

2 Study Area & Regional Context

2.1 Subject Area

This Master Plan has been prepared for the Perisher Range Resort villages of Guthega, Smiggin Holes and Perisher Valley. [Figure 2.1](#) shows the location of these villages and the transport connections to the Perisher Range.

The subject area is located within the Kosciuszko National Park and comprises an immediate area of 1,850 ha containing the resort villages of:

- Perisher Valley (2450 beds);
- Smiggin Holes (866 beds); and
- Guthega (236 beds).

Blue Cow, whilst an important part of the Perisher Range ski infrastructure, is considered under the Ski Slope Plan as part of skiing infrastructure and is not included in this Master Plan.

Bullocks Flat is also an important part of the overall ski infrastructure for Perisher Range Resorts but is technically outside the immediate study area.

Each of the resort village areas has a unique character that will be maintained and reinforced through provisions of this Master Plan. A character statement has been prepared for each of the resort areas, including the new Perisher Valley Village Centre, and these are contained in later sections of the report.

Although physically separated, the resort villages all service the same skiing area (Perisher Blue) and are interlinked via municipal services, freight distribution, waste management, access and parking.

A number of precincts have been identified within each resort village for planning and development purposes. These precincts are described as follows:

- Guthega
 - ▶ Gateway and carpark
 - ▶ Accommodation
- Smiggin Holes
 - ▶ Gateway
 - ▶ Carpark and commercial area
 - ▶ Outer precincts (west, east)
- Perisher Valley
 - ▶ Village Centre
 - ▶ Central Precinct
 - ▶ Outer precincts (north, south)

The subject area also contains a number of major infrastructure elements that service the resorts including:

- Skitube;
- Kosciuszko Road;
- Other access roads;
- Effluent treatment plant (North Perisher);
- Water supply; and
- Electricity transmission.

These existing facilities are described in detail in the Environmental Study, and are summarized in this Master Plan.

2.2 Regional Context

Perisher Range is part of the Kosciuszko National Park located in the Alpine Region of south eastern Australia. The general area is centrally located in relation to Sydney and Melbourne. There are also a number of urban centres including Canberra, Cooma, Jindabyne, Tumut and the coastal areas of Batemans Bay and Merimbula within a two-hour drive of the site. [Figure 2.1](#) refers.

Perisher Range complements the other major NSW ski field at Thredbo and is supported by the adjacent urban areas at Jindabyne (35 kms to the east) and Cooma. Alpine skiing is the predominant recreational activity for winter visitors to Kosciuszko National Park. In 1998 the NSW ski resorts in KNP had about 59% of the market share of Australian resorts. Of this, Perisher Blue had approximately 64% of the NSW skiing market (Connell Wagner, 2000, p18).

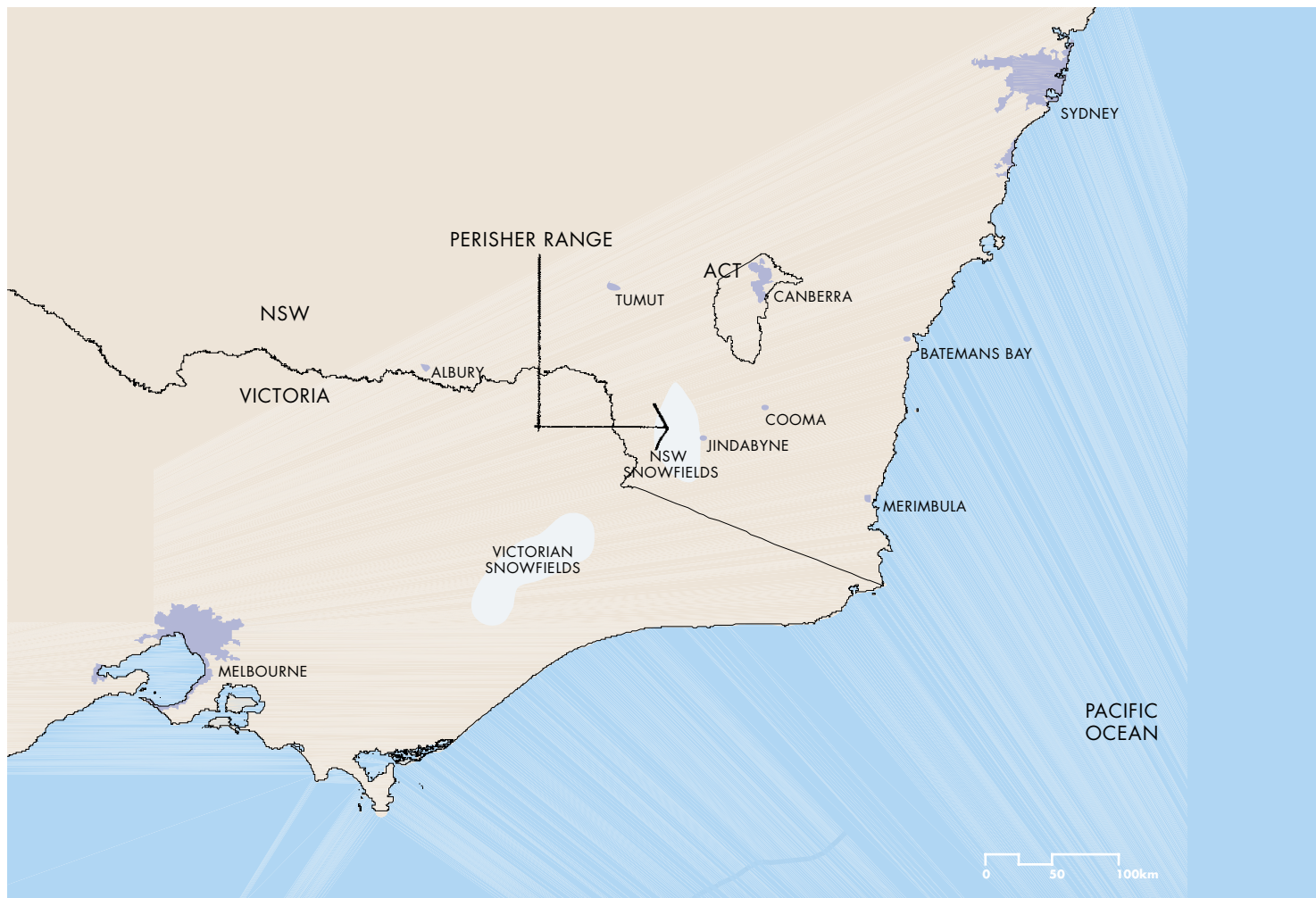
Main transport access to Perisher Range is via the Monaro Highway, Snowy Mountains Highway, Kosciuszko Road, Alpine Way and the Skitube. Commercial air services to the area are provided at Cooma.

Perisher Range resorts provide accommodation during all seasons but operate principally as winter recreation resorts. Tourist activity at Perisher Range represents a major development initiative with regional and state significance.

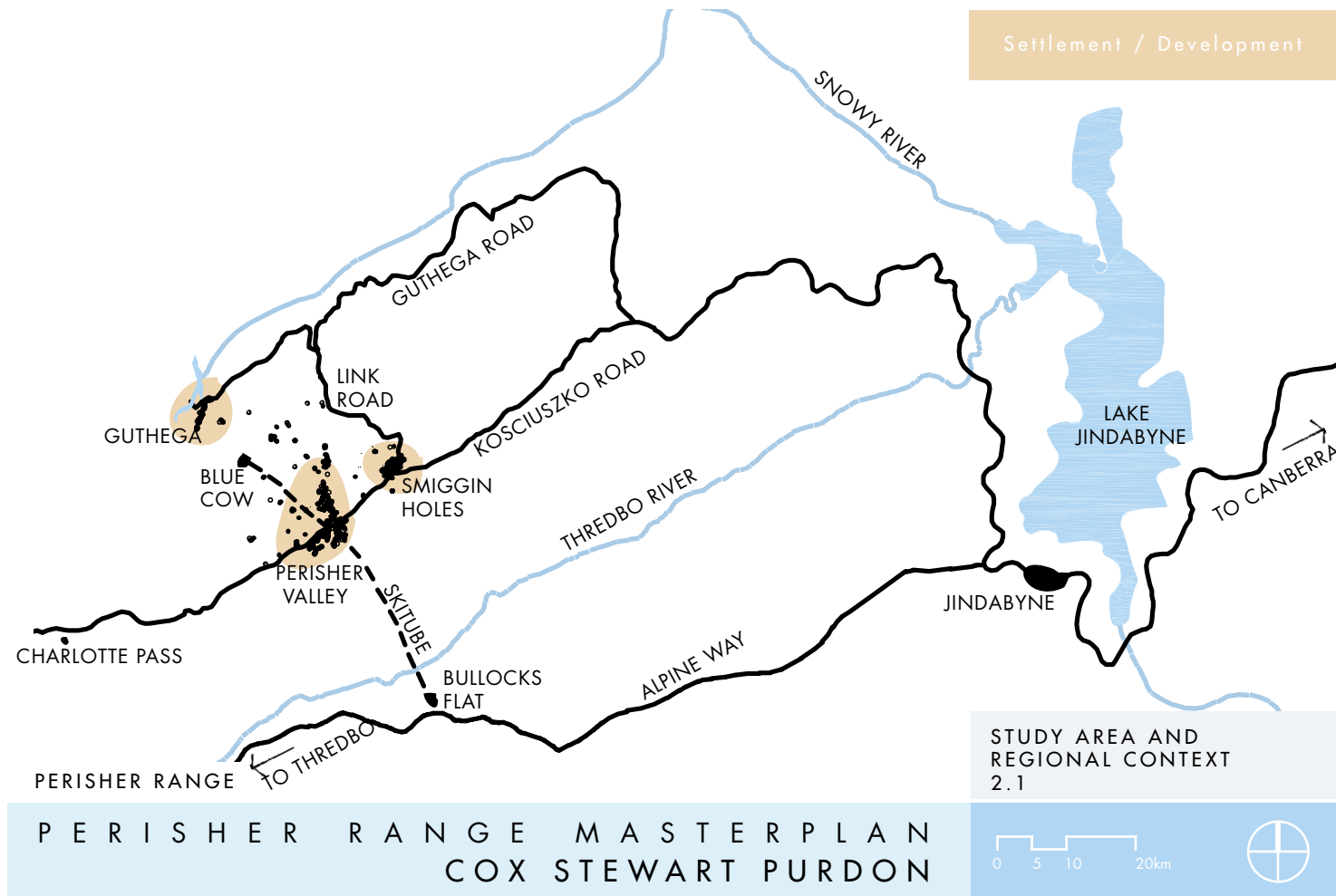
Development of additional bed space in the Perisher Village Centre, in conjunction with increased ski slope capacity, will generate new employment opportunities on Perisher Range and in adjacent regional towns. This new employment will strengthen the regional economic base.

Activity in the area generates substantial employment opportunities (especially during winter) and the ski industry has important economic and social multiplier benefits for the wider Alpine Region. Perisher Range represents a major concentration of private sector investment in accommodation and ski resort infrastructure.

Perisher Range has experienced a gradual increase in visitor numbers over the last decade during both summer and winter seasons. Up to 75% of visitation to KNP occurs during the four winter months of June to September. Peak summer use during December and January is less than 10% of the annual usage, while the remaining six months comprise approximately 15% of KNP visitation.



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The Perisher Range resorts currently attract over 16,000 visitors on a peak day in winter, providing significant economic and employment opportunities to the local, regional and state economies. Substantial growth in visitation rates is projected with 25,000 visitors per day seen as the maximum capacity on peak days.

Management of the recreational opportunities of the ski resort areas needs to take into account the important ecological values that the area provides. The social and economic well being of the Alpine Region towns is markedly influenced by tourism, particularly skiing, generated by the natural attributes and recreational activities in the Park. Any reduction in the number of visitors to the Park, particularly those involved in snow sport, will adversely impact on the social and economic environment of alpine region towns.

As part of the KNP, any development of Perisher Range resorts will be required to respect and reinforce the ecological significance of the surrounding area.

2.3 Local Context

The Perisher Range resort areas are part of the alpine and sub-alpine environment in KNP. KNP contains ecologically significant features such as:

- Landforms resulting from past peri-glacial and associated cold climate processes;
- Hydrological processes driven by high altitude and mountain climate;
- Vegetation and fauna communities adapted for survival in the harsh seasonal environment;
- Plants and animal species, many of which are rare or threatened, endemic to the area or of limited distribution, or specialised to occupy ecological niches characteristic of the alpine and sub-alpine areas; and
- Extensive communities of old aged, slow growing vegetation.

KNP has particular social, cultural and economic significance as follows:

- Significance to the Aboriginal people of Monaro Ngarigo Cheruipin and Bega communities as descendants of the tribes who occupied and visited these areas, and because of places and pathways of special cultural significance;
- Archaeological significance of sites providing evidence of early human use and occupation of the mountain area;
- Significance to the local communities as the context in which their ancestors pioneered European occupation and use of the high country;
- Social significance to the broader community as an important national park and wilderness sanctuary;
- Significance of the Main Range and Mount Kosciuszko as the highest peak in Australia;
- Economically significant water catchments providing reliable high quality supply to hydro-electric and irrigation industries; and
- Economic significance of tourism and in particular the skiing industry to the regional economy.

The Perisher Range Resorts area is the largest ski field in Australia with a skiable area of 1250 hectares ranging from 1680m at Smiggin Holes to 2054m at the top of Mt Perisher.

The Range has a winter, mean daily maximum temperature of 3°C and minimum of 4.3°C. In summer these figures are 17.2°C and 4.9°C respectively (Connell Wagner, 2000).

Precipitation is greatest in the Perisher Range Resorts during the winter months, usually falling as snow. A winter average of 656 mm precipitation for the Perisher Valley provides an average of 42.4 snow days (Connell Wagner, 2000).

The ecological features which are found in the Perisher Range Resorts are not widespread in Australia or even within KNP. The resorts have been developed in areas with some very important habitats, the significance of which was not understood at the time of early development of the resorts.

The wider Kosciuszko National Park provides environmental conditions for a diverse and complex range of ecosystems and is of national and international significance in terms of flora conservation and genetic resource preservation. KNP has been previously recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature as one of six Australian sites of plant biodiversity and one of 167 throughout the world.

All of the resorts with on-site accommodation, with the exception of Blue Cow, were well established by the time KNP was placed under the control of NPWS in 1967. As KNP contains the only viable ski fields in NSW the continuing use of KNP for skiing and snow sports was accepted as a legitimate recreational activity. The COI confirmed that ski resorts are an acceptable use in KNP and are not in conflict with its designation as an international Biosphere Reserve provided environmental features are protected (Connell Wagner, 2000).

The location of the ski resorts, particularly Perisher Valley, at altitudes above 1700m presents particular challenges for design of resorts facilities and accommodation. Climatic factors requiring particular attention are strong winds and potential for heavy snow deposition. The floor of Perisher Valley is significantly affected by these micro-climatic conditions and a design for the new Village Centre will need to incorporate features to cope with these conditions.

2.4 Historical Development of Ski Resort Areas

Skiing in Australia developed between 1860 and 1900 focussing on the goldfields at Kiandra. Early development and interest in alpine activities in the Perisher Range began to open up the region to visitors.

The NSW State Government played a key role in the development of the snowfields at Perisher Range. In 1909 the Government established the Hotel Kosciuszko and associated ski slopes. In the 1920s the Government also established the Charlotte Pass Chalet. Subsequently a series of shelter huts was established between Hotel Kosciuszko and Charlotte Pass, one of which is located in the Perisher Valley.

During the period up to the 1950s, various ski clubs formed and pressure mounted for the creation of leases for separate club lodges.

Hotel Kosciuszko was destroyed by fire in 1951 and a subsequent report in 1952 advocated the granting of leases within what was then Kosciuszko State Park for the erection of accommodation hotels or accommodation houses.

The operations of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme in the late 1950s and 1960s also improved access to the area and attracted more people to the ski fields (NPWS).

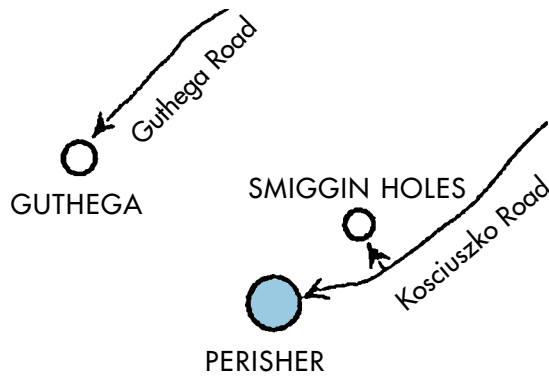
By the late 1950s, ski lodges and tows were established at Perisher Valley, Smiggin Holes, and Guthega. Initially these village areas consisted mainly of club lodges with a limited number of commercial lodges.

Commercial activity in the resorts increased during the 1960s and 1970s. The increasing popularity of the snowfields enabled greater commercial development of lifts and ski slopes. The number of day visitors to the snow was increasing due to improved access and facilities.

In 1967 the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1967* was passed (since replaced by the 1974 Act). Kosciuszko State Park became the Kosciuszko National Park, managed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

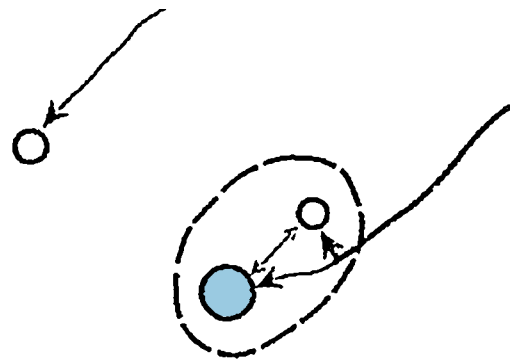
Within the national park, development of the ski resorts has continued. Perisher, Smiggin Holes, Blue Cow and Guthega, established as separate resorts, have progressively integrated to form Perisher Blue Ski Resort (see [Figure 2.2](#)). The construction of Skitube in the 1980s (first year of operation in 1986) provided greater access to the ski fields.

The current Master Plan will provide a framework for the next important phase in development of each resort.



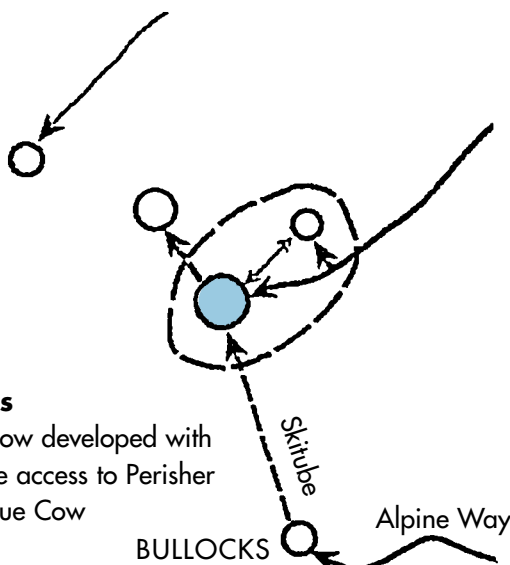
1950s

Perisher, Smiggin Holes and Guthega established as separate resorts



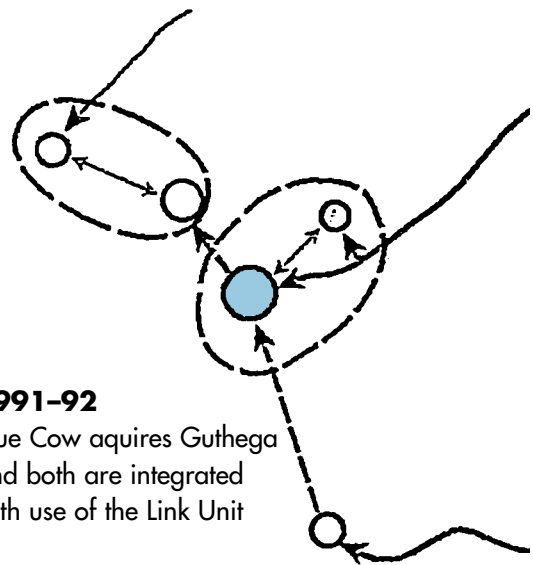
1970s

Perisher and Smiggin Holes integrated with Smiggin Holes as a 'gateway' to the resort



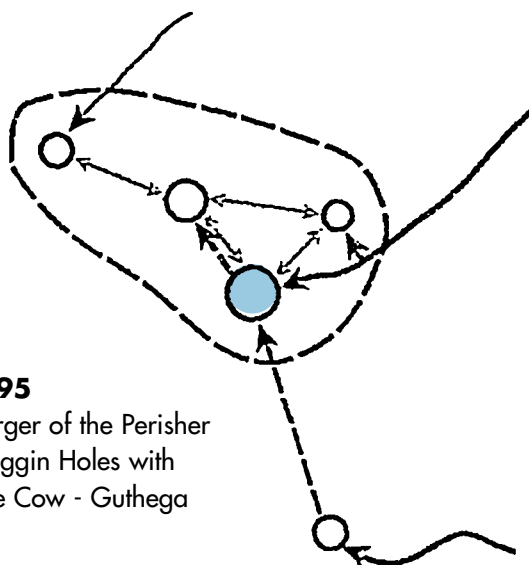
1980s

Blue Cow developed with Skitube access to Perisher and Blue Cow



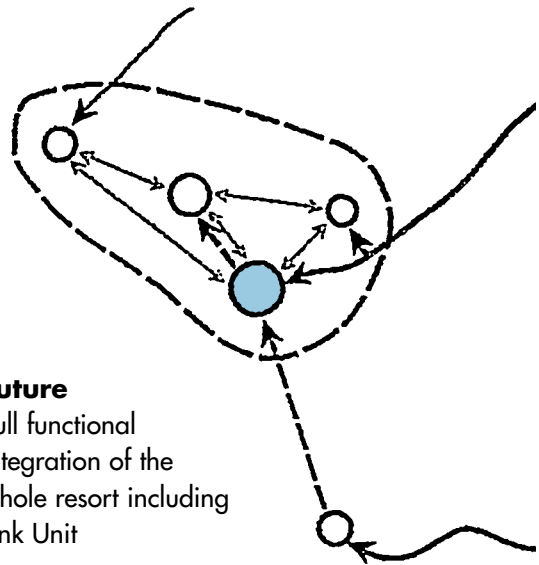
1991-92

Blue Cow acquires Guthega and both are integrated with use of the Link Unit



1995

Merger of the Perisher Smiggin Holes with Blue Cow - Guthega



Future

Full functional integration of the whole resort including Link Unit

