

Southern Tasmanian Ski Association

Presidents Report - November 2017

2017 proved to be a season of two parts. With a relatively late start it looked like it might be a low-average season, but a week of good snowfall at the beginning of September buried the Mawson tow, and meant that STSA was able to operate the downhill ski tows for nine consecutive weekends, with good crowds of skiers and boarders enjoying excellent conditions right through into October.

The season started on 13th August, but unfortunately there was a problem with the access road which prevented the majority of skiers from getting through. The Stornaway tractor took 5 hours to clear the road, and then a landslip was identified just above the boom gate at the bottom which kept the road closed for a couple of hours longer. ABC television news had travelled to Mt Field to record the opening of the season, but instead the major story became the queue of 100 cars waiting to get up the Dobson Road. Following this incident I met with the Department of Transport and the contractor, and reinforced the importance of timely snow clearing. To their credit the landslip was repaired that week, and snow clearing was well managed for the balance of the season.

The season got properly underway on 19th and 20th August, with a large crowd of skiers and boarders enjoying excellent conditions. Temperatures remained sub-zero all weekend, meaning that the snow quality was excellent, with good coverage on both Mawson and Uni tows. A number of visitors were at Mt Mawson for the first time, and were impressed with the natural setting of the ski field, and the friendly community of volunteers. The only negative comments related to the lack of a heated public shelter, with the PWS Shipping Container proving to be completely inadequate for the number of people seeking shelter in very cold conditions.

Late in the day on Saturday a problem emerged for the STSA volunteers from the Oldina Ski Club, with the rope on the University Tow breaking. Fortunately STSA had two rolls of new rope on the mountain, and on Sunday the volunteers tackled the big job of joining a new rope, under the patient guidance of experienced Mt Mawson

Ski Patroller Andrew Davey. Members of the public helped to move the 500 metres of heavy rope across to the Uni Tow, and then a team of skiers and boarders assisted with tensioning the rope down the hill in preparation for completion of the final splice. Ironically later in the season we experienced some intermittent electrical problems with the University Tow, and so it was not used for the last 3 weeks of skiing. Updating the control systems for Uni Tow will be a priority working bee activity for this summer.

The cold outbreak at the beginning of September saw snow almost to the top of the poles on the lower section of the Mawson Run, so there was plenty of digging for STSA volunteers to ensure the rope was clear of the snow. The investment in snow fences over recent years has certainly paid off, and ensured that snow is effectively captured during winter storms such as this rather than being blown off the ski field.

The STSA member clubs did a wonderful job of keeping the tows running for the full 9 week season, with enthusiastic volunteers electing to run the tows for an extra two weeks in October once the official roster had ended. This was much appreciated by the skiing public, and also provided some useful additional revenue to enable STSA to recover some of the costs invested in infrastructure over past years. I would like to thank members of the Mt Mawson Ski Patrol, who persevered with the inadequate (unheated) ski patrol container, as well as turning up to ensure this critical safety service was maintained throughout the season. I would particularly like to acknowledge the efforts of Andrew Davey, Liz Koolhof and Paul Vince who collectively patrolled for a total of 41 days!

During the past year there have been a number of meetings between STSA and the Project Manager for the new Parks Day Shelter at Mt Mawson. After many years of waiting and providing input it is very pleasing to know that the construction of the new facility is now underway. Detailed input has been provided to ensure that the replacement STSA ticket office and Ski Patrol First Aid Room are fit for purpose. A decision was made to prefabricate a number of the elements of the building(s) off site, including pre-casting of the concrete floor slabs. Given the amount of snow on the ground at Mt Mawson this winter this was a good call, and means that erection of

the building can proceed at a rapid pace over this summer. It is hoped that STSA will be able to move into the new facility well before snow arrives for the 2018 season.

The Mt Mawson website continues to be a key medium for communications, and we now have over 1200 people who subscribe directly to the Mt Mawson blog for updates on what is happening on the mountain. Thanks to Bishwa Oakes and Ian Stewart for their work in keeping the website and the webcams in operation. Bishwa also stepped up with some excellent contributions to the website while I was overseas.

Thank you to my fellow committee members for their contribution to STSA's activities this year. As with many organisations it seems to fall to a relatively small number of volunteers to shoulder the load of keeping everything working, and your efforts are greatly appreciated. With the development of the most significant infrastructure on the mountain in 30 years this summer, I am hopeful that more members of the STSA clubs on the mountain will choose to volunteer and get actively involved in running Southern Tasmania's only operating downhill ski field.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Davis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Peter Davis

STSA President 2016-2017