

VICTORIAN SKIING—1958

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The year of 1958 may not go down in the history of Victoria as being of great significance except for one thing, it may be considered as a year in which many schemes and development projects were brought to that stage where they required only a slight push to start them off on their progress. The likeness could be made to a ship which has spent a considerable time on the slips and when it is launched requires only a small amount of final preparation to reach completion. This is the point reached in Victorian development, mainly as a result of hard work a tremendous amount of progress could take place during the year of 1959.

The first event of importance for 1958 was that the Victorian Ski Association assumed State control from the Ski Club of Victoria who had carried on in that capacity for many years. Besides controlling Victorian skiing in general, the V.S.A. has received considerable recognition from various State Government departments. This is revealed by the increasing number of Government committees on which V.S.A. nominees now sit. To quote a few, the National Parks Authority, the Mt. Buller Committee of Management, the Upper Murray Regional Development Committee as well as two special committees set up by the Forests Commission to investigate new snow fields. Other Committees of Management are proposed, all with skier representatives.

Skiers in Victoria are extremely fortunate that the Forests Commission, who control a considerable area of snowfields in this State, are extremely interested in developing these regions and have shown a most progressive and sympathetic outlook which must benefit skiers in years to come.

One of the most ambitious programmes conceived during the past winter, and

planned at the end of the snow season, was a progressive move at Mt. Buller for the formation of a "Co-operative" company to own and operate all the ski tows in the summit area.

The proposal was submitted to the Forests Commission late in 1958 and after full consideration by them, and the Mt. Buller Committee of Management, was approved in principle. The basis of the scheme was that all ski tows should be owned by the one company and that this company should be mainly controlled by skiing interests and skiers, viz., Forests Commission nominees, Committee of Management representatives and Victorian Ski Association nominees as well as shareholders representatives. It is hoped that the bulk of the money necessary will be provided by interested skiers. Although the company will be concerned with making some profit it was mainly felt that wherever possible these profits should be used for the further development of the mountain. Skiers investing would, however, gain an immediate benefit by receiving discounts on their ski tow tickets, proportionate to their financial interest in the Company as well as interest payments on their investment.

The immediate plan is to erect, for this coming winter, at least two new T-bar tows, one on the Federation Slope and the other on the Howqua slope. In addition it is proposed to immediately extend the Bourke Street to the top of Baldy. The Ski Club of Victoria, and Mr. Ernest Forras have expressed a willingness to co-operate with the new Company by "donating" their existing tows in lieu of shares. It is also proposed that a Hospice will be built on the saddle below the summit, at the head of the Koffler run. This will contain a canteen, Ski Rescue Service room and will also provide day shelter for skiers using

the slopes. There will be sufficient overnight accommodation for the tow operators and the canteen staff who will live on the job. There is every reason to expect that this hospice will be the property of the Crown and leased to the operating Company. This is an outstanding example of the splendid co-operation being given by the Forests Commission who are actively supporting the scheme.

It is expected that other tows will be installed as soon as possible and ultimately there should be an extensive ski tow "circus" operating over the whole of the mountain. This will remedy the unsatisfactory position that existed at Buller last season when tow queues reached a state where it was quicker to climb back up the slope rather than wait in line. In actual fact, the position sometimes arose on Bourke Street, during some week-ends, when it was possible to have two runs, walking up the slope on each occasion, and still be ahead of the skier waiting to use the ski tow.

Other future development for Mt. Buller includes the building of a large hostel, and presumably a ski lift, at the old Chalet site. The Victorian Government recently set aside an area of 9 acres for 75 year lease, and tenders closed at the end of January. It is hoped that an announcement will soon be made concerning the successful tenderer.

The Victorian Ski Association have for some years past, been pressing most strongly for the installation of a telephone service to the mountain and at last this is in sight. The P.M.G. has now officially advised that a radio trunk line link is in the process of installation and it is anticipated that it will be completed by the next winter season. In actual fact work is already taking place on the mountain.

Visitors to Mt. Buller will also be amazed at the amount of work being carried out on the road. The C.R.B. largely as a result of representations by

the V.S.A. have devoted some £2,000 for improvements above the old Chalet site and a considerable sum for the road up to this point. In addition the Forests Commission is also providing a vast amount of money to improve the road from Cow Camp up to the summit, mainly to facilitate the building of the hospice. The Alpine Village is still growing at an amazing rate, although there are over 55 lodges already on the mountain a further eight clubs were allotted sites during this last summer and some of these will have lodges up before the winter.

There has been some progress at Mt. Hotham but development in that area is restricted to a large extent by the lack of a Committee of Management. Although this committee was suggested in a State Development Report on the Alpine areas some nine years ago, progress is disappointingly slow. It is hoped that it will not be much longer before some further move is made. With the formation in Victoria of the new Tourist Development Authority it is hoped that this area will be assisted. The major problem is undoubtedly one of access and it is known that the Authority is giving every consideration to new ideas on this subject. There is, however, still some progress taking place, and this year will see the erection of yet another private ski lodge. However, with improved access, it would not be hard to envisage a large ski village developing within a very short time.

Victoria's other major skiing area, Falls Creek, is finally in the happy position of expecting a Committee of Management before very long. The area is under the control of the S.E.C. and has developed at an incredible rate during the last 18 months. It now boasts five ski tows as well as the first chair lift installed in Australia. This was installed a year before the well-known lift at Thredbo and has successfully operated throughout the past two winters. A further tow is proposed for this coming



Jane Tinsley and Pat Barker.

Photo: Sydney Morning Herald.

winter and this will open up the full extent of the Frying Pan spur.

Public accommodation continues to grow, as well as canteens and ski schools. It is most encouraging to see these public chalets, as well as private club lodges being built. At this point, mention should be made of the unfortunate loss to the Falls Creek village early last year, when the Albury Ski Clubs lodge was burnt to the ground. Unfortunately these fires are becoming all too frequent and it is sincerely hoped that the year of 1959 will go down on record as one in which there was no such occurrence.

Another significant fact concerning Australian skiing activities during this summer is the large number of our top line racing skiers who are over in Europe competing in the racing programme. It is quite obvious that many of our Australian skiers are training desperately

hard with a major objective ahead—the 1960 winter Olympics.

It is indeed noteworthy that the daily press, as well as radio and TV stations are taking an increasing interest in our winter sports. In Victoria during the winter months the A.B.C. broadcasts a weekly snow report every Thursday and Friday as a service to skiers and it is understood that a number of country broadcasting stations do likewise. More than one television station has sent cameramen up to our snowfields at various times during the past season and it was only due to technical reasons that a direct telecast was not made to Mt. Buller by a Melbourne TV station last year. With improvements in outside broadcast facilities we look forward to the time when the telecasting of National Ski Championships will be as normal as cricket or football broadcasts.