



**ALPINE RESORTS**  
CO-ORDINATING COUNCIL

# **ALPINE RESORTS** **STRATEGIC PLAN** **2020 – 2025**

*Responding to a changing climate*



Authorised and published by the  
Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council  
8 Nicholson Street  
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

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Images courtesy of Falls Creek, Lake Mountain, Mt Baw Baw, Mt Buller, Mt Stirling and Mt Hotham Alpine Resort Management Boards.

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# Aboriginal Acknowledgement

**The Gunaikurnai, Taungurung and Wurundjeri are the First People of much of Victoria's alpine resorts country. For generations they have owned and managed the land. The Victorian Government acknowledges all the Traditional Owners of Victoria's alpine resorts and pays its respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.**

We recognise the strength of Aboriginal people despite the negative inter-generational impacts of past practices and policies, some of which continue to be experienced today.

We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life, and how this enriches us all. We recognise that Aboriginal cultures and communities are diverse, and the value we gain in celebrating these cultures and communities.

We acknowledge that the land is of spiritual, cultural and economic importance to Aboriginal people. We also recognise the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country and acknowledge their contribution in the management of land, water, the natural landscape and the built environments.

We embrace the spirit of reconciliation, working towards the equality of outcomes and ensuring an equal voice. We have distinct legislative obligations to Traditional Land Owner groups that are paramount in our responsibilities in managing Victoria's resources.

*The artist, Tom Day worked closely with the DELWP Aboriginal Staff network to create DELWP's Aboriginal Cultural Identity Mirring – Country.*

*Mirring represents the diverse Countries and landscapes across Victoria and the "scars that have been left within the landscape by our people" while at the same time reminding us of "our inherent responsibility to protect Country."*





## Minister's Foreword



**Victoria's alpine resorts are nestled within the Alpine, Yarra Ranges and Baw Baw National Parks, providing visitors with a unique and memorable experience unlike any other in the state. The natural environment continues to be identified by visitors as the most important value associated with our alpine resorts and is fundamental to the alpine experience. The challenge is to ensure that the unique alpine environmental values are conserved for current and future generations, while allowing for the use and enjoyment of the resorts by all Victorians.**

As well as places of natural beauty, the Victorian Alps are places of cultural significance to Aboriginal people. This plan outlines our commitment to partner with the Traditional Owners of Victoria's alpine resorts land and to work collaboratively in a way that is consistent with the principle of self-determination and the terms of current and future Recognition and Settlement Agreements.

The alpine resorts are a significant part of our visitor economy, drawing people from our cities and towns, interstate and overseas into the Victorian High Country. In 2018-19 Victoria's alpine resorts generated over 1.7 million visitor days, resulting in over \$1 billion in economic output for the state. This activity created over 10,000 full time job equivalents, making the alpine resorts major contributors to regional investment and employment.

As the population of greater Melbourne continues to grow towards eight million, the demand for safe, well-managed access to our natural environment will grow with it. Victoria's alpine resorts, with their high-quality infrastructure, are uniquely placed to help meet this demand. Those resorts located closest to Melbourne have already seen significant increases in day visitation, which brings specific challenges, as well as future opportunities. Managing the impacts of increased visitation requires long-term planning across government to ensure that as community needs change, government response continues to be appropriately targeted.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an important framework for change, identifying opportunities and guiding growth. Through this plan the alpine resorts are contributing to achieving the SDGs by addressing the challenges of inequality, climate change, environmental degradation and economic prosperity.

The current and future impacts of climate change on our alpine resorts are well described in "*The Potential Impacts of Climate Change on Victorian Alpine Resorts*" study prepared for the Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council in 2016. This study identifies that the short to medium-term future for Victoria's alpine resorts should still be based around snow visitation, with snow making supplementing decreasing natural snowfall.

In the medium to long-term, Victoria's alpine resorts must have a compelling and financially viable visitor offering that is not entirely dependant on snow-based visitation. The Victorian Government recognises this is a significant challenge, a challenge that requires investigation and collaboration across government, business, Traditional Owners and the community to ensure the resorts continue to provide significant economic and social benefits to the state and surrounding communities.

The vision presented in this strategic plan, **The Victorian alpine resorts achieve their potential as thriving and sustainable destinations for mountain activities and nature-based tourism**, reflects an ongoing need to support the alpine resorts to deliver a high quality, snow-based snow season experience while continuing to transition to being year-round destinations that are resilient and adaptive to a changing climate.

**Lily D'Ambrosio MP**

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

# Contents

<b>Aboriginal Acknowledgments</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Minister's Foreword</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Vision Statement:</b>	<b>6</b>
Strategic Objectives	6
<b>Background</b>	<b>7</b>
About the Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan	7
Implementation of the Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan	10
Victoria's alpine resorts	10
<b>Context for this plan</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Economic significance of Victoria's alpine resorts</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>How this plan was prepared</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Climate Change Risk Disclosure and Scenario Analysis</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Our commitments and obligations to our Traditional Owner partners</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Strategic Objective 1 –</b>	
Enable investment that drives sustainable businesses within a prosperous regional economy	26
<b>Strategic Objective 2 – Protect and enhance the mountain environment</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Strategic Objective 3 – Enhance the visitor experience</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Strategic Objective 4 – Implement practical policy and regulatory reform</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Developing and strengthening partnerships through collaboration and communication</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Monitoring, reporting and review</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Recommended reading</b>	<b>40</b>



## Executive Summary

**Our alpine resorts hold a special place in the hearts of Victorians. During the 2018/19 year over 1.4 million people visited at least one of the six resorts, with around 75% of those being Victorian residents. Interstate and international visitors are also enjoying our resorts in increasing numbers, bringing significant economic benefits to regional economies. This level of visitation is comparable with many of Victoria's world-famous visitor attractions, with the dual benefits of being regionally based and with a winter high-season.**

The Gross State Product (GSP) contribution for the 2018/19 period by the alpine resorts to the Victorian economy is estimated at \$1.22 billion (cf pg 17). This level of expenditure results in a contribution to total Victorian employment in annual equivalent terms of approximately 10,000 direct and indirect jobs, with most of these jobs situated in regional Victoria.

Our alpine resorts also play a significant role in supporting the social and cultural cohesion, and health and wellbeing, of the community. The resorts are places that bring people together to share their passion for the alps, to engage in mountain sports and to escape the pressures of everyday life. The financial health and wellbeing benefits associated with the alpine resorts has been estimated at \$27 million per annum.<sup>1</sup>

Protecting these attributes as our climate changes is our most significant challenge. The climate over Australia's southern slopes is expected to become warmer and drier over the coming decades, resulting in reductions in natural

snowfall. Snow making and other snow management techniques provide a buffer against these impacts but cannot completely address all the risks associated with a changing climate.

The Alpine Resort Management Boards (ARMBs), that manage the resorts on behalf of the Victorian Government, have an obligation to disclose these risks and what is being done to manage them, to investors and other stakeholders. This will be a priority action over the 5-year term of this strategic plan, starting in 2020.

Growing non-snow dependant visitation (referred to as green-season visitation) has long been an aspiration of the alpine resorts, however success has been limited. To ensure that any future investment in green-season visitation has the best chance of success the Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council (ARCC) will form a Victorian Government Taskforce to investigate how to address some of the current barriers to green-season visitation. The taskforce will report its findings within the first year and that information will be used to inform further work through the term of this strategic plan.

As Melbourne's population continues to grow the demand for nature-based recreation and tourism will also grow. This brings tremendous opportunities for ongoing investment at Victoria's alpine resorts but also comes with some challenges. Overcrowding, especially during peak winter times, is having a negative impact on visitor experience with critical infrastructure stretched to capacity. Roads, parking

and resort transport are the most constrained, with further investment required if the resorts are to effectively meet this increased demand.

Managing the impact of visitation on the natural environment is also a priority. About one third of the state's total rare and threatened species are found in the Victorian Alps, including the Mountain Pygmy Possum and Baw Baw Frog. *Biodiversity 2037* is the Victorian Government's policy to ensure Victoria's biodiversity is healthy, valued and actively cared for. The ARMBs, in partnership with the Traditional Owners, will deliver Caring for Country works that support the delivery of *Biodiversity 2037*, including the protection of sites of high biodiversity value.

The partnership with the Traditional Owners of Victoria's alpine resorts will extend beyond Caring for Country activities, with holistic partnership plans to be developed between the resorts and the Traditional Owners. These partnership plans will reflect Native Title, Recognition and Settlement Agreements, Country Plans, *Manganin-Gadhaba*, as well as other relevant strategies, goals and aspirations.

The development and use of land in the alpine resorts is controlled by the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme, whilst the leasing of land at the resorts is controlled by the *Alpine Resorts Leasing Policy and Implementation Details 2002* (Leasing Policy). Both instruments are over 15 years old and need to be reviewed and updated.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/>

## Executive Summary *continued*

At the time of the development of this strategic plan the review of the Leasing Policy had commenced while the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has committed to a review of the planning scheme by 2024. Updating both planning instruments is expected to have benefits for investors, visitors, resort management and the natural environment.

All this activity will be enabled by a strengthened approach to stakeholder engagement. A 2018 review of current engagement practices found that there is much to be proud of, as well as areas for improvement – at both sector and board level. As a demonstration of the sector's commitment to improvement, a *Victorian Alpine Resorts Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan*<sup>2</sup> has been published.

This action plan contains a framework and 12 actions designed to deliver improved engagement across the Victorian alpine sector.

By working together, the sector can achieve this strategic plan's vision, which is:

**“The Victorian alpine resorts achieve their potential as thriving and sustainable destinations for mountain activities and nature-based tourism”.**

This vision will be enabled by delivering on four strategic objectives:

- Enable investment that drives sustainable businesses within a prosperous regional economy
- Protect and enhance the mountain environment
- Enhance the visitor experience
- Implement practical policy and regulatory reform

To maintain a flexible and responsive approach to the inevitable changes that will occur over the life of the strategic plan, a separate Action Plan has been prepared. The Action Plan will be regularly monitored and adapted to ensure the most effective and efficient actions are delivered and will maintain alignment with the strategic objectives.

(GSP) contribution to  
Victorian economy for  
2018/19 by the alpine  
resorts estimated at

  
**\$1.22b**

in 2018/19  
**1.4m**

People visited at least one  
of the 6 Alpine Resorts

### KEY

- Mt Baw Baw - Warragul
- Lake Mountain - Marysville
- Mt Buller / Mt Stirling - Mansfield
- Mt Hotham - Bright
- Falls Creek - Mt Beauty

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/>

## Vision Statement

**“The Victorian alpine resorts achieve their potential as thriving and sustainable destinations for mountain activities and nature-based tourism”.**

To achieve this vision, we need healthy ecosystems, businesses and local economies. Achieving our full potential requires actively planning pathways together to a new future. This may mean overcoming physical,

cultural and financial barriers to create a future that maximises opportunities for the alpine sector and minimises the impacts of climate change. We will achieve this through delivering four strategic objectives, with an

overarching principle of climate change adaptation, supported by strengthened stakeholder partnerships.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

### PATHWAYS TO A SUSTAINABLE ALPINE FUTURE

Enable investment  
that drives sustainable  
businesses within a  
prosperous regional  
economy

Protect and  
enhance the  
mountain  
environment

Enhance our  
visitors'  
experience

Implement  
practical policy  
and regulatory  
reform

**DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN  
PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH  
COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION**



## Background - Victoria's Alpine Resorts

### Victoria's alpine resorts

**Victoria has six declared alpine resorts: Falls Creek, Lake Mountain, Mt Baw Baw, Mt Buller, Mt Stirling and Mt Hotham.**

They lie in the east and northeast of Victoria, between 120 kilometres and 380 kilometres from Melbourne. A detailed profile of each of the alpine resorts can be found on their respective websites.

The characteristics of the larger, more developed resorts (Falls Creek, Mt Buller and Mt Hotham) and the smaller, less developed resorts (Lake Mountain, Mt Baw Baw and Mt Stirling) are becoming increasingly differentiated. The larger resorts are sites of significant private investment and deliver around 92 per cent of the value-added Gross State Product (GSP) associated with Victoria's alpine resorts sector.<sup>3</sup>

The smaller resorts provide an entry level, lower-cost opportunity to access the Victorian alps and a pathway for people to take up alpine sports. These resorts also make a significant contribution to meeting the demand for safe and affordable access to the alps for people of varied cultural and economic groups.

This differentiation has presented challenges for the smaller resorts, in particular Lake Mountain and Mt Baw Baw, with the absence of key infrastructure at these resorts resulting in financial losses that are currently met by government. The Southern Alpine

Resort Management Board has identified that the future of these resorts should be based around providing a year-round, nature-based experience, but that the current lack of key infrastructure, including quality access roads and power, and ageing lifting and accommodation assets is inhibiting this transition.

### About the Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan

**The legislative and policy settings in which the alpine resorts operate underpin the development of the Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan). The Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 (the Act) provides the management framework for all six Victorian alpine resorts. It also establishes the ARCC and the four Alpine Resort Management Boards (ARMBs).**

This Strategic Plan is prepared under section 33F1(b) of the Act. The Act requires that the strategic plan must set out:

- the strategic objectives that are to be achieved in relation to alpine resorts;
- the main directions and principles that are to be followed to achieve the objectives;
- the strategic actions that may be taken to implement the Strategic Plan.

The Act also requires that the Strategic Plan must be:

- (a) consistent with, and seek to achieve, the object of the Act;
- (b) consistent with the purposes

for which any land in each alpine resort that is reserved or deemed to be reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* is so reserved.

The object of the Act 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; and
  - (ii) economic considerations;
  - (iii) cultural heritage considerations, in particular, aboriginal cultural heritage considerations; and
- (b) for the use of the resorts—
  - (i) primarily for alpine recreation and tourism; and
  - (ii) in all seasons of the year; and
  - (iii) by persons from varied cultural and economic groups.

The Act also requires the ARMBs to prepare an Alpine Resorts Strategic Management Plan (SMP) for each resort. The Act states that a SMP must be consistent with the Strategic Plan and as a result needs to be reviewed and updated whenever a new Strategic Plan is made.

## Background - Victoria's Alpine Resorts *continued*

The previous Strategic Plan (2012) required the resorts to prepare Alpine Resort Master Plans, which were permitted to function as a SMP (on the proviso it met the requirements of the Act). This arrangement will remain in place and as a result the terms Strategic Management Plan and Master Plan are often used interchangeably.

The development of the Strategic Plan has also been guided by the following:

### Climate Change Legislation and Policy

The *Climate Change Act 2017* lays the foundations for Victoria to achieve net zero emissions and enable a climate resilient community and economy. It places obligations on Victorian Government decision makers and provides guidance to all stakeholders on responding to the impacts of climate change.

Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017–2020 is helping the State, including the alpine resorts, prepare for the impacts of climate change. It establishes the following principles for good adaptation:

- Informed decision-making;
- Integrated decision-making;
- Risk management;
- Complementarity;
- Equity; and
- Community engagement.

### Traditional Owner Legislation and Policy

The nature of the State of Victoria's relationship with Traditional Owners is binding and based on a *meaningful partnership founded on mutual respect*. The Gunaikurnai (Mt Baw Baw and part of Mt Hotham), the Taungurung (Mt Buller, Mt Stirling, part of Lake Mountain and part of Mt Hotham) and the Wurundjeri people (part of Lake Mountain) are the recognised Traditional Owners of a majority of Victoria's alpine resorts land.

Gunaikurnai achieved legal recognition of connection to Country and rights as Traditional Owners in 2010 when it was granted Native Title by the Federal Court of Australia. As part of the native title settlement package, Gunaikurnai also entered into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria.

In addition to the Settlement Agreement with Gunaikurnai, the State of Victoria has also entered into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the Taungurung people. The Recognition and Settlement Agreements, executed under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*, afford Traditional Owners certain rights relating to the use of public land within their Agreement area, including alpine resorts land.

Gunaikurnai, Taungurung and Wurundjeri have Registered Aboriginal Party status under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* over the majority of Victoria's alpine resorts land.

There are several groups that identify as Traditional Owners in the greater north-eastern alpine area (including Falls Creek resort and the northern section of Mt Hotham resort): this area is not currently within Native Title, Recognition and Settlement Agreements nor Registered Aboriginal Party boundaries.

### Biodiversity Legislation and Policy

*Biodiversity 2037* is Victoria's plan to stop the decline of our native plants and animals, and improve our natural environment so it is healthy, valued and actively cared for. *Biodiversity 2037* is underpinned by the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the *Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations* and together these instruments ensure that Victoria has a modern and effective approach to protecting and managing our biodiversity.

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's key piece of environmental legislation. The EPBC Act enables the Australian Government to join with the states and territories in providing a national scheme of environment and heritage protection and biodiversity conservation.



## Background - Victoria's Alpine Resorts *continued*

### Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better Practice Guide

The *Public Participation in Government Decision-making: Better practice guide* (Better Practice Guide) was released by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office in 2017. The process of developing this guide involved extensive research and consultation. It highlighted recurring challenges that public sector agencies face in undertaking public participation exercises.

In addition to the Better Practice Guide, DELWP has developed a

Community Charter. The purpose of the Community Charter is to guide DELWP and its entities (including the ARCC) in delivering meaningful, inclusive and effective stakeholder engagement.

### Review of the Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan – 2012

The ARCC led a review of the 2012 Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan in 2017. Five of the 12 recommendations made following this review related to future strategic planning in Victoria's alpine sectors, and these recommendations informed the development of this strategic plan, including:

- collaborative consultation with all key stakeholders in order to build a collective approach to and stakeholder ownership over plan implementation;
- development of high-level strategic priorities and guidance;
- alignment with relevant strategies, policies and strategy documents;
- strengthening of monitoring, reporting and review processes; and
- strengthening of the representation of Traditional Owners in alpine resorts governance.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALPINE RESORTS STRATEGIC PLAN HAS BEEN GUIDED BY:



## Background - Victoria's Alpine Resorts *continued*

### Regional Tourism Review

At the time of consultation and finalising this ARSP, the Victorian Government announced a Regional Tourism Review. The review will take a broad look at regional tourism in Victoria with a range of goals to help build on what has already been established by the businesses and communities of Victoria's local towns.

The findings and recommendations from this review may result in changes to the way Victoria manages and invests in its regional tourism sector. This could include:

- the structure and function of regional tourism bodies;
- the way regional tourism marketing is funded and delivered;
- the delivery of regional tourism infrastructure;
- an increased focus on natural and cultural sites to grow visitation; and
- improved co-ordination between public sector entities.

The Strategic Plan will be flexible and adaptative in responding to changes in the regional visitation sector and will be reviewed and updated (if necessary) following the Government finalising its response to the review.

### Implementation of the Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan

**The Strategic Plan informs several strategic and business planning processes.**

These processes in effect "operationalise" the Strategic Plan and provide the framework for delivery and reporting. These include:

- Alpine Resort Corporate Plans;
- Alpine Resort Strategic Management Plans;
- ARCC Corporate Plan;
- Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme; and
- DELWP Business Plans.

Following the release of the Strategic Plan, DELWP will update the Alpine Resorts Corporate Planning Guidelines to ensure resort-level business planning is aligned. The ARCC will also review its Corporate Plan to ensure a similar level of alignment.

In addition, DELWP will ensure that its business plans enable the delivery of the commitments it has made in the Strategic Plan. In the medium-term, DELWP will also update the Alpine Resorts Strategic Management Plan Framework.

This Strategic Plan focuses on the first 2-3 years of delivery, to maintain flexibility and responsiveness to changes in the policy and operating environment.

Several of the activities that will be delivered in this time will provide information that will inform decision making during the remaining term of the plan. To enable this level of flexibility, the Strategic Plan has been divided into two components:

- The first component (this document) contains the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Strategic Actions that will guide decision making and behaviours for the life of the plan.
- The second component is the Action Plan, which will contain the actions, measures, targets and outcomes we are seeking to achieve. The Action Plan will be a "live" document – it will be reviewed to ensure we are delivering the most effective and efficient activities. New actions may be added as priorities are identified and existing actions may be rescheduled or removed if they are no longer a priority.



**“Victoria’s Alpine Resorts contribute \$1.22 billion per annum to Victoria’s gross state product and create approximately 10,000 direct and indirect jobs.”**



## Background *continued*

### Role of Ministers and Departments

**The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change is responsible for the alpine resorts on behalf of the State.**

DELWP is responsible for advising the Minister on alpine resort matters. This includes policy and strategic planning, legislation and regulatory reform, environmental matters and governance oversight of the ARCC and ARMBs.

The Minister for Planning is the Responsible Authority and the Planning Authority for the alpine resorts.

DELWP administers the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme on behalf of the Minister for Planning.

### Role of the Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council

**The role of the ARCC is to undertake the statutory functions as set out in Section 18 of the *Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997*.**

Some of these functions are prescriptive while others are broader. The prescriptive functions are:



Coordinate, monitor and review the implementation of the Strategic Plan



Monitor the development and implementation of SMPs for each alpine resort



Coordinate, in conjunction with Visit Victoria (formerly Tourism Victoria, established under the *Tourism Victoria Act 1992*), the overall promotion of alpine resorts



Some of the broader functions include:

- Plan for and facilitate the establishment, development, promotion, management and use of alpine resorts in accordance with the objective of the *Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997*;
- Undertake research into alpine resort issues;
- Liaise with and encourage the cooperation of all state and local government authorities, industries, communities and other people involved in the development, promotion, management and use of alpine resorts;
- Make recommendations to the Minister on matters related to the provision and improvement of services and facilities in alpine resorts.

### Role of the Alpine Resort Management Boards

**The alpine resorts are permanent Crown land reserves<sup>4</sup>, each managed by an ARMB appointed by, and responsible to, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The ARMBs are also deemed to be Crown land managers under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and have the same powers and functions as a Crown land reserves Committee of Management.**

The ARMBs are responsible for the development, promotion, management and use of each alpine resort in an environmentally sound manner, having regard to:

- Environmental and ecological considerations, in particular climate change; and
- Economic considerations; and
- Cultural heritage considerations, in particular, aboriginal cultural heritage considerations; and
- For the use of the resorts:
  - (i) primarily for alpine recreation and tourism; and
  - (ii) in all seasons of the year; and
  - (iii) by persons from varied cultural and economic groups.

<sup>4</sup> Mt Hotham Alpine Resort also has some freehold land parcels



## Background *continued*

They also provide or arrange services and utilities including:



Water and energy supply



Bushfire prevention emergency management and response



Destination marketing and industry promotion



Sewerage and garbage disposal



Natural resource management



Product development



Resort roads and parking



Ski and bike patrol (some resorts)



Resort transport



Civic maintenance and beautification



Snow making



Crown land administration and leasing

ARMBs also deliver resort level strategic and operational planning, including the development of SMPs as required under the Act. ARMBs are also responsible for the management of Crown leases of alpine resort lands.

### Role of private business

**Many of the day-to-day services that underpin the visitor experience are provided by private business (although the Southern Alpine Resort Management Board currently delivers a number of these services at Mt Baw Baw and Lake Mountain).**

This includes services such as:



Ski lifting



Snow making



Equipment sale and hire



Ski instruction



Ski patrol (some resorts)



Food and beverage



Accommodation



Transport



Waste recycling and processing



Medical practices and triage services



Marketing and promotion

## Context for this plan

**The alpine resorts have made a significant contribution to Victoria's economy, recreation and tourism for decades. However, our resorts are changing, mainly due to pressures from broader factors such as climate change, population growth and changing visitor demographics. The Victorian Government, the alpine resort industry and local communities all understand that climate change presents a significant and unprecedented challenge. The sector must adapt to these changes and embrace the opportunities to grow regional economies, nurture environmental assets, and build partnerships.**

Every 5-year strategic plan helps build the foundation for a long-term sustainable alpine resort sector. The next 5 years will be a period of practical building of the sector into sustainable destinations for alpine activities and nature-based tourism. This will be achieved through partnerships between government, Traditional Owners, industry and local communities.

### Climate Change

This strategic plan follows several years of investment by the sector in obtaining robust climate change information. In 2016 the ARCC commissioned the Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (ACE CRC) to deliver the *Potential Impact of Climate Change on Victorian Alpine Resorts Study*.<sup>5</sup> Using high-resolution models

to determine the likely climatic changes in alpine regions, the researchers produced projections for the Australian alps by the end of the century (based on the scenario of ongoing high emissions of greenhouse gases).

In 2017, DELWP applied the findings of the ACE CRC potential climate impacts study to deliver the *Alpine Resorts Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Report*.<sup>6</sup> This project assessed the climate change vulnerability of Victoria's alpine resorts and how this could affect the economic, social and cultural value of the resorts as climate change occurs. The project identified and recognised the substantial economic, social and cultural value the alpine resorts currently contribute to Victoria.

The vulnerability assessment found that the snow season in the alpine resorts will continue to be impacted by climate change through changes to natural snow fall conditions and patterns, including reductions in natural snow fall over time. The project also found that the green season will be impacted by climate change through increased bushfire risk. The vulnerability assessment states that if adequate adaptive responses are deployed, most of Victoria's resorts should be able to offer adequate snow to support snow activities for quite some time.

### Snow Making

New and improved snow making technology has allowed several resorts to offer snow guarantees, providing certainty to both operators and visitors that snow will be available. There are likely to be continued improvements in snow making technology as climate change impacts alpine resorts around the world. The sector will of course need to be mindful of both the resource (water and power) and financial constraints of snow making when making investment decisions.



In addition to snow making the alpine industry also applies other snow management techniques to offset the impacts of climate change. Snow fences are used to capture snow during storm events which are usually associated with high winds. These fences are used to deposit drifts on the leeward side which is subsequently harvested and redistributed over the adjoining slopes.

Snow grooming machines are used to harvest and push snow from snow fences and other natural locations onto slopes that would otherwise be bare or thin. Snow groomers equipped with winches are used to redistribute snow pushed to

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/land-management/alpine-resorts>



## Context for this plan *continued*

the bottom of slopes by skiers and snowboarders back up the hill. This technique is called rebuilding and is used extensively throughout the resorts.

The latest technological development has been the introduction of satellite-controlled GPS systems into grooming machines. This enables the snowpack beneath the machine to be viewed and mapped which informs both pushing and snowmaking decision making. This has resulted in significant improvements in the efficiency of both snowmaking and grooming operations.

### Green Season Visitation

The other primary adaptation response is to increase non-snow dependent visitation. Increasing green season visitation has long been an aspiration for Victoria's alpine resorts and has been a mainstay of successive strategic plans. While visitor numbers during the green season continue to increase, commercial returns for alpine resort operators are below those necessary to support further private investment.

Visitors in the green season tend to be short-stay visitors, often spending little money within the resorts, before returning home or to adjoining townships. Without snow, the alpine resorts lose their unique selling point and must compete with established destinations on the coast, and in cities and towns, and National Parks. This strategic plan recommends a more complete picture of the future potential of the green season be established



before any further significant investment is made by the Alpine Resorts Management Boards (ARMBs) into infrastructure or services only for the green season.

### Growth of Melbourne

*Plan Melbourne*<sup>7</sup> is a 35-year blueprint to ensure Melbourne grows more sustainable, productive and liveable as its population approaches 8 million. It is a long-term plan designed to respond to the state-wide, regional and local challenges and opportunities Victoria faces between now and 2050.

Plan Melbourne contains strategic actions related to liveability and the demand for tourism, recreational and nature-based experiences in close proximity to the Melbourne metropolis and peri-urban areas. Alpine resorts and recreational land managed by Parks Victoria represent significant assets which can contribute to meeting these needs. Alpine resorts can grant leases over crown land for private investment in services and activities, which can add to the resort's ability to expand offerings and capacity to increase year-round visitation in a planned and orderly manner.

In assisting the response to the growth of Melbourne, any growth and development in alpine resorts also has a direct positive impact on their regional economies.

### Investment

The Victorian Government recognises the fundamental importance of the private sector partners in making the alpine resorts what they are today. Most of the investment in infrastructure and services that resort visitors enjoy has been delivered by private business. It is crucial that alpine resort businesses are financially sustainable and that barriers to further investment are minimised so that our resorts can continue to thrive into the future. This strategic plan contains several actions aimed to reduce disincentives to private investment and to explore new avenues for ARMBs to attract funding.

### Climate Change Adaption Planning

Long-term resort level adaptation planning led by the ARMBs is the next step in successful sector adaptation. The primary vehicle for this planning is through the SMPs that set out the future management and development aspirations for each alpine resort and are required to align with this strategic plan.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/>

## Economic significance of Victoria's alpine resorts

### The Victorian alpine resorts generate significant economic activity for the state through the attraction of Victorian, interstate and international visitors.

*The Victorian Alpine Resorts Economic Contribution Study* (April 2017) provides estimates of the economic contribution of the Victorian alpine resorts (summer, or green, and winter, or snow, seasons), taking into account

visitation trends and changes in economic conditions.

The report identifies the value of the resorts to both state and regional economies and the state of Victoria. This analysis demonstrates that the alpine

resorts help boost economic activity in regions and that regional unemployment could grow if the alpine industry and resorts were to decline in quality and appeal.

Since the original estimates provided for the 2016/17 period, the ARCC has continued to publish estimates on the economic contribution of both the snow and green seasons to Victoria's economy.



The GSP contribution of the 2018 snow season to the Victorian economy is estimated at

**\$1.076b**



and the 2019 green season at

**\$146m**



This combined level of expenditure would result in a contribution to total Victorian employment in annual equivalent terms of approximately

**10,000 direct and indirect jobs**



While these figures demonstrate that the snow season remains the engine of the alpine resort's economy, the contribution from the green season is notable.

During the 2018 snow season, Victorian alpine resorts received 982,003 visitors and 1.7 million visitor days. This level of visitation represents a 33 per cent increase in visitors and a 25 per cent increase in visitor days compared with the 10-year average from 2008 to 2017. Visitation for 2018 was up by 4 per cent and visitor days were up by 7 per cent compared with the 2017 season.

The 2018/19 green season saw a 2.3 per cent increase in vehicle numbers compared to the previous year with just over 219,000 vehicles entering the resorts. There was a 4 per cent increase in visitor numbers compared to the previous year, with almost 454,000 visitors to the resorts.

## Economic significance of Victoria's alpine resorts

### *continued*

The economic performance of the alpine resorts becomes more significant when considered in a regional context. The alpine resorts draw significant numbers of people to regional Victoria and keep them there, resulting in a transfer of spending from the capital cities into regional Victoria. The fact the resorts

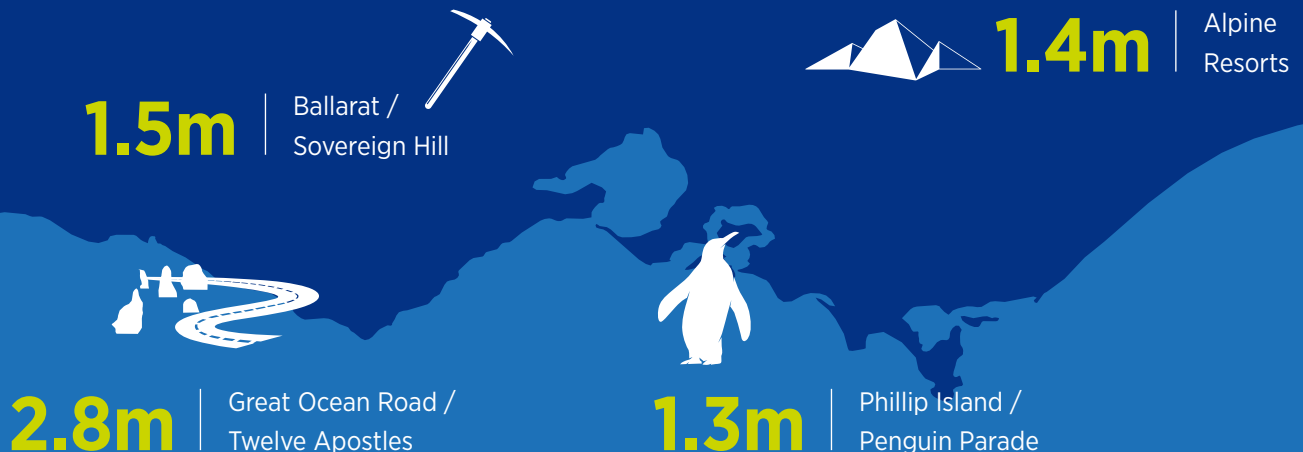
can do this in winter, usually the quietest time for regional tourism, is also noteworthy. In fact, it is likely that the alpine resorts are the number one tourist attraction in regional Victoria in the period between June and October each year, creating jobs and economic activity for their regional communities.

With a total of 1.4 million annual visitors Victoria's alpine resorts compare favourably to Victoria's top regional attractions. In its annual report of visitation to Victorian attractions the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) reported the below visitation numbers.<sup>8</sup>

### STATE VISITATION NUMBERS

At a state level this would see Victoria's alpine resorts within the top 15 attractions, above the MCG and National Gallery of Victoria.

Full copies of all economic and visitation reports are available from the ARCC website.



<sup>8</sup> For comparison purposes only. The methodology used by DJPR and the Alpine Resorts to measure visitors are likely to differ.  
<https://www.business.vic.gov.au/tourism-industry-resources/research/teve-research>



## How this plan was prepared

The development of this strategic plan was informed by the findings from the review of the 2012 Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan, namely that:

***“Future strategic planning should be focused on establishing a flexible and collective approach among alpine sector stakeholders to implement the strategic priorities for alpine resorts set by the Victorian Government. This must be underpinned by a consultation process that is truly collaborative and re-establishes buy-in and ownership among key government and non-government stakeholders”<sup>9</sup>***

Achieving this level of stakeholder buy-in was the primary goal in developing this strategic plan and is reflected in the stakeholder engagement plan and stakeholder promise published on the ARCC website prior to engagement commencing. At the conclusion of the stakeholder engagement process the ARCC had received 381 online submissions and hosted 200 people at its workshops.

The requirement to respond to the impacts of climate change, and the principles contained in *Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017-2020*, also guided the development of the strategic plan. To bring together the twin goals of a collaborative approach to stakeholder engagement and responding to the impacts of climate change, the ARCC presented the following remit, and posed the following question, to its stakeholders:

***The ARCC needs to develop an Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan that outlines a vision and strategic priorities for alpine resorts while also responding to the effects of climate change.<sup>10</sup>***

***What does the Alpine Resort of the future look like to you and how would you like to be a part of it?***

The approach to stakeholder engagement (both online and place-based) applied the Pathways Planning approach, encouraging participants to visualise Victoria's alpine resorts in 2040 and to identify pathways to achieving this, while taking account of the current and projected impacts of climate change and the importance of economic viability. The agreed pathways are subsequently reflected in the four strategic objectives.

Having developed these objectives, participants were then asked to identify what actions should be carried out in the next 5 years and what actions should remain front of mind and considered over the longer term.<sup>11</sup> These actions became the activities in the Action Plan, with a focus on the first three years of delivery.

In working with stakeholders to develop the agreed pathways several obstacles were encountered, including:

- Divergent views on the likely impact of climate change on the ability of alpine resorts to offer snow (be that natural or made) in the medium to long term;
- Divergent views on the scale of the impact that any reduction in the availability of snow will have on resort visitation and financial sustainability;
- A lack of information on the viability of an increased reliance on snow making;
- Divergent views on the potential for commercially viable green-season use of the resorts;
- Divergent views on who should be responsible for investing in green-season visitation initiatives, given the current absence of commercial returns; and
- Policy and governance barriers that constrain certain adaptation pathways.

The identification of these obstacles is an important step in the sector's climate change adaptation process. Several of these obstacles will be the focus of a Green-Season Taskforce (Action 1.1.1) that will be established following the release of this plan, while others will be addressed through the next phase of climate change adaptation planning (which will include climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research>

<sup>11</sup> <https://engage.vic.gov.au/index.php?cID=2330>

## Climate Change Risk Disclosure and Scenario Analysis

**Climate change is widely accepted and recognised as a financial problem, not purely an ethical or environmental issue. Given that climate change now presents material risks (and opportunities) it is best considered and managed in the context of business strategy, scenario analysis and risk management.**

The purpose of climate risk disclosure is to inform stakeholders as to the manner in which the organisation is managing climate change risk, including mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions) and adaptation (responding to the impacts of climate change). These stakeholders include government, private operators, lessees, investors, insurers, policy-makers, regulators and the Victorian community.

Scenario analysis and planning is a method for understanding risks and opportunities around climate change and for informing strategic responses. A scenario refers to a plausible and often simplified description of how the future may develop, based on a coherent and internally consistent set of assumptions about driving forces and key relationships.<sup>12</sup>

Scenario analysis and planning involves the development and use of representations of plausible futures and pathways to inform strategic decision making and planning in a range of organisational and policy making contexts. It is increasingly used by private and public sector organisations to identify risks, opportunities and strategic options in the context of complex and uncertain future conditions and events.

The complexity of the alpine resorts system creates a challenge for climate change adaptation planning. As part of the Alpine Resorts Vulnerability Assessment a detailed map of the alpine resorts' system was developed, with input from alpine resort stakeholders. The system map depicts the interaction of all the forces that influence the successful operation of an alpine resort in Victoria. The systems map is a useful tool in supporting climate change scenario analysis and planning.

*Please see the [Alpine Resorts Systems Map](#) on pages 20 and 21.<sup>13</sup>*

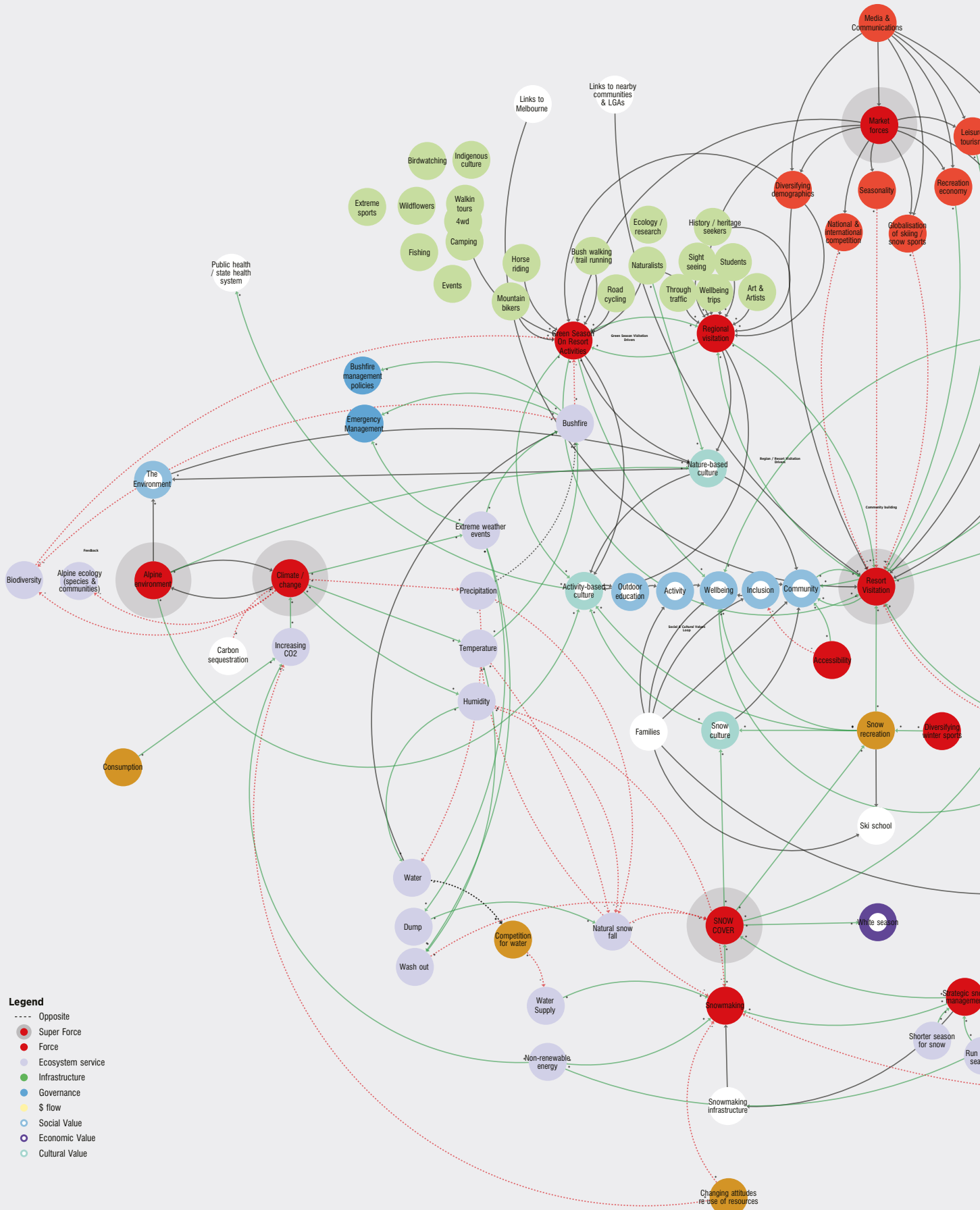
The next step for Victoria's alpine resorts in responding to climate change is to prepare "climate change risk disclosure statements and model reports", informed by climate change scenario analysis and planning.

<sup>12</sup> (IPCC, 2007b)

<sup>13</sup> <https://realsustainability.kumu.io/victorian-alpine-resort-sector>



# Alpine Resorts Systems Map







## Climate Change Risk Disclosure and Scenario Analysis *continued*

**To ensure climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis is conducted in a consistent manner across all resorts a climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis framework will be developed.**

This framework will be informed by the *Climate Change Risk Disclosure and Director Due Diligence Guidance Note*<sup>14</sup> released by the ARCC in March 2018.

### **Climate Change Action 1: Develop an alpine resorts climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis framework.**

The ARCC will lead the development of a climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis framework to ensure a consistent approach to the following:

- The scenario/s that should be considered;
- The assumptions that will be used to conduct the analysis;
- The principles that will inform decision making;
- An agreed data set to inform the analysis;
- Inclusions and exclusions;
- The requirements for stakeholder engagement (including collaboration between ARMBs);
- A structure and process for reporting; and
- The approach to reviewing/ updating scenario analysis and planning.

### **Climate Change Action 2: Prepare climate risk disclosure statements and model reports.**

Following the development of the climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis framework the ARMBs will prepare climate risk disclosure statements and model reports for inclusion in their annual reports. These disclosure statements will be consistent with the climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis framework.



<sup>14</sup> <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/publications-and-research/>



## Our commitments and obligations to our Traditional Owner partners

**Primary amongst our partners are the Traditional Owners of the Victorian alps. This is the first Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan to commit the sector to working in partnership with Traditional Owners. We are proud of the Aboriginal history of our alpine regions and will honour our commitments under the Recognition and Settlement Agreements of Gunaikurnai and Taungurung.**

For thousands of years the Gunaikurnai, Taungurung and Wurundjeri people have owned through customary right the land of the high Country, protecting the health of Country and managing the land and resources sustainably. Traditional Owners

have never surrendered their connection to their Country; the cultural connection to the land has always been strong and continues to grow. As Traditional Owners they have the responsibility to protect their Country and the cultural heritage it contains – including tangible and intangible cultural values.

The greater alpine area is an important cultural landscape. It is a place of creation stories, song-lines, artefacts, sacred sites and intangible heritage. It is also shared Country, where neighbouring traditional owner groups came together for ceremony, trade and sharing of resources.

Alpine resorts, although significantly developed and modified in parts, rest within this culturally rich landscape. Resort areas contain culturally sensitive areas, with many sites registered for protection through the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. ARMBs have a responsibility to respect and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage through this Act and its regulations.

In 2018 the ARCC led a review of stakeholder engagement practices across the sector, and specifically with Traditional Owner partners. The following partnership actions were identified as being the next steps in strengthening our relationship.

***Gunaikurnai people travelled from the high country to the lowlands; visiting the mountains for food, water and other resources. The southern slopes of Victoria's alpine ranges are where the Gunaikurnai creation story began and where ancestors travelled for trade, gatherings and seasonal food sources. As custodians of the land that includes part of Mt Hotham and Mt Baw Baw alpine resorts, the Gunaikurnai people have a cultural obligation to protect the cultural and natural values.***



## Our commitments and obligations to our Traditional Owner partners *continued*

### Partnership Action 1: Develop and implement a framework for Traditional Owner partnerships.

Together with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Taungurung Land and Waters Council and the Wurundjeri Tribe Council, the ARCC will develop and implement a framework to guide genuine and meaningful partnerships. The framework will include a vision and principles (including the principles of free, prior and informed consent) for an ongoing partnership on alpine resort-related matters.

The framework will contain sector-wide policies, guidelines and commitments to support a consistent approach to engagement. Some of the sector-wide actions that would be appropriate at this level include:

- Guidelines for appropriate use of acknowledgement of recognised Traditional Owners and Welcome to Country;
- A commitment for ARCC and ARMB Directors and staff to undertake cultural awareness and safety training;
- Regular leadership meetings with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Taungurung Land and Waters Council and the Wurundjeri Tribe Council;
- Processes to engage Traditional Owners in decisions that affect them; and
- A commitment to maximising procurement from Aboriginal businesses, consistent with *Tharamba Bugheen*, the Victorian Aboriginal Business Strategy 2017-2021.

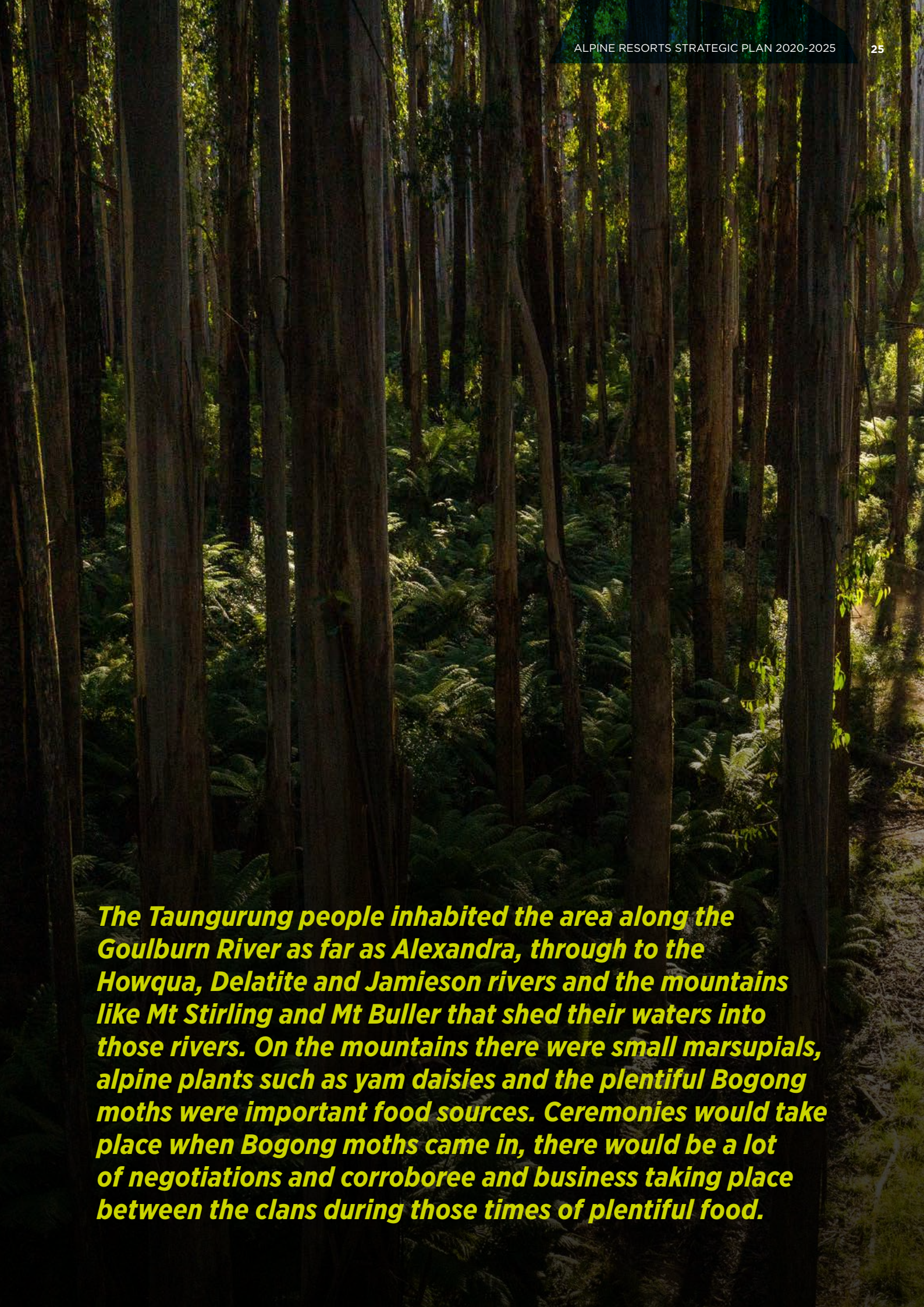
### Partnership action 2: Develop partnership plans between ARMBs and relevant Traditional Owner groups

These partnership plans will reflect Native Title, Recognition and Settlement Agreements, Country Plans, *Manganin-Gadhaba*, as well as other relevant strategies, goals and aspirations. The plans will be developed by ARMBs and will reflect agreed processes and actions with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Taungurung Land and Waters Council and the Wurundjeri Tribe Council, including:

- Facilitating access to Country;
- Developing interpretive information at alpine resorts;
- Signage at entry/exit points of alpine resorts, recognising the Traditional Owners of the land;
- Partnership arrangements to deliver Caring for Country activities;
- Regular meetings and communication between Traditional Owner groups and ARMBs;
- The use of Aboriginal place names, where appropriate and as approved with Traditional Owner groups, at alpine resorts;
- Identification and protection of sites of cultural significance, in partnership with Traditional Owners, at alpine resorts; and
- Together explore tourism, business and employment opportunities.







***The Taungurung people inhabited the area along the Goulburn River as far as Alexandra, through to the Howqua, Delatite and Jamieson rivers and the mountains like Mt Stirling and Mt Buller that shed their waters into those rivers. On the mountains there were small marsupials, alpine plants such as yam daisies and the plentiful Bogong moths were important food sources. Ceremonies would take place when Bogong moths came in, there would be a lot of negotiations and corroboree and business taking place between the clans during those times of plentiful food.***



## Strategic Objective 1

Enable investment that drives sustainable businesses within a prosperous regional economy

**Economic sustainability underpins the viability of Victoria's alpine resorts. It is vital to secure support to develop a broad range of tourism and recreation activities and events in the alpine region to support a thriving mountain experience. Recent investments by the Victorian Government at Mt Buller (expanding water storage capacity) and Falls Creek/Mt Hotham (Falls to Hotham walk) are examples of this support.**

There are opportunities to diversify offerings in the snow season to include activities less dependent on traditional snow cover, and to continue to invest in efficient snow making and snow management. Investment in new assets to boost sustainability of green season activities, without impacting continued investment in the snow season, remains a challenge that we must address.

Efforts to expand the offerings of green season have yielded low economic returns and these will continue to be more economically challenging than snow-based activities for the foreseeable future (see below for examples at Mt Hotham).

For ARMBs, the absence of resort entry fees in summer means resorts are operating at a loss and need to be subsidised by revenues generated during the short winter period. These winter operating surpluses are under increasing pressure from asset maintenance requirements and are highly susceptible to downturns in winter visitation.

For private business, the high operating costs in the alpine resorts mean that certainty of visitation in the green season is needed before businesses will be confident to invest. Whereas winter visitors often stay for multiple nights; visitors in summer are more likely to stay for one night (or not stay overnight at all). A different financial and operating model may be needed to make green season growth possible.

In 2017, the ARCC commissioned a limited study on the green season to further develop its potential. The study noted that the green season offering is ad hoc and disjointed across resorts. Green season activities relate to trail and mountain biking, running, four-wheel driving, and other sporting and recreational events. Study findings include:

- Low awareness is a barrier to visitation;
- Short getaways are best suited to the region;
- The snow season skews perceptions of the green season;
- The main, unique attraction is the natural beauty;
- For event goers, there is a need to capitalise on existing visitation to increase expenditure; and
- For non-event goers, increase expenditure on daytrips, and encourage overnight stays.

### PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS AT GREEN SEASON ACTIVATION AT MT HOTHAM.

#### **Onsen Retreat and Spa Dinner Plain**

*Large spa facility with outdoor Onsen, Heated lap pool, Gym, spa treatment rooms and Pilates Studio.*

*Open Year round 2006 to circa 2011*

*Business not viable due to low visitation outside peak holiday periods and long weekends despite efforts to attract retreat business.*

#### **Mountain Biking with chairlift access via Village Chair – Mt Hotham Circa 1999 – 2002**

*Assisted MTB riders to access Village Chair from trails developed down Slalom Gully and Davenport Access.*

*Ceased operating as evident it would need onsite medical support to assist with injuries.*

#### **Scenic chair lift rides over numerous summers from 1997 – 2011**

*Having appropriate staffing levels onsite in summer for lift evacuation is an issue with most staff residing away from the mountain during this period*

#### **Tube Park at Dinner Plain 2014-2019**

*Operated in summer as it is a synthetic surface – two slides with a rope tow for return to the top.*

*This park has been removed as it was not viable to operate even during peak holiday periods.*



## Strategic Objective 1 *continued*

Enable investment that drives sustainable businesses within a prosperous regional economy

### **Strategic Action 1.1: Identify new, and enhance current, year-round experiences that attract investment.**

This strategic action is two-fold: optimisation of the snow season to maximise visitation and revenue throughout the snow season and optimising green season activities to promote a vibrant market that can also be activated in low-snow seasons. This should be informed by up to date research to identify the investment required, determine real green season potential, financial viability, and sundry issues such as alpine resorts operation and remit.

As tourist activity outside the winter season is relatively untapped, there are opportunities to better use 'lazy assets' (e.g. physical assets, human capital, regional investment) to encourage year-round recreational activities and events in the alpine resorts. Although many facilities that cater for green season are already in place, effort is required to create a market, put facilities to better use, and offset any impacts of a shorter snow season. Efforts to activate the green season should not come at the expense of the financial sustainability of resort operations.

### **Strategic Action 1.2: Seek opportunities for diverse sources of development funding.**

Increased private sector investment as well as targeted government support are required to enable the alpine resorts to be financially sustainable. These would likely be augmented with a focus on increasing visitor spending, engagement with destination partners and engagement with new and expanded market segments.

To have the best chance of gaining targeted government investment, the sector will need to clearly demonstrate the net benefits of that investment to the community. The sector should also identify new opportunities to seek grant funding for cases where net benefit is clearly demonstrated.

### **Strategic Action 1.3: Work with infrastructure and service providers to maintain, upgrade, replace, and provide the optimum suite of assets for a sustainable, climate ready alpine region.**

The entire alpine resort visitor experience begins at home and involves an interaction with a wide range of assets and services before visitors arrive at the resort. Roads, rest stops, public toilets and mobile phone communications are just some of the assets and services that influence the overall visitor experience. These assets need to be resilient to the impacts of climate change and able to meet our growing population.

It will also be important to demonstrate financial sustainability and net community benefit in order to secure support for the development of a broad range of tourism and recreation activities to support a thriving community and region. This includes targeted investment in new assets – including resort infrastructure and assets that support resorts – to boost sustainability of the green season, without impacting continued investment in the snow season.

The Regional Tourism Review<sup>15</sup>, being conducted by the Victorian Government, will investigate how to improve the delivery and management of regional infrastructure that supports the visitor economy. The Strategic Plan will respond to the findings of that review.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/resources/regional-statement/regional-review>

## Strategic Objective 2

Protect and enhance the mountain environment

**Victoria's alpine resorts are nestled within the Alpine, Yarra Ranges and Baw Baw National Parks, which contains some of Victoria's most spectacular, and fragile, natural country. About one third of Victoria's native plant species, more than half of the terrestrial bird species, and 40 per cent of the state's mammal species are found in the Great Alpine National Park area<sup>16</sup>. About one third of the state's total rare and threatened species are also found there, including species such as the Mountain Pygmy Possum and Baw Baw Frog.**

*Biodiversity 2037*<sup>16</sup> provides the policy framework to guide the delivery of on-ground actions to ensure Victoria's biodiversity is healthy, valued and actively cared for. As public land managers, the ARMBs, working with their stakeholders, are responsible for managing their resources to contribute to delivering the state-wide targets under *Biodiversity 2037*.

The impacts of climate change on Victoria's biodiversity are already being felt, with alpine species among the most affected. As temperatures continue to rise and rainfall decreases, the suitability of habitat for alpine-dependent species will contract and become increasingly fragmented.

Alpine resorts have an opportunity to actively manage 'business-as-usual' activities to contribute to a state-wide target of 100 per cent change in suitable habitat (CSH). 100% CSH is defined as *"100% positive change in the outlook for threatened species in 50 years, with co-benefits for non-threatened species, measured across Victoria"*.

*Biodiversity 2037* also seeks to build people's understanding that their personal wellbeing and Victoria's economic wellbeing are dependent on the health of the natural environment. The alpine resorts provide safe, well-managed access to the alpine environment that generates a deep connection through repeat visitation as well as a broad connection (over 1.7 million visitor days per year). The alpine resorts will maximise the opportunities that this connection with the natural environment provides by engaging with resort users on matters of environmental importance.

### Strategic Action 2.1: Sustain and protect the biodiversity of the alpine ecosystems.

*Biodiversity 2037* establishes a state-wide target of 100 percent CSH to achieve the following outcomes:

1. no vulnerable or near threatened species will become endangered;
2. critically endangered and endangered species will have at least one option for being conserved in the wild; and
3. net gain in the overall extent and condition of habitats.

As custodians of the alpine environment, all alpine resorts stakeholders have a responsibility to contribute to these goals, led by the ARMBs.

Biodiversity Response Planning<sup>17</sup> (BRP) is the government's area-based planning approach to biodiversity conservation in Victoria. BRP is designed to strengthen alignment, collaboration and participation among government agencies, Traditional Owners, non-government organisations and the community.

ARMBs and their stakeholders can participate in BRP to align and coordinate actions and resources to achieve the greatest gain in habitat.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-plan>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-response-planning>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file\\_uploads/Greater\\_Alpine\\_National\\_Parks\\_Management\\_Plan\\_2016\\_9FyDnQMt.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/Greater_Alpine_National_Parks_Management_Plan_2016_9FyDnQMt.pdf)

## Strategic Objective 2 *continued*

Protect and enhance the mountain environment

### Strategic Action 2.1: Sustain and protect the biodiversity of the alpine ecosystems.

*Continued*

Management interventions to achieve a net gain in habitat are informed and prioritised by Strategic Management Prospects, a decision-making tool developed by DELWP. Strategic Management Prospects ensures the most efficient and effective management actions are delivered through BRP. Pest herbivore, predator and weed control, revegetation, and private land protection in priority areas are examples of effective and efficient management actions.

Continuous improvement and our ability to demonstrate achievement against the Victorian Government's biodiversity goals and targets will be informed by best-practice monitoring and reporting standards<sup>19</sup>. The alpine resorts will report against DELWP's standard outputs.



### Strategic Action 2.2: Connect people with the alpine environment and enable low-impact visitation.

Connecting people with nature is a strength of the alpine resorts. More than 1.4 million people currently visit the resorts each year, many of them passing this tradition on through the generations. The alpine resorts are one of the few sectors that keeps this connection going through the winter months and therefore plays an important role in delivering against the "Victorians Value Nature" goal under *Biodiversity 2037* on behalf of the Victorian Government.

As more people visit the alpine resorts, and as those visitation patterns change to include a greater proportion of day visitors, there is a need for everyone to reduce their environmental impacts. The ARMBs and partners will investigate ways to deliver high quality educational information to all resort visitors so that they can minimise their impacts on the alpine environment.

### Strategic Action 2.3: Reduce the environmental footprint of the alpine resorts.

With the alpine environment being on the frontline of the battle against the impacts of climate change, it is important that the sector shows leadership in reducing its environmental footprint. Victoria's alpine resorts have made efforts to reduce their environmental footprint through a range of waste and recycling initiatives, water efficiency programs, and an increasing use of renewable energy.

There is an opportunity to do more, including an increased focus on sustainable transport to and within the resorts, waste minimisation, continued investment in more energy efficient plant and equipment and generation of renewable energy, and decreasing per capita water consumption.



<sup>19</sup> <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/waterways-and-catchments/our-catchments/integrated-reporting/output-data-standard>



## Strategic Objective 3

Enhance the visitor experience



**Visitors to Victoria's alpine resorts have expressed high levels of satisfaction with their experience over recent seasons. Surveys of visitors to resorts from 2015 to 2018 indicate scores for overall visitor satisfaction of 7 out of 10 on average across all resorts and all years.**

It is important to balance the increasing quantity of visitors with the quality of visitor experience. The potential for large numbers of visitors to travel to a small number of areas in the snow season is an ongoing challenge for resort operators as well as those managing surrounding infrastructure and services.

The current and forecast growth in Melbourne's population presents both opportunities and challenges for Victoria's alpine resorts. The 2019 snow season saw a noticeable shift in the demographic of visitors to the resorts, with many more visitors from culturally diverse backgrounds staying on the mountain.

It is likely that many of these visitors have progressed from single day visitation over the last several years and may not be as sensitive to low-moderate snow levels as traditional resort visitors. This new visitation pattern, should it continue, provides opportunities for resorts during periods of low snowfall. Meeting the needs and expectations of new visitor cohorts, while continuing to cater for traditional resort visitors, is a priority for resort operators.



This increased visitation also creates challenges for the resorts, with roads and carparks congested and many first-time visitors to the resorts being unfamiliar with travelling in alpine conditions. During weekends and school holidays the resorts are frequently full and overcrowding can become a problem. Maximising the use of public transport and providing real-time resort information are two ways to help address these issues.

## Strategic Objective 3 *continued*

Enhance the visitor experience

### **Strategic Action 3.1: Deliver the optimum visitor experience by matching infrastructure and services with visitor needs.**

Infrastructure needs to be aligned with visitor experience and visitor needs, climate change adaptation, sustainability, and public safety. Specifically, work is required to improve roads and parking, management and connectivity of transport.

With increasing extreme weather due to climate change, there is a greater need to prioritise public safety and improve communication mechanisms. Co-ordination across resorts could improve public awareness, with wide and clear information and education to help people understand safety measures.

There is also an opportunity to look at ways to provide real time information to alpine resort visitors, in particular when roads and resorts need to be closed due to weather, congestion or other incidents.

### **Strategic Action 3.2: Deliver a resort experience that is mindful of cultural needs and continue to improve access for all abilities.**

As the demographic of the Victorian public and alpine resorts visitors evolves it will be important to improve awareness of diverse cultures and broaden the appeal of mountain activities, so they respond to and meet the needs of changing visitor expectations.

This will involve catering for different visitor cultural behaviours, attitudes and backgrounds and planning infrastructure and facilities that are multi-purpose. It will also involve enhancing inclusiveness and multi-culturalism for domestic and overseas visitors by improving awareness of the changing ethnicity of the population. Consideration should also be given to social equity and providing opportunities for people of all income levels.





## Strategic Objective 4

Implement practical policy and regulatory reform

**Development and use of land in the alpine resorts is controlled by the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme. The Minister for Planning is the planning authority and the responsible authority for the scheme, which is administered on their behalf by DELWP.**

The leasing of land at the resorts is controlled by the *Alpine Resorts Leasing Policy and Implementation Details 2002* (Leasing Policy). The Leasing Policy has a significant influence over alpine resort development outcomes.

Both instruments have not been updated in more than 15 years and present a barrier to investment and effective environmental protection and climate change adaptation. These instruments need to be reviewed and updated to provide the best land use and development decision-making framework for the future.

### Strategic Action 4.1: Review and update the Alpine Resorts Leasing Policy.

There is a need to review and update the Alpine Resorts Leasing Policy to:

- Reflect current strategic objectives, including climate change; sustainable development principles, environmental considerations and the maximising of public benefit;
- Incentivise appropriate development and remove the current provisions that discourage smaller or more modest developments; and
- Provide guidance to assist decision making regarding appropriate lease terms; return on investment; land release; and minimising public risks associated with climate change, including the potential for stranded assets.

### Strategic Action 4.2: Review and update the Alpine Resort Strategic Management Plan Framework.

Victoria's alpine resort management boards are required under the *Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997* to prepare an SMP for each resort. The SMPs must be consistent with the Strategic Plan. On the publishing of the Strategic Plan the ARMBs will be required to review and update their SMPs. For Lake Mountain, Mt Baw Baw and Mt Stirling resorts, SMPs will be required to be developed. To support the review of the SMPs, DELWP will issue revised SMP Guidelines.





## Strategic Objective 4 *continued*

### Implement practical policy and regulatory reform

#### **Strategic Action 4.3: Develop Alpine Resort Siting and Design Guidelines.**

The design and siting of buildings plays an important role in contributing to the alpine resort character, 'sense of place', and in protecting the environment. Improving the physical attractiveness of alpine resort villages enhances the visitor experience and has been raised by stakeholders as a current barrier to increased green season visitation.

To support best practice building design, comprehensive Alpine Resorts Siting and Design Guidelines should be incorporated into an updated planning scheme. The siting and design guidelines should (but not be limited to):

- Require excellence in siting and design;
- Respond to a changing climate based on current scientific knowledge, and addresses adaptation requirements;
- Complement and integrate with the alpine landscape and setting, in all seasons;
- Incorporate environmentally sensitive design that minimises development impact and footprint, minimises disturbance to indigenous flora and fauna, and incorporates energy and materials efficiency and water sensitive design;
- Avoid, to the extent practicable, disturbance to native flora and fauna; and
- Incorporate, to the extent practicable, the needs of accessibility and inclusion of people with varied levels of ability or physical capacity.

#### **Strategic Action 4.4: Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme.**

A review of the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme presents an opportunity to remove outdated provisions and update broader strategic planning policy to ensure alignment with contemporary policy relating to climate change, optimising the green season opportunities, environmental, landscape and sustainability matters, governance, economic development, tourism and infrastructure investment.

There are also inefficiencies and inconsistencies in the drafting of current policies and provisions within the planning scheme that, if addressed, will streamline approval processes, reduce costs of development and enhance the management of the alpine resorts' unique environmental values. A more efficient planning scheme would have a positive flow-on effect of reducing the volume of permit applications and overall administrative burden.

To support the review of the planning scheme the ARCC will conduct a desktop review of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage "Carrying Capacity Review" of NSW alpine resorts. Carrying capacity is becoming an increasingly important concept as alpine resort infrastructure and services become stressed at times of peak visitation and as the resorts seek to balance visitation with best practice environmental management. It is also likely that the resorts will have a different carrying capacity in summer when compared to winter. The findings from this review should be used to inform the update of the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme.



## Strategic Objective 4 *continued*

### Implement practical policy and regulatory reform

The review of the planning scheme should be delivered in two stages:

#### Stage 1:

- A general update to improve the operation of the scheme; and
- Complete the Planning Policy Framework translation (SMART Planning).

#### Stage 2:

Stage 2 will comprise of integrating the SMPs and Design Guidelines into the planning scheme, as well as a more fulsome review of the provisions within the planning scheme.

Some specific areas of the planning scheme that require review include (but not be limited to):

- Incorporate strategic policy directions for the resorts having regard to changing economic, social and environmental conditions, and the latest Strategic Plan and SMPs for the resorts;
- Have the scope to review and include additional specific permit exemptions to increase efficiencies, such as under the Comprehensive Development Zone, overlays (including the Erosion Management Overlay) and Clause 52.17 – native vegetation;

- Consider whether a snow season and green season carrying capacity for each resort should be identified;
- Consider how the planning scheme could enable alpine resort workers to be accommodated on mountain;
- Update the Environmental Significance Overlay and mapping to include the research and findings by DELWP regarding alpine fauna;
- Update the Erosion Management Overlay (EMO) so that 'low risk' buildings and works are exempt from requiring a planning permit under the EMO;
- Remove complex processes and unnecessary provisions (anomalies and duplication) and clarify problematic provisions and requirements (demolition, outbuildings, minor utility installations);
- Acknowledge the alpine resorts as a premier tourist destination for all season activities; and
- Include a Significant Landscape Overlay to recognise significant landscapes.





**“The design and siting of buildings plays an important role in contributing to the alpine resort character, ‘sense of place’, and in protecting the environment.”**



*Photo credit: Andrew Railton & Mt Buller*



## Developing and strengthening partnerships through collaboration and communication

**In 2018, the ARCC conducted a review of engagement across the alpine resorts sector, including consideration of current policies and practices. The review found that there is much to be proud of, with each ARMB engaging with their stakeholders on a variety of subjects using various mechanisms.**

The review also highlighted areas for improvement – at both sector and board level – particularly in capability to apply recognised engagement principles, consistent understanding of the purpose of engagement, and leveraging collaboration opportunities.

At a high level the alpine resort sector's approach to stakeholder engagement will be guided by the principles outlined in the Better Practice Guide, and by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). These principles are based on the premise that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. The level at which a stakeholder is engaged is determined by considering the impact on stakeholders or their interest in the matter, the decision to be made and the goal to be achieved.

To support improved engagement the ARCC developed the Victorian Alpine Resorts Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan.<sup>20</sup> This action plan contains a framework for action as well as 12 actions designed to deliver improved engagement across the Victorian alpine sector, with underpinning activities and timeframes for implementation.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research>

## Actions summary



### Climate Change Action

#### CC 1

Climate change risk disclosure and scenario analysis framework.

#### CC 2

Prepare climate risk disclosure statements and model reports.



### Partnership Action

#### TO 1

Develop and implement a framework for Traditional Owner partnerships.

#### TO 2

Develop partnership plans between ARMBs and Traditional Owners.



### Strategic Action

#### SA 1.1

Identify new, and enhance current, year-round experiences that attract investment.

#### SA 1.2

Create opportunities for diverse sources of development funding.

#### SA 1.3

Work with infrastructure and service providers to maintain, upgrade, replace, and provide the optimum suite of assets for a sustainable, climate ready alpine region.

#### SA 2.1

Sustain and protect the biodiversity of the alpine ecosystems.

#### SA 2.2

Connect people with the alpine environment and enable low-impact visitation.

#### SA 2.3

Reduce the environmental footprint of the alpine resorts.

#### SA 3.1

Deliver the optimum visitor experience by matching infrastructure and services with visitor needs.

#### SA 3.2

Deliver a resort experience that is mindful of cultural needs and continue to improve access for all abilities.

#### SA 4.1

Review and update the Alpine Resorts Leasing Policy.

#### SA 4.2

Review and update the Alpine Resort Strategic Management Plan Framework.

#### SA 4.3

Develop Alpine Resort Siting and Design Guidelines.

#### SA 4.4

Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme.

## Monitoring, reporting and review

### Monitoring

The ARCC will monitor the delivery of the strategic plan through its existing Council meeting process. Twice a year (October and April) ARMB Chairs will provide a progress report on the delivery of that year's actions that are assigned to the ARMBs, as will the Chair of the ARCC for actions assigned to it. The ARCC will also provide an update on the progress of any actions assigned to other organisations (such as DELWP).

This information will be published on the ARCC website within a fortnight of each meeting.

### Reporting

The ARCC will lead an annual Strategy Implementation Co-ordination meeting involving all partner organisations with delivery responsibility. The ARCC will report the outcome of this meeting in its Annual Report with focus on the progress to achieving the desired 5-year outcome, highlighting any risks or requirements. At this annual Strategy Implementation Co-ordination meeting delivery partners will also review the actions for the upcoming 12 months and consider whether changes are required.

The ARMBs will also report on the delivery of their commitments through their annual report.

### Review

In 2022, the ARCC will lead a mid-term Strategy Implementation review with input from all partner organisations with delivery responsibility. The findings of this review will be used to inform the design and delivery of actions for the remainder of the term of the Strategic Plan.





# Abbreviations

**ACE CRC:** Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre

**ARCC:** Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council

**ARIAG:** Alpine Resorts Industry Advisory Group

**ARMB:** Alpine Resort Management Board

**BRP:** Biodiversity Response Planning

**DELWP:** Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

**DJPR:** Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

**GSP:** Gross State Product

**IAP2:** International Association of Public Participation

**RDV:** Regional Development Victoria

**RTB:** Regional Tourism Boards

**SMP:** Strategic Management Plan

**VAGO:** Victorian Auditor-General's Office

**VARDP:** Victorian Alpine Resorts Development Program



## Recommended reading

**Victorian Alpine Resorts Economic Contribution Study:**

<https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/Victorian%20Alpine%20Resorts%20summary%20report%20-%2023062017%20low.pdf>

**Potential Impacts of Climate Change on Victoria's**

**Alpine Resorts study:** [https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/The%20Potential%20Impact%20of%20Climate%20Change%20on%20Victorian%20Alpine%20Resorts%20Study\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/The%20Potential%20Impact%20of%20Climate%20Change%20on%20Victorian%20Alpine%20Resorts%20Study_FINAL.pdf)

**Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Report:** <https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/land-management/alpine-resorts>

**Review of the 2012 Alpine Resorts Strategic Plan:** [https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/AlpineResorts\\_StrategicPlanReview\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_Feb2018.pdf](https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/AlpineResorts_StrategicPlanReview_Report_FINAL_Feb2018.pdf)

**Green Season Research Report:** <https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/26266%20Full%20Report%20V2%2006APR2017.pdf>

**Plan Melbourne:** [https://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/377206/Plan\\_Melbourne\\_2017-2050\\_Strategy\\_.pdf](https://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/377206/Plan_Melbourne_2017-2050_Strategy_.pdf)

**Alpine Resorts Management Act:** [http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/LTObject\\_Store/LTObjSt1.nsf/dde300b846eed9c7ca257616000a3571/6766676825129dfbca25776100172b40/\\$FILE/97-89a023.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt1.nsf/dde300b846eed9c7ca257616000a3571/6766676825129dfbca25776100172b40/$FILE/97-89a023.pdf)

**Biodiversity 2037:** <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-plan>

**Victorian Alpine Resorts Stakeholder Engagement Action Plan:** [https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Action%20Plan\\_FINAL+COVER\\_2.pdf](https://www.arcc.vic.gov.au/uploads/publications-and-research/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Action%20Plan_FINAL+COVER_2.pdf)

**Regional Tourism Review – Discussion Paper:** <https://djpr.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/a-new-way-forward-for-tourism-in-regional-victoria>

**Victoria's Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017 – 2020:** [https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/60729/Victorias-Climate-Change-Adaptation-Plan-2017-2020.pdf](https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/60729/Victorias-Climate-Change-Adaptation-Plan-2017-2020.pdf)

**Public Participation in Government Decision-making – Better Practice Guide:** <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/20150130-Public-Participation-BPG.pdf>

**Munganin – Gadhaba - DELWP Aboriginal Inclusion Plan 2016-2020:** [https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/4418/DELWP-Aboriginal-Inclusion-Plan.pdf](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/4418/DELWP-Aboriginal-Inclusion-Plan.pdf)





