



# Australian Alpine Snowsports History Association

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## In this issue

- AASHA 2023 Conference in Thredbo
- President's Update
- The doctor is in
- Falls Creek Historical Society
- National Alpine Museum Australia – Mt Buller
- Disabled Wintersport Australia
- Report on the Annual Meeting of AASHA

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*The Australian Alpine Snowsports History Association acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are the traditional custodians on the land on which we live and work. We pay respect to their Elders past and present.*

## AASHA 2023 Conference in Thredbo



*AASHA 2023 Participants. Photo: Steve Cuff (Snowy Mountains Magazine)*

Falls Creek Historical Society unfortunately had to cancel their hosting of the November 2022 Conference due to a landslide over the only entrance road to the resort and reschedule for May 2023. This in turn had to be cancelled when authorities advised they could not guarantee the road would be reopened by then. The event was again cancelled. This meant that – with Covid hurdles and now a landslide – our organisation had not met for three years.

Accordingly, we had not been able to benefit from the interaction intended, between the 4 Alpine Snowsports Historical Societies, Mt Buller, Falls Creek, Perisher and Thredbo, plus the interaction with our wider supporting network of Authors, Film makers and Historians. This unplanned gap in our Conference schedule prompted Thredbo Alpine Museum (TAM) to offer, at short notice, to host the 2023 Conference over the weekend of 5/6/7 May which was accepted. Accordingly the 2023 Conference went ahead over that weekend, thanks to support offered by resort operator Kosciuszko Thredbo Pty Ltd, and a number of Ski Clubs, Ski Club of Australia, Kiama Alpine Club & The Denman Hotel who offered accommodation for visitors.

Some 50 plus people attended the Friday night Welcome drinks, the Conference on Saturday followed by Saturday night dinner all at the Thredbo Alpine Hotel. The Conference went on to provide the interaction and learnings for those in attendance we had hoped for.

Agenda highlights were the Panel discussion moderated by TAMs Wayne Kirkpatrick. The subject was "Future Challenges Facing Resort Management / Operators". The panel made up of Stuart Diver (Thredbo), John Hutchins (Mt Buller) Tina Burford (Perisher) Angela Murdock (Charlottes Pass) Josh Elliott (Mt Selwyn).

Panel discussions followed on – "Museums Existing Collection Systems and moving into the digital age" – Randy Wieman TAM, Karen Smyth Falls Creek, Michelle Stevenson Mt Buller.

Also, "Attracting Museum Volunteers and Retaining them" panel of Alan Fredericks (Thredbo), Nyree Fiddes (Falls Creek), Michelle Stevenson (Mt Buller).

Further presentations were made on: Visitor Motivations and Exhibitions in Motion by Glenn Ferguson; Decluttering your collection by Dr Michelle Stevenson Mt Buller; The Snowy Alpine Heritage Centre by Wayne Kirkpatrick; Charlotte Pass and its place in Australian Skiing History by Author Rick Walkom, and a film on Freestyle Skiing by Randy Wieman.

As Conference Co-Ordinator there are a number of people from TAM I wish to thank for their efforts and services provided in making the Conference the success it was, including: Randy Wieman, Errol Hanlon, Treasurer Raylene Jarvis and Chrissi Webb & Brian Farmer. Saturday night Dinner Guest Speaker Shann Turnbull had the audience enthralled with his skiing adventures from Tasmania to Thredbo and much more in between!



*A visit to the top of Thredbo's Gondola was one highlight of many!*



*Michelle Stevenson  
(Mt Buller)*



*Stuart Diver and Errol  
Hanlon*



*Victorians Jon & Robyn Hutchins test the  
Kosi Chalet Chairlift Seat*

Sunday brought a different perspective with a good snowfall overnight and two resort busses with guides giving us a village tour before hopping on the Merritts Gondola for a ride to Merritts Station for coffee and photo opportunities.



*Rik Walkom, Penny & Jerry Krejzar*



*Shann Turnbull with Randy Wieman*



*Neil and Keryn Bower (Mt Buller)*

*Alan Fredericks, AASHA Conference Co-Ordinator*

## President's Report

The 2023 season was not one of our best for snow. As the saying goes 'as one door closes another opens'. Our members with physical exhibition spaces had open doors for those visitors needing a break from softening afternoon snow or for when the weather was grim and the snow not so great. I know this has been the case for NAMA. For me, it meant I got in a visit to the Falls Creek Museum on a cold very wet day in the last week of August during a mid-week ski trip. Many thanks to our host, Leo, the fabulous volunteer, who was the perfect information source to the visitors. He was interesting, engaging and not too intrusive. Just what you want in a volunteer.

At the end of 2024 you too will be able to visit the Falls Creek Museum as part of the program for the next conference which I am very much looking forward to after missing all the fun in Thredbo. The work on the land slip is progressing well and traffic is being well managed to safely navigate past the affected section.

Our digital memberships continue to be strong with 451 members. In the last month the number of people who viewed our page increased by 150% to 665 people, nearly all of these (650) were members. I would like to acknowledge and thank Graeme Holloway who is our No. 1 contributor with some excellent content for all to enjoy. Each Ben Lomond post had 200+ views.

I would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a lovely spring and summer and best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year .

Thank you, Alan, for your consistent enthusiasm for the newsletter.

*Genevieve Fahey – President*



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## The doctor is in

“Skiing is an activity which crosses everyday boundaries between the natural and cultural, tangible and intangible.”

Dr Michelle Stevenson can't write you a prescription but she's the sort of doctor most of us would prefer to have an appointment with; she holds the first PhD ever awarded for study in Australian skiing history. Yes, a Doctor of Australian Skiing history is a thing and she's the only one in the land.

Michelle's day job is at Museums Victoria where she heads up History & Technology and she is the Curator at the National Alpine Museum on Mt Buller. She's a skier, did a stint instructing in her twenties and instead of bingeing Netflix during COVID she got her head down and worked on a thesis that brings together “two entangled passions and parts of my identity, that of skier and cultural heritage practitioner.”

Her PhD, poetically titled “Snowflakes in a sunburnt country”, kicks off with a delicious glossary of terms including ‘chookfooter’, ‘punter’ and ‘spring corn’ and you know you're in for an interesting read when the table of contents has sections titled; Skis, Snowgums, Schnapps, Snowflakes and Ski Like a Girl.

Even when the topic is as close to the scholar's heart as this is for Michelle, a PhD is a weighty academic undertaking and her exploration of ski culture reveals interesting perspectives on how it all started, what we do on snow, why we do it and what it all means to us.

“Studying skiing in Australia is a way to examine broader Australia in many ways and can help us to understand elements that have shaped our country and the people we are today; migration, our interactions with the environment and our engagement with the wider world. It looks at how we've taken some of those overseas influences and made them our own. In studying Australian skiing we see the co-mingling of Australian and particularly European cultures that shows up in the snowfields in a way that is more visible than in the big cities,” she explains.

Snowgums get a special mention in the thesis and it seems if you ask anyone what makes Australian skiing unique, our favourite bendy trees are high on the list. “Snowgums came up again and again ... most of the skiing we are doing here is at or just above the tree line and we are immersed in landscapes with snowgums so they come to define these places we love.”

Her study spans things, the facts and happenings of Australian ski history but also the feelings and meanings we make in the mountains. She uses a lovely word, liminality, which is about transitions, in-between moments and breakdowns to ‘normal’ boundaries; liminal moments it seems are often woven into our alpine experiences. She explains, “when people come to alpine areas it's usually a place they transition into, and there's a journey to arrive. We might step into a different ‘version’ ourselves in these special places. Skiing also offers us a different set of experiences; après ski moments, a place of escape, moments of danger and adventure – these are liminal moments that are offered to us in the mountains.”

Talking to Michelle it's clear she lives and breathes this topic, and that she's quietly stoked about being the first PhD in her field. She broken the trail and is hopeful others will follow her bootpack to build on and record Australia's evolving alpine history. Visit the Museum when you are next on Buller to see some very cool alpine artifacts, flip through a copy of “Snowflakes in a sunburnt country” and take a moment to reflect on what it means to ski in Australia.

Dr Stevenson might even show you around.

*Written by Rhylla Morgan & Dr Michelle Stevenson. First published in Chillfactor 2023 magazine and reproduced here courtesy of the magazine's editor, Reggae Ellis.*

## Falls Creek Historical Society

Well, that was a strange one.

We started off with a bang. Great snowfall, roads open, visitors by the bucketloads, tons of smiling faces and a full volunteer list for the planned 4 days a week that we wanted to open in 2023.

We ended with an early closure due to high temps and northerly winds, roads still open, healthy levels of visitors, tons of smiling faces and full volunteer list still opening the 4 days a week.

We had another great year in the museum and again thank the fabulous people that helped us out for the 15 weeks. We have continued to receive treasures from the community and continue to copy, scan and record as much as we can.



The team of Falls Creek volunteers

We helped the Falls Creek Primary celebrate their 50th birthday which was a lot of fun by providing photographs and a guest book for their celebration. The guest book was not only intended to capture great stories from the first 50 years but will be something that can be brought out at future celebrations and milestones.

We loved our time at the AASHAA celebration at Thredbo, thank them sincerely for taking on the conference at such short notice, and look forward to hosting 2024 in Falls Creek in November. We have already started coming up with some new ideas that we hope will be of interest to our guests.

We have been plugging away at our digitisation project and look forward to continuing that over the summer. Our greatest learning from this is that it is time consuming. The photographing, collating the information and building the story takes time and whilst we thought we would have hundreds of items on the web, we just haven't but we now know what we have to do and look forward to continuing this project into the future. Thank you to the Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grant for their financial assistance with getting us started.

We are closed now until the summer holiday periods but have had a great winter overall and look forward to more smiling faces in our museum soon.

*Karen Smythe, Falls Creek Historical Society Chairperson*

## National Alpine Museum Australia - Mt Buller

The unveiling of the commentative 'Hans and Captain' sculpture at the entrance to Mt Buller Alpine Resort on Saturday 20th May started the winter season. The finished sculpture has already become a popular photo spot.



*Hans' son Hannes with the completed sculpture. Photo: Meridian Sculpture, May 2023*

We had a very productive working bee before the season started. One major element related to the re-organisation of our storage areas. We installed new shelving, shifted compactus and existing shelving, and reorganised the storage areas to make better use of the spaces we have – creating a dedicated digitisation workspace in the process. Other work took place in the front of houses spaces with volunteers finishing the racking for our main ski display and creating a new 'shop' display for the items we have for sale.

Despite the season and museum closing two weeks early NAMA has had a very good year for visitation already our best ever – and the year is not over yet. An increase in school groups and a series of poor weather days contributed to our strong numbers. Part-way through the season we implemented a new system of tracking the time of day visitors came through the museum and our data so far suggests the most popular time is between 2–3pm.



*The workspace before and after the shifting of shelving and compactus. New digitisation workstation in the foreground. Photo: Michelle Stevenson.*

Our après @ NAMA late openings run each Wednesday in July and August. There were 250 attendees who came from a much broader range of clubs on the mountain than we have seen in previous seasons, and we got a very enthusiastic response from everyone.

*Michelle Stevenson, NAMA*



*New shop display and completed ski rack. Photo: Michelle Stevenson.*

## Disabled Wintersport Australia

Disabled Wintersport Australia (DWA) has a long and valued association with the snow resorts in both Victoria and New South Wales. Established in 1978 as the Australian Disabled Skiers Federation, DWA has assisted thousands of individuals with disability to participate in winter sports.

This unheralded service continues to be possible with the unswerving commitment of the five resorts at which we operate.

We understand that we represent only a small fraction of total business across the snow resorts, but we are grateful for the ongoing support, goodwill, and strong relationships we share at Falls Creek, Mount Buller, Mount Hotham, Perisher, and Thredbo.

Winter 2023 has been challenging for anyone invested in snowsports and, whilst our member numbers are increasing since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a reduction in participation this season. Not surprising given the rising cost of living and the fact that it is generally more expensive for people with disability to participate in all aspects of life.

We are grateful for the support of our donors, partners, supporters, and the snow resorts for enabling DWA to help our members find their freedom on snow. And, of course, the commitment of our volunteer adaptive snowsports guides.

We are now turning our thoughts to winter 2024, strengthening relationships, and building an even more member-centric organisation. And we are looking forward to the best season ever.

*Tony Murray, Chief Executive Officer, Disabled Wintersport Australia*



## AUSTRALIAN ALPINE SNOWSPORTS HISTORY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

6 May 2023, Kosciuszko Room, Thredbo Alpine Hotel, Thredbo Alpine Village

Meeting commenced: 4.10PM

### In attendance:

**By Zoom:** Genevieve Fahey (President), Peter Southwell-Keely.

**In person:** Roger Andrew, Robert Parcel. Alan Fredericks, Randy Wieman, Del Fisher, Karen Smythe, Glenn Ferguson, Anna Murray, Frances Millar, Elizabeth Burke, Shann Turnbull, Tracey Dickson, Chrissi Webb, David Hogg, Neil Bower, Keryn Bower, Steve Thompson, John Hutchins, Robyn Hutchins, Wendy Magee, Paul Shyday, Andrew Horsley, Errol Hanlon, Rick Walkom, Ashley Blondel, Jerry Krejzar, Raylene Jarvis, Brian Farmer, Jan Glover.

**Apologies:** Marion Murri, Phillip and Pam Woodman, Michael Wadsley, Graeme Holloway, Chris and Janelle Brangwin, Stuart Stevens, Robert Frolich, Jenni Cole.

### President's Report

Genevieve Fahey (GF) opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. She thanked TAMS and Alan Fredericks for hosting the 2023 conference and annual meeting and for Randy Wieman's assistance organising the Zoom so GF and Peter Southwell-Keely could participate. GF thanked Karen Smythe for the effort and commitment she and her team put into hosting the conference despite the Covid pandemic and more recent roadway landslips. GF referred to 2024 as the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of AASHA and the growth in membership since its inception in 2014. GF listed the new AASHA committee members and advised that those members form the 2023/24 committee, with the exception of Chris Brangwin (PHS) who had resigned during the year.

### The Committee for 2023-2024

**President:** Genevieve Fahey NAMA Mt Buller

**Immediate Past President:** Alan Fredericks TAM

**Members:** Karen Smythe, Falls Creek; Michael Wadsley, Ski Club of Tasmania; Randy Wieman, TAM; Ashley Blondell, PHS; Jamie Lawrence, Ben Lomond; Stuart Stevens, Mt Hotham; Tony Murray\*, DWA; Robert Frolich, Australian Indigenous Alpine Sports Foundation.

**Observers:** Peter Southwell-Keely, PHS; Graeme Holloway, TAMS.

### AASHA Agenda Items:

GF turned to the agenda seeking views on the preferred means of communication – Facebook or email. A majority present indicated email as the preferred communication channel. Facebook is to remain a primary source due to the public reach and exposure with GF undertaking to determine who wants emails so that it can be used for members wanting to use this means. We now have 413 members. The Facebook demographic and other analytics report for the AASHA site shows strong engagement from men in every age group. This is counter to the demographic profile across Facebook where women slightly outnumber men. Our largest demographic is men in the 65+ age group.

GF thanked Graeme Holloway for his continuing help in administering the Facebook page and Alan and Jeanie Watson for their support in producing our fabulous newsletter.

GF raised the question of when conferences should be held. Retain annual or move to biannual? The majority favoured moving to biannual meetings. This would be revisited at the Falls Creeks conference.

There was discussion on what was the best time to hold the biannual meetings. It was recognised that resorts had difficulty in hosting in May due to the proximal start of the season in early June each year. There were suggestions of April and November and the committee will consult members further, including on the issue of rotation amongst the resorts.

Members agreed that the content of the newsletters and Facebook channel was about right, including that the updates from each resort was best achieved by the newsletter. There was discussion on the focus for the next 12 months with recommendations including the need and the ways and means to increase fundraising for member societies as well as uploading society movies and videos to a YouTube channel. This will need further discussion as to the best way forward. GF closed the meeting at 4.30pm, thanking attendees & wishing everyone a successful winter in 2023.