LGA. The purpose of the plan is to provide additional planning and building guidelines than are available in WLEP 2011.

The DCP does not have controls applying specifically to indoor recreation facilities. However there is a precinct specific part of the DCP for Freshwater Village B2 zone area and surrounds.

The following assesses the proposal against the general development provisions of the DCP and Part G5 Freshwater Village.

Relevant DCP provisions	Preliminary Proposal
PART A INTRODUCTION	
A.5 Objectives <i>The overriding objective of the DCP is to create and maintain a high level of environmental quality throughout Warringah. Development should result in an increased level of local amenity and environmental sustainability.</i>	The proposal seeks to establish a locally based leisure and recreation premises to serve needs within the local centre of Freshwater. This will provide a new social and recreational opportunity for residents and visitors - not previously available in this area.
PART B BUILT FORM CONTROLS	
“... the provisions of Part B Built Form Controls do not apply to those areas of land specified in Part G.”	N/A. Does not apply to this application.
PART C SITING FACTORS	
C2 Traffic, Access and Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicular Access • On-site loading and unloading 	The application does not involve any changes to the vehicular access, loading or unloading for the complex. The change of use involves some lower level internal building works to the room previously used for refrigeration, however, these do not impact access, parking or operation of the complex.
C3 Parking Facilities	No change to the amount or location of parking onsite.
C3(A) Bicycle Parking and End of Trip Facilities	No change to the provision of bicycle parking onsite. The bouldering centre will contain change rooms that can be used as end of trip facilities by clients of the centre.
C4 Stormwater	As existing. No change.
C6 Building over or adjacent to Constructed Council Drainage	N/A to this application.

Easements	
C7 Excavation and Landfill	N/A to this application.
C8 Demolition and Construction	Internal building works only. No change to the external fabric of the existing building.
C9 Waste Management	A waste management plan for building works form part of this application and submitted as part of the DA documentation.
PART D DESIGN	
D9 Building Bulk	No change to the existing building envelope and built form of the existing building.
D10 Building Colours and Materials	The materials and façade treatments applied to the existing centre do not change.
D11 Roofs	All mechanical equipment and lift overruns are existing and no external change.
D18 Accessibility	The access to the centre does not change under this proposal and will comply with the BCA. There is no change as existing access is available from the footpath through the centre into the tenancy.
D21 Provision and Location of Utility Services	The site is fully serviced. Any services requiring augmentation will be detailed in the DA documentation.
PART G5 Freshwater	
1. Built Form in Freshwater <i>R1. Development is to evoke the coastal setting of the area through architectural expression and public art, eg murals or other external treatment of buildings.</i> <i>R2. Buildings, including balconies and carpark entry points, fronting any public place must not contain any utility service pipe or conduit that is visible from the public place.</i> <i>Utility services including service structures, plant and equipment are to be located below ground or be designed to be an integral part of the development and suitably screened from public places</i>	<p>R1. This application is for a change of use and occupation of an existing premises only. Any signage or external works are not part of this application.</p> <p>R2. N/A to this application.</p>

<p><i>including streets.</i></p> <p><i>R3. Locate residential uses so that noise, odour and any other adverse impacts are minimised from loading bays, garbage disposal and other service areas.</i></p> <p><i>R4. Retail entries are to be no more than 10m apart</i></p> <p><i>A minimum floor to ceiling height of 3.3m for ground floor uses.</i></p> <p><i>R5. A minimum floor to ceiling height of 2.7m for uses above the ground floor.</i></p> <p><i>R6. For any development with 10 or more shops or 500m² or more retail floor space, accessible and well signposted toilet facilities complying with AS1428 shall be provided. These facilities shall have the same minimum opening and closing hours as the proposed development. Residential entries are to be separate and clearly distinguished from business entries</i></p>	<p>R3. N/A to this application.</p> <p>R4. No change to the existing entry/exist points of the building. No change to the existing floor to ceiling heights.</p> <p>R5. N/A to this application.</p> <p>R6. N/A to this application.</p>
2. Number of Storeys	No change to the building envelope. Change of use only.
3. Street Activation	Access into the Bouldering Centre remains unchanged from the previous supermarket use with lift and stairs from the basement and double doors (entry and exit) to the street level.
4. Street Facades and Shopfront design	No change to existing street façade or shopfront design.
5. Access and Loading	No change to the location or function of the access, parking and loading areas onsite. Mains vehicles and pedestrian access points are separated. Parking for the complex is available at basement and rooftop levels.
6. Lighting	There is no change to the façade of the building, including external lighting that could impact on adjacent residential premises. Signage is not part of this application.

7. Safety and security	Appropriate CCTV, lighting and alarm systems will be installed to address the principles of CPTED. Condition of consent will confirm CCTX at entry and over the reception area.
8. Signage	Signage is not part of this application.
9. Awnings	No change or proposed awnings as part of this application.
10.Front Setback	No change to the existing building. Change of use of the premises only.
11.Side and rear setbacks	No change to the existing building. Change of use of the premises only.
12.Other side and rear setbacks	No change to the existing building. Change of use of the premises only.
13.Roofs and building form	No change to the existing building. Change of use of the premises only.
14.Building massing	No change to the existing building. Change of use of the premises only.
15.Building sustainability	Subject to standard conditions of consent, taking into account the internal air quality needs of the centre and the acoustic measures to address noise emissions from the site.
16.Materials and colours	Subject to final details at the CC stage.
17.Active travels links	No change to the existing building. Change of use of the premises only.
18. Development in the vicinity of heritage items	The site is not a heritage item; is not located within a heritage conservation area and is not located within the vicinity of a locally listed heritage item. Refer also to cl 5.10 of the LEP assessment table above.
Part H Appendices	
App 1: Car Parking Requirements Closest defined landuse in terms of parking rate is: Gymnasium: 4.5 spaces per 100sqm GFA.	There is no change to the existing GFA of the building. The previous use of the site was an IGA supermarket which would have generated a higher traffic generation with more vehicle trips per hour. The

	<p>Bouldering Centre will utilise the same GFA and the same parking. The turnover will be lower and the traffic generation from the premises lower.</p> <p>A Traffic and Parking report is not submitted with the DA on this basis. Potential users of the centre may also use other facilities at the Village like eateries and so forth therefore spreading the vehicle trip over other transactions. As stated in the description the bouldering use is quite unique in that users are required to set anchors and often spend 2 – 3 hours in the facility due to rest periods between climbs.</p>
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4.3 Suitability of the site for the development.

The proposal is a permissible land use in the zone. The land area has the capacity and the infrastructure to support the occupation of the premises as a bouldering centre. The proposed development has responded positively to the characteristics and constraints of the site and maximised site opportunities to deliver a development with a balanced outcome. Therefore, the proposed development is found suitable for the site.

4.4 Submissions made in accordance with this Act or the Regulations

Council is responsible for the referral of the application to relevant Government bodies and to adjoining owners if required under Council's DCP. Any submissions will be reviewed by the applicant and Council during the assessment process, and duly considered.

4.5 The Public Interest

Given that the relevant issues have been addressed with regard to the public interest as reflected in the relevant planning policies and codes, the development is unlikely to result in any adverse impact on the public interest in the circumstance of the case. It is our opinion that the addition of this indoor recreational facility (focussed on adults) will have a positive social impact on the area. A new indoor, secure and fun place to recreate is a special facility nowadays, providing opportunities for active recreation with friends and family. The inclusion of a small ancillary coffee area to service the centre will provide a safe and secure place to meet and spectate. This will ensure good passive surveillance of the facility during trading hours. It is in the public interest to increase these types of opportunities for more active recreation, especially in a location that is well serviced and highly accessible.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Following the assessment of the proposal against the relevant planning controls, it is concluded that the proposed development is consistent with the objectives and planning strategies. Traffic and Parking generation for the site is acceptable in this case, given the sites location and good access to public transport services. The application is supported by an acoustic report that confirms the use will not have any adverse impacts on surrounding tenancies or neighbours.

Consideration has been given to the potential environmental and amenity impacts that are relevant to the proposed development and this report addresses these impacts.

Having regard to the above assessment the proposal is worthy of approval.

Andrew Martin *MPIA*
Planning Consultant

Skywood Climbing

The initial gym will be located in Freshwater Plaza on the site recently vacated by IGA, near Freshwater Beach. Skywood Climbing Pty Ltd (to trade as Skywood Climbing) has signed agreement to lease 770 sqm space.

All aspects of design and day-to-day operation of Skywood Climbing will be led by Josef Sundakov-Krumins

Director Bios

Josef Sundakov-Krumins

I am one of Australia's top competitive climbers and a leading designer (setter) of climbs. I began climbing competitively at local competitions in 2013/14. In 2016 I made the Australian youth climbing team and competed in the Youth World Championships in China, and the Open World Cup in Germany. In 2017 I won my first national title and competed in the Open World Cup in Mumbai. In 2018 I competed in the Open World Cup in Tokyo, made my first international semi-final (top 20) at the World Youth Championships in Moscow, competed at the Open World Cup in Germany, and Competed in the Open World Championships in Austria. I am currently ranked in the top 100 competitive climbers in the world.

While I love climbing competitively, I enjoy setting just as much, if not more. I started setting in 2016 at 9 Degrees Alexandria, Sydney's first international-quality bouldering gym. Since then I have:

- Set commercially at Nomad in Sydney on a regular basis
- Set for the opening of 9 Degrees Parramatta (and have set commercially for them)
- Set for the opening of Blochhaus in Canberra
- Set for the opening of the SICG St Peters boulder only facility (and have set commercially for them)
- Set for the NSW state titles in 2017 held at Nomad
- Set for the opening of 9 Degrees Lane Cove.
- I set with International – world cup – head routesetter Jacky Godoffe in a competition in Sydney and attended a setting workshop held by international – world cup – head routesetter Remi Samyn. I have worked commercially with internationally recognised German setter, Held Niklas. I was flown to The Boulder Hub in Perth to set for their local competition, which is one of the largest competitions in Australia and I am currently working as part of the regular setting team at SICG St Peters.
- My work in various gyms around Australia and considerable time spent in bouldering gyms in Europe and Japan has given me detailed insight into the success factors and operational requirements of such gyms. Since this is a new industry in Australia, I am now one of the most experienced setters in Australia. From my experience and knowledge of the climbing world, I have formed a strong vision for a successful climbing gym as a hospitality business.

Background on Climbing

Indoor climbing is a relatively new sport, with the first ever climbing world cup only held in 1991. However, it is going through rapid and consistent growth, particularly with the construction of new indoor climbing facilities around the world. One of the reasons climbing is catching on as a recreational activity is because it is not only physical, but there are technical elements to it: how to move your body, the extent to which you are standing on and trusting your feet or how accurate you are when you grab a hold. This means that it is a sport that is open to a greater range of ages because there are alternative paths of progression, and it is equally as available to men and women. There are two main disciplines of climbing that are provided commercially: lead climbing and bouldering. Lead climbing consists of longer walls and climbing with a rope. Indoor lead walls

are often between 10 and 20 meters in height, and with overhanging sections they can reach over 30m in length. Bouldering consists of shorter walls – up to 4.5 meters in height – where one climbs over a crash mat. At a fundamental level, bouldering is much more accessible, as one does not need to have the physical capabilities to carry themselves up a 20-meter wall, and they do not need to own a harness, nor know how to safely handle the ropes. For the climber, bouldering is more convenient, as they do not need to coordinate with a belayer; they can come in whenever they want. It is also less intimidating, as you can complete climbs that finish as low as 3 meters above the mats, not having to be 10 meters above the ground to feel as though you have truly accomplished something. For these reasons, boulder gyms have become increasingly popular worldwide, not just for established climbers, but also for first timers.

From the owners' perspective, bouldering gyms are much more cost effective. Given that in either a lead climbing gym or a bouldering gym, you cannot have anyone climbing above another person on the same wall/climb, climber in a lead gym occupies additional 5+ meters of walls compared to a bouldering gym. That also means another 5+ meters of holds for the climber to use. Lead climbs also take much longer for the climber to complete, so people must wait longer to try a certain climb in a lead gym and the customer turnover is much lower. Lastly, to lead climb you require 2 people; a climber and a belayer who holds the rope. This limits who can come into the gym, and when they are free to climb.

The other key aspect of climbing gyms that has had to improve over time is the routesetting. Routesetters are the people who "set" the climbs, and as climbing has become more and more mainstream, it has become more important for setters to set interesting climbs for people of all climbing abilities, so that the easiest climbs in the gym are just as fun as the more difficult ones. This way first timers enjoy themselves more and keep coming back. Most gyms around the world reset a portion of their climbs once or twice a week. This keeps the climbs fresh and exciting, and gives people a reason to keep coming back, multiple times a week.

Setting has become more and more of a priority, and more and more a defining feature of certain gyms.

Grading Systems

Most, if not all gyms define their climbs by the colour of the holds. Meaning you start on certain holds of a particular colour, and to complete the climb you follow that colour to the top, avoiding holds of a different colour. This allows gyms to fit multiple climbs in the same space, just with differing colours.

Hold Colour

A common way in which gyms grade their climbs is by the colour of the holds. Typically, the yellow climbs are all very easy, the greens are slightly harder and so on. This is the grading system that 9 Degrees uses (they have 9 colours; 9 degrees of difficulty), and there are two small start tags to show where to begin with your hands and a top tag to denote the finishing hold. Nomad also uses this system, as do Blochaus, Urban Climb, Portside, Adrenaline Vault and Beyond Bouldering. This makes it very easy for anyone to come in and identify the climbs that they can do: A first timer can come in and easily see all the yellow climbs around the gym. However, it is extremely limiting for the setters, as the same holds must always be used to create the same level of difficulty. This means if there are big easy to hold holds, but they are for a more difficult grade, then they will always have to go in the steeper section of wall, never on the more vertical section. This becomes stale after a certain time, and the only real way to combat this is to buy more holds in that colour. However, those new holds that are bought can still only be used in that colour grade.

Number Scale

Sydney Indoor Climbing Gym, Climbit and The Boulder Hub all grade their climbs on a number scale. St Peters uses small tags that range from 1 – 10, while The Boulder Hub and Climbit go from 1 – 15. These tags are on the starts of the climbs, and then you follow the colour of the holds to a top tag to complete the climb of that grade. While this is not as visual, and therefore harder for first-timers to easily identify the climbs they should be trying, the setters can set any grade with the holds that they have. This gets the most out of the holds, and keeps the climbs from becoming stale for longer. This means the climbers are more engaged and want to keep coming back to try the new climbs. I have personally found that when I worked at 9 Degrees, we were doing the same thing over and over, because when specific holds had to go on specific walls to attain a specific grade, there was only so much you could do change week to week.

Tape Colour

What I believe is an ideal hybrid of these two systems is the tape grading method that, in Australia, only the Northside gyms use, but this is the system that almost every Japanese gym uses. With this system, coloured tape denotes the start holds and the difficulty of the climb, and you follow the colour of the holds to the top hold that is defined by another strip of matching tape to the start holds. This means yellow tape problems may be the easiest, while black tape problems may be the hardest, allowing setters to use holds of any colour for any grade they wish, while first timers can easily walk in and at a glance, see all the climbs for their level of experience.

Setting Systems

Sectors

Setting by sector is the most common way that gyms reset their climbs. This involves taking off all the climbs in one area, often between 4 and 10 meters in linear wall length washing the holds, and setting new ones. This means that features can be moved around, big holds can go anywhere and when customers come in, in the afternoon, there is a fresh area of all grades for them to try. The main reason for gyms to avoid resetting in this way is that climbers often crowd around the new area, and do not spread throughout the gym. The other issue with this method is that if gyms do not have enough of an overflow of holds, the same holds tend to come off and go back on. This is particularly an issue in gyms that also grade by colour (9 Degrees Parramatta sets by sector and grades by colour), as when the same holds go back on, as just came off, and they must be used for the same level of difficulty, they are often very similar. It is a common complaint I have heard about 9 Degrees Parramatta, and that their climbs are becoming stale. This is the method used by 9 Degrees Parramatta, Nomad, Blochaus, Northside, Urban, Portside, Adrenaline Vault, The Boulder Hub and Climbit. As far as I know this is the system used by all gyms in Australia other than 9 Degrees Alexandria and SICG St Peters.

Colours

Setting by colour is the other method through which gyms reset. This means they take down all the climbs of a certain colour throughout the gym, wash the holds and reset that colour. This means that the climbers spread out throughout the gym when they are trying the new climbs. However, there are many inherent issues with this method of setting. In 9 degrees, because they also grade by colour, it means that when there are new climbs in the gym, they are only appropriate for a sub-group of climbers that climb that level. For the others, the new climbs are too easy, and they do all of them without trying, or they are too hard and there is nothing for them to try. This is not the case at SICG St Peters, as every week there are new climbs throughout the gym for people of all levels to try. However, when only one colour of holds comes off, it means there is limited space for them to go back on, because they need to fit in between all the other climbs that have stayed on. This is limiting for the setters, and as holds are getting bigger and bigger, sometimes certain shapes simply cannot go back on in a different spot. This is the same case with features. Because holds are bolted or screwed onto features, the only time a gym that sets by colour can move them, is

when there are no other climbs that use it. Even if this is the case, they often do not fit somewhere else. I have worked at SICG St Peters since they opened their boulder only facility, and there are some features that are still in the same place, 8 months after opening. It makes that section of the wall very stale and climbs tend to move in the same way week to week.

Setting by sector is a must for a gym to keep the setting exciting, and a gym that sets by sector and without grading by the colour of the holds has more potential than gyms that do not.