

RUAPEHU MOUNTAIN CLUBS ASSOCIATION (INC.)

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To: -
Hon
PO Box 18 888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Via email: xxxxx @parliament.govt.nz

Requesting Better Transparency in MBIE's process to find an operator for Ruapehu Ski Fields.

Dear Hon Minister xxxx ,

I write to you in your position as Minister for xxxxxx in relation to Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL) being placed in voluntary administration last year. Previous correspondence from Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association (RMCA) to ministers regarding Ruapehu Ski Fields was in October 2022 and February 2023.

The Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association is a key stakeholder of the Mt Ruapehu region, representing 46 tramping and ski clubs based on Mt Ruapehu. The clubs are integral to the fabric of Iwikau and Whakapapa villages within Tongariro National Park, some being over 100 years old. They comprise about 15,000 active members. The clubs and their members value the region, spend in the area, and thus economically support the area.

You will no doubt be aware of the severe socioeconomic impacts on the Central North Island if ski field operations cease on Mt Ruapehu. RMCA wrote to the minister of MBIE late October last year to which the minister responded favourably and advised that Kanoa RDU would continue to work closely with administrators and stakeholders through the process. This was reconfirmed 2nd May this year.

It came as a shock last week when media reported that MBIE has preferred operators for the ski fields. Although the reporting was misleading and unhelpful, it has raised significant concerns about MBIE's involvement.

RMCA note that the appointed Administrator for the Voluntary Administration process for RAL is PWC; however, note and question why MBIE have in effect 'taken over' much of the process. Case in point; the proposals were called for by MBIE and reportedly have only been reviewed by MBIE. There appears to have been no or minimal consultation to date with key stakeholders, most importantly local iwi.

RMCA notes that MBIE is a key creditor, has not attended any creditor committee meeting (as per the letter to RMCA from Hon Minister Allan, 2nd May), and is the requestor and only reviewer for proposals from potential operators. This situation raises concerns of transparency, independence, and fairness.

Since MBIE's apparent taking over the process, the process appears to have significantly, and we believe, detrimentally slowed. Case in point; although the season pass campaign was announced 2nd March to 'soon' go on sale, and thus help to fund circa \$5-\$6m. It is now well into May; the snow has arrived and there is no season pass campaign to help fund RAL or a new operator.

It is unclear what the difference is between the role of MBIE and PWC in the VA process of RAL. It appears to be an unnecessary duplication and additional cost to NZ taxpayers.

RAL is a not-for-profit public entity operating in a dual world heritage park. RMCA asks that the involvement of MBIE in the process to find appropriate operator/s be more respectful and transparent to the importance of the area, the relevant communities and most importantly to local iwi.

I and the RMCA Council look forward to your response.

Regards,



President

Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association