

PLANNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE KOSCIUSKO NATIONAL PARK

Introduction.

The Need for Planning.

The following is the plan adopted by the Ski Council of N.S.W. and recommended to the Kosciusko State Park Trust for the development of the area.

Because of its distance from centres of population, before the Park can serve the purpose for which it is intended, accommodation must be greatly increased. At the present time it is limited to about 300, and many more than this are turned away each week. There is no point in reserving over a million acres for recreation purposes unless people can make use of it. The Ski Council of N.S.W., the controlling body of winter sports in this State, has, since its inception, advocated the opening up of the snowfields to all sections of the community, both as a recreation area and as an alpine resort that will attract overseas tourists. Now that the whole of the area has been reserved as a National Park, its development should be planned along sound lines so that its growth will not be haphazard, and the maximum economy achieved.

Plan Intended as Basis for Future Development.

Obviously, the Ski Council is not in a position to take into account what influences other economic projects will have on the development of the Park as a recreation resort. It is, however, in a position to know what is required, and has formulated this plan as a basis upon which the final plan can be evolved. While the Ski Council is primarily interested in winter sports, it is not disregarding of summer interests. As will be seen later, practically any site that is suitable as a ski-centre will be suitable for summer interests. Unfortunately, the reverse is not true. It is therefore advisable that the problem should be first approached from the viewpoint of winter sports. Before proceeding with the plan, it would be advisable to consider factors that have retarded popularity and development of Kosciusko in the past.

Time Taken on Journey.

The lengthy—in point of time—and wearisome journey from Sydney is a principal drawback. The

So that all skiers will be advised on the aggressive campaign being conducted by the Ski Council of N.S.W. for the betterment of our sport in every possible way the Year Book editors are reprinting a copy of the 7,000 word plan for the development of the Kosciusko State Park which has been submitted to the National Park Trust. The opening pages of the report made the following points: (1) Health Value. (2) Tourist Trade. (3) Popularity in Summer as well as Winter. These are things that all skiers can appreciate, and we continue the report from these points on.

time taken, both ways, puts Kosciusko outside the field of holiday resorts for a short holiday. Much of the time taken is wasted en route. Victorian resorts, much further away, are just as accessible (in time) as Kosciusko. The days of arrival and departure are two days out of one's holiday . . . a big factor for anyone whose holidays are limited to one or even two weeks. Thus, it is out of the question for long, much less short, week-ends, or for overseas visitors on cruises, whose stay in port is limited to a few days. Even with the present break of journey at Cooma, there is no reason why trains should not arrive an hour earlier, and buses leave within half an hour. A cup of tea at the station while the buses are loaded, and buses could go straight through to the final destination for breakfast around 9.30. On the return, buses could leave after an early dinner, say 6.30, and transfer to the train about 9.30. In any event, if the train left Cooma at 11 p.m., it wouldn't have to break any records to get to Sydney by 7 a.m.

Cost of Transport.

First class return fare is £4/8/9, second class £3/13/10, of which £2 is for the one-class bus fare for one-sixth of the total journey. The average person could have a week's holiday, inclusive of fares, at other resorts for less than this. Until fares are reduced, holidays at Kosciusko will be outside the

reach of most people, especially families, and will never be a "short period" resort. The shorter the period of stay, the bigger the cost of transport in proportion. However, because of building costs (mainly inflated due to transport costs) it would not be economic to popularise Kosciusko as a week-end resort except by means of "Ski-trains" (see later) if a railway is built.

Cost of Accommodation.

While the summer tariff is not unreasonable, it has never been exceedingly popular in summer, partly through reasons already mentioned, and because none but rabid skiing enthusiasts would suffer the inconveniences of dormitory accommodation. In winter the tariff was exorbitant, roughly three times the summer tariff, for grossly overcrowded dormitory accommodation. It is evident that because of its winter monopoly and not having to meet the competition of other resorts as in summer, the State monopoly deliberately set out to exploit winter enthusiasts, with the result that it made skiing the prerogative of the rich, and excluded all those with only moderate means. In spite of this, but only because of the enthusiasm of skiers, accommodation was always overtaxed. Winter sports must be brought within the reach of all the people, especially families. Unless winter tariffs are greatly reduced, winter sport will remain the exclusive privilege of the wealthy, and nullify the objects of the National Park.

Exclusion of Private Enterprise.

Compare Kosciusko with similar resorts overseas which have been developed by private enterprise. There the popularity of skiing snowballed overnight. Refusal to allow private enterprise to conduct guest houses, hotels, etc., is in itself a tacit admission by the State enterprise of inefficiency and desire to exploit the public. For the past fifteen years demand for accommodation on the snowfields has never been satisfied, yet not only did it fail to provide sufficient accommodation, but refuse to allow anyone else to do so. Kosciusko is a feature of Australia and just as much a part of our

national heritage as the beaches, where private enterprise has provided accommodation for all at far cheaper tariffs than those at Kosciusko.

Again, if a private person prefers the snow to the beach, why shouldn't he be allowed to build a cottage in the Alps, just as he can near a beach? There is every justification for reserving the Kosciusko Park to the people, but this in itself entails an obligation to provide them with accommodation at prices they can afford. Selected sites should be made available for private persons to establish and run guest houses, etc. This is the surest and quickest way of ensuring its popularity. By allowing private occupation, it doesn't mean that the public are excluded from any part of the Park; actually only the actual building site need be alienated, and then only upon such conditions as may be imposed. Look at the price charged at Bett's Camp in winter—17/6 a day just for a bunk (blankets only) and three plain meals a day. No conveniences, nowhere to sit except on the bunk, grubby floors, walls, etc. Overcrowded, inadequate accommodation and high prices are the very things that must be avoided if the resort is to flourish.

High Prices of Equipment.

This is the final factor that has resulted in the attitude that skiing is the sport of the wealthy. Much of the cost is due to excessive revenue duties, resulting in equipment costing more than double the amount it does overseas. There is a field here for reducing the landed cost of equipment, and thus helping reduce the cost of winter holidays.

Accommodation.

Amount and Type Required

It is doubtful if there will ever be sufficient accommodation at Kosciusko. Given reasonable standards at moderate prices, its popularity will increase more rapidly than accommodation is built. At a very minimum, it should be planned to provide accommodation for not less than 10,000 at the end of a ten-year period. This only provides for 250,000 visitors annually, on a basis of a stay of two weeks per visitor (or 175,000 on a three-weeks basis), with no vacancies at any time and no "off" season periods. It can therefore be planned to build accommoda-

tion for 1,000 each year in a ten-year plan, the building to be modified or accelerated as the growth is seen to be too slow or too rapid.

Dormitory type of accommodation is not a success. It is impossible to fill in summer, as competing resorts offer better standards of accommodation. In winter it has been overcrowded in the past, but only because it was the only accommodation available. To be successful, a resort has to be full for the greater part of the year. It is obvious that improved standards must be planned, especially if overseas tourists are to be attracted. Nevertheless, all standards must be provided, but as far as possible dormitory types must be eliminated, and single and double rooms concentrated upon. Suggested types of accommodation to be provided are:

- (1) Hotels (rates ranging from 20/- to 42/- per day).
- (2) Sports hotels (rates ranging from 15/- to 25/- per day).
- (3) Chalets (rates around 12/6 per day).
- (4) Hostels (rates not more than 10/- per day).
- (5) Camps (rates not more than 7/6 per day).

At hotels and chalets, all rooms should be single or double, with full service. Hostels should provide double rooms and small (not more than four persons) dormitories with service, but only buffet meals. Camps should be along the lines suggested in the plan for improving Bett's Camp, but with smaller-sized dormitories. It is suggested that camps should be restricted to more inaccessible parts for touring parties, etc. At all places, tariffs should be standard throughout the year, and special concessions be given to families.

In addition, so as to provide cheaper accommodation for families and groups, it is suggested that cabins with two or three bedrooms, common room, kitchenette, bath and lavatory could be built. Such cabins should be furnished and let at, say, £3 per week, with fuel and light supplied, provisions to be purchased from nearby hotel, and say a flat charge of £2, irrespective of length of occupancy, charged for changing bedclothes and cleaning, etc., on completion of each occupancy. Restaurants and a shop could be established in each centre.

Centres are Preferable to Scattered Buildings.

Many factors favour the building

of places in centres, rather than scattering them around. Transport costs are reduced, cheaper building and operating, one power plant, one water supply, one laundry, and other facilities. The same maintenance and supply staff can service the whole centre, instead of having to have a separate staff for each building.

Design of Buildings

It is desirable that no buildings of a "humpy" type should be erected, and that all should be pleasing in appearance and be comfortable. Several faults are apparent with existing buildings. Inadequate lounges, lack of private rooms for writing, card games, and sports committees to organise competitions, etc., above all, no sun room; faulty window design, poor plumbing architecture, no room for members of clubs to hold club functions, etc., are bad faults in the present Chalet. Absence of a lounge or common room at Bett's Camp has already been commented upon. Particular attention must be given to providing adequate lounges, etc., water pipes must be readily accessible, and not run along any outside wall. This criticism is not intended to be destructive, but merely to point out faults so that they will not be repeated in new buildings.

Size of Centres

It is suggested that the final size of each centre should be planned to provide accommodation for not more than 500. In the first stage, they might be limited to about half this size, and gradually increased. However, it is important that provision be made in the first place for increasing the size up to that finally planned. The final centre might comprise:

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| 1 Hotel to accommodate about 90 (or two of 45 each) .. | 90 persons |
| 2 Sports hotels to accommodate 45 each .. | 90 .. |
| 3 Chalets to accommodate 45 each .. | 135 .. |
| 4 Hostels to accommodate 30 each .. | 120 .. |
| 10 Cabins to accommodate 6-8 each, say .. | 70 .. |

In addition, there should be utility services, e.g., power house, laundry, water supply, fuel service, restaurant, shop, and garage.

Of course, there could be any variations of the above, the final composition of each centre would be largely determined by the experiences gained during the progress of the ten years' plan,

Selection of Sites.

General.—Practically any site that is suitable for a Ski-centre will be found suitable for summer interests. Unfortunately, the reverse is not true. To be suitable as a Ski-centre, the surrounding terrain must first of all be suitable for downhill running. It must be assured of snow in bad years, which occur once in every three or four years. No alpine resort has any attraction in "off" or "in-between" seasons; then it is bleak, uninviting, and usually muddy from melting snow until the snow leaves the higher levels. It may be argued that people can be transported from lower levels to the snow daily. This will not appeal to any skier, and only adds to the cost and uses unnecessary labour and transport. No skier wants his skiing limited to an area served by transport, and having his skiing restricted to a set time-table. It will not satisfy the novice for long, either; he will want to watch and copy the more accomplished, and improve by their advice. No skier will waste his holidays in spending half his time being transported to the snow. It is very essential that ski-centres be built where the maximum length of snow season is enjoyed, so that the "off" or in-between season is reduced to a minimum. There are plenty of sites within the Park that fulfil this requirement, where the ski-ing season lasts from May until the end of October, even in poor years, and later in better than average ones. This is where the Hotel Kosciusko fails as a Ski-centre, and accounts for its long "off" periods. In the average year, ski-ing is only possible near the Hotel for a few weeks.

The whole of our snowfields lie within the boundaries of the Park and cover an area greater than those of Switzerland. While practically all country over 5,000 feet above sea level is snow covered in winter, this statement must be qualified by the fact that except in years of unusually heavy snowfall, the snow does not remain on levels below 5,500 feet for any length of time, unless protected by and adjacent to peaks of 6,000 feet or higher. As the summer season cannot start before December, centres must be selected to reduce the "off" season to a minimum, and avoid the need of costly transport to take skiers to suitable skiing fields.

Another requirement for suitable ski (or any other) centre is

that it must be accessible. If it is not, transport charges will make building extremely costly, both to build and to run, difficult for visitors to reach, especially in bad weather. Accessibility will influence the selection of sites, and must be considered (see Transport) before making a definite choice. Finally, any centre must be fairly sheltered. It is useless attempting to build in exposed positions in the Alps. It must have a convenient water supply, as well as be handy to timber for wood.

Special conditions affecting the choice of ski-centres are: Length of descent (not less than 1,000 feet vertical), variety of courses suitable for both expert and novice. The minimum required for a Second Class Test or Championship race is 1,500 feet on suitable slopes. Such courses must be in the vicinity of the main centres if we are to have international races here to attract spectators and develop the sport of ski-ing.

Transport.

Present System.

The disadvantages of the present combined rail-bus system have already been mentioned, and the possibility of speeding up the journey examined. The period while luggage is transferred at Cooma is always one of bustle and confusion. Existing eating houses cannot cope with any more than the present number. While theoretically additional eating places can be provided, it is doubtful if sufficient staff could be obtained to work for but a few hours each day. If this system has to be maintained, the only solution is to cut out the delay at Cooma and go straight through to Kosciusko, as has already been suggested. Some system of sorting luggage and booking seats and sleepers would avoid the unpleasant free-for-all scramble that occurs at the present time. Road surfaces would have to be improved to avoid the dust nuisance. Extension of the present road would have to be made to open up more of the snowfields.

Air Transport.

Can air-liners land in blizzard conditions right in the snowfields? In winter, fogs are frequent, winds are terrific in force, and are not constant in direction. Landing fields are likely to be scarvlastoured. Transport to the various centres would still be necessary. While landings could be made at

lower levels all the year round (e.g., Jindabyne), this would involve the same disadvantages of the present combined rail-bus system.

Through Road.

This obviates the break of journey. Because of distance it cannot be accomplished overnight as comfortably as by train, with its facilities for sleepers and other conveniences. There are two alternative routes; one is a main alpine highway, opening up the whole of the snowfields. The second is an extension of the present route, perhaps down Spencer's Creek to the Snowy, and extending along the Snowy to link up with the highway at Adaminaby; this amounts to a big section of the first suggested route.

Through Rail.

If economically possible, this is the most practical means of transport, and would make the journey possible overnight, either way. It is the only method by which week-end tours (ski trains) are possible. In America, week-end ski trains are very popular. They transformed ski-ing into a national pastime overnight. It is estimated that between 1,000 and 2,000 would leave Sydney every week-end on ski trains or similar tours in summer. While the actual route of a railway is one to be determined by engineers, it should open up as much of the snowfields as possible. While it is costly to build, the savings that it would effect in the cost of the several projects contemplated may considerably offset its cost. It is obvious that transport by rail is cheapest, comparison only need be made between the present rail fare to Cooma and the bus fare to Kosciusko to bear this out. Freight must be proportionately cheaper.

If the carriage of passengers and freight with the existing volume (six trains a week) between Sydney and Cooma at present rates is profitable, then the carriage of 5,000 (i.e., 10,000 a fortnight, the aimed-at accommodation) a week, with provisions, etc., necessary to maintain them, over the full distance must be more profitable at less than the present combined fare.

Fletcher's Wood, Alpine Hut.

Second prize, N.S.W. Photographic Competition. R. Adams



"Australian Arlberg," photo C. W. Wyatt, facing north from ridge above the Grandstand. The gully immediately in the foreground runs directly into Northcote Canyon at the foot of the slope below Lake Albina. Carruthers is the highest point on the skyline. The sunken valley (almost centre) runs into "Little Austria," the fissure between Carruthers West Spur and the intervening, unnamed ridge running off the back of Lee (extreme right). Tuynam West Spur in the background. Watson's Crag, between these two spurs is practically obscured.

Conclusion.

Estimates should be made of the capital and running costs of all methods, the savings in building costs of all projects by the different systems must be taken into account. Finally, comparisons of the estimated fares and freight rates, on the basis of the estimated number of people and freight that would be carried, must be made. Unless the journey can be made overnight by train, it is likely that most people will prefer to travel by private car. After all, the return journey only means the consumption of about 30 gallons of petrol, a little oil, and slight wear on the tyres for the private motorist (depreciation on the car would be the same whether the trip was made or not). Irrespective of the number carried, the total cost of the trip would be less than a single return journey by rail and bus. Leaving Sydney at 5 a.m., the journey is completed almost as soon as the present bus arrives, although the train leaves the previous night.

If, however, the journey can be made in a sleeper overnight by rail, most people will prefer that way of travel. Through rail is the only system that will make possible week-end tours, and bring Kosciusko within the reach of overseas visitors on cruises, even

though their stay in port is limited to a few days. As the railways have much to gain by taking the railway through into the snowfields and much to lose if it is not, they should be asked to estimate its cost and the amount of passengers and freight (also rates) that would be required to make it pay. It can then be seen if it is an economic proposition.

Selection of Sites

Extent of Suitable Skiing Country.

The snowfields extend from the Victorian border north to Kiandra. It is unfortunate that the greater part of the northern section between Jargunal and Kiandra generally does not fulfil the previous requirements laid down. There are some good slopes, but generally they are isolated. Kiandra and Adaminaby are the only points served by road outside those on the Kosciusko-Summit road. From Jargunal south, particularly between Tate and the summit, especially on the west side, which rivals the best overseas, lies the best ski-ing terrain. Unfortunately, it is fairly inaccessible, except near the southern end close to the summit road. The Grey Mare Range, running parallel on the west, promises good trail running, but it is most inaccessible

of all. The area bounded in the triangle formed between the Ram's Head Range and the Main Range, south of a line east and west through Smiggin Holes, comprises good ski-ing country, and is the only good ski-ing terrain at present accessible. Unfortunately, Hotel Kosciusko is just below the snow line, and suffers all the disadvantages mentioned earlier. While the maximum use of it should be made, expenditure on it should be kept at a minimum, and the more suitable ski-ing centres concentrated upon. Betts Camp and the Chalet, the remaining other present accommodation houses, are well situated, although the former needs additions (see plan submitted) to make it habitable.

Sites Recommended.

Although the question of which transport system is finally determined upon will influence the selection of sites, no matter what one is determined upon, its final section (it may be taken past Kosciusko to link up with Victoria) nearing Kosciusko will follow the route up the Snowy and through the Perishers to the Chalet, and link up with the present Hotel to Charlotte Pass Road. It is therefore possible to select at least a few centres that will be accessible in any case.

First, we have the Chalet, with its existing machinery and facilities that are capable of serving a larger community. The terrain is suitable for ski-ing, and is within reach of a big section of the best ski-ing slopes of the main range, and it is obvious that this is an eminently suitable site for one of the centres.

Next, we select a site in the Perishers, hitherto undeveloped, which enjoys the maximum winter season. Good slopes, well sheltered, easy of access by any of the transport systems.

Irrespective of transport system, a centre in the Pound's Creek area must be our next choice. It is in the heart of the best ski-ing area on the Main Range, and has surrounding slopes affording a variety of runs of 1500 feet. It will open up much of the Western Face. Even at present it only needs slightly more than a road down Spencer's Creek (or alternatively direct from the gap overlooking Betts Camp) to make it accessible. It is in close proximity to any route that comes up the Snowy Valley.

There are other sites along the present road that are suitable, e.g., Mt. Guthrie, Betts Camp area, but it is advisable that as much of the ski-ing country as possible should be opened up, rather than concentrate all centres along the one valley. Further selection of centres must be left until the question of transport is determined. Subject to accessibility, the following sites must receive consideration: Snowy Valley between Etheridge and Clarke; Hedley Tarn—Blue Lake area; White's River; Mt. Jargunal. Further observation is required before any recommendation can be made to sites on the Western Face; they may or may not be too exposed. In the meantime, two shelter huts on Townsend West and Twynam West should be built, so that a few days could be spent in exploration of possibilities there. At present, only hurried trips are possible, because of lack of shelter in that area.

Immediate Plan.

The most pressing requirement is to open all available accommodation and make the maximum use of it. Existing huts, particularly Betts Camp (on lines suggested in sketch already submitted), should be improved and made more habitable. A chain of huts along the Main Range be-

tween Adaminaby and Kosciusko should be established by erecting new huts and improving some already built, and thus open up the greater part of the snowfields. Adaminaby is reasonably close enough to the best part of the snow-belt to be considered as the northern terminal. It is far more suitable than Klandra, which is more like a "ghost" town. The construction of a short road from Adaminaby to the snow-line, where a hut as a "hopping-off" place should be built, would give easy access. While the present time, because of high costs, is not opportune to consider reductions in tariffs or fares, some attempt should be made towards evening-out winter and summer tariffs. Endeavours should be made to attract more people throughout the summer season (e.g., rodeos, riding and hiking tours, etc.).

The next thing is to speed up transport by eliminating delay at Cooma, etc. Experiments should be made to see if it is practical to transport visitors right through to their destination, and get them there at the earliest possible. A system for transferring luggage at Cooma and booking berths, etc., should be arranged to avoid the confusion and necessity to line up for bookings at the station. If possible, arrivals and departures should be spread evenly over the week. It is pointed out that one big objection to mid-week arrival in the past was that the only transport from Cooma was by mail-car, which, serving all places along the route, did not arrive in Kosciusko until 1 p.m.—six hours after arrival at Cooma.

The two shelter huts on the Western Face should be built immediately, both as a safety precaution and so that conditions there can receive closer observation and let experiences gained guide future development in this part, which is the finest ski-ing ground in Australia. Other exploratory huts should be built at the more inaccessible places on the west of the Main Divide between Jargunal and the Victorian border. Some kind of a crossing over the Snowy near Pound's Creek Hut must be built. The crossing is extremely dangerous, and has nearly caused fatalities on several occasions. Crossings should also be built over all open streams along the regular tour line of the Main Range.

The next step is the commencement of the three centres that have been definitely selected: (1)

At the Chalet. (2) In the valley between the Back and Front Perishers. (3) Pound's Creek Valley. (1) and (2) are already accessible by road; (3) only requires a short road to be built, either down Spencer's Creek or around the southern end of the Perisher facing Betts Camp over the gap and down to the Snowy (it will have to be built in any case). Each of these three centres should be developed to accommodate about 250 each, which, with other existing buildings, will provide accommodation for about 1,000 people.

It is unlikely that the Trust will have sufficient funds to carry out development as fast as it would like, and it is therefore recommended that sites at each centre be made available to private enterprise to run guest houses, etc., on conditions that will be mutually agreeable. Utility services at each centre, or to serve all centres, should be controlled by the Trust through a body established to undertake such work (power and water supply, wood cutting, etc.). Ski-lifts will be wanted near all centres. It is suggested that overseas firms who have had a deal of experience in this work will be willing to make such installations, and guarantee their successful operation. Since the ski-lift at the Chalet appears to have been more costly than those overseas, and has not been altogether satisfactory in operation, this matter should be thoroughly investigated.

During this period, the question of transport should have been settled, routes determined, and on the way to completion. Further centres should not be started until they are accessible. Nevertheless, it is recommended that some "Camps" should be built throughout the length of the Park to open up the snowfields and provide accommodation for tour parties. From "Camps" a thorough exploration of the snowfields can be made, and the possibilities of additional centres determined.

Long Range Plan.

This begins with the determination of the transport question. The first stage is the building of roads and/or railway, which have to be operating sufficiently to transport materials and labour to the selected centres. By this time, the immediate plan will have been completed. Each year, two new sites should be selected and developed to accommodate 250 each

and the already selected sites increased to accommodate an additional 500 between them, making a total increase of 1,000 each year. Each year, it can be determined whether this increase is too fast or too slow, and the plan modified or accelerated as required. The experience gained each year will be the guide in the selection of new centres, and the type of accommodation most required. Each year, a tentative selection of sites for the next year should be made, and their possibilities explored; the area of the Park is so huge

that its possibilities will take many years to unfold. Therefore the advantages and disadvantages of every proposed site must be fully investigated, so that there will be no prospect of a more desirable site being overlooked.

At some stage of the plan, access must be provided to people coming from southern States or from the Riverina and thereabouts. Much will depend on the decision for road or rail, or perhaps both. To open up the whole of the area, the route required would run from Kiandra south to

Finn's or White's River to the Snowy, then up the Snowy Valley to Kosciusko, south to below Ram's Head. The north end is served by road from Tumut to Kiandra, continuing on to Cooma. At Rules Point, along this road north of Kiandra, a track leads on to the outskirts of Capital Territory. The south end is only served by the Kosciusko road from Cooma. The whole of the main snowfields between Kosciusko and Kiandra are therefore generally inaccessible, and must remain so until roads or railways are built.



The Grey Mare Range and the Upper Geehi from the Kerries in Springtime.

R. Adams