

# Let's talk

about the

# FUTURE

## Mt Baw Baw and Lake Mountain

## 2030

lake  
mountain  
ALPINE RESORT

# DISCUSSION PAPER SUMMARY

## Project overview

All Victorian alpine resorts are facing an increasingly uncertain future.

The manner in which each resort responds to the impacts of climate change, how they can accommodate major shifts in tourism trends, recreation demands and visitor tastes, whilst still protecting their important natural and cultural assets, will determine what sort of alpine experience all Victorians will have now and into the future.

In planning for these necessary changes, the Victorian Government has asked the Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain Alpine Resorts Management Boards to undertake a comprehensive review of each resort. By September 2016, the Board will make recommendations to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change as to how best to manage, protect and develop Lake Mountain into the future to make the resort more financially sustainable, whilst ensuring that this is balanced with the maximisation of the economic and social benefits provided by the resort to the communities it serves.

The 'Mt Baw Baw and Lake Mountain 2030' project will respond to the challenges and opportunities and inform some of the big decisions the Government intends to make. Involvement in this process by everyone who visits, works or has an interest in these resorts is encouraged.

Your views are important. We may need to make difficult decisions to ensure that Lake Mountain resort remains as a valuable and loved regional asset.

The future of Lake Mountain is at a turning point. So we strongly encourage you to join a conversation, have your say and get involved.

**Allan Bawden,**  
Chair Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain  
Alpine Resorts Management Boards

**Philip Nunn,**  
CEO Mount Baw Baw and Lake Mountain  
Alpine Resorts Management Boards

### The Act

The object of Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 is to make provision in respect of alpine resorts;

- (a) for the development, promotion, management and use of the resorts on a sustainable basis and in a manner that is compatible with the alpine environment, having regard to:
  - (i) environmental and ecological considerations, in particular, climate change;
  - (ii) economic considerations;
  - (iii) cultural heritage considerations, in particular, Indigenous cultural heritage considerations; and
- (b) for the use of the resorts:
  - (i) primarily for alpine recreation and tourism;
  - (ii) in all seasons of the year; and
  - (iii) by persons from varied cultural and economic groups.

# Some facts about Lake Mountain Alpine Resort

- Lake Mountain is Melbourne's closest alpine resort, accessible via a fully sealed, comfortable and scenic 115 kilometres drive from Melbourne's eastern suburbs.
- The resort and the adjacent national park and state forests, provide wonderful natural bushland in a mountain environment, that attract visitors wanting to experience snow and other nature based offerings provided by the natural alpine environment.
- In the snow season, the resort offers 37 kilometres of groomed cross-country ski trails, providing access to more than 2,400 hectares of skiable terrain, has four toboggan runs, dedicated snow play areas, and trails suitable for snow-shoeing. Modern snow making equipment currently enables snow cover to be available on most days on the main toboggan runs even during poor snow seasons.
- A growth in non-snow or "green season" activities include short and extended bushwalking, camping, wild flower viewing in spring, mountain bike riding, road cycling and family

friendly sightseeing. An array of other nature based adventure activities such as a zip line, tube run, and laser skirmish arena are provided. The resort also acts as a venue for music and sporting challenges.

Around  
**120,000**  
people visited Lake Mountain in the winter of 2015 making it one of the highest years since 2005.

Of these visitors, almost 80 per cent of visitors to Lake Mountain were 'first timers' or 'beginners'. A significant number of these people return to Lake Mountain or build upon the experience by visiting other Victorian alpine ski resorts. Tobogganing, snow play, sightseeing and spending quality time with family or friends are the key activities of visitors to Lake Mountain. The resort is also well regarded for its cross-country ski offer with many people including school groups taking up the opportunity of lessons and hiring clothing and equipment as they learn to cross-country ski.

- The resort has a food and beverage offer available to visitors.
- Lake Mountain is almost exclusively used by day visitors. It has the most ethnically diverse visitor profile of all Victorian alpine resorts, with over one third of its snow season visitors describing themselves as being of Asian or Indian background.
- Visitors to Lake Mountain during the 2015 winter spent on average \$23-24 per person per visit.
- Since the fires of 2009, Lake Mountain has grown as an important economic contributor to Marysville and the local regional economy. In addition to on-mountain spend, every visitor to Lake Mountain contributes a further \$85 to the Marysville Region. This estimates that approximately 40 per cent of total (visitor) spend in Marysville is from visitors to the resort.
- The operation, administration and promotion of Lake Mountain is managed by a Board appointed by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Lake Mountain is unique insofar as there are currently no private leaseholders or private commercial businesses providing services to visitors in the resort.

## Some big challenges facing Lake Mountain Alpine Resort

### Climate change will affect the resort – expect much less natural snow

- In their 2012 report 'Climate Change Impacts on Snow in Victoria' CSIRO indicated that in the near future, the duration of the Victorian snow season is very likely to be shorter, have a slightly later start, and generate lower maximum natural snow depths. The number of good snow seasons is likely to decline and the number of poor seasons is likely to increase.

- A study into the impact of climate change in the Victorian alpine areas is currently being finalised. The study will also explore emerging snow making technologies and if they have capacity to sufficiently respond to forecast changes to alpine rainfall, humidity and temperature. Changes to natural snowfall patterns, combined with the future viability of lower altitude snowmaking, will be critical to the short and long term planning for the winter offering at all Victorian resorts.
- At 1,490m elevation, Lake Mountain is the lowest of all alpine resorts in Victoria compared to the highest, Mt Hotham at 1,861m. Arguably, low altitude resorts will be most vulnerable to changes in climate.
- It is expected that Lake Mountain may face an increased risk of bushfires due to shorter snow seasons, less rainfall over the year

and drier and warmer ground conditions. The perception of bushfire risk may be a barrier to increasing the number of visitors in green seasons.

### Infrastructure is limited and costly to maintain

- The 2009 'Black Saturday' bushfires devastated the region and had a generational impact on both Lake Mountain and Marysville communities, the environment and business. The long recovery from the tragic loss of human life, damage to physical infrastructure and the natural environment continues.
- The Murrindindi Shire lost approximately 60 per cent of its accommodation capacity in the bushfires. There is currently no accommodation at Lake Mountain resort, the closest



accommodation is 20 kilometres from the resort in Marysville. Opportunities exist at Lake Mountain to assist in this recovery.

- There is no reticulated drinking water supply at Lake Mountain, with all drinking water being supplied through the sale of bottled water. Anecdotal evidence from Lake Mountain system operators also indicates the current wastewater treatment system is nearing its capacity to cope during times of peak flows and wet (rainfall) conditions.
- Lake Mountain is not connected to the national electricity grid so on-mountain diesel generators provide the resort's entire energy needs. Dependence on diesel powered generators is costly and reduces the funds available for ski or amenity infrastructure upgrades.

### It costs more to operate Lake Mountain than the revenue it is currently capable of generating

- In 2003, a long standing financial cross-subsidy from the larger alpine resorts (Mt Buller, Falls Creek and Mt Hotham) to support the smaller resorts was removed. Since then, Lake Mountain has been unable to become financially self-funding and has relied on additional government funding. For the past 5 years, Lake Mountain received approximately \$2.5-3.5 million per annum from the Victorian Government to underpin its ongoing operations and management.

- The majority of Lake Mountain's annual revenue is collected through resort entry fees during the relatively short snow season, which usually runs between June and September. The prospect of shorter snow seasons and reduced visitation numbers, will have a direct and significant impact on resort revenue from the current income generating activities.



## What we have heard from you

We know from previous community conversations that Lake Mountain Alpine Resort provides many visitors with an authentic natural alpine experience where visitors feel valued and invigorated.

The beautiful natural environment leaves a positive impression, and can even give visitors a feel for the lives of earlier generations.

You've told us that whether you want to challenge yourself or re-live your childhood, Lake Mountain offers a lot to many people!

We've heard visitors love its low cost, easy access and 'first time' snow offerings. You've also said Lake Mountain could do with a facelift and

improvement in parking, potentially offer accommodation and of course supplement the natural snow with more man-made snow.

People have supported ideas to offer further nature based adventure activities. Locals appreciate Lake Mountain, but are concerned that a reduction in the snow season, increased bushfire risk and competition from other attractions will result in a decline in the resort's visitor numbers and thus impact upon the region.

## Some important decisions may have to be made

The Board of Lake Mountain wants to know how you think the resort can adapt to the impact of climate change and continue to maximise the economic and social benefits generated for its surrounding communities.

**In order to do this, there are important questions we need to ask –**



- 1 Why would you (or do you) choose to visit Lake Mountain rather than another Victorian alpine resort or destination?
- 2 What would you be prepared to see change at Lake Mountain to allow it to become more viable, and what must remain?
- 3 For Lake Mountain to become more financially sustainable, it will need to significantly increase revenue, minimise costs whilst still protecting natural and cultural assets. What ideas do you have for how the resort could do this?
- 4 What would you change about how the Lake Mountain resort is governed or managed?
- 5 Investment in additional snow making capacity, mountain biking infrastructure and nature based adventure activities and facilities have been proposed in the past. What could be done to enhance the existing activities and facilities and/or what type of new, non-snow based experiences or activities would bring increased visitors like you, to Lake Mountain in the winter or "green season"?
- 6 How could the local community, businesses and stakeholders in the wider region and Lake Mountain management better collaborate to bring visitors to the resort?

## How you can be involved

To find out more about Mt Baw Baw and Lake Mountain 2030 and how you can get involved, visit [haveyoursay.delwp.vic.gov.au](http://haveyoursay.delwp.vic.gov.au)

On the website you will find a series of activities you can do to provide your insights and the background studies/ reports used to prepare this summary.

Findings from the first stage of engagement will identify and inform a series of future option for each resort – these will be presented in an

Options Paper in August 2016 and will be available for the community and stakeholders to provide feedback.

