

The Bulletin

RUAPEHU SKI CLUB

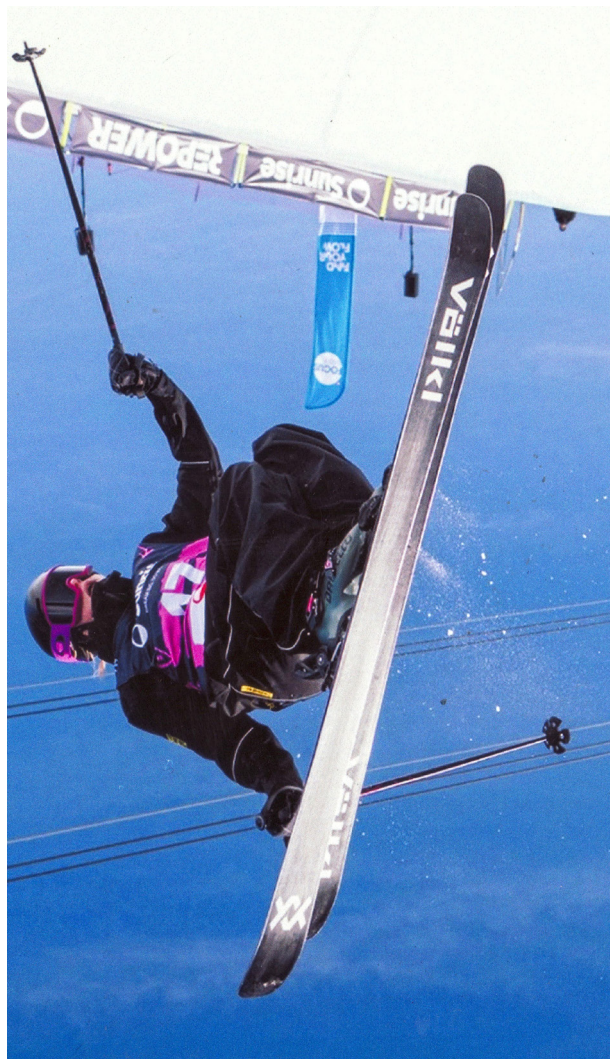
Volume 90, No. 3

September 2025



CONTENTS

2	President's column
3	Ruapehu news
5	Big snow dump
7	Member survey
9	AGM topics
12	Save The Chateau
12	Stone workshop
16	Goodbye buckles
17	RSC calendar
17	Answers wanted
18	Para selections
19	Jo Graham
20	Back country skiing
21	The 4.30 races
22	Champion NZ coach
23	Bowen skifield
23	Ruapehu lawsuit
25	Next skiing star
26	Try Snow Farm
27	Highest skifield
28	World ski news
30-31	Snow news
32	Club info page



Mischa Thomas (RSC-NZ) shows her freeski halfpipe form. Photo: FIS.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

It is always interesting to ask the opinion of the group one is involved in, and the member survey last month has been highly informative. Many thanks to those of you who completed the survey.

Based on the stated intentions of those who responded, we can conclude that members will provide only 60 percent of the bunk nights that we have budgeted for.

What this means is that your Committee is compelled to seek alternative sources of revenue.

We have operated in the school group booking space for decades and this year it is proving to be a critical resource.

To date school groups have contributed significantly more than members to our bunk night income stream, with a couple more yet to come.

Your Committee has debated long and hard on other ways we can increase our income, and I am grateful to each of them for the time and energy spent in dedication to our collective cause.

One solution we have settled on is to make Turoa more available to the public during the ski season.

I acknowledge that this differs from what was contemplated when we first made Turoa available via BookaBatch when we said that it would not be offered during the ski season.

However, we cannot ignore the potential earnings from an asset that has already generated almost \$18,000 this year.

This is equivalent to 383 bunk nights, compared with 45 bunk nights from our members at Turoa in the year to date.

Accordingly, and after much debate, the Committee has agreed to make the building available to third parties via BookaBatch for weekdays during the

balance of this ski season.

I note that any night that is booked by a member in advance will make the building unavailable on BookaBatch, and in this way those members who prefer this side of the mountain do have an opportunity to book their nights now.

I note that 59 percent of the survey respondents indicated we should make any building available at any time, and 66 percent supported making Turoa available on weekdays during the season. This is the option that we have gone with.

As I write this, we are coming into Club Week and I am expecting a great time reliving the 1970's with some of the old gang that I have literally grown up with.

Events like this are really important to keep our Club spirit alive and well, and whatever the weather I am confident that a great time will be had by all.

Another great event to look out for is the Backcountry course proposed by Carl Burling which is outlined elsewhere in this issue - see "Getting into the Back Country".

I would encourage you all to get involved with these events, and enjoy our Club's unique position on the mountain.

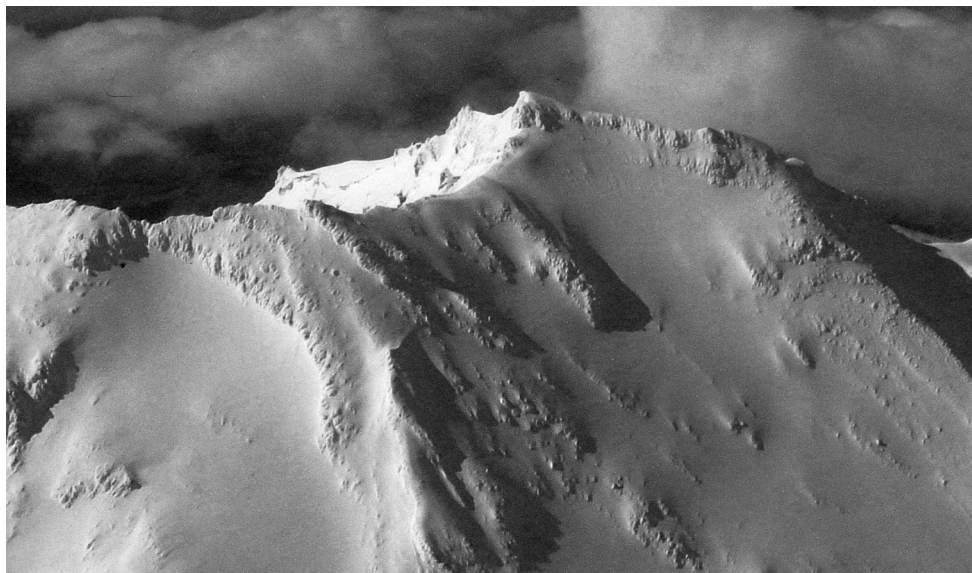
Should you have a great idea that will assist in creating more bunk night revenue, and can help with implementation, please bring these to the attention of your favourite Committee member, to myself or Mandy at admin@rsc.org.nz.

Looking forward to seeing you on the snow

Michael Webb-Speight
President

NEW MEMBER

We welcome a new member: Geoff Cawson.



The summit of Mt Ruapehu. Photo: Alan Graham.

THROUGH THE LODGE WINDOW

Whakapapa opened Happy Valley for sledging on May 30th and for skiing from June 21st.

Turoa opened the Alpine Meadow for sledging on May 31st and opened the full season on June 28th.

Both sides opened their upper mountain lifts on July 18th after a big snow dump.

***Pure Turoa** has opened a new headquarters shop in Ohakune.*

The retail shop offers information, lift tickets and quality apparel.

Neighbours at SLR Ski & Board Rental and TCB Ski Board & Bike handle equipment rentals.

People have asked about the reference to the “Mr Ed door” in the RSC Hut in the last Bulletin.

The door replaced was the one upstairs near the telephone leading out on to the deck.

It was a “stable door” in two parts top and bottom which could be opened one at a time.

This sort of door is commonly used in horse stables including the home of the popular TV horse Mr Ed.

*RSC belongs to the **Turoa Village Residents Association** who used our building for their AGM.*

All members of the village are expected to be members, as they pay to maintain the open spaces around the outside of the buildings.

When the village opened there was a nine-hole golf course around the buildings. It was not included in the RAL takeover of Turoa and was abolished since no one was maintaining it.

The Bridge to Nowhere that attracts RSC cyclists has won an Enduring Concrete Award which recognises legacy concrete structures more than 40 years old.

Previous recipients include Wellington’s Beehive, the Grafton Bridge in Auckland and the Hawera Water Tower in Taranaki.

DOC senior ranger Jim Campbell said: “When I first saw the Bridge to Nowhere in the 1970s there was grass growing in the

THE RUAPEHU SKI CLUB

(inc) Founded 1913

P.O.Box 8064, Newmarket,
Auckland 1149

Telephone: 0-9-377 3856

Email: admin@rsc.org.nz

Website: www.rsc.org.nz



President: Michael Webb-Speight.

Vice-Presidents: Carl Burling,
Damon Forsyth, Donald Webster.

Immediate Past President:

Catherine Gafa.

Secretary: Sam Hood.

Treasurer: Sonia Quinn.

Captain: vacant.

Committee: Drew Blair, Simon
Hunt, Charles Lawson, Fiona
Lovelock, Pip McNaughtan.

Patron: Peter Brady.

Patroness: Barbara Scelly.

Auditors: Hart and Co.

Glacier Hut custodian: Bernard
Smith.

middle of it. Now we have thousands of cyclists and trampers visiting every year, as well as side visitors from river trips."

DoC has unveiled some new signs advising folk that dogs are not allowed anywhere in Tongariro National Park, even in your car.

These new signs are in pride of place at the Ohakune, Whakapapa and Tukino entrances to the park, so you can't miss them.

No dogs or other pets are allowed in Whakapapa Village, Whakapapa Ski Area, Tūroa Ski Area or inside vehicles. This means no dogs on State Highway 48.

**** A woman who posted photos of herself with multiple dogs inside Tongariro National Park has been fined \$400.*

An inquiry into the death of a backcountry skier on Mt Ruapehu has prompted a reminder for people to take extra care when planning backcountry skiing trips in early winter.

A coroner found that 64-year-old Ian Malcolm Howat, from Wellington, fell in rocky terrain on Skyline Ridge while skiing in icy snow conditions and sustained a fatal chest injury.

Although his route was within the Whakapapa skifield, it had not yet opened for the season so it was considered a backcountry area.

The coroner said skiers must always maintain a critical eye on like surface conditions, weather and group dynamics, no matter how familiar they are with the area. Skiers and snowboarders should travel with a partner.

The deadline for the December Bulletin will be Friday November 14th.

All items should be with the Editor in Wellington by then.

THE BULLETIN

Founded in 1936 by Jock and Fizzie Graham.

Editor: Alan Graham, 63 Messines Rd, Karori,
Wellington 6012.

Telephone: 04-476 4598.

Email: alanjograham@xtra.co.nz

Advertising: admin@rsc.org.nz or 09 377 3856



A Whakapapa crew member clears snow following a big dump in mid-July. Photo: WHL.

BIG JULY SNOW DUMP

Just when it looked as if we would have a slow start to the 2025 ski season, a lovely big snow dump in mid-July (see photo above) ensured the opening of trails at both Whakapapa and Turoa.

Earlier, the Ruapehu skifields were busy over the July school holidays, despite an underwhelming early season snowfall.

Both skifields kept their learners slopes open, thanks to snowmaking, during a wet June which brought rain not snow.

Turoa boss Jono Dean said the season is long at Ruapehu, with the best spring skiing in the world to come.

Ruapehu Mayor Weston Kirton said the area was humming with tourists, and the town of Ohakune was chockablock.

CRATER LAKE COOL

The temperature of Te Wai ā-moe declined from 17C in May to 12C in August.

The mountain was then at Volcanic Alert Level 1, which indicates minor volcanic unrest.

Mt Ruapehu is an active volcano and has the potential to erupt with little or no warning when in a state of minor volcanic unrest.

The last time it erupted was on September 25, 2007, which caused a seven-minute earthquake, two lahars and flying rocks.

A swarm of earthquakes was detected under Mt Ruapehu on July 8th this year.

GNS Science said the swarm was detected every six to seven minutes beneath Ruapehu's north-eastern flank.

The earthquakes were very small, less than magnitude 1, at 15-30 km depth.

RUAPEHU AVALANCHE

A group of skiers had to be rescued at Mt Ruapehu on July 18th after triggering an avalanche which buried two people, one of whom only had their hand protruding from the snow.

The Mountain Safety Council says a party of six was ski touring near Glacier Knob.

The avalanche was 50 metres long and 50 metres wide at a depth of 40cm.



Upper: Lodge chef Andrew Sandlant and his wife Louise. Photo: Catherine Gafa.
Lower: Our Swiss instructor Sereina Bislin. Photo: Michael Webb-Speight.

MEMBER SURVEY OUTCOMES

A total of 89 of our paid up members responded to the 250 emails sent out, the vast majority of whom were Senior or Veteran members.

Based on those who responded:

- The majority intend to ski on Whakapapa, with 42 percent having purchased a season pass.
- Only 10 respondents have purchased a Turoa season pass.
- Some 26 percent of our members indicated they are not going to Mt Ruapehu this season, with 49 percent indicating they may ski in the South Island.
- On average our members will ski four or five days this season, which is about equal to the long term average.
- On that basis we anticipate members will book approximately 2000 bunk nights, less than 60 percent of our breakeven budget.
- On the question of whether we should make whole buildings available to school groups during the season, 59 percent indicated either any time or only during the week, with a further 7 percent supportive but only at Turoa.

Conclusions:

1. the membership will provide less than 60 percent of our budget bunk nights.
2. group bookings are critical to our economic survival.
3. 66 percent of members support making Turoa available to groups during the week.
4. 59 percent support making any building available at any time.

NEW TRAIL OPENED

A long-awaited cycle and walking trail that will connect Horopito to Waimarino (National Park village) has been opened as a major milestone for the Mountains to Sea - Ngā Ara Tūhono Great Ride.

Te Hangāruru, the new section of the Great Ride, is a vital piece of the vision to complete a 320km journey from Ruapehu maunga to the Tasman Sea.

Locals say the Ruapehu region has come through a difficult period including ski industry troubles and the closure of major employers like the Chateau Tongariro and WPI Mills.

The trail would help build regional resilience and act as a catalyst for sustainable economic growth and community wellbeing.

Completing the full Mountains to Sea journey will be essential to unlock the full economic, cultural, and social benefits this network promises.

ELIZABETH KEANE

Elizabeth-Anne Agnew (nee Liz Keane) who has died at Hamilton was a prominent young ski racer in the 1960s who joined RSC and raced in our colours.

Liz as a child was the daughter of two Chateau staff members and lived in what is now Fergussons Café just above The Chateau.

She showed ability as a ski racer and represented New Zealand in inter-dominion contests with Australia.

She also raced in Australia and Europe without quite making the Winter Olympics team. Liz was the RSC champion in 1963 and 1964.

We offer the Club's condolences to Norm Agnew and the family.



Upper: The RSC Committee for 2025. Back row: Charles Lawson, Simon Hunt, Donald Webster, Sonia Quinn, Carl Burling, Sam Hood, Damon Forsyth. Front row: Pip McNaughtan, Fiona Lovelock, Catherine Gafa, Michael Webb-Speight. **Lower:** Michael Webb-Speight receives the Bernard Drake ice axe upon his election as our 34th President. Photos: Deane Tetley.

AGM TOPICS

The AGM of RSC was held at the Richmond Yacht Club at Auckland.

Outgoing President Catherine Gafa welcomed members present in person and online via zoom.

Members observed a period of silence for those who passed on during the year.

The annual report was adopted.

Treasurer Sonia Quinn spoke to the annual accounts and said the Club had coped well with the ongoing problems caused by Covid, the RAL liquidation and poor snowfalls, which resulted in reduced bunk nights and revenue.

She said the Committee is actively working to reduce costs wherever possible. The accounts were adopted.

Hart and Co were reappointed as audit reviewer.

The meeting agreed to end the Heritage Fund and with that the work of the Guardians.

A new constitution for the Club was adopted, bringing RSC in line with new legislation. Bernard Smith was thanked for this work on this.

Liza Fitzsimmons was elected as a Life member of RSC.

Richard Nelson said Liza was reliable and hard working over many years and several projects including the Club's centennial.

She did wonders for the Haensli Cup, for sponsorship, for school holiday programmes, as Club Captain and for some difficult negotiations with RAL over the siting of the gondola.

Liza replied that she was honoured to be chosen for her 50 days a year at times on the mountain.

Peter Brady was re-elected as Patron and Barbara Scelly as Patroness. Catherine said they offered practical advice and wise counsel.

Michael Webb-Speight was elected as

the 34th President of RSC and received the badge of honour, the Bernard Drake ice axe which has been part of RSC since day one.

Michael said the past three years had been very difficult for the reasons mentioned above, but Cath with the help of her husband Damon had done a wonderful job for the Club.

He said he was honoured and emotional to be the first President who is a son of a former President. For him the Club is the mountain, the skiing and the RSC family.

Michael encouraged members to bring young people into the Club and to help with working parties.

He thanked Damon Forsyth for introducing the new Clubman booking scheme.

The new Committee was announced as: President: Michael Webb-Speight.

Vice-Presidents: Carl Burling, Damon Forsyth, Donald Webster.

IPP: Catherine Gafa.

Secretary: Sam Hood.

Treasurer: Sonia Quinn.

Captain: Vacant.

Committee: Drew Blair, Simon Hunt, Charles Lawson, Fiona Lovelock, Pip McNaughtan.

Nominations from the floor were sought for Club Captain and one Committee post, but none were made.

Presentations and thanks were made to Sonia Quinn as Treasurer, Carl Burling for work parties, Ron Bonfrer for the Chalet, Matt Lamb as the Club's IT guru, Richard Nelson for his many years of work on computer systems, David Watt as the great problem solver, Mandy Burling for Admin and Alan Graham for the Bulletin.

In general business, Catherine said the Rangatira lift on the Rockgarden would be available for uplifting on skis or on foot, and for limited downloading. Cath said the new operator WHL is very supportive of RSC.



Upper: Liza Fitzsimmons is elected a Life member of RSC. **Lower:** Catherine Gafa addresses the AGM. Photos: Deane Tetley.



Upper: Fiona Lovelock amuses the AGM. **Lower:** The RSC AGM. Photos: Deane Tetley.

FUTURE OF CHATEAU

The future of the Chateau Tongariro, which has been sitting empty and derelict for the last two years, is still far from being decided.

The 96-year-old heritage-listed building closed in 2023 after being deemed to be “very high risk” in a seismic assessment.

The hotel’s previous operator, Malaysian-based company Kah Corp, handed it to the Department of Conservation.

RSC held our Winter Party at The Chateau from 1929 until the Lodge was built. We have since staged two lavish anniversary balls there for 300 people each time.

Options include refurbishing or demolition. The Government says all options will be considered. In the Budget, it was revealed demolition is possible.

Maintenance of the building currently costs taxpayers around \$2 million per year.

Whakapapa Holdings, which runs and operates the Whakapapa skifield, has shown an interest in running the building as a hotel again.

Its director, Tom Elworthy, told RNZ that the Chateau is an integral part of the tourism around Ruapehu, and he is “optimistic” it could restore the building and operate it with a long-term lease.

Ruapehu Mayor Weston Kirton says there is still widespread interest in the building and he opposes demolition.

“There are people around that are passionate about these sorts of buildings and trying to reinstate them to a high level,” he said.

Kirton said he has been working with a group on a “village-type” concept for the Chateau.

The Chateau was erected by Fletcher Building for the Mt Cook Tourist Co but both parties under estimated costs. It went

broke after a year and was handed over to the state-owned Tourist Department which ran it for many years,

In the 1930s and beyond the Chateau Manager was effectively the operator of Whakapapa skifield until RAL took over in 1954.

STONE WORKSHOP

Also up for consideration is the old stone workshop at the foot of the Staircase.

This was constructed in 1956 as the drive station for the No2 chairlift which initially ran to the top of Knoll Ridge.

The chairlift construction company, Mueller AG, from Switzerland had a talented stonemason, Paul Brugger, who crafted the volcanic rock into beautiful stone blocks for the external walls. Even losing a finger in the process!

It became a workshop after the drive station was moved to take it clear of snowdrifts.

The incoming skifield operator WHL does not want it and now becomes an endangered structure. Groups are working to see if it can be saved.

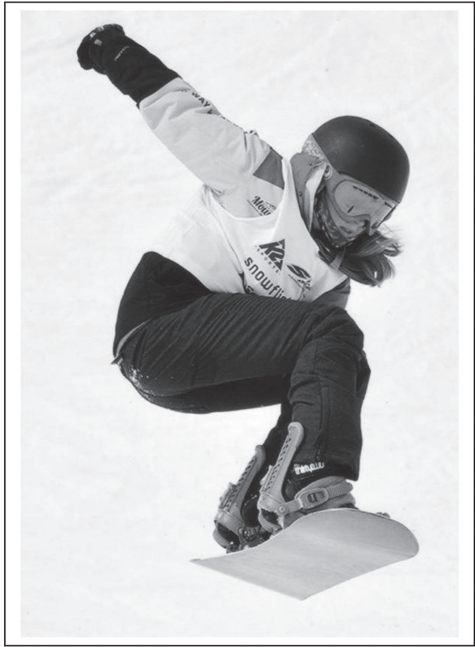
INSPECTION BLOCKED

A potential buyer for Chateau Tongariro has been blocked from entering the rapidly deteriorating heritage hotel.

Whakapapa Holdings director Dave Mazey said his team was becoming increasingly frustrated at being unable to get in for an independent survey of the property’s current state, and how much it would cost for earthquake strengthening work.

“Whether there is a \$30 million requirement, a \$10 million requirement, or \$100 million - no one really knows,” he said.

“We need to get into the building with our independent experts, just like you do when you buy a house.”



Snowboard action at Whakapapa.



NIPS racing in action at Whakapapa.



More NIPS racing at Whakapapa.

GOODBYE BUCKLES TRY THE BOA BOOTS

The BOA ski boot which uses a system of wires and micro-adjustable dials instead of buckles, is taking recreational skiing and snowboarding by storm.

It is said to give a better fit and can be easily adjusted on the go.

How strong is it? The lace is made of 19-strand stainless steel wrapped in 90 additional strands, strong enough to hold a cable car.

BOA? It is named after a snake the crushes its prey.

The BOA Fit System works in unison with the boot shell and the upper cuff in

dual dial applications to wrap the foot and the lower shin.

This provides a uniform fit that reduces pressure points on the top of the foot and locks the heel in the heel pocket, eliminating unwanted movement.

BOA powered ski boots enhance power transfer from boot to ski by up to 6 percent and improve stability and control during turns by up to 10 percent.

Most major boot brands have adopted BOA for skiers and snowboarders but so far no brand has released a BOA equipped race boot.

Race boots are much stiffer than recreational models, which puts more workload on the BOA system.



RSC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug 2025	18-21	Club Week at RSC Lodge.
	24-27	NIPS school racing at Whakapapa.
	31	Rangatira club race
		Club champs are cancelled,
Sept 2025	20	Ngauruhoe club race
Oct 2025	?	Ski season ends

ANSWERS WANTED

A family say they have endured months without an explanation as to how 26-year-old marine biologist Wednesday Davis died in a climbing accident on Mt Ruapehu last year.

The adventure was a way to celebrate a few collective birthdays among a group of extended friends ranging from skilled mountaineers to alpine novices.

She was in the latter category, having barely ventured into the mountains. The group planned to stay at a lodge on Tukino Skifield and explore the nearby terrain.

In the days that followed, her family using location data from photos on her phone and flight tracking records linked to the rescue helicopter, and where she fell near Whangaehu Hut, the highest alpine hut in New Zealand.

The Department of Conservation website described the access route as off track, challenging, exposed and “only suitable for expert, well-equipped hikers with alpine experience”.

“This is pretty advanced,” her family said. “It’s steep and, in winter, it’s icy up there. This isn’t the 42 Traverse. This isn’t the Tongariro Crossing. This is something quite extreme.”

A photo on her phone taken the morning of the accident suggested members of the group were not wearing many layers or carrying much gear.

One mountain expert said that if it was a paid trip, WorkSafe would have come in. If it happened on a river, or a boat, it is maritime law, but there is no mountain law.

University of Otago law expert Associate Professor Simon Connell said there was extremely limited scope for inquiry when someone died during a private recreational trip on public land because they were covered by the ACC scheme that ruled out claims for fault.

SINNER THE WINNER

Wimbledon champion Jannik Sinner says skiing made him a better tennis player.

Sinner grew up in the village of Innichen, in the South Tyrol which is in Italy but sometimes seems as if it is in Austria.

Sinner’s parents worked at the local ski resort and in 2008 he won a juniors national championship in giant slalom.

“I was winning a lot when I was young in skiing, and in tennis I never won. Then slowly I started to lose in skiing, because physically I was not ready to compete. I was always quite skinny.

“The reason why I chose tennis was, in tennis you can make mistakes. You can lose points but you can still win the match. In skiing, if you make one mistake, one big mistake, you cannot win.”



The much photographed Cardrona Hotel is for sale at \$1.6 million, at least. Nestled between Wānaka and Queenstown, the building has been standing for 162 years. It has a bar and restaurant, 17 ensuite hotel rooms for 44 people, a beer garden, a children's play area, a modern workshop and a retail gift shop. Skiing is nearby.

PARALYMPIC SELECTIONS

Alpine skiers Adam Hall and Corey Peters have been named as the NZ team to contest the Winter Paralympics in Milano Cortina (Italy) in February.

Hall, 37, will be at his sixth Games. He has won five medals including three gold.

Peters, 42, will be contesting his fifth Games. He has won four medals including one gold.

Of the 238 Paralympians to have represented New Zealand since 1968, just 29 competed at the Winter Games.

"I still have the fire in the belly and striving to be as competitive as I possibly can," said Hall.

More athletes may be named in the NZ team.

*** Paralympics means Parallel Olympics.

*** Blind NZ skier Thomas Coysh, aged 25, said he hopes to compete in

the 2030 Winter Paralympics. He skis with a guide who calls turns into his helmet.

CROSSING RESCUE

A man was rescued from the Tongariro Alpine Crossing in July after he became stranded in freezing conditions with no food or adequate gear.

Taupō Police Search and Rescue received a phone call at 7.30pm from the trapper, who admitted he was unprepared for the challenging winter environment and would not be able to make it out on his own.

Police and LandSAR responded with a helicopter and successfully escorted the man to safety. Although he was extremely cold, he was not injured.

Police urged trampers to take winter conditions seriously, especially in alpine areas, and to carry the right equipment such as ice axes, crampons, adequate clothing and supplies.



Jo Graham.

JOANNE GRAHAM

Bulletin Editor Alan Graham is sad to report that his wife Joanne has died at Wellington, aged 86.

Jo was the RSC Lodge cook in 1968. That year Alan took Jo (then his girlfriend) on a Queen's Birthday trip to the Lodge and she was assigned to cooking dinner.

She did such good job that she was asked to be Lodge cook, and as she was between jobs, she agreed.

Jo joined RSC and was a member for 55 years, usually staying in RSC Hut and enrolling two sons as young skiers.

In later years Jo was a judge in the RSC ski tests programs.

Jo and Alan have enjoyed skiing in Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Scotland and all over the South Island.

Jo was a popular school teacher, both primary and secondary.

TOURISTS TO PAY FEE

Foreign visitors will be charged to access four of New Zealand's most iconic conservation areas, including the Tongariro Alpine Crossing.

The others are Cathedral Cove (Te Whanganui-a-Hei), the Milford Track and Aoraki/Mount Cook.

The charge will range from \$20 to \$40 per person, with the goal of raising up to \$62 million per year. Entry for New Zealanders will remain free.

The funds will be directly reinvested into those same locations to improve infrastructure and environmental management.

GETTING INTO THE BACK COUNTRY

I was lucky enough to get introduced to the Ruapehu backcountry 14 years ago when I first joined RSC.

The first mission was to Te Heuheu peak with a yeti and a slightly mad cook. They lent me an ice axe and we boot-packed all the way to the top in four hours.

The ski down was amazing through bowls and narrow shutes back down to The Valley and then into Broken Leg Gully for our final run home. By the time we got back on to the skifield everyone had gone home and it was straight back to the Lodge for a debrief.

Since that trip I have done many missions up to the tops and even over to the east side down to Tukino.

When we were getting started we did a course on Avalanche Awareness and Safety with Hillary Outdoors. The course was really worthwhile and Hillary Outdoors mentioned they could come to the Lodge to run a course for our members if we had enough people interested.

If you want to learn more about the backcountry I am happy to share what I have learnt and let you know what you need to get started. Also taking expressions of interest for members that want to do the course. Just email me below if you are interested.

I will be doing an after dinner talk at the Lodge in a few weeks if people want to learn a bit more and I will email you dates if you're interested.

If you are keen to get into the backcountry, email me below.

carlburling99@gmail.com

NEW SKIING EVENT

A new skiing event, the team alpine combined, will be raced at the Olympic Winter Games at Cortina (Italy) next year.

Teams of two take part, for men and for women.

A downhill specialist races a downhill or super-g in the morning, and his or her teammate races a slalom in the afternoon. Aggregate time wins.

Nations are allowed to field up to four men's teams and four women's teams.

CHAMONIX BANS HOMES

Chamonix has become the first town in France to ban the construction of new hotels and holiday apartments.

The move, introduced as part of a new urban development plan, is aimed at tackling the severe housing crisis affecting the ski and mountaineering town's 9000 permanent residents, many of whom are being priced out of their own community.

Mayor Éric Fournier has taken decisive action to curb the rise of second homes and short-term rental properties, which he says have led to an unsustainable housing market.

The town's new urban goal is to create 1000 additional homes for locals within the next decade.

Chamonix has evolved dramatically over the years. What was once a charming alpine village filled with rustic pubs has transformed into a high-end destination with luxury chalets and champagne bars.

The real estate boom has led to an overwhelming dominance of second homes which now account for nearly 70 percent of the town's housing stock. However, many of these properties sit vacant for most of the year.



The 4.30 races in action. Photo: RSC Collection.

THE 4.30 RUAPEHU SKI RACES

By Alan Graham

Did you know that as a 16 year-old in 1957 I invented the 4.30 ski and snowboard races for RSC children?

In the 1950s after the RSC Lodge was built, accommodation was so tight that families were allowed to spend only one week of the two-week August school holidays at the Lodge.

This led quickly to the founding of Pinnacle Ski Club which was opened largely by RSC families looking for a second week.

In 1957 I proposed to the Club Captain that I should be allowed to have a second week at the Lodge in return for inventing and running the 4.30 races in 1957 and 1958.

This was agreed. I took the entries, set the courses, got the parents to help run the races and organised the prizegiving.

They were simple giant slalom runs of approx 200 metres from Wango Hut to Glacier Hut.

Why did the Swiss instructor not set the courses? This was 1957 and the first live-in Swiss instructor didn't come until 1960.

Initially only Lodge children were involved. The old tin 1936 Hut was not

used by RSC and was made available to school parties (eg Auckland Grammar School).

RSC Hut folk joined the 4.30 races after the new (current) Hut was opened in 1960 and eventually the Wangos came along as well.

Ski racing for children was nothing totally new at Whakapapa.

When I was approx 14 and staying at the Lodge in the school holidays, we had lessons with the Chateau Ski School on Monday to Thursday.

Then on the Friday the Canadian chief instructor Harvey Clifford ran a simple race from the bottom of Broken Leg Gully down toward Skippers, where RAL in later years ran twin platter lifts.

In the 1990s I stayed in RSC Hut during the school holidays as my wife was a school teacher.

Naturally I volunteered to run the 4.30 races and among the starters was Emma Humphries, a wee lass from Karori who went on to the play football (soccer) for NZ at World Cup level.

Emma was most confused that her ski race was being run by one of her football coaches from back home!

*** August school holidays? Yes. When we had a three-term school year, children like me had the best of the snow.

NZ SUPER COACH SEAN THOMPSON

NZ snowboard star Zoi Sadowski-Synnott said she owes much of her success to her long time coach Sean Thompson.

"I'm extremely lucky to have my coach at every single competition," Zoi said..

"It makes a huge difference. I trust him on any call he takes, and if I'm feeling like I don't think I'm ready to try this trick, he either reads me, or gives me the motivation to go ahead with it."

"I see coaching as two separate things," said Thompson. "You've got coaching the sport, and you've got coaching the person."

"Really good coaches can connect with that person and understand what makes them tick and what stokes them out..

"If you can just find that balance of working on your relationship with the athlete as a person, then that really flows over and helps enhance your on-snow technical coaching because you've built such a strong relationship there, the trust is there."

Working with athletes such as Sadowski-Synnott has also taught him a lot, Thompson said.

"I learn every day from my athletes (laughs)," he said.

Thompson believes an internal drive and passion for success are what ultimately give snowboarders a competitive edge, especially when recovering from injury.

"Those two things together really help an athlete work through those challenging scenarios," he said.

"Your pressure and your confidence, and internal and external pressures – they can get pushed aside really quick when the passion is high and the love for it is high.

"So it's really trying to identify that and help them understand where they're at in the journey. Once they can understand that, all that other stuff doesn't matter.

"It's about them doing what they love and trying to achieve their goals when it matters the most – on the stage and in the bib."



Sean Thompson.

Sean, known as Thommo, is employed by Snow Sports NZ at Wanaka as a high performance coach, and has assisted many other Kiwis besides Zoi such as World Cup winners Christy Prior and Tiarn Collins.

Sean was born in Sydney, as was Zoi, and he initially competed internationally in snowboard cross. He instructed in Canada, US, Australia and Japan before his big move to Wanaka.

RSC SPELLING BEE

(1) Rock Garden or Rockgarden? Both are used. The Bulletin favours Rockgarden. So does the skifield management.

(2) Tennants's Valley? Definitely it is Tennant's. The Club has a copy of the man's signature and the spelling is quite clear.

(3). Ski field is grammatically correct and is in widespread use, but the Bulletin and the industry prefer skifield.

NEW SKIFIELD OPPOSED

A new skifield is planned for Bowen Peak at Queenstown, but the idea is hotly opposed by more than 1600 people who have signed a petition to stop the mega development.

Bowen Peak Ltd has submitted plans for a two-track funicular railway system stretching from the Lake Wakatipu up to Fernhill, Ben Lomond and Bowen Peak.

The development proposes a new commercial skifield on Bowen Peak, with a six-seater chairlift, plus a new retail and hospitality complex including a 1500 person conference centre at the base terminal.

There would also be a 250 unit chalet-style housing development above Fernhill, called Fernhill Heights Suburb. The funicular would be similar to the Cable Car in Wellington NZ.

The project is being advanced under the government's controversial Fast-Track Approvals Bill, which sees applications assessed by an expert panel and approved by ministers, rather than going through the usual council-run resource consent process.

The main person behind the project is Guy Hingston, an Australian surgeon who lives part-time in his family's home in Fernhill.

Forward Wakatipu, a group of locals representing mountain bikers, hikers, runners, and families, vehemently opposes the plans.

"If we are not careful, excessive over tourism will lead to environmental degradation, cultural erosion, overcrowding and even greater cost of living for locals.

"We believe in protecting wild places, enjoying human-powered recreation, and

smart, local infrastructure that benefits our community and visitors alike."

SKIFIELDS LAWSUIT

A Ruapehu hapū has filed court action against Conservation Minister Tama Potaka, challenging the concessions given to two companies to operate the Whakapapa and Tūroa skifields.

The action, launched by Hayden and Te Kurataiaha Te Wanikau Tūroa on behalf of Ruapehu/Whanganui hapū Te Patutokotoko, argues the Government and Department of Conservation were legally required to consult iwi, under section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987, before handing over control of the mountain. They allege the Crown breached this.

The hapū argue the Crown treated the law as imposing a tokenistic duty to consult *mana whenua*.

Te Kurataiaha Te Wanikau Tūroa said the legal action was not about money or control, rather about getting the Government to come to the table and "work together".

"The Government are breaching their own legislation, regarding our tribes, the *maunga*, the deals that they're doing, the selling of our mountain, and the selling of the village without consulting us," he said.

The legal action asks the court to declare the Director-General of Conservation failed to give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as the law requires, when they granted the concessions to the ski operators.

Kura Te Wanikau Tūroa said the iwi has no particular wish to shut down the skifields. They simply want to get the Government to come to the table.

"We need them to actually sit down and stop ignoring us."



Upper: NZ has two reps on the Council of the International Ski and Snowboard Federation (FIS). They are Fiona Stevens and Adam Hall who can be seen together in front of G and R.

Lower: Adam Hall (Wanaka-NZ) has won five Winter Paralympic medals in alpine skiing including three gold.



NEXT SKI SUPERSTAR

At the age of 21, Emma Aicher (Germany) is being tipped as the next superstar of alpine ski racing.

Unusually she competes for placings in all four disciplines. Most skiers specialise.

Last season Aicher skied 10 slaloms, nine super-g, eight GS and five downhill races on the World Cup tour.

She has won two World Cup races. At the World Championships she has one gold medal. At the Olympics she has a silver and a bronze.

Emma has a Swedish mother and was born in Sweden. She has a German father and moved to Germany to get better ski training.

“I like all of the disciplines, I like skiing. I think that makes it kind of easy, because I’m always doing the thing I like the most. Every morning I wake up and



Emma Eicher of Germany.

have so much fun.”

One blot on her programme. She prefers to go to Chile not NZ for off-season training.



Snow Farm skifield with its groomed cross-country trails.

TRY THE SNOW FARM

RSC members visiting Wanaka or Queenstown might try a day or two at Snow Farm near Cardrona which is NZ's only cross-country skifield.

Snow Farm is owned and operated by the Pisa Alpine Charitable Trust and is located on Queenstown Lakes District Council land.

Founded in 1986 by Mary and John Lee, it has 55km of trails groomed for both skating and classic cross-country skiing, plus a 24km snowshoe trail and a 150 metre tubing/sledding hill.

Rentals and instruction are available. Base elevation is 1520 metres and the highest point is Mt Pisa at 1965 metres.

Winter biathlon and winter orienteering are on offer, as well as a mass start race called the Merino

Muster.

Cross-country skis have a free heel so you can progress several metres for one stride. Beginners might travel 20km in a day.

Many top World Cup athletes from Canada, Poland, Japan, China, the US and others have called Snow Farm their training base over the past 15 years.

Accommodation in-field includes a large and recently renovated hotel at the base area, plus four basic mountain huts which are 90 minutes of winter skiing or summer biking away from the base.

The farm is next to a series of snow trails called The Southern Hemisphere Proving Grounds which are used by car and tyre companies for winter testing and as a location for winter motoring TV adverts.

HIGHEST SKI LIFT

The US wants to become the new home of the world's highest ski lift after Copper Mountain (Colorado) got the go ahead from the White River National Forest to expand its ski area.

US media says the addition of 513 acres bringing the resort's total skiable area to 4154 acres, making it the second largest in Colorado behind Vail.

The plans propose America's new highest chairlift up to 4008 metres, overtaking the country's current highest at nearby Breckenridge, which reaches an altitude of 3914 metres.

There is currently some debate amongst ski lift nerds as to where is the current highest lift in the world.

That's because the former clear highest ski area, Chacaltaya in Bolivia, which operated a primitive drag lift up to altitudes of 5421 metres, shut down more than a decade ago as climate change melted away the permanent snowfield it served.

Since then, there have been a number of contenders for "world's highest ski lift" in China and India where gondolas climb to between 4500-4900 metres altitudes, but they serve locations that are more scenic destinations rather than ski areas.

A candidate for world's highest ski lift is in India's Gulmarg, with a gondola lift up to approximately 3980 metres.

Another high Chinese gondola known as Shangri-La or "the Yulong Snow Mountain tourist cable car" climbs to an observation platform at an elevation of 4506 metres and has had short nursery slopes at the top which have attracted dedicated global skiers.

Commenting on the new lift plan, global expert on ski area dimensions Christoph Schrahe of Ski Weltweit said: "This would end all discussions whether Shangri-la in China is still operational or if you can

consider India's Gulmarg a proper ski area."

SKIER TREE FATALS

Did you know that two well known Americans died, six days apart, in the 1990s when they skied into trees?

One was **Michael Kennedy**, a corporate lawyer, who was the son of Robert Kennedy and thus a nephew of ex-President JFK.

He died in 1997 aged 39 as the result of a skiing accident at Aspen Mountain (Colorado).

He was playing "football" while on skis with several other members of the Kennedy family when he hit a tree.

Kennedy was not wearing a helmet or other safety equipment and the family had been asked by the ski patrol to cease the activity.

For the game the Kennedys split into two groups, with Michael captaining one team. As the game began, Michael recorded himself skiing down the run. After he reached the first goal, he handed the camera off to a friend to record him.

Then as he turned around to receive a pass, he slammed into a tree head first, and fell down unconscious.

The other was **Sonny Bono**, once of the pop singing duo Sonny and Cher, and later a prominent politician in California and Washington.

Salvatore Bono was of Italian descent who came to fame in partnership with his second wife Cher. Sonny went on to be a mayor and then a congressman.

He died in 1998 aged 62 of injuries incurred when he hit a tree while skiing at Heavenly Mountain Resort (California). Sonny had skied at the resort for 20 years.

Police estimated that Bono was going between 40 and 50 km/h when he hit the tree, and he was not wearing a helmet. An autopsy showed no indication of any substances or alcohol.

WORLD SKI NEWS

After winning a bronze at 16 and a gold at 20, two-time Winter Olympic medallist **Nico Porteous** has decided the time is right to step away from Olympic competition at the tender age of 23.

"I've loved representing New Zealand. Wearing the fern and competing for my country has been the most incredible experience and I'm so proud of what I've achieved," Porteous said.

Although he will no longer be competing at Olympic level, Porteous said he is not retiring from skiing altogether.

He plans to maintain his high level of skiing and remain active in the sport through filming, product development and other competitive events.

Work is underway on construction of the world's largest indoor snow centre at Shanghai in China.

The development is phase two of an existing indoor ski centre, the Taicang Alps Resort.

The new centre will be 650-metres long and will feature the world's biggest indoor vertical drop of 100 metres.

The \$US700 million development includes an international hotel and will feature a snow-themed observation lounge at the top of the slope. It will be open to the public by June 2029.

Cardrona is officially the largest skifield in NZ after the grand opening of the Soho Basin on June 29th.

The 150ha of new terrain has taken over a decade to complete and includes a new six-seater chairlift.

The basin's slopes include both groomed runs and off-piste areas, making it appealing to both intermediate and advanced skiers.

Wānaka Snow Sports Club committee

member Bonny Teat said the new terrain would bring more opportunities for the club's athletes and spread the load evenly across the mountain.

*After more than five years away from competitive skiing, the eight times overall alpine skiing World Cup champion **Marcel Hirscher** last year made a brief comeback.*

His return was abruptly cut short by injury. Now, six and a half months after undergoing knee surgery, he is officially back on track, having passed all necessary medical checks, including more than a thousand hours of rehab, therapy, and strength training.

Hirscher used to race for Austria. Now he represents The Netherlands where his mother was born.

A Waikato couple are selling their A-frame ski chalet at Waimarino (National Park) so they can build a new home near Te Kowhai Airpark at Hamilton. The idea is to park their Cirrus light aircraft right at the front door.

They built their dream A-frame ski chalet two years after their boys developed a love for skiing, but are now selling up for \$850,000 since the boys are into other sports.

A-frame houses built in the 1970s and 1980s are more common in the Ruapehu district than anywhere else in the country.

Professional freeride extreme skier Craig Murray (NZ) is giving away skis, bindings, helmets and goggles to an up-and-coming skier in need.

He said he is looking for a motivated but financially challenged young skier in Canada.

Several years ago, alongside his brother and a few friends, he founded Gritt, an organisation that offers mentoring and holds sports camps that cover skiing, biking, and climbing.



Upper: Downtown Ohakune and Ruapehu. Photo: Pure Turoa. **Lower:** Walking a mountain track near Ruapehu. Photo: DOC.

ACROSS THE SKIING WORLD

Last year the **Manganui skifield** on Mt Taranaki was open for only one day.

This year it was the first NZ skifield to open when it switched on its T-bar and learner tow on June 7th, following a polar blast and a snow dump.

Manganui is sited above Stratford and is operated by the Stratford Mountain Club which has an accommodation lodge on site.

It also has a powerful rope tow on its upper slopes.

***Mikayla Shiffrin (US)**, fresh from scoring a record 101 wins in alpine ski World Cup races, has posted videos of her singing pop songs and playing the guitar.*

Guess what? The lady has a lovely voice and sure can sing.

The Snow Farm cross-country skifield near Wanaka (see page 26) is hosting some of the world's top skiers this year as the 30th Merino Muster celebrates its first edition as a fully-fledged member of the Worldloppet global ski marathon series.

The 42km Merino Muster has been running since 1995 and for the past 14 years it has been an associate Worldloppet member.

It now joins 18 other prestigious marathons in the Worldloppet series, placing New Zealand on equal footing with global icons like the Vasaloppet (Sweden) and the American Birkebeiner (USA).

Becoming an official Worldloppet member marks a turning point for the sport in New Zealand, race founder Mary Lee said.

***Snow Sports NZ** has announced the launch of its new Mountain Women Hine Tāpuhipuhi website aimed at supporting the development of female snow sports athletes.*

Developed by leading industry experts and covering female athlete health, nutrition, strength and conditioning as well as mental skills, these resources will help female athletes train safer, smarter and better and will also help them get the most out of life beyond sport.

It is all a part of Snow Sports NZ's mission

to better support women and girls.

Norwegian ski cross star Audun Groenvold has died after being struck by lightning at his cabin. He was 49.

Federation president Tove Moe Dyrhaug said: "Norwegian skiing has lost a prominent figure, who has meant so much to both the alpine and freestyle communities.

"Audun had a great career in both alpine skiing and ski cross, before becoming the national ski cross coach."

Groenvold was initially a member of the Norwegian alpine skiing team. He switched to ski cross, a discipline that incorporates terrain park features like banked turns and big-air jumps.

He won the ski cross World Cup title in 2007 and won an Olympic Games bronze medal in 2010.

A coroner has ruled that three young Korean ski racers and their coach who died in South Island motor crash a year ago were not wearing seat belts. She said all four men may have survived had they been wearing seatbelts.

The young men and other athletes and coaches were travelling in convoy after a day of training when their car crossed the centre line near Geraldine. The driver of the other car was injured but survived.

The racers were members of the Lee Chang Woo Racing School. They arrived in New Zealand in July 2024 to train and compete in the Winter Games NZ in Queenstown.

The fastest times for men and women climbing Mont Blanc in France and skiing down were both broken on the same week. One was broken twice.

Benjamin Vedrines (France) set off from the church in Chamonix and made it back to town in 4 hours 54 minutes and 41 seconds.

Elise Poncet (France) set a new women's fastest known time for the 36 km round trip on skis in 6 hours 54 minutes and 47 seconds.

William Boffelli (Italy) promptly broke the Vedrines time with a run of 4 hours 43 minutes 23 seconds. That's 11 minutes faster.

***US ski areas** saw the second-highest visitation on record this past season, with a*

total of 61.5 million skier visits. That marks a 1.7 percent increase over the previous season.

The highest visitation total on record, 65.4 million in the 2022–23 season, was the result of a post-Covid surge.

Globally, ski resorts saw more than 366 million skier visits in the past year.

French ski mountaineer Vivian Bruchez has become the first person to climb and ski every peak higher than 4000 metres in the European Alps. The daunting task involved 82 summits.

Bruchez notched the final peak when he clambered to the top of Pointe Marguerite in the Grand Jorasses in Italy.

Born and raised in the steep skiing hotspot Chamonix, he first sought to become a ski racer like Bode Miller. Then Candide Thovex, the renowned freeskiier, became his idol.

The World's ninth highest peak, Nanga Parbat at 8124 metres, has for the first time been skied from its summit down to base camp at 4600 metres, a vertical descent of 3500 metres.

French duo Tiphaine du Perier and Boris Langenstein set two world firsts: the first ski descent from Nanga Parbat's summit and the first descent on skis from the challenging Rupal face.

They were joined by German alpinist David Johannes Goettler who made a dramatic descent by paraglider.

Nanga Parbat is in the Himalaya Range in the Pakistan administered Kashmir.

A 49-year-old Latvian national, identified on his Facebook page as Richard Berger, has been sentenced to 12 months in prison for posing as a certified ski instructor and defrauding Russian-speaking tourists at some of Austria's most popular ski resorts, including Mayrhofen, Kitzbühel and Ischgl.

Berger ran a fraudulent operation under the name "Omega Ski Academy," advertising his services on Facebook and his website, where he claimed to be an Austrian state-certified instructor.

According to prosecutors, he collected upfront payments for private ski lessons, many of which were never delivered.

Witnesses testified that he often failed to show up, and in the cases where lessons did occur, they were marred by unprofessional conduct.

A new chairlift and more than 150 acres of additional skiing terrain are to be named after the Robert Redford comedy movie Electric Horseman.

Sundance Mountain Resort in Utah was built by the actor and named after his role as the Sundance Kid in a smash hit movie.

The quad Doppelmayr quad express will cover 700 metres vertical feet in six minutes, unlocking runs in Sundance's back mountain area.

Starting from the 2025–26 ski season, Italy will become the first nation in Europe to make helmets compulsory for all skiers and snowboarders, regardless of age.

Until now, helmets were only mandatory in Italy for minors. First introduced in Italy in 2021 for those under 14, it was soon expanded to include all minors up to the age of 18.

From next winter, anyone skiing or snowboarding in Italy must wear a CE-certified helmet that meets European safety standards.

The rule applies across all ski resorts and all age groups, and includes sledding and tobogganing.

Head Skis are selling for \$US420 ski goggles with a solar powered lens that automatically adjusts in a split second, darkening in sunlight and brightening in shade.

There are no switches and no batteries, just a solar panel that activates a microprocessor.

Germany's two-time Winter Olympic biathlon gold medallist Laura Dahlmeier died aged 31 after being hit by falling rocks on a Pakistani mountain.

The accident happened around midday at an altitude of 5700 metres on Laila Peak in the Karakoram Range. Her climbing partner was able to sound the alarm after reaching safety.

Dahlmeier, an experienced mountaineer, was a certified mountain and ski guide and an active member of a mountain rescue team.



CLUB ITEMS & SERVICES FOR SALE

RSC Administration Office, P.O. Box 8064, Newmarket, Auckland 1149

Website: www.rsc.org.nz

email: admin@rsc.org.nz

Lockers

Ski and gear lockers are available in the Hut, Lodge and Turoa buildings.

Please email admin@rsc.org.nz for current availability.

Annual Locker Rental Rates:

Charged at the date of allocation.

Ski Locker \$63.25

Gear Locker \$32.62

Club Items

(Add \$3 for each order to be posted)

Name Badge (free to new members) \$12

PHONE NUMBERS

RSC Office 09-377-3856

Lodge 07-892-3824

Hut 07-892-3822

Chalet 07-892-3823

Turoa 06-385-8767

NEW MEMBERS COSTS

Attend two working parties.

Annual senior subscription \$310

Annual sub young adult, junior,
associate, veteran \$130

Joining Fees - \$49 for seniors
and juniors, maximum \$150 per family.

ACCOMMODATION FEES

2025 RATES

Member type	NEW Catered Lodge only	NEW Non-Catered
Senior	\$66.00	\$47.00
Young Adult	\$66.00	\$47.00
Teen	\$57.00	\$41.00
Junior	\$43.00	\$31.00
Member's Child	\$33.00	\$24.00
Senior non-member	\$119.00	\$85.00
Junior non-member	\$77.00	\$55.00

“All subscriptions and accommodation fees are paid through Clubman, our new booking system, and will have an additional Stripe surcharge of 2.7% and a 30 cents transaction fee.”