

## **Southern Tasmanian Ski Association**

### **Presidents Report - November 2014**

The 2014 season is one that will be remembered for the completion of a number of significant improvements at Mt Mawson Ski Field, but very little actual skiing.

Over the 2013-14 Summer STSA conducted 12 days of working bees, involving 35 volunteers and a total of 92 man-days of work. The principal focus was on constructing new snow fences on the lower part of the Mawson run to assist with snow retention on the new groomed area, as well as undertaking extensive repairs to existing old snow fences on both Mawson and Uni runs. A total of 10 new snow fence panels were constructed to a new design which puts the diagonal bracing in the same plane as the horizontal beams, providing a robust structure for attaching the slats to.

A big thanks to everyone who participated in the STSA snow fence working bees – the infrastructure is now in place to ensure that Mt Mawson Ski Field can operate and take advantage of Tasmania's intermittent snow falls.

Another major achievement for the summer was the installation of a new rope, safety gate and lifting lines for the Rodway Tow. An additional working bee was scheduled in May for this task, with 11 volunteers turning out to carry 500 m of new rope out to Rodway, and to retrieve the old rope from the mountain. It was a long day, with the team not returning to their cars until after dark. A big thanks to all who participated, and particularly to Julian Oakes who provided the leadership and organization for this work.

On the occasions when snow has fallen it is apparent that the new fences are performing well – the issue we had this season was that the snowfalls were too widely spaced and there was no opportunity for a base cover to be established. I understand that 2014 was the second warmest and driest winter on record in Southern Tasmania.

There was sufficient snow to operate in early August, and members of Oldina Ski Club put in a big effort to get the tows running – Mischi Sigrist and Bishwa Oakes worked in blizzard conditions at the top of the mountain to get the rope de-iced while

others prepared the tow motor and ticketing. Saturday had a record crowd and a very large number of snow boarders, which made for some challenges during the day given the way the snow had drifted down the slope down the new snow fences. Stephen Webber and Eve Winter spent most of the day shoveling snow to make a level path that ultimately kept the boarders on the ski trail and not heading towards Maydena. It was in fact a very successful day for the STSA, and thanks must go to all of those who came and helped out. Parks also advised that it was the busiest day they had experienced at Mt Field, and there was significant traffic congestion on Wombat Moor.

STSA ski patrol members demonstrated their skills by arranging a helicopter rescue on the Sunday afternoon to airlift a young French tourist who had suffered heart problems along the snow gum track. The rescue illustrated some shortcomings in our mobile communication, and also the need for a proper heated visitor shelter on the mountain. A big thanks to Andrew Davey, Liz Koolhof and Craig Larsson in particular for their professional approach to the rescue.

During the year the STSA prepared a submission to Parks and Wildlife including detailed specifications for a new Alpine Day Shelter that would be built on the site of the former Sitzmark Lodge, and include a public lunch area, kiosk, toilets, belt issue and first aid (Ski Patrol). I met with the Minister's advisers and senior officials from PWS to discuss our submission, as well as officials preparing a new management plan for the World Heritage Area. There appears to be a good understanding of the need for a suitable building at Mt Mawson but unfortunately no commitment has yet been made for the timing or scale of the new facility.

Thank you to my fellow committee members for their contribution to the organisation of the STSA's activities this year. Your voluntary efforts in all aspects of STSA is greatly appreciated and is making a material and valued contribution to the continued provision of downhill skiing in Tasmania for both locals and visitors.

Peter Davis

President 2013-2014