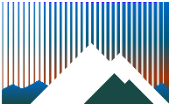


# **Falls Creek Alpine Resort**

## **2006 Strategic Management Plan**

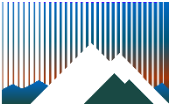
**Prepared by Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board**

**Approved by the Minister for Environment in accordance with  
Section 56 (E) of the Alpine Resorts (Management) (Amendment)  
Act 2004 on 14 June 2007**



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## 1. Chair's Message

The Falls Creek 2006 Strategic Management Plan details the strategies and initiatives proposed by the Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board for the five year period from 2006. These are consistent with the Alpine Resorts 2020 Strategy and are designed to realise the vision for Falls Creek to be Australia's most enjoyable and environmentally responsible all season alpine resort.

Headline objectives for Falls Creek are to enhance guest's winter season enjoyment, operators' viability, and to promote Falls Creek as an all season alpine destination to a wider market. These objectives are being pursued in co-operation with stakeholders. Key areas for attention during the planning period are as follows:

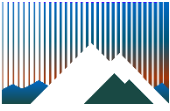
- Master planning for resort development and sustainability
- Transport and access to and around the resort
- Improved and expanded winter activities
- Enhanced environmental focus, together with a stronger strategic and operational alignment with the natural assets of the resort and region.
- Establishment of Falls Creek as an important all season alpine destination and community

The Alpine Resorts 2020 Strategy provides a clear framework for the future development, use and conservation of Victoria's alpine resorts and the potential for enhanced tourism and recreation. The 2006 Falls Creek Strategic Management Plan is consistent with this strategy.

The vision for Falls Creek is as a trail head of accommodation and food and wine and as a resort and community centre working with tourism operators who offer guided walking trips, cultural and heritage experiences, nature and adventure options, and servicing the independent traveller, sportsperson, walker or cyclist. The market for such alpine all season offerings is international and interstate, as well as local.

Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board has sought and received valuable input throughout past years on strategic and planning issues for the Resort. A draft of this Strategic Management Plan was widely released with an invitation to submit comments for consideration in the drafting of a final document. Comments were received from a variety of stakeholders and these have been incorporated as deemed appropriate in this Plan.

Feedback received has provided context for this document as well as for the growth and development of the Resort, and for a range of plans and initiatives including the Resort's Alpine Planning Framework, a range of other plans, and planning overlays.



## 2. Scene Setting

### 2.1 Resort profile

Falls Creek is Victoria's largest alpine resort and is a major tourist destination in North East Victoria. The resort is set on the edge of the Bogong High Plains at altitude ranging from 1210 to 1849 m over an area of 1535 hA. The resort is surrounded by the Alpine National Park and is easily accessible from two major population centres in Melbourne and Sydney, from Albury, plus air, road, and rail hubs. The resort comprises a 5000 bed village and associated infrastructure.

In addition to the availability of snow sports, the resort lends itself to a wide variety of all seasons activities. The surrounding region is a growing tourist destination with an expanding gourmet food and wine reputation. The region also enjoys a rich indigenous and European culture and heritage.

Falls Creek attracts 400,000 plus visitor days each year. Visitation to the resort is currently heavily biased to the winter season although the resort offers outstanding potential as a genuine all seasons resort. Resort infrastructure is currently significantly underutilised outside the snow season.

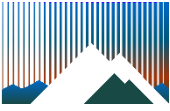
Falls Creek contributes significantly to the economy of the region. The operation of the resort impacts upon regional employment, business returns, investment attraction, and property returns. The resort generates significant seasonal employment, particularly in the nearby towns, and provides recreational opportunities and environmental values to both the local and wider community. The report on the Economic Significance of the Australian Alpine Resorts completed by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research in June 2006 indicated that the Victorian Alpine resorts contribute \$505 million of additional gross state product and over 6500 additional equivalent employment opportunities.

Falls Creek Resort Management is an organisation with assets comprising Crown land, public utilities, and infrastructure assets. Annual revenues are approximately \$7 million. Expenditure is primarily directed to visitor services, resort promotion, and infrastructure services including road, water, sewerage, and waste management.

### 2.2 SWOT Analysis

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats directly relating to the current and future operation of the resort can be summarised as follows;

- Strengths  
Key strengths include the resort's alpine location adjacent to the National Park, proximity to major population centres, developed infrastructure, a mostly pedestrian village that offers ski-in ski-out under good snow conditions, resort altitude that currently provides reliable natural winter snowfalls plus all seasons altitude training for athletes, the premier cross country skiing terrain in the country, access to Rocky Valley dam for reliable snow making and village water supply and for recreation, existing snow making capacity, general location



in a developed and growing tourist destination region, stable political environment, and climate that is conducive to all seasons tourism.

- **Weaknesses**

Weaknesses that affect the operability and success of the resort include the degree of current reliance on a winter market, accessibility of the resort, the guest arrival and departure experience, the current lack of a village “gateway”, the lack of a contemporary master plan for the resort, low levels of visitation outside winter, sub-optimal coordinated marketing of the resort, including the current website, and lack of clear wayfinding signage leading to and throughout the resort.

- **Opportunities**

Opportunities available to the resort and region include increased international visitation due to globalization, the benefits that might be derived from the sealing of the Bogong High Plains Road, scope to develop one or more iconic resort features such as an icon walk and a world class altitude training, wellness, and lifestyle centre, fostering and furthering the development of Falls Creek as the Arts mountain, the largely untapped recreation opportunities offered by Rocky Valley and Pretty Valley dams, ecotourism, the cross country ski market, development of a robust suite of all season events and products including indigenous and European culture and heritage, education and interpretation, improved coordination of all points of guest contact, coordinated marketing of the resort, improved data collection, holiday packaging options, potential market growth stemming from improved access to the resort following the recent completion of the Albury/Wodonga bypass and, to a lesser extent, the Craigieburn bypass, evolution of planning and leasing policies and procedures to attract and facilitate desirable investment, the implementation and maintenance of leading connectivity and communication, environmental and sustainable living leadership, environmental management, and climate change studies.

- **Threats**

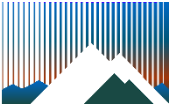
The key threat to the future viability of the resort is climate change. Included in this threat is the future likelihood of decreased natural snowfalls and increased prevalence of bushfires. Other significant threats include the increasing range of affordable recreation options for current visitors, energy costs that impact visitor travel budgets, the number of sites with short remnant lease terms, the lack of developed all season product, and land stability.

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats listed above have all been taken into account in the preparation of this Plan.

### **2.3 2005 Guest Profile**

The profile of the winter guest at Falls Creek is dominated by persons travelling within a group (41.5%) or family party (30.9%). The average Falls Creek winter travelling party comprises five people.

Falls Creek receives a large proportion (42.4%) of winter guests from outside Victoria. Interstate guests source from Queensland (9 %), NSW (16.9%), South Australia (9.2%), and WA (5.6%), with a small minority of Tasmanian (1%) and international guests (0.8%). In the five year life of this strategic plan, it is planned to further develop interstate and international visitation while deepening local interest and support. For example, there is the opportunity to capitalise on the



excellent reputation and international media coverage garnered by Falls Creek's international cross country ski event, the Kangaroo Hoppet.

Visitation to the North East region of Victoria is, concurrently, growing strongly. There is also an inverse and complementary seasonal relationship between alpine and lower country visitation, and there are significant opportunities to enhance the non winter visitation to the region for the benefit of all. Visitor numbers in non-winter seasons to Falls Creek show increases over 10 year averages, and peak markedly for organised events.

As an all season resort Falls Creek caters for those seeking both passive and active leisure experiences. One important non-winter guest group is sportspeople and athletes who visit Falls Creek for altitude training. These guests include international and local elite athletes, school, university, and other sporting groups from Victoria and interstate. The majority of athletes who currently train at Falls Creek are middle to long distance runners, tri-athletes, and rowers.

The references throughout this document to families or the guest party should be read to incorporate the range of guests mentioned above.

### **3. Falls Creek Resort Management Vision, Mission, and Values**

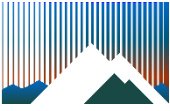
#### **3.1 Vision**

Australia's most enjoyable and environmentally responsible all season alpine resort.

#### **3.2 Mission**

Falls Creek Resort Management:

- enhances the experience of all guests visiting Falls Creek;
- facilitates investment in sustainable all season recreation opportunities and development at the resort;
- delivers long term sustainable social and economic benefits to the local and regional community and to the people of Victoria;
- embraces the precautionary principle and preserves the natural environment and heritage for future generations;
- respects and celebrates indigenous and European culture and heritage and protects the interests and rights of Indigenous Australians;
- maintains and manages the public assets of the resort and administer Crown leases and licences within the resort;
- is an employer of choice with strongly held organisational values



### 3.3 Values

Falls Creek Resort Management staff have developed and are committed to a set of values that provide a safe, efficient, effective, and inclusive internal operational and business environment. These values provide the basis for delivery of a positive experience for every guest visiting the resort.

- **Safety First**  
Our concern for safety, health and the environment is paramount.
- **Respect for People**  
We have mutual understanding and respect for each other as team mates and also for our guests.
- **Teamwork**  
Our own individual success comes from our contribution to team efforts and commitment to team goals.
- **Integrity**  
We are consistent, trustworthy and transparent in the way we do business
- **Environmentally aware**  
Falls Creek's natural environment is our greatest asset, which we strive to protect and enhance.

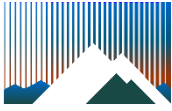
## 4. Planning Framework

The Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997 as amended requires that “the Board of an alpine resort must commence to prepare a Strategic Management Plan for the resort.”

The purpose of the Strategic Management Plan is to provide for long term planning and to identify strategic objectives and directions for the promotion, management, use and development of the resort.

The 2006 Falls Creek Strategic Management Plan is one of three key documents that direct and influence the development of Falls Creek and which supports the legislative objectives and framework set out in the Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997. The Alpine Resorts 2020 Strategy outlined the goals and directions to 2020 and identified specific issues and opportunities for the delivery of these directions. The Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme (Amendment C9 – Falls Creek Scheme) provides the formal framework for development within the resort.

This Plan spans a five year period from 2006 to 2011. It includes an overview of the major initiatives and activities proposed to be undertaken during this period. These have been translated into a Strategic Management Plan Implementation Plan that details specific and measurable activities and actions to be undertaken during the period 2006 to 2011 and which will be further devolved in annual corporate plans into measurable activities and actions to be undertaken in each year during the Plan period.



## 5. Strategic Approach

The 2006 Falls Creek Strategic Management Plan aligns with Victoria's Alpine Resorts 2020 Strategy. In the following sections the plan reviews the six broad issues that were identified in the 2020 Strategy and details the strategic direction, background, strategic approach, and major initiatives and activities for each issue.

The initiatives have been developed in the context of planned sustainable development of Falls Creek, respecting its unique setting amidst a fragile environment. The initiatives have been designed to appeal to a market which is changing demographically and is seeking broader experiences and destinations. Key issues in this regard include emphasis and conservation of the environment, respect for and value of heritage and authenticity of place, developing cultural richness, being a vibrant community, and integrating the natural and built environment. The contemporary guest demands a range of diverse recreational opportunities and an integrated, inviting, and efficient resort experience.

Sustainable development embraces not just environmental and economic criteria, but also social issues of community well being, local prosperity, employment opportunity, and local engagement and influence.

The creation of a vibrant resort requires a commercial environment that gains and then maintains the confidence of business operators and investors. Economic and business success is vital in attracting and retaining quality businesses and operators to the resort. These are fundamental to the future viability and attraction of the resort.

The development of the Plan thus recognises the mutual dependencies between conservation, environmental sustainability, successful tourism, economic and business success, and successful local communities. KPIs to measure especially environmental performance and social impact will be developed in conjunction with other Victorian resorts and monitored and maintained during the life of the Plan.

The realisation of the initiatives and activities detailed in this Plan can only be achieved through the development and maintenance of close working relationships, collaboration and commitment with and from authorities, stakeholders and the local community. Key parties with whom these relationships are important include the DSE, Parks Victoria, Falls Creek Chamber of Commerce, and Alpine Shire. The development of strong and enduring relationships with these and other parties is therefore key to the successful implementation of this Plan.

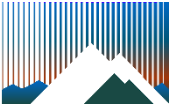
### 5.1. Climate Change

#### 5.1.1 Climate Change - Strategic direction

Falls Creek will remain committed to a snow tourism industry and proactively plan for the impacts of climate change.

#### 5.1.2 Climate Change - Background

- For some years there has been concern about the threat of climate change on the ongoing sustainability of the alpine resorts.



- As part of the research undertaken to develop the Alpine Resorts 2020 Strategy, CSIRO confirmed that as one of Victoria's higher altitude resorts, Falls Creek will be able to manage the impact of climate change and will be well positioned to continue to offer snow-based recreation.

### **5.1.3 Climate Change - Strategic approach**

While the resort will take all possible steps to mitigate against climate change, the key action for the resort will be to develop and implement adaptive responses. These include investment in snowmaking and improved slope management practices, better and multifunctional utilisation of existing assets and infrastructure, and the development of an expanded range of non snow dependent and all season guest activities. The positioning of Falls Creek as a year round resort will optimise the benefits flowing from the implementation of these initiatives.

### **5.1.4 Climate Change - Major Initiatives and activities**

- Work with the ski field lessee to improve and extend snow making facilities infrastructure.
- Maximise snow making opportunities through the best available use of frost hollows and cold air drainage areas.
- Implement new snow retention techniques including initiatives such as snow fences, shade plantings of indigenous trees.
- Reduce the impact of bad weather through encouragement of the provision of surface lifts, enclosed access lifts, snow play and junior ski school, and increased lifting capacity and snow activities in the sheltered Village Bowl,
- Encourage operation and use of lifts for walkers and mountain bikers, and extended and alternate uses for major assets such as Cloud 9 to increase utilisation and hence return on ski specific infrastructure.

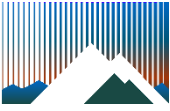
## **5.2. Resort use and visitation**

### **5.2.1 Resort use and visitation - Strategic direction**

Falls Creek will provide high quality experiences, facilitating safe access to the alpine environment for recreational use through both the winter and non winter seasons.

### **5.2.2 Resort use and visitation - Background**

- Falls Creek has positioned itself as a flexible and appealing resort attracting guests in groups of friends and families from Victoria, interstate, and to a limited extent, from overseas.
- Through revitalisation of the village, renewed confidence and a focus on product development and improved service, Falls Creek has experienced an increase in resort visitation above industry average.



- The Falls Creek value proposition is centred on guests feeling welcomed into the community and sharing great experiences. Recent research across all alpine resorts in Australia shows a level of satisfaction with the Falls Creek experience above industry averages.
- The location of Falls Creek in an alpine environment at the gateway to the Bogong High Plains provides outstanding visitor integration opportunities between the resort and the Alpine National Park for Bogong High Plains experiences.

### **5.2.3 Resort use and visitation - Strategic approach**

Falls Creek enjoys an abundance of natural assets and has an increasing availability of a range and quality of guest amenities that provide the basis for high quality year round experiences. For guests to have the best possible experience when they visit Falls Creek every touch point needs to be a positive experience from the time of initial research to booking to arrival at the resort. Consistent with this a “one mountain” guest focused experience is being implemented by the major operators in 2006.

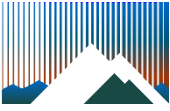
By offering quality and consistency to the guest when they visit the resort and the region this will encourage longer stay and greater spend during their stay. This can be enhanced by the development of a range of skills in tourism and hospitality consistent with a premier resort.

Falls Creek has achieved a market reputation for sports respite and altitude training. There is ample scope to further develop facilities to grow this market and build on this reputation.

Additional promotion of the region as a destination will also provide greater incentive to the guest to visit Falls Creek in all seasons.

### **5.2.4 Resort use and visitation - Major initiatives and activities**

- Drive, support and facilitate the development of major tourism and recreational assets, including the development of two major attractions and a range of other facilities to complement the range of soft to harder adventure and nature based tourism activities in the Alpine National Park. The major attractions targeted are world class altitude training facilities and an Australian alpine icon walk on the Bogong High Plains. The altitude training facilities would be carefully designed to cater for broader guest and community use in addition to elite athletes.
- Support and facilitate the development of other facilities including the Bogong High Plains bike track, the Rocky Valley Lake trail, Bogong High Plains heritage and nature experiences, a heritage trail linking Mt Beauty, Bogong Village, Howman’s Gap, and Falls Creek, and the general promotion of Falls Creek, the Kiewa Valley, and Mt Beauty as one region.
- Develop conference facilities, promote Falls Creek as the gateway and trailhead for the Bogong High Plains, and enhance tourism interpretation products embracing Falls Creek, the Bogong High Plains, and the region.
- Develop increased options for winter visitors such as enhanced cross-country skiing facilities, access and improved snow play and non-skier options.
- Broaden the positioning of the resort to embrace winter markets that are beyond, yet complementary to, traditional snow sports activities.



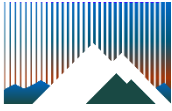
- Create a strong and varied year round events program, focused on sport, the arts, heritage, and food and wine. Build on the reputation of Falls Creek as the Arts Mountain.
- Review all points of contact, including transport, information, accommodation booking and signage, to ensure the end to end experience is easy and enjoyable.
- Improve promotion through the website, cross promotion and co-operation, targeted marketing and increased visibility of events in the village and use of resort ambassadors.
- Encourage/facilitate whole of resort customer service training.
- Create a comprehensive database to understand and improve offerings to guests. Measure guest satisfaction to determine the effectiveness of initiatives and introduce improvements where required.
- Develop and promote packaging options incorporating travel and regional product.
- Work collaboratively with BART, NEVTi, ART, Tourism Victoria, Tourism Australia, and other resorts to promote all seasons alpine and regional tourism
- Work with partners to position the Falls Creek Visitor Information Centre and the Alpine Discovery Centre as viable promotional, product development and information gateways to the Upper Kiewa Valley and Bogong High Plains.
- Attract and retain a larger permanent population and skilled workforce to provide improved all season service levels.
- Promote and support the development of a range of skills in tourism and hospitality consistent with a premier resort.
- Target communication and marketing to support the repositioning of Falls Creek as an all seasons resort.
- Develop product, information and events through working with Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability and the Environment, nature and environmental groups, the indigenous community, Mt Beauty community, wine and food operators, adventure operators, accommodation providers, local community groups, chambers of commerce, and the hydro scheme operator.
- Institute means to provide guests with transparency on accommodation standards and style.
- Continuously review and seek improvements to the content and currency of the website.

### **5.3. Development of Falls Creek**

#### **5.3.1 Development of Falls Creek- Strategic Direction**

Falls Creek will enhance the visitor experience by providing an attractive, ecologically sustainable mountain village that has local character and a distinct sense of place in the landscape.

The future sustainable development of Falls Creek is dependent upon a robust master plan and planning process. With such a planning framework in place, the key aspects of this strategic direction are encouraging and facilitating major investment in Falls Creek, providing improved transport access to and within Falls Creek and facilitating the development and improvement of village infrastructure.



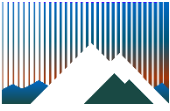
### **5.3.2 Development of Falls Creek- Encouraging and facilitating major investment in Falls Creek**

#### **5.3.2.1 Development of Falls Creek- Encouraging and facilitating major investment in Falls Creek - Background**

- Consistent with developed future planning for the village, a number of significant areas have been identified as appropriate for further development and upgrade. These include the Village Plaza where a major new development, the so called St Falls project, is now under construction. The Victorian Government supported Gateway project, in conjunction with the St. Falls Development will provide an arrival precinct for the village. A new master plan for the resort will be developed in the near future and this plan will incorporate other potential development in the Village Bowl, Village Bowl, Gully precinct, and Windy Corner, in addition to seeking to fully leverage the benefits that will flow from the sealing of the Bogong High Plains Road.
- Regulatory and statutory requirements have been heightened over recent years. Despite the fact that there has been significant investment in the village in recent years, all facilities have not been upgraded consistent with current standards. The fabric and aesthetic of some facilities are also not consistent with a contemporary alpine village.
- The Falls Creek Design and Siting Guidelines, the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme and the alpine lease terms, are key tools to improve the urban design of the resorts and ensure strategic alignment between site-holders and wider Falls Creek objectives.
- Currently there is no prospectus to facilitate investment in Falls Creek. The resort attracts a number of quality investors with alpine experience due to the strength of the investment opportunity and the processes employed.
- Planning and lease approval policies and processes are perceived to be complicated and extended.
- Falls Creek has been successful in attracting government funding and financial commitments to major projects and smaller initiatives.

#### **5.3.2.2 Development of Falls Creek- Encouraging and facilitating major investment in Falls Creek - Strategic approach**

Investment in Falls Creek is dependent on the availability of opportunity, the ease and speed with which those opportunities can be converted into development and the level of confidence an investor has that a major investment in Falls Creek will provide a return. It is also dependent on the extent to which public funding can be secured to support private investment. The encouragement and facilitation of investment in Falls Creek requires the availability of a comprehensive master plan that identifies potential private development areas and public infrastructure needs within the village and resort boundary. It further requires the development and clear communication of policies and processes to facilitate development plus promotion of future opportunities available for investment at Falls Creek.

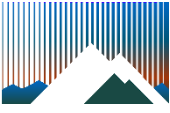


The retention and evolution of the character of Falls Creek as a contemporary alpine village will require the progressive modernisation and upgrading of facilities. This will also be necessary to meet heightened regulatory and statutory requirements.

Utilisation of the planning scheme and master planning for the resort will ensure all development within the Resort meets strategic objectives and responds to environmental, cultural heritage, ecological, economic, aesthetic, and safety considerations.

### **5.3.2.3 Development of Falls Creek- Encouraging and facilitating major investment in Falls Creek - Major initiatives and activities**

- Develop internal mechanisms to create an operational environment that understands and is able to efficiently respond to stakeholder and investor issues, opportunities, and proposals.
- Further develop the Master plan and Alpine Planning Scheme for Falls Creek.
- Develop a village site plan that identifies all land potentially available for development immediately and in the future and reviews the status of all existing sites. Include pedestrian access requirements in public precincts and improve linear access lines throughout the Village.
- Promote Falls Creek as a place to invest.
- Review planning policies and application assessment processes to ensure proposals add to the attractiveness, character and distinct sense of place within the alpine landscape plus meet long term quality objectives.
- Ensure the leasing policies and assessment processes provide the strategic and operational framework to achieve the Board's objectives of providing a quality guest experience and to encourage lessees who contribute to the broader environmental and strategic goals of the resort.
- Manage releases of land development opportunities through Expressions of Interest or other public means.
- Support and facilitate the development of a range of quality accommodation
- Investigate models of affordable accommodation to attract temporary staff and permanent residents.
- Encourage the presence of police, emergency, and medical services to support and service community needs
- Ensure delivery and acquittal of major projects within contractual and financial commitments.
- Ensure compliance with planning and leasing approvals.
- Develop a register of and pursue government and private funding opportunities.
- Explore the provision of alternative forms of tourism.



### **5.3.3 Development of Falls Creek- Improve Transport Access To & Within Falls Creek**

#### **5.3.3.1 Development of Falls Creek- Improve Transport Access To & Within Falls Creek - Background**

- Falls Creek is a “remote” location not serviced by public transport. Most visitors travel to the resort by car supported by scheduled bus services that operate in the snow season from Melbourne, Albury and Mt Beauty.
- Falls Creek’s unique advantage of ski in/ski out presents arrival and pedestrian movement challenges and pressures on existing services and infrastructure.
- The sealing of the Bogong High Plains Road is expected to significantly boost already increasing all season visitation. It will provide alpine and ‘mountain to sea’ touring loops, attractive road terrain to car and bike clubs and a cleaner surfaced environment and product for athletes, walkers, and cyclists. The Resort and the Alpine National Park will both see an increase in visitor numbers and a corresponding increase in demand for well planned, managed, and maintained visitor facilities and services.
- Albury is an under-utilised arrival hub for Falls Creek with air, rail and bus terminals and a ring road under construction which will contribute to a reduction in travel time to Falls Creek.
- Opportunities exist for regional operators to collaborate to provide guest transport options.

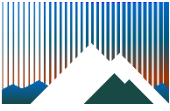
#### **5.3.3.2 Development of Falls Creek- Improve Transport Access To & Within Falls Creek - Strategic approach**

The availability of diverse, reliable, and efficient transport options to and from Falls Creek is key to the future success of the resort. In addition to ready access to the resort, guests further require easy transport around and within the resort. This requires the availability and integration of air, coach and road links to Falls Creek. Within the resort this will encompass pedestrian and snow sports links, ski lift alignment, oversnow and shuttle services. Master planning will also address linkage of village roads and pathways to other resort, National Park and High Plains trails and roads

The sealing of the Bogong High Plains Road will add an extra dimension to Falls Creek visitation through the provision of a touring loop.

#### **5.3.3.3 Development of Falls Creek- Improve Transport Access To & Within Falls Creek - Major initiatives and activities**

- Examine ways of improving the efficiency of access to Falls Creek from Melbourne and Albury airports, plus metropolitan and regional rail hubs. .
- Support the development of Albury as an air hub for both winter and summer guests. Encourage additional airlines, rail and coach operators, build relationships with car rental companies, and work with Falls Creek operators to take greater ownership of guests’ travel arrangements.
- Bring the All Seasons Gateway project to fruition to strengthen guests’ sense of arrival, to improve visitor circulation and traffic management within the resort, and to establish the Plaza event amphitheatre.



- Retain the competitive advantage of a ski-in/ ski-out village. Investigate more flexible on-snow/off-snow intra-village transport options
- Work with Oversnow to further improve terminal operations and customer experience in vehicles.
- Review the on and off-snow shuttle services offered throughout the Resort and, in conjunction with regional operators, explore the feasibility of an all season shuttle.
- Prepare village plan of existing and improved pedestrian and skier access routes.
- Undertake a master planning exercise in conjunction with Falls Creek Ski Lifts to ensure lift access is aligned with guest needs.
- Continue to work collaboratively to finalise funding to seal the Bogong High Plains Road to create a recreational and sports product and touring loop.

### **5.3.4 Development of Falls Creek- Facilitate the Development and Improvement of Village Infrastructure**

#### **5.3.4.1 Development of Falls Creek- Facilitate the Development and Improvement of Village Infrastructure - Background**

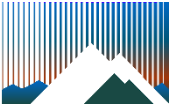
- Falls Creek enjoys well developed infrastructure that is capable of meeting current and short to medium term village needs.
- While the resort has good access to a secure water supply, work is required to address the current off take arrangement. The current off take is sub-optimally located from an engineering perspective plus has resulted in summer water quality issues due to post bushfire sediment contamination.
- There is only limited affordable permanent accommodation available on the mountain
- The forecasted aging of the Australian population in coming years will potentially increase the number of people with mobility related disabilities visiting alpine resorts.

#### **5.3.4.2 Development of Falls Creek- Facilitate the Development and Improvement of Village Infrastructure - Strategic approach**

Village infrastructure needs to support current and future guest and community demands through an understanding of the guest and their requirements, of current infrastructure capacities, and through demand forecasting. Infrastructure development needs to be proactive, especially given the limited window for construction activities. Infrastructure includes utilities, car parking, village traffic, staff accommodation, as well as guest facilities.

#### **5.3.4.3 Development of Falls Creek- Facilitate the Development and Improvement of Village Infrastructure - Major initiatives and activities**

- Undertake a master planning exercise and, where appropriate, incorporate the master plan, transport, parking, pedestrian and major development plans into the Falls Creek planning scheme. Master planning will also address Nordic skiing requirements and resort snow play areas.



- Work with key stakeholders to ensure the planning process incorporates issues identified by the Board. These issues include limiting intrusion on the ski fields, ensuring effective use of infrastructure, maintaining accessibility to facilities, maintaining a visually cohesive village, limiting environmental impact and conserving and enhancing natural assets.
- Evaluate impacts of changing Government policy and compliance requirements and development and accommodation mixes on Falls Creek infrastructure (sewerage treatment plant, water supply, staff accommodation and car parking), develop long term maintenance and infrastructure plans and funding requirements, and optimise collaborative means to deliver.
- Ensure that all village utilities, services and infrastructure are brought up to a contemporary and compliant standard; are adequately maintained and that identified future needs are incorporated in development plans.
- Design and commission new water supply off take point and treatment facilities.
- Develop a Resort Assets and Risk Management Plan to maximise life, minimise maintenance and operating costs, mitigate risks and inform investment decisions.
- Develop an Access and Inclusion Plan in consultation with stakeholders.
- Ensure statutory obligations to provide access to people with disabilities are met for all public facilities.
- Encourage private site holders to make provision for disability access

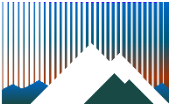
## **5.4. A Vibrant Resort**

### **5.4.1 A vibrant resort - Strategic Direction**

Falls Creek will be a vibrant economic entity, making a strong contribution to Victoria and the local region.

### **5.4.2 A vibrant resort - Background**

- Falls Creek contributes significantly to the regional and Victorian economies. The recently completed report on the Economic Significance of the Australian Alpine Resorts indicate that the Victorian resorts are a 500 million dollar industry attracting some 1.3 million visitor days in winter alone. Almost 10,000 people are employed over winter, with most of these being regional jobs.
- There are approximately 5,000 beds in Falls Creek, a large proportion of which are only available during the ski season. Increasingly, new developments are providing all season accommodation and facilities and contemporary standards.
- There is a lack of affordable staff accommodation during the winter.
- The seasonality of employment plus the availability and affordability of accommodation have negatively impacted the growth of a permanent population at Falls Creek.
- The current permanent population of Falls Creek is estimated to be 100.
- Falls Creek is the only alpine resort to operate an all season primary school
- Falls Creek has a growing requirement for structured secondary schooling and increased primary school capacity, especially in winter.



- The childcare centre and kindergarten, which are necessary to support a permanent population, operate only during the ski season
- The sub-alpine towns of Mt Beauty, Tawonga and Bright provide services and employees to Falls Creek and extensive accommodation to off-mountain guests.
- The Alpine leasing policy is intended to support the strategic use and development of alpine resorts.

#### **5.4.3 A vibrant resort - Strategic approach**

A vibrant village provides quality visitor, staff, and permanent resident accommodation with well maintained and managed sites. It also supports and provides services to a permanent community. Lease compliance requirements and the lease application process can be used to improve accommodation quality. The development of strong working relationships with stakeholders to maintain or increase community services can also contribute to this outcome.

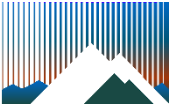
A vibrant and engaged community also requires clear and effective communication with stakeholders.

The future success of Falls Creek as a permanent viable year round resort depends on providing investment and lifestyle opportunities for small businesses that will service guests and the local community.

The resort is located in a remote, highly sensitive, but spectacular environment that attracts guests but is more costly to develop and operate than in other locations. A key challenge is to encourage and support the development and business investments that are necessary to bring vibrancy and economic prosperity to the resort while maintaining guardianship of the unique environment.

#### **5.4.4 A vibrant resort - Major initiatives and activities**

- Investigate the feasibility of operating an all season childcare centre and kindergarten.
- Facilitate the provision of suitable primary and secondary educational facilities.
- Develop lease policies and consistently apply lease terms and lease assessment criteria to lease compliance and new lease applications to support and encourage operators willing to invest and make facilities accessible in all season.
- Work with stakeholders and possible funding partners to develop models for affordable housing and community facilities.
- Investigate options to provide more affordable accommodation and investment opportunities to permanent residents and employees of Falls Creek.
- Work with Falls Creek ski clubs to develop a new generation club lodge model that will meet the accessibility and quality needs of the resort and introduce new guests to the alpine region in all seasons.
- Investigate models to enable potential operators willing to operate outside of the snow season to access accommodation or facilities that would otherwise be non-operational.
- Support and encourage new business ventures that provide local services to the resort community.



- Work with stakeholders to improve services to the Falls Creek permanent community.
- Explore models and opportunities to establish multi-use opportunities for sport, community, education, and visitor use.
- Establish effective communication plans and platforms for all stakeholder groups
- Support and facilitate leading edge connectivity and communication capabilities

## **5.5 Environmental Management**

### **5.5.1 Environmental Management - Strategic direction**

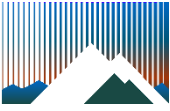
The future management and development of Falls Creek will be undertaken within an ecologically sustainable framework.

### **5.5.2 Environmental Management - Background**

- Falls Creek is the first alpine resort to be Green Globe 21 benchmarked – the international certification program for ecologically and socially sustainable tourism. This is a key point of difference relative to other resorts.
- Falls Creek has instituted a number of environmentally responsible programs including “A tree from me”, a goal of having a plastic bag free village, recycling and reuse of materials during the deconstruction of a major development, revegetation works, restoration of alpine bogs, a Landcare Group, Green Power on a major access lift, and introduction of building design guidelines that include energy efficiency.
- The alpine climate and the relatively poor energy efficiency of many facilities in the resort result in Falls Creek currently being a high per capita energy user.
- The Falls Creek bioregion contains a rich diversity of native flora and fauna species. The high altitude slopes also provide the restricted habitats of numerous significant or threatened species.
- The 2003 bush fires caused significant environmental impact and loss to the resort area and the Alpine National Park and adversely impacted domestic water quality.
- Following the landslip at Thredbo in 1997, a comprehensive review of the land stability at Falls Creek has been completed. A program of remedial works stemming from the review has been actively progressed and an ongoing program to manage land stability issues is in place.

### **5.5.3 Environmental Management - Strategic approach**

Ecological sustainability requires ongoing consideration and management of the environment in all activities at Falls Creek and in the surrounding Alpine Park. In addition to the environment being a prime consideration in all aspect of resort planning and operation, education and promotional programs can be used to stimulate environmental awareness among stakeholders and guests, to foster support and ownership for environmental initiatives and as a point of market attraction.



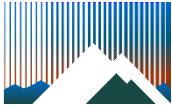
While Falls Creek has access to abundant water from the Rocky Valley Lake, water conservation and water management practices are important issues, especially given the location of the resort in an environmentally sensitive environment and at the headwaters of a major catchment.

Land stability issues remain an important aspect of the ongoing management of the resort.

The development and application of construction standards matched to the alpine environment and the installation of energy efficient appliances can enable Falls Creek to better meet its environmental objectives.

#### **5.5.4 Environmental Management - Major Initiatives and activities**

- Engage and educate guests and stakeholders/owners in environmental programs such as weed eradication, revegetation/clean up of alpine bogs and annual clean up days.
- Continue working with the ski field lessee to protect, enhance, and restore vegetation communities.
- Continue rehabilitation of degraded areas to achieve a net vegetation gain.
- Maintain alpine flora and fauna in as healthy and robust condition as possible.
- For bushfire affected areas, continue with revegetation and planting programs to allow natural regeneration and continue to monitor and manage the ingress of exotic species in fire affected areas.
- Develop and maintain a fire management plan for Falls Creek.
- Work with the ski field lessee to develop long term potable water and snowmaking water supply systems.
- Continue to manage the land stability program.
- Actively promote, encourage, and support the adoption of the Keep Winter Cool program by all stakeholders and guests.
- Develop communications strategy for promotion of Falls Creek's environmental performance.
- Undertake regular energy audit of Resort Management facilities and operations; develop and implement plan to action audit items.
- Develop support programs for stakeholders and assist them to meet benchmark levels of performance.
- Encourage stakeholders to participate in Green Globe 21 benchmarking.
- Work with industry stakeholders to create an enviro-performance award.
- Develop program to retrofit public and private buildings with energy efficient heating, lighting, and appliances, plus water conserving plumbing fittings.
- Ensure all new developments incorporate energy efficient design principles
- Maintain and periodically review Falls Creek's Environmental Management Plan. Plan to include minimisation of impact on catchment hydrology.
- Incorporate environmental sustainability into all policies for resort development and operations.



- Develop and maintain a robust risk profile that covers all activities undertaken by Falls Creek Resort Management; implement developed strategies to maintain inherent risks at acceptable levels
- Educate and train staff in sustainability issues on an ongoing basis.

## **5.6 Embrace Our Role as a Steward of Public Land**

### **5.6.1 Embrace our role as public land steward - Strategic direction**

Falls Creek Resort Management will embrace its stewardship role across the resort, working cooperatively with its communities.

The key aspects of this strategic direction are interlinking Falls Creek Alpine Resort with the surrounding areas and communicating effectively with stakeholder groups.

### **5.6.2 Embrace our role as public land steward - Interlinking Falls Creek with the surrounding areas**

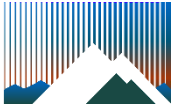
#### **5.6.2.1 Embrace our role as public land steward - Interlinking Falls Creek with the surrounding areas - Background**

- Falls Creek is located on publicly owned land, which is managed for and on behalf of all Victorians. The wealth of Victoria is grown through the optimal management of Crown assets.
- Indigenous Australians have visited and lived in and around Falls Creek during annual movements over the summer for thousands of years.
- Falls Creek is the gateway to the Bogong High Plains, a unique alpine setting.
- Falls Creek and the Bogong High Plains share a strong and interesting European history that includes early exploration, gold, high country cattle grazing, and hydroelectricity
- Falls Creek is located in fragile alpine environment that represents only 0.9% of Australia's land mass.

#### **5.6.2.2 Embrace our role as public land steward - Interlinking Falls Creek with the surrounding areas - Strategic approach**

Falls Creek Resort Management engages and works with Parks Victoria and other land managers and agencies to improve and capitalise on linkages to the adjoining Alpine National Park and Rocky Valley Lake. This enables the benefits of these assets to be available to all Victorians in a safe and environmentally sensitive manner without damaging significant historic places or flora and fauna.

It is important to protect and sustainably manage both indigenous and European heritage and heritage places and to engage the indigenous community on cultural heritage and interpretation issues.



### **5.6.2.3 Embrace our role as public land steward - Interlinking Falls Creek with the surrounding areas - Major Initiatives and activities**

- Develop ecotourism, heritage, interpretation and educational products which link with the Alpine National Park.
- Plan for and provide complementary infrastructure, services and access from Falls Creek to the Alpine National Park and Rocky Valley Lake.
- Identify, record, and assess significant historic places, alpine flora and fauna and protect these from damaging human activity. Provide appropriate access and interpretation of the culture, heritage and environment of the Resort or region.

### **5.6.3 Embrace our role as public land steward - Communicate effectively with stakeholder groups**

#### **5.6.3.1 Embrace our role as public land steward - Communicate effectively with stakeholder groups - Background**

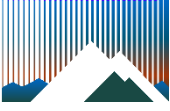
- Falls Creek has a large number of stakeholders from far-spread locations with diverse interests. Many Falls Creek stakeholders do not reside in or visit the resort outside of the ski season.  
The level of development and progress across a range of areas creates a vital need to keep all relevant stakeholders informed.

#### **5.6.3.2 Embrace our role as public land steward - Communicate effectively with stakeholder groups - Strategic approach**

Robust communication and relationship development plans provides the base tools to effectively engage all stakeholders. A consultative approach further enables stakeholders to provide feedback and therefore input to the decision making processes.

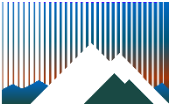
#### **5.6.3.3 Embrace our role as public land steward - Communicate effectively with stakeholder groups - Major Initiatives and activities**

- Implement communication and relationship development plans to effectively engage with all stakeholders.
- Ensure that policies and procedures, especially those relating to leasing and planning issues, are visible, and transparent to stakeholders.
- Continue to educate and inform stakeholders as to issues relevant to especially new investment in the resort plus current leasing and planning requirements for existing investors and businesses.
- Foster strong and cooperative working relationships with relevant Government agencies and statutory authorities.



## **6. Implementation and action plan**

As noted in Section 4. Planning Framework, this Plan spans a five year period from 2006 to 2011. It includes an overview of the major initiatives and activities proposed to be undertaken during this period. These have been translated into a Strategic Management Plan Implementation Plan that details specific and measurable activities and actions to be undertaken during the period 2006 to 2011 and which will be further devolved in annual corporate plans into measurable activities and actions to be undertaken in each year during the Plan period.



## Appendix A: Falls Creek Profile

Falls Creek Alpine Resort is a major tourist destination in north-eastern Victoria. It provides an intensive recreational experience during the winter months and is increasingly a focus for events and activities in all seasons. The Resort is designated a Level 1 destination by Tourism Victoria and opportunities to further develop its attractiveness to visitors and its attractiveness to visitors and its tourism potential are clearly set out in Victoria's NE Regional Tourism Development Plan.

Falls Creek contributes significantly to the economy of the region and the state as a whole and its success impacts upon employment, business returns, investment attraction and property returns, in the Resort and the region. The Resort generates significant seasonal employment, particularly in the nearby towns. It also provides recreational opportunities and environmental values to both the local and wider community.

The Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board (Falls Creek Board) is responsible for the development and management of the 1,535 hectares Falls Creek Alpine Resort which is situated at an altitude of 1210 – 1849 metres, and bounded on all sides by the Alpine National Park.

Falls Creek Board assumed management of the Falls Creek Alpine Resort from the former Alpine Resorts Commission on May 1, 1998 and is accountable for the development, promotion, management and use of the Resort on a sustainable basis. It provides a diverse range of services and performs its functions in an environmentally sound way.

The Board operates under the *Alpine Resorts (Management) Act 1997*. The Act was amended in 2004. The Act sets out the objectives for the management of Victoria's alpine resorts and is supported by the Victorian Government's Alpine Resorts 2020 Strategy and the Alpine Resorts reform package of 2003. Resort use is to be for alpine recreation and tourism, in all seasons of the year; and accessible to persons from varied cultural and economic groups. The management of the resort is to be undertaken in a manner which is respectful of the alpine environment having regard to economic, environmental and cultural sustainability.

Falls Creek Board is a small organisation with assets primarily made up of Crown land, public utilities, and infrastructure assets, and has revenue of some \$7 million. In addition to planning and development activities which encourage visitation and investment, expenditure is primarily directed to essential road, water, sewerage and waste services, visitor services, and land management. As a steward for the Victorian people, the organization has an important role in protecting and enhancing the resort's unique natural environment. The Board's management role combines the functions of a land management agency, tourism authority, shire council and a water authority.

In managing the resort and in meeting its stewardship responsibilities, the Board serves the owners, the people of Victoria, and current and potential visitors to the Resort and region, and all other stakeholders. The Board aims to engender a strong spirit of common purpose and develop and sustain a quality of service and visitor experience which is world class.