

Australia's First Ski Tow

Australian and New Zealand skiers will watch with critical interest the operation of the ski tow which was installed on the Cresta Run, Mount Buffalo, last August. The first equipment of its kind in Australia, it very definitely adds to the convenience of skiers and the popularity of Mount Buffalo in winter, especially for novice skiers requiring serious tuition and experience, as the tow eliminates the laborious uphill climb and so enables the skier to obtain substantially greater downhill practice.

Installed by the Victorian Railways Department, which controls the Chalet at Mount Buffalo, the ski tow is really an endless ropeway along the surface of the snow-slope, extending for more than 120 yards parallel with the Cresta Run. This year it is planned to extend the ropeway by another 200 ft., increasing the total length of the tow to 200 yards. A V-8 Cadillac engine is used as the power unit.



—Photo, Courtesy Victorian Railways.

A flat piece of ground alongside the point where the rope comes off the first pulley in front of the engine-sled forms the taking-off place. Over his outside wrist the skier loops both ski sticks (pointing backward); he then places his ski together, pointing up the slope, leans back and grips the rope with both hands. The speed at which he travels on the ski tow is from four to five miles an hour.

At the top of the ropeway a flat landing place is provided, and the skier can either make a cross jump or let go, come to a standstill and step around. If he loses control and direction of his ski while ascending he naturally falls. When this occurs the attendant stops the rope, allows time for him to recover and starts the rope again.

The tow is more easily managed when several skiers are using it at the same time; the rope is then lifted off the snow, where the slack otherwise drags. As the machine develops considerable power, the number of skiers the rope will carry is limited only by the necessary spacing between them.

The ski tow proved its worth at Buffalo last year, and it can only be a question of time before it is adopted extensively at other resorts. Although motor power is used at Buffalo there are obvious advantages in applying electric power where it is available. In this connection the development of the Kiewa hydro-electric scheme opens up interesting possibilities of the establishment of electric tow lifts on Bogong in the future.