



hear every voice, know where you stand

STRAIGHTTALK

STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Workshop outcomes

Report

April 2016



Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Methodology	3
3. Outcomes	4
3.1. Activities, services, offering	4
3.2. Future management model	4
3.3. Infrastructure	5
3.4. Access	5
3.5. Head lease model	5
3.6. Leasing implications	6
3.7. Other issues and concerns	6
4. Next steps	8

Document

Stakeholder and community engagement: workshop outcomes

Client

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Prepared by

Nicola Wass

Reviewed by

James Page

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1. INTRODUCTION

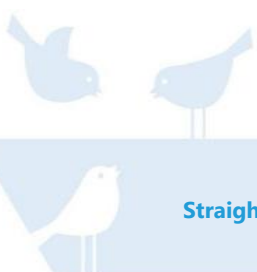
The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has a responsibility to manage more than 850 protected areas in NSW, covering over seven million hectares and representing around eight per cent of the land area of the state. This includes national parks, nature reserves, World Heritage areas, rainforests, beaches, alpine areas, and sites of great cultural and historic significance. Management of these areas involves a wide range of responsibilities, including plant and animal conservation, fire management, sustainable tourism and visitation, research, education, volunteering programs and more.

In relation to Kosciuszko National Park, NPWS has some additional responsibilities, specifically the overall management and day-to-day operational responsibilities for the Perisher Range Resorts. These responsibilities include: lease management (for 126 club and commercial lodge leases, and the Consolidated Mountain Lease over the resorts' ski lifts and other infrastructure); and the delivery of community, municipal and utility infrastructure services, such as water, sewerage and storm water services, internal roads, and solid waste collection and disposal. NPWS also provides waste disposal services to Charlotte Pass Resort.

None of these activities are seen as core business for NPWS in the future. Government is looking to the private sector for a model to deliver these important services and increase investment and visitation, through additional year-round activities. Consequently, a review of the management arrangements for the Resorts is underway, following the NSW Government's approval of the commencement of a three-stage market process to identify a private sector proponent to take on the day-to-day operational responsibilities for the resorts.

Currently the expectation is that there are four potential management models for the resorts. The first stage of the management review is stakeholder and community engagement, to ensure their views are known and inform Government's decision on the proposed management model it will take to the market. To that end, three workshops were undertaken in early March, one with local community members and two with stakeholders.

This concise report provides a summary of stakeholder and community feedback about the key issues and concerns about the management review and how to create best-practice resorts.



2. METHODOLOGY

In early March 2016, three workshops were held to collect stakeholder and community feedback into the management review of the Perisher Range and Charlotte Pass Resorts (resorts). The workshops were promoted to stakeholders via their representative bodies and direct email, and were also advertised on the project website. Community members were informed of the community workshop via a newspaper advertisement and through local radio. Details of these workshops are below.

Workshop type	Location	Time/date	No. of attendees
Stakeholder workshop (lessees and business operators)	Jindabyne	4.00 to 6.00pm, 7 March 2016	33
Community workshop	Jindabyne	7.00 to 8.30pm, 7 March 2016	5
Stakeholders workshop	Sydney	6.30 to 8.30pm, 10 March 2016	46

Straight Talk designed the workshop process and materials, in collaboration with NPWS. The workshops included an introductory presentation about the management review and Government's intentions, and an opportunity for participants to ask questions. Feedback was then sought to inform the review.

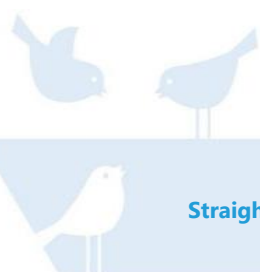
Feedback was collected from community workshop participants in response to the following two questions:

- 🔥 To be worth coming back to, what do the resorts need?
- 🔥 What factors does Government need to consider when making the decision about new management arrangements?

Similarly, stakeholders were invited to provide feedback in response to these questions and were also asked:

- 🔥 What are your concerns about changing management arrangements?

The feedback generated during these discussions was captured by table scribes and forms the basis of this report.



3. OUTCOMES

A significant amount of feedback was provided by workshop participants on a wide range of matters. This provided stakeholder and community views about:

- 🔥 The range of activities and services that could be offered to improve the resorts and make them world-class destinations, with year-round visitor activities
- 🔥 Potential issues associated with the future management model and the interactions between lessees and the selected proponent
- 🔥 Required improvements to infrastructure at the resorts
- 🔥 How access to and between the resorts should be improved
- 🔥 A potential head-lease model and the impacts that may have on lessees and the head-lease area
- 🔥 The implications of a change in management arrangements for lessees and leases
- 🔥 A variety of other factors, relating to the impact of a changing management model and how management arrangements could be improved.

The following is a summary of the matters raised and the most common responses provided by participants.

3.1. Activities, services, offering

A great many ideas were raised for improving the activities and services the resorts offered. These involved improving both winter and summer opportunities through an expansion of facilities, particularly those not related to skiing, and making better use of the opportunities that are currently available, particularly within the rest of the national park. Most common suggestions related to:

- 🔥 Providing 'resort' facilities such as retail, cafes and restaurants, and cultural opportunities, as well as other sporting facilities, such as gym, swimming pool, golf course. Creating a village was seen to be an important improvement at Perisher Valley
- 🔥 Providing summer activities, such as bike riding, walking (including guided walks), in the national park
- 🔥 More snow making, and extending skiing areas
- 🔥 Integrated ticketing across the resorts
- 🔥 Holding events to attract summer visitors.

3.2. Future management model

Several different issues were raised by participants in relation to the possible future management models. The most commonly raised matters were:

- 🔥 That the critical issue was who the operator of the future model was rather than the future model itself and that the operator should not be Government but a private operator:

- The need to select the operator on a range of criteria, not just profit to Government
 - The operator having a vision and the long-term certainty to implement it
 - Concerns about the impact the operator would have on lessees
- 🔥 The influence lessees and representative groups, such as SLOPES, would have over the future operator/operations and the continued opportunity to be in contact with Government
- 🔥 The need to create an environment that supported operational improvements, such as increasing activities, through the Plan of Management and other mechanisms, as well as ensuring performance compliance.

3.3. Infrastructure

Although a number of comments were provided about infrastructure, there were only two main themes. These related to the need to:

- 🔥 Improve parking, and overnight parking in particular, for example with a giant underground parking facility for overnight visitors
- 🔥 Ensure ongoing investment in infrastructure, such as increasing lifting capacity, refurbishing buildings, and the incremental improvement of facilities such as toilets, shelters etc as well as roads and water infrastructure.

3.4. Access

The need to improve access both to and between resorts was identified. The current access options were seen as being limited and expensive. Most common suggestions were to:

- 🔥 Improve public transport to and between the resorts, via a bus or shuttle services, to reduce the current cost impost of accessing the resorts
- 🔥 Improve road clearing, particularly during shoulder periods to support an extended season
- 🔥 Maintain current standard of access to cross-country trails.

3.5. Head lease model

A level of discomfort and concern was expressed about the option of having a head lease over lodges and clubs. These concerns can be summarised as:

- 🔥 Head lessee's decisions and influence over: the availability of services; increases in costs and charges; and lodge/club facilities (many of these concerns were related to Charlotte Pass) - the need for lessees to be consulted on, and to have a level of influence over, decisions was raised in relation to this concern
- 🔥 Increasing costs because the head lessee would need to recoup its payment to Government
- 🔥 The head lease area - what it covered, and the potential effect on access to and maintenance of the nordic trails.

3.6. Leasing implications

Concerns were raised about the impact changing management arrangements would have on leases, particularly:

- 🔥 Changes to the rights of lessees
- 🔥 Cost associated with leases increasing
- 🔥 Tenure changes and the uncertainty that would bring (need certainty to invest in facilities)
- 🔥 Having access to consistent lease terms across all resorts (an issue for Charlotte Pass lessees).

3.7. Other issues and concerns

A range of other issues and concerns were raised by workshop participants. These can be summarised as:

3.7.1. Business implications

Concerns about potential conflicts of interest and competitiveness between the successful proponent and other operators, especially in relation to the confidentiality of commercial information, and protections from those conflicts were raised.

3.7.2. Costs

The concern about increasing costs and the subsequent loss of affordability, especially compared to New Zealand and Japan, was raised by a number of participants. The equitable distribution of costs and transparency about that were also raised.

3.7.3. Environmental management

The issues raised that were associated with environmental management were varied although sustainability was mentioned more than once. This was in relation to the carrying capacity review informing a sustainable increase in capacity, the need to identify sustainable activities and providing incentives to leaseholders to promote sustainable outcomes.

3.7.4. Lessons learnt

The suggestion to learn from other examples was made by participants - these examples included:

- 🔥 Queenstown and Lake Crackenback for all year offering
- 🔥 USA for governing models of utilities management (trusts)
- 🔥 Canada for the separation of Government responsibilities (national parks, and commercial interests).

Understanding the demand and looking to other resorts where things work well were also mentioned.

3.7.5. Management review process

A number of comments related to the process of the management review itself, in particular that the process is fair and transparent. Having one point of information, such as a website, was suggested as was ensuring consistent communication across all stakeholders. Concerns that the process may fail, that Government will overestimate the value of the asset, or that there will not be responses to the EOI because the offering is not commercially attractive, were also raised.

3.7.6. Marketing

The need to better promote the resorts and increase marketing about the area and the winter and summer opportunities that are available was raised. Promotion that differentiated each resort and highlighted the uniqueness of the Snowy Mountains experience was identified as being needed.

3.7.7. Municipal services

The provision of municipal services was raised, in particular in relation to the cost of the services under a new management model and the level of oversight there would be for the setting of charges by a private proponent. The potential for increases municipal costs was a concern, as was the equitable contribution towards municipal services.

3.7.8. Red tape

Improving the burden of approval processes was identified. This was related to the approval process for repairs, upgrades and improvements to lodge and club facilities, which were currently seen to be impeding not encouraging improvements.

3.7.9. Uncertainty

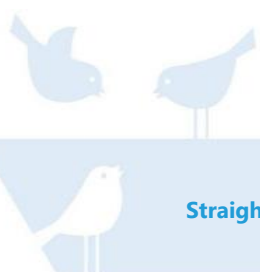
The impact of the current uncertainty about the future management model, and who the potential operator might be, was discussed. This was identified as being a particular issue for clubs and lodges as they cannot invest, renovate lodge/club facilities or grow membership because of lease uncertainty. These concerns about uncertainty were felt at Charlotte Pass in particular.

3.7.10. Viability of increasing summer visitation

Participants raised concerns about the viability of increasing summer visitation. These concerns were centred on three main points:

1. Australians go to the beach during summers, not the mountains
2. The market/demand is not necessarily big enough to support an additional summer resort
3. Any increase in costs due to the need to be open during summer will make operations unviable.

Being able to attract summer staff was also identified as an issue that would impact the viability of year-round operations.



4. NEXT STEPS

NPWS will be reviewing all of the direct feedback provided at the workshops, in order to identify:

- 🔥 The issues and matters that can be addressed by the management review
- 🔥 Those issues and matters that are outside of the scope of the management review (if any)
- 🔥 If there are any matters that require clarification or further stakeholder feedback.

At the same time, any feedback that is provided via the project website will be reviewed against the feedback provided by workshop participants. This will ensure that any additional issues and matters raised through the website are identified and included in the analysis.

Two further stakeholder workshops will be undertaken, in mid-to late April. The workshops will be held to:

- 🔥 Report back to stakeholders about feedback provided in the first round of engagement
- 🔥 Respond to questions and concerns raised by stakeholders
- 🔥 Clarify any matters that are out of the management review scope
- 🔥 Seek clarification on issues and/or request further stakeholder feedback.

Stakeholder will be notified of the details of the second round of workshops. They will also be promoted via the project website.

