

21.04 MT BAW BAW RESORT STRATEGIC STATEMENT

31/05/2012
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21.04-1 RESORT PROFILE

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Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort is the closest Alpine Resort to Melbourne, the Mornington Peninsula, the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland that offers accommodation. The Resort is located on the south-western face of the Baw Baw Plateau, bounded to the north, south and east by the Baw Baw National Park. Travel time from Melbourne is approximately 2.5 hours.

The Resort rises from 700 metres at the Gantry to 1,564 metres at the Summit of Mt Baw Baw and covers an area of 335 hectares.

The Baw Baw area falls within the lands of both the Woi Wurrung and Gunai/Kurnai language groups. It is believed that Aboriginal communities used the plateaus and ridgelines for travelling routes and to harvest Bogong moths and sub-alpine plants.

Mt Baw Baw is a major tourist destination in Gippsland contributing around \$8.6 million per annum to the La Trobe Valley economy. The Resort provides a range of both winter and summer recreational activities. During the winter period snow based activities include downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snow tubing, tobogganing, snowshoeing and snowplay. It is renowned as Victoria's affordable, family friendly 'learn to ski' destination. Summer activities include bushwalking, mountain biking, mountain boarding and wellness and cultural experiences.

During the 2010 winter season the Resort attracted approximately 67,000 visitor days, which was an increase of 26 per cent from visitor days in 2009. Since the opening of the South Face Road in 2007, summer visitation to the Resort has more than doubled from 16,500 to 47,000 in 2009/10.

The opening of the South Face Road in 2007 has created a safer and faster route which better connects the Resort to the Gippsland region. Historically access has only been possible via the Mt Baw Baw Tourist Road which is a narrow and winding route. The Mt Baw Baw Tourist Road is heavily used by logging trucks and defined by VicRoads as a 'Blackspot Road'.

Mt Baw Baw Village is located within sub-alpine woodland, dominated by snow gums with a dense shrubby understorey which provides an important backdrop to development in and around the Resort. There are an estimated 189 indigenous flora species and 11 Ecological Vegetation Classes identified within the Resort. A number of flora and fauna species are listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The majority of building development within the Resort area is confined to the Village area. The Village comprises a range of accommodation including lodges, clubs and apartments.

21.04-2 OBJECTIVES – STRATEGIES – IMPLEMENTATION

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ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

Overview

The Baw Baw plateau supports many rare and endangered species and sensitive ecological communities. Significant flora and fauna communities need to be protected, preserved and retained under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Significant communities of flora provide important habitat for rare and threatened fauna species. The integrity of flora and fauna and bio-diversity values may be threatened by pressure for expansion of Village boundaries, and inappropriate use and development both within the Village and

skifields. The siting, construction and ongoing management of buildings and activities should respect the values and contribution of significant flora and fauna to the Alpine and broader environment.

Key issues

- Ensuring sustainable use and development within the Resort to capitalise on the natural assets which are a primary focus for visitors.
- The potential for adverse environmental impacts through ongoing recreational use.
- The potential for adverse environmental impacts by disturbance of natural ecosystems during construction.
- Managing the off-site effects of development and activities at the Resort to minimise their impact.

Objective 1

- To preserve and protect the natural environment and landscape values.

Strategies

- Minimise development that may have adverse visual impacts in areas of high scenic quality or visual sensitivity.
- Ensure minimum disturbance in areas of significant flora and fauna.
- Ensure that the design and further construction of the down hill and cross country trail system minimises land disturbance and vegetation clearance.
- Minimise conflicts arising from development on sites near significant flora and fauna habitats.
- Minimise adverse environmental effects associated with the disposal of effluent and wastes generated by the development and utilisation of the Resort.
- Maintain the health of alpine and sub-alpine flora within the Resort.
- Secure the retention of native vegetation where possible.
- Ensure that where native vegetation removal is required, a Net Gain is achieved.
- Ensure all new Resort developments and projects incorporate a Habitat Hectares Assessment of native vegetation in affected areas.
- Encourage the rehabilitation of degraded areas to achieve a Net Gain.
- Ensure passive and active recreational activities are in balance with the conservation and protection of the natural environment within and adjacent to the Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort.
- Prevent the establishment of ornamental exotic flora within the Resort.

SETTLEMENT

Overview

There is potential for limited expansion of the Village within the existing Village boundary. It is important to focus on consolidation of the Village within its existing boundaries to limit intrusion on the ski fields, ensure effective use of infrastructure, maximise accessibility to facilities, maintain a visually cohesive Village and limit environmental impact.

The Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort immediately abuts the Baw Baw National Park. A sensitive transition between the National Park and the Resort needs to be maintained and preserved. Land use, recreational activities and any form of buildings or works in close proximity to the boundaries of the Baw Baw National Park need to be very carefully

considered having regard to compatibility and level of impact on scenic and environmental values.

Key issues

- The need to provide for a variety of accommodation types within the Resort for year-round use by permanent residents and visitors.
- The allocation of land for public use should aim to protect existing spaces for both skiing and congregation, and enable safe and efficient skier movement.

Objective 1

To facilitate the continued development of a year-round Resort with a recognised Village centre and diverse recreational and entertainment opportunities.

Strategies

- Encourage mixed use development where appropriate including residential, commercial, entertainment, recreational and service uses.
- Encourage re-development of the existing range of commercial facilities.
- Promote the development of infrastructure, commercial and public services.
- Ensure development remains within the current Resort boundary.
- Promote consolidation of the existing developed areas of the Village.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Mt Baw Baw contributes to, and will benefit from, the further strengthening of local, regional and Alpine tourism. The greatest challenge is to ensure that the Resort continues to move towards business sustainability.

Snow tourism will continue to be the primary source of tourism visitation in the short to medium term. Key activities include downhill skiing, snowboarding, cross-country skiing and snow play. Maximising 'White Season' visitation is vital to protect and manage that income source.

Consideration should be given to use and development that will function year-round. Active or passive recreation developments which add value to the year-round use of the Resort should be facilitated. Geo-tourism experiences (tourism that focuses on the natural features) should also be considered, building on the region's Alpine, social, environmental and heritage strengths.

Key issues

- Activities need to complement the natural values of Mt Baw Baw and enhance the alpine experience, with no negative impacts for the delicate environment of the Resort or National Park.
- The potential for creating a successful year-round Resort is currently constrained by the limited range of commercial and recreational facilities.
- The limitations to the provision of expanded lift infrastructure such as potential impacts on significant fauna and flora, changes in terrain type, difficulty in integrating lift systems, and potential impacts of entering into new catchments.

Objective 1

To provide for all year-round recreation, having regard to environmental, ecological, economic, aesthetic and safety considerations.

Strategies

- Minimise the impact of seasonal variations during the snow season and maximise season length through snow-making and snow management.
- Encourage development sites to provide for a full range of all-season recreational activities to encourage conferences and related markets.
- Extend the commercial viability of the Resort by providing a balance between summer recreational facilities and a wider range of winter attractions for less active visitors.
- Reinforce the notion of cross country trails that can cater for year-round use for hiking, bicycling and walking close to the Village or for more distant trips.

TRANSPORT

Overview

The opening of the South Face Road in 2007 has created a safer and faster route which better connects the Resort to the Gippsland region. Further improvements to this road, which remains unsealed, would significantly improve visitor access and allow the promotion of a major new gateway to Mt Baw Baw.

Ensuring appropriate provision is made at the Resort for both short-term and long-term car parking for visitors, residents and commercial operators is important.

Vehicular access to the Resort and broader Gippsland Region is provided via the Tourist Road and the South Face Road. The Tourist Road becomes congested at times during the peak snow season and effective management of vehicles is critical to the visitor experience. Siting and location of appropriate transport terminals, including bus and helicopter, are important considerations for visitor attraction, ease of movement and emergencies. Sealing the South Face Road may increase year-round visitation to the Resort.

Key issues

- The provision of car parking at the Resort needs to be carefully linked with intra-Village transport to ensure ease of access and reduced congestion on principal access roads.
- Ensuring efficient access to and within Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort for visitors and emergency services vehicles.

Objective 1

To provide orderly planning and development for ease of movement by recognising the distinct roles of, and avoiding conflict between vehicle, pedestrian and skier mobility.

Strategies

- Encourage improved mobility and linkages for alpine skiers both within the skifield and to the urban areas of the Resort.
- Encourage a pedestrian only Village during the winter season and integrate pedestrian access into the Village movement network.
- Encourage the freedom of movement of skiers around and through the urban areas of the Resort and to and from the skifields.
- Encourage consolidation within the existing Village to optimise usage of existing Resort transport services.
- Provide convenient access to and departure from the Resort and skifields to reinforce positive experience.
- Recognise that enhanced access to the Resort will provide for greater visitor numbers which will require further detailed planning.

- Encourage the provision of a reliable transport service within the Resort.
- Investigate the need for strategic and convenient location of car parking.
- Encourage improvements to the Resort road networks.

Objective 2

- To ensure the adequate provision of emergency services.

Strategies

- Encourage the provision of emergency services.
- Ensure developments include consideration of the provision for medical and emergency facilities.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Overview

Servicing the Resort with sewerage, water, electricity, gas and refuse disposal is essential to the Resort's ability to operate and may dictate the visitation and population capacity. Infrastructure constraints and opportunities need to be identified to ensure future growth is adequately serviced.

Key issues

- The design, siting and construction of infrastructure must ensure that environmental protection requirements are met and applications consider sound environmental practices.

Objective 1

To ensure the development of infrastructure and commercial and public services meet the demands of and correspond to the Resort's visitors.

Strategies

- Maximise the use of existing accessible land within the Mt Baw Baw Village area.
- Ensure provision of underground reticulated services to the Resort, including electricity, sewerage, gas and telephone.
- Provide Village road and arrival facilities that cater for and give encouragement to buses and private vehicles coming to the Resort.
- Provide sufficient skifield terrain and an appropriately matched ski lift system, to match the identified needs and skill levels of alpine skiers.
- Ensure that any future cross country terrain expansion allows for the construction of shelter huts on trails, appropriate service facilities and car parking.
- Provide additional facilities that will extend the range and quality of experiences for non-skiing visitors.
- Encourage the provision of adequate drainage, kerbing, footpaths, road construction, treatment of batters, landscaping and lighting appropriate to the Mt Baw Baw Village theme in all future development to enhance the amenity of the Resort, particularly during non-winter visitation.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Overview

Building design has a significant influence on the current and future character of the Resort and its attractiveness to visitors. It is important to ensure that the design, scale, height and materials of new development within both the public and private domain are sympathetic to the surrounding built form and natural setting of the Resort. The use of stone and colours from the natural alpine palette are essential in developing a design image for the Village and are encouraged.

Aboriginal heritage material within and surrounding the Resort has undoubtedly been disturbed by the development of the Baw Baw Village and ski fields. Management of potential finds of heritage material is required under State and Commonwealth legislation.

The Resort has one identified historic site, Summit Cairn, which has been recorded on Heritage Victoria's Inventory.

Key issues

- The future siting and design of development should ensure that culturally historic places are protected.
- Maintaining the unique 'village' atmosphere through siting buildings within the alpine landscape, retention of trees and maintaining the compactness of the developed area.
- Future siting and design of development should ensure that historic places are preserved through appropriate management techniques.

Objective 1

To protect and improve identified and potential places, sites and objects of Aboriginal and European cultural, historical and architectural significance.

Strategies

- Use the best available knowledge, skills, standards and technical and community input to decisions and actions that may have a significant impact on heritage values.
- Respect all heritage values of the Resort.
- Ensure that the use and preservation of sites is consistent with conservation and heritage values.
- Ensure that future development considers the historical links to the Resort area including major cultural and scientific significance related to Aboriginal, pioneer, mining and ski history.

Objective 2

To ensure that the scale, intensity, bulk and appearance of any development is consistent with the alpine character and complements the natural systems and landscape values of the Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort.

Strategies

- Location, design and siting of developments should protect and promote vistas to the ski field and maintain and develop Village and skier networks.
- Ensure that all development is sympathetic to the landscape, and demonstrates sustainability best practice.
- Encourage development of a Village centre that provides both the visual prominence and activity focus of the locality.
- Promote development that creates a sense of arrival with the primary focus of visitor activity in a Resort 'village' atmosphere.

Objective 3

To encourage a variety of accommodation of high quality design with year-round use that enhances the amenity of the area.

Strategies

- Encourage mixed use development where appropriate for a variety of mixed residential, commercial, entertainment, recreational and service uses that are considered desirable in the Resort.
- Encourage a variety of accommodation by dwelling type and standard within the Mt Baw Baw Village area.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Overview

The water catchment for the Resort is Dam Valley, which is located in a protected valley slightly elevated above the Village. The Village is supplied by surface water from within the catchment by means of rain runoff and snowmelt.

The main issue for the catchment is the Resort's pursuit to attract larger visitor numbers in the green season. This will increase the number of bushwalkers and mountain bikers using the track through the catchment, which could increase chances of contamination to the water supply.

Key issues

- The provision of service infrastructure should not adversely affect the water quality of the catchment.
- Buildings need to be appropriately set back from waterways.
- Sediment control principles should be implemented during construction to protect water quality.
- The appropriate management of 'Green Season' to protect the quality of the water catchment.

Objective 1

- To protect the quality and integrity of natural water systems and aquatic ecosystems.

Strategies

- Protect natural waterways/drainage lines within the context of development.
- If practical, integrate stormwater treatment into the landscape.
- Protect the water quality of receiving waterways by removing/managing pollution close to its source.
- Manage rainwater as flows from the land to reduce the need or scope for larger infrastructure projects.
- Ensure cost effective management of drainage infrastructure.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

Overview

Geotechnical stability of the Resort is an important environmental and safety issue. The location and siting of buildings need to have regard to drainage lines and subterranean water levels and movement to minimise the risk associated with ground stability within the Resort.

In light of the risks of climate change, non-renewable energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are of increasing concern.

Use and development within the Resort needs to recognise the influence of these climatic conditions and be designed to provide for use outside the designated snow season. There is potential for climatic change to influence snow depth levels in Victoria within the next 50 years.

Bushfire is another naturally occurring environmental event and the Alpine areas are particularly prone to bushfires with extensive areas of vegetation cover and steep slopes. The design, siting and choice of building materials need to have regard to the bushfire risk.

Key issues

- Recognising the geotechnical issues associated with development within the Resort.
- Acknowledging the impacts of climate change.
- Managing the risk of bushfire.

Objective 1

- To take proper account of geotechnical stability considerations.

Strategies

- Ensure that the design, construction and maintenance of development takes account of geotechnical stability considerations.
- Identify and monitor sites in the Resort that may be susceptible to landslide/subsidence and minimise the risk of land slides/subsidence.
- Ensure that development applications demonstrate an acceptable level of risk of landslip or instability prior to granting approval for development.
- Encourage applicants to consult with the Mt Baw Baw Resort Management Board regarding existing geotechnical information prior to lodging an application for a planning permit or a site development plan.

Objective 2

- To respond positively to climate change.

Strategies

- Facilitate the reduction in non-renewable energy consumption.
- Encourage the design, construction and operation of buildings to incorporate energy efficiency principles and measures.

Objective 3

- To ensure the safety of the Resort from bushfire.

Strategies

- Manage safety from bushfire through appropriate fire management strategies.
- Ensure that development demonstrates an acceptable level of risk to fire prior to granting approval for development or use.
- Encourage applicants to consult with the relevant fire authority and the Mt Baw Baw Resort Management Board regarding bushfire management information prior to lodging an application for a planning permit or a site development plan.

- Implement the Resort Strategic Fire Risk Assessment prepared by the Mt Baw Baw Resort Management Board.
- Ensure that development in areas of high bushfire hazard does not increase the potential fire hazard to built assets and human life.
- Effectively balance vegetation conservation and protection from bushfire.
- Ensure that the safety of the Resort is managed through appropriate fire management strategies.

IMPLEMENTATION

These strategies will be implemented by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying Schedule 1 to the Comprehensive Development Zone to areas considered appropriate for Resort development (i.e. commercial, residential, tourist, services and infrastructure).
- Applying Schedule 2 to the Comprehensive Development Zone to areas considered suitable for passive and active recreation.
- Applying the Public Park and Recreation Zone to all public land surrounding the Village and ski field areas.
- Applying an Erosion Management Overlay to areas susceptible to landslip or instability hazards.
- Applying a Bushfire Management Overlay to areas susceptible to bushfire.

Application of local planning policies

- Applying Clause 22.01-1 Development Guidelines when assessing development applications.
- Applying Clause 22.01-2 Management of Geotechnical Hazard Local Planning Policy to provide guidance in determining an application for planning permit or site development plan made under the Erosion Management Overlay.
- Applying Clause 22.01-3 Urban Design in Alpine Resorts in the consideration of development applications.

Further strategic work

- Considering applying an Environmental Significance Overlay to sites of significant environmental value.
- Exploring how best practice in energy efficient design and construction might be included in the Alpine Resorts Planning Scheme.
- Implementing the Environmental Management Plan and ensuring that the Plan and associated procedures are regularly reviewed and updated.
- Preparing and implementing the Resort Strategic Fire Risk Assessment.
- Continuing to monitor the Resort to determine possible geotechnical hazards.

Other actions

- Ensuring appropriate management of rare and threatened plants and plant communities of the Resort through conservation, enhancement and education.
- Maintaining and increasing current involvement in weed management projects with Parks Victoria.
- Monitoring the environmental impacts associated with Resort development and ski terrain and encouraging research into management techniques to safeguard environmental quality.