

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION BY AN OBJECTOR FOR
REVIEW OF A PLANNING DECISION

P469-2024

BETWEEN: **CROSS COUNTRY SKIING ASSOCIATION VICTORIA INCORPORATED**

Applicant

AND: **ALPINE RESORTS VICTORIA TRADING AS FALLS CREEK ALPINE
RESORT**

Respondent

AND: **MINISTER FOR PLANNING**

Responsible Authority

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GLEN [REDACTED] CLARK

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WITNESS STATEMENT

I, Glen [REDACTED] Clark of [REDACTED] do say as follows:

1. I am a qualified cross country ski instructor and owner of a Winter seasonal business, called Traverse Hotham. My business has provided cross country ski instruction and tours since 2018 at Mount Hotham Alpine Resort and Dinner Plain. I reside on-mountain each Winter season. For an additional two years prior (commencing 2016), my wife and I also lived and worked seasonally at Mt Hotham. We have long been regular users of Mt Hotham's cross country ski trails.

Negative impact of road clearing on nearby ski trails

2. At Hotham, the otherwise excellent cross country ski trail network suffers the scourge of having the Great Alpine Road bisecting it. It brings with it the following consequences for the snow conditions on nearby trails:
 - (a) hazards from boot holes caused by walkers, thanks to the easy access to trails from the road;
 - (b) risks from illegal tobogganing facilitated by easy road access;
 - (c) dirt and mud dragged by oversnow vehicles and trail groomers which have to cross the cleared road as well as from the boots of abovementioned walkers;
 - (d) windblown dust from dried road mud;
 - (e) vehicle emission pollution deposits;
 - (f) fine tyre particles; and
 - (g) grit and muck from road clearing.
3. The dirt, dust, tyre particles and other grit or mud on the snow surface causes accelerated snowmelt. This is because anything dark on or near the snow surface absorbs and transmits heat from the sun. Even the cleared road itself increases local heat which further accelerates melting, thus negatively impacting snow retention.
4. Both the snowmelt and dirty snow adversely affect the condition of trails which in turn requires constant attention in terms of staff hours to manage and alleviate. Unfortunately the Great Alpine Road is a through highway, therefore not much can be done but try to mitigate the impacts.
5. I am concerned to hear that Falls Creek is proposing to open the cross-country ski terrain there to vehicles, including cars. While the vehicle volumes are unlikely to be as high as at Mt

Hotham, there will be undoubtedly be significant negative impacts to snow quality and quantity, particularly in the area of the proposed sealed and cleared carpark, which is intended to have a ski trail running next to it.

Safety concerns

6. Further, there are serious safety issues at Mt Hotham, particularly the risk of various forms of collision. My experience there leads me to believe that the close interaction of skiers, vehicles and walkers will be a safety risk at the Project site. These issues include:
- (a) easy access to cross country ski trails encourages people to wander onto ski trails or children to toboggan on them. This puts them at risk of collision with cross country skiers moving at speed, on trails which are intended from the use of skiers;
 - (b) skiers (especially beginners) are endangered by boot hole 'craters' in otherwise smooth groomed trail surface, especially when they freeze as temperatures drop; and
 - (c) road crossings are not only a nuisance for cross country skiers, but also present a safety risk, particularly at busy times, in poor visibility conditions and when road conditions are slippery – skiers may slip over on the icy road in ski boots, while cars find it difficult to stop.
7. Falls Creek's cross country ski trails remain blissfully free of the snow quality problems and safety issues outlined in my statement. This will all change if the Project proceeds and road clearing through to the Lakeside precinct follows. Falls Creek would be effectively importing all the challenges and problems Mt Hotham has with its cross country ski trail network, to the detriment of cross country skiers and the sport overall, while also incurring more effort and costs to manage the resulting issues (if managed at all).

The evidence contained in this witness statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed:



Glen Clark

Dated: 24 September 2024

Place: HOTHAM HEIGHTS, VIC