

# Perisher Valley's Future

By **STEVE CUFF**

WHEN you look at what has occurred in the past 30 years within Perisher Valley it is quite sad. The reason being, virtually nothing has happened.

To their credit Perisher Resort have invested millions of dollars in new lifts and snowmaking for their operations, but the actual wider Perisher Valley precinct has seen no major investment.

The National Parks, as landlord have failed Perisher Valley and the people who visit.

Under their tenor nothing has happened in decades on this front. They flaunted over a decade ago they wanted Perisher Valley to be a year-round, world class resort but had no ammunition to back up that statement.

Find me another tourist destination who falls into this category where no investment has been made in either upgraded accommodation or modern infrastructure over decades.

The Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct (SAP) needs to address a number of issues within

Perisher Valley, the first, who will be driving the future or any development of the valley.

This is not the resort's responsibility; they are owned by Vail Resorts and only look after their entity of mountain lease area and lifts.

If you look at Thredbo, who have had a head lease arrangement, they are responsible for their own destiny. Development (with planning permission) has excelled over the past 30 years because they had people driving their vision.

The village has seen apartments and accommodation developments, and they have expanded into the Crackenback Ridge and Woodridge areas.

Perisher Valley has no direction and still to this day no one seems to be responsible for lack of progress. I am not saying it needs to be over developed, but surely at least keep up with the current era.

If the SAP does not change this immediately, it will have also failed Perisher Valley along with the NPWS of the past decades.

It is all well and good to do studies

on comfortable carrying capacity and planned framework, but if there is not an independent agency appointed, what will happen.

The National Parks and Perisher (Vail Resorts) were in negotiations for the head lease, but Perisher have ceased any further discussions and have pulled out of the race. Whether that is temporary during the SAP planning stages or they resume in future, that is unclear.

The Deputy Premier John Barilaro has suggested an agency could be appointed to oversee the Perisher Valley precinct.

"We have got to resolve what is happening up there in Perisher with the lease," said Mr Barilaro.

"For a long time they (Vail Resorts) have been negotiating with the National Parks, that came to nothing. I think there is an opportunity to model what we can use going forward, looking at what other states do, that will be something I will be exploring with Perisher and my regional departments and see where we can land that."

When asked about the stalemate the valley has been entrapped in for decades, Mr Barilaro agreed it has been



a stalemate.

"I remember when I first got elected in 2011, that was a big issue then, and we were trying to negotiate and I can't believe, ten years on and we haven't landed it."

"But we just have to come to a realisation skiing and the resorts are a big part of that landscape, the guys that own the resorts know what they are doing, they value the environment that they are in, they will protect it.

"There's got to be a better commercial approach, that's the balance we've got to find. It's unfortunate we were not able to land that lease, but that doesn't mean it ends there, it just opens another door."

Let's hope we can find that other door, as at present it is a locked room.

The SAP needs to address the shortcomings of the winter season as a priority before it looks too far ahead for

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**NO** Plastic bags, soft plastics, packets or wrappers, nappies or hygiene products, polystyrene, clothes, shoes, food scraps, electronic items, building materials, wood or batteries.

**Landfill YES**

Consider home composting for food and garden waste. Recycle soft plastics at supermarkets via REDcycle program.

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■ **PROMISES: The view of Perisher Valley from the slopes of Perisher.**

PHOTOS: Steve Cuff.

summer planning.

Hearing they did not invite all key stakeholders within Perisher Valley to specific Perisher meetings in the past year is disappointing. Let's hope they can all sit down and address some immediate problems and fix those.

The key winter issues are parking and accommodation. If you look at Mt Buller in Victoria, they have about 10,000 beds on the mountain.

Imagine what Perisher Valley could be if we had that foresight to develop accommodation, environmentally conscious of course. There would be less traffic, less weekend road congestion and we would solve a few issues right there.

The roads are congested as the carparking is an issue but that could have been solved years ago by NPWS.

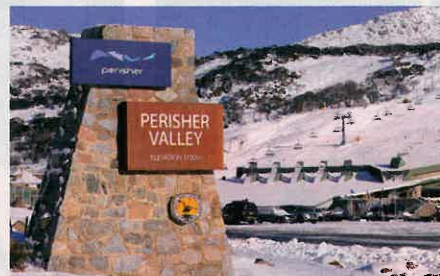
On the busy days, 600 cars park below Smiggins on the Kosciuszko Road towards Prussian Creek and Dainers Gap. Yet it has been detailed prior that 800 car spaces could be made available with restructure of the Perisher View site, which is already disturbed, and at the end of Smiggins carpark.

Part of the problem with any development inside the park is the timeframe, plus costs are at the higher end of the scale. Combined they would scare away developers. There are limitations on how much pain developers would want to put themselves through.

The SAP is supposed to counter all this and deliver timely DA applications and fast track development and reduce 'red and green tape'. Making developments commercially viable initially would also be proactive.

There are 800 beds still allocated for the Perisher Valley precinct, but how they could be delivered back into the accommodation sector is another problem. Could some lodges be offered extra bed licences at a fair or even reduce rate as an incentive. Or do you build new hotels and apartments?

It may seem unfair to existing lease holders if these 'new' beds are offered



outside of the current cost frame. Commercial lodges have been paying a premium fee for existing beds.

Attending the SAP overview meeting for businesses in February, the planning team could not offer any specific answers relating to Perisher's head lease.

Their summer vision was also somewhat limited at this stage. The Snowies Iconic Walk is already in play and was before the SAP started. This will be a great walk, but it will hardly be a huge driver of tourism to Perisher, more a steady trickle.

It was suggested by a respected tourism consultant at one meeting have the SAP looked seriously at a full upgrade for the Charlotte Pass lookout area for summer. This area is all part of the Perisher Range vision, yet currently the lookout is a shemozzle of a car park cluster on a busy day. Hardly the best experience for a visitor.

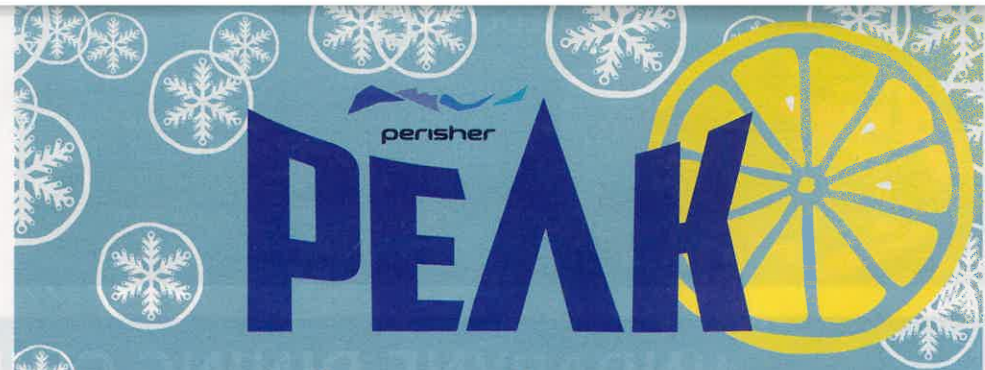
Could this lookout area be developed to more of a world class space in summer.

Charlotte Pass Resort have made indications they will invest in their summer product and imagine if they had a modern lookout precinct with proper amenities next door.

The SAP draft plan is due out for public exhibition in either May or June. Everyone who is a passionate Perisher visitor should read that plan and submit constructive ideas when they see the content of the Perisher section.

In summary, if the SAP was expanded from the Jindabyne Masterplan to now incorporate the alpine resorts, they have a duty to improve Perisher Valley as one of their first priorities.

It could be a really exciting period ahead for Perisher, the best we have seen in a generation, lets hope the government planners act accordingly to ensure it happens.



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