



RANSKI CLUB

adventure : recreation : relaxation



December 2023 NEWSLETTER



Navy Ski Club members enjoying some sunshine for the 2023 Club Championships Giant Slalom race at Mount Buller (August 2023)

President's message

----- IAN MIDDLETON

Season's Greetings fellow members.

Another year almost over already and Christmas is upon us. Winter 2023 started well but ultimately the snow falls did not continue and most resorts ended the season early. I hope you at least got a couple of days skiing or boarding in and if you didn't, there is always next season.

Your board has been busy over the last couple of months preparing the Club for the introduction of a new online booking service in the New Year.

This move has also caused a change in accounting systems and a different credit card payment service, all of which should be transparent to you, but if you do run into difficulties when booking next year, please don't hesitate to ring your booking officer Liz. On that note, if you do have to cancel, please do it through calling Liz as she does run a waitlist for all the lodges and can often re-let your cabin to other members. Liz is also undergoing training in the new booking system and will be available to assist you if the "internet" doesn't comply.

The board has also considered rates for next season and decided to continue last year's practice of applying Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases only to keep our rates competitive for Alpine accommodation. We did decide to increase our joining fee for new members who join in 2024 from this year's rate of \$250 to \$325.

Our total member numbers are near our desired membership cap of 1850 members and as we planned in our membership and marketing strategy, we are also introducing additional measures to ensure new members align with our club values. This includes re-instating the requirement for all new members to be endorsed as "suitable" by two ordinary members.

We will also be targeting our recruiting efforts at attracting current and ex-Navy people to increase the number of ordinary members in proportion to new non-Navy members.

From the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of the Club newsletter.

I hope you like the new format ☺

Not much we can say about the 2023 snow season, except that things can only get better.

Many are calling it the worst season in decades. Certainly, it is the worst since 2006 in terms of snow depths.

Warmer than usual temperatures also resulted in reduced opportunities for the snowmakers, so it all amounted to a disappointing season throughout the resorts with many events and competitions having to be cancelled.

Despite the relatively poor conditions, the season was still very successful for our Club as our members and guests continued to come out of 'COVID hibernation' and get back to what we love – spending time with our friends and family in the snow. See the Treasurer's wrap up for some details of where our funds come and go!

The poor snow and cancelled events saw a record number of requests for refunds this year. It is important to know the refund terms and conditions before you commit to a booking!

Don't forget that our lodges can also be used over the summer period and in the new year leading up to the start of the snow season. Why not visit and partake in some 'green season' activities. Check our website and articles in this newsletter for more details.

This bumper edition of our newsletter is full of tips to keep you informed about all aspects of our Club, so enjoy the read.

Have a safe and joyful Christmas and wishing you all the best for 2024.



Oh, what could have been.
Maybe next year...

The Club values all of our members, including ordinary Navy members, associates and our families, but our club is focused on fostering skiing and other alpine activities among members of the Royal Australian Navy as laid down in our constitution.

The board is also looking for ways to emphasize our naval connections within our lodges and club events, and I hope guests and visitors to our facilities will notice these efforts next season.

The board's biggest strategic activity over the past couple of years has been the effort to redevelop Thredbo Lodge. The building DA was lodged earlier this year and while not yet approved, Phil Gregory has been very busy answering numerous questions from the NSW government regarding our design. Those of you who have built houses would appreciate the detail needed for a successful DA, but we have found proposing a new ski lodge just three blocks down from where the Thredbo landslide occurred has been very challenging. That said, we have progressed and are confident we will get a successful outcome in 2024, and hopefully look to start some of the early changes in Summer 2024/25 with a view to actually commence the build on completion of the 2025 winter season, provided our finances allow.

So we continue to increase our savings in preparation for the build, but we will need a mortgage and we will need all of you to assist in paying it off through subscriptions, accommodation revenue, as well as work parties to maintain our other lodges and keep other costs down.

The board has also decided to limit work party priorities to one per member family for next winter irrespective of how many work parties or which work party you attended. Perisher Lodge in particular and to some extent Thredbo (for key weekends) has been booked out for all practical purposes during the first priority band period for the last two years and we would like to ensure all members have an opportunity to make a booking. I hope this does not reduce participation in our working parties as our club needs your active participation to ready our lodges for each winter season.

Since the last AGM, Linda Walker advised the board she would like to retire as Vice President Membership, Marketing and Communications, due to an attractive employment offer that would prevent her active participation in the Club. Linda has been a very active board contributor, drafting our current membership and marketing plan, as well as working behind the scenes on keeping our online booking system running while finding the Club a more contemporary booking system better suited to our needs. She has also brought a different perspective to your board, and she will be missed! Jeremy Butler volunteered to step up and take on Linda's duties at short notice for which I am very grateful. A huge thank you to Linda for her contribution to the Club!

The next AGM will be at Buller Lodge on Saturday 27 April 2024. Please consider attending and actively participating in our club. We do need volunteers for each of the Lodge committees. I hope to see you there.

-----/-----



The R.A.N. Ski Club's original lodge after the first major rebuild in the 1960s. If only it was as easy today in terms of planning and cost.



Test your knowledge! Can you name any or all the Club's values?

There are eight values in total!

(Answers on the back page)



Proving you are never too old to race, Phil Ridgway in action at the Club Championships. (Phil's tip to our young snowsports competitors, "The most important part of course inspection is to note the location of the photographer.")

2023 Club Championships

Japan comes to Mt Buller

----- JEREMY BUTLER

The 2023 RAN Ski Club Championships were held in excellent conditions at Mt Buller on Saturday 5th August 2023.

With the challenge of finding sufficient snow cover, the Giant Slalom event was moved from the traditional Standard racecourse to a new location with good snow cover on the Summit.

The weather was kind to us, and after many years of this race being held in blizzard conditions, on this occasion a cloudless sky provided a beautiful blue-bird day. The proceeding night was also clear and cold, thus ensuring a firm racecourse that held up well in the sunshine.

Most got through unscathed apart from a few damaged egos for the Veteran Men. Also, glad to see our Club Facebook moderator, Anne-Marie, survive a big fall and ready to fight another day!

The afternoon saw the Cross-Country race held on the Village Trail with equally fierce racing from all involved.

As is tradition, the races were followed by an evening dinner and awards ceremony. With 'Japanese' being the theme this year, over 70 people were treated to amazing gourmet delights created by iron chefs Kath Bier and Mike Rich and ably assisted by a band of fantastic helpers.

The Japanese festivities were briefly interrupted by an anti-whaling protester, (the Ed.) however, this did not detract from a night of fun, food and karaoke.

Trophies and medals were awarded within a variety of categories including Junior, Open and Veteran. A handicap system is applied to ensure fair results regardless of age.

The premier award and biggest trophy of the night goes to the fastest uncorrected male and female times.

Congratulations to this year's Club Champions, Alice Butler & Bowie Rich.

Planning for the 2024 Championships is well underway.

The date has been set for Saturday 3rd August 2024. The theme will be "United States of America!"

All Club members are welcome to attend the Club Championships and events include GS for Skiers and Snowboarders and a X-country race.

Those that have made the journey from interstate have always thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Communications

Stay in touch with the latest Club news

The Navy Ski Club uses a variety of ways to keep you informed of Club business. These include our website, Facebook, newsletters and bulletins.

Like most organisations, email is now our primary method of Club communications.

Gone are the days when a few of our dedicated members would hand address and stamp a mailout twice a year. It's just not practical or efficient to do this anymore with over 900 addresses in our system.

Therefore, it's so important that you keep your email address up-to-date. We still get many 'bounces' from invalid addresses when we send out newsletters and bulletins.

Data also shows that only 60-70% of our bulletins are opened, so many of you may be missing out on important Club business. Please check to ensure emails from info@ranskiclub.com.au are not diverting to Trash or Spam folders.

We aim to send out a newsletter biannually (April and December) and periodic bulletins to keep you informed of important business.

Additionally, we use Facebook to advertise various events and activities.

Finally, the Club website should be your 'go-to' place for a wealth of Club information.

Suggestions and input from our members is always welcome.

Email

info@ranskiclub.com.au

Website

<http://www.ranskiclub.com.au>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/RanSkiClub>

Newsletter editor: Jeremy Butler

vpmmc@ranskiclub.com.au



You can always call Liz if you have enquiries about membership and bookings ☺

New Booking System

Navy Ski Club to introduce CBD Web Alpine Booking Service

The existing Club System membership and booking system was our first foray into an online system.

Although a vast improvement on the antiquated system of mailing or faxing booking forms, it was not without glitches and resulted in a lot of extra work behind the scenes.

IT support for Club System has steadily declined over the past couple of years as the sole proprietor of the system has scaled down operations.

As a result, a new (and better) system was sought, and the Board has elected to engage a new online system (called “CBD Web Alpine Booking Service”) which will be rolled out prior to the 2024 snow season.



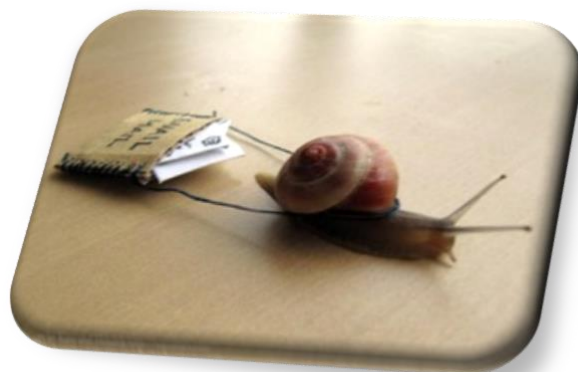
A tested and proven system, this new service currently serves 73 clubs with a total of 95 lodges. It provides increased levels of flexibility and useability.

Please be patient as there may be some teething problems. Note that ‘Green season’ bookings will continue to require manual transactions with our Booking Officer (Liz) as we transition to the new system.

Speaking of Liz and bookings, a big shout out and thanks as always for all her continuing hard work!

It is a big job moving all the data across from one system to another. Thanks to Adrian Hills for his many hours of work in this regard.

Booking Enquiries
 (02) 6295 6634
 Tue, Wed & Thu
 0930 – 1430



Did you know?

The RAN Ski Club receives a lot of correspondence (and bills!). Our volunteer committee members endeavour to respond to all requests as quickly as possible, but often it takes time.

Sometimes correspondence must be considered at one of our Board meetings before a response can be drafted, for example, *‘exceptional circumstance – full refund.’*

So, thank you for your patience.

Many enquiries are about membership and bookings. Often the information requested is on our website.

Occasionally we get complaints ☹ We take them seriously and always respond.

Rarely do we receive compliments

News from the Lodges

Thredbo

----- GREG THOMPSON (VP)



Our lodge is ideally located just a short walk to the centre of the Thredbo Village.

An update on the planned redevelopment of Thredbo lodge:

Phil Gregory has been toiling away making sense of the seemingly incomprehensible regulations and guidelines to be followed in order to submit the required development application (DA). We are almost there with Phil following up with the contractors on some clarifying questions from the Department of Planning and Environment regarding:

- Geotechnical review details
- Updating the hydraulic designs
- Refinement of the construction approach

So, without the approved DA, this summer will have no redevelopment work started and our view is now to undertake the cool room, heating and some other 'minor works' in summer 24/25 and then look to commence the major redevelopment work in the summer of 25/26.

Stay tuned!

Greg
vpthredbo@ranskiclub.com.au

Hello from Thredbo!

I'm Greg and it's a privilege to be taking over from Ian as the VP for Thredbo lodge.

Damian, our friendly lodge managers and I look forward to welcoming you to the lodge sometime soon!

As with all areas in Australia it has been a ski season to forget, but the good thing about Thredbo is there is always something on and many of our members took advantage of a number of village events other than skiing. I'm sure we're all looking forward to next winter and some more snow!

But now Thredbo is open for summer bookings! Come on down and bring your bikes, your running shoes and your hiking boots!

Some of the events in and around Thredbo this summer are:

- Ultra Trail Kosciuszko Thu 7 to Sat 9 Dec
- Snowies MTB Festival: Fri 9 Sat 10 Feb
- Snowies Trail Running Festival: 24 Feb
- Rare Cancers Challenge Walk: 16 Mar

Visit www.thredbo.com.au for more details.



Draft plans for the new Thredbo lodge.

Perisher Valley

----- ANDREW SMITH (VP)

Perisher Lodge 2023 Ski Season Recap

Although 2023 Winter Season snow conditions fell well short of the magic we experienced in 2022 our members reported that good snow was available through to mid-September when lift operations shut down. The Lodge remained open through to the end of the season with high occupancy and our stalwart cross-country skiers closing out with some fun on the main range.

Your Perisher Committee

At the 2023 AGM I was elected VP Perisher. I've been a member since [he 1980s] and assumed responsibility from Rick McMaster who has dedicated [so many years supporting our Perisher Lodge (thankyou Rick). The Perisher Lodge has also continued to receive excellent support from Perisher Committee members, our volunteer Lodge Managers and Work Party participants with some significant improvements achieved in 2023 (see below).

Internet Access

In November this year Sky Muster was installed. Sky Muster is expected to considerably improve internet access. It allows data rates to be adjusted month to month enabling the club to dial down data rates (and cost) during off season periods when occupancy rates are low. Performance will be assessed after the 2024 season.

Personal Equipment Stowage

A Personal Equipment Stowage area has been established to provide for the stowage of skis/stocks on numbered racks and for the storage of a small quantity of personal equipment on similarly numbered shelves. 38 stowage's are available for allocation to members. The Stowage area is in the Mezzanine (above the Galley) with access via a steep ladder; consequently, access will be controlled by the Lodge Manager. Applications for allocation of a stowage are now open and can be made through submission of the relevant form available on the Club's Website. The form includes further details of the application and allocation process. A nominal fee of \$25 per annum applies.



Whole of Lodge Bookings

Summer Whole of Lodge Bookings are increasingly popular with members enjoying the opportunity to host family and friends deep in the Snowy Mountains high country. Backcountry recreation opportunities abound at Perisher including spectacular bushwalks (NPWS is expanding walking track infrastructure), cycling, photography and fishing. To be eligible to make Whole of Lodge Bookings members are required to undertake an induction session at the Lodge covering Opening and Closing procedures and other relevant Standard Operating Procedures. Induction sessions are held in conjunction with Working Parties (see website for Work Party dates and contact details). Interest in receiving an induction session can be made when applying for a work party.

Winter Lodge Managers

Winter Lodge Managers play a critical role in assuring a safe and positive experience for our members, consequently a number of key requirements must be satisfied before a manager is certified. Contact me for more information if you are interested.

Andrew
vpperisher@ranskiclub.com.au

Mount Buller

----- ADRIAN HILLS (VP) [Ghost Writer: JB]

Without going on about it, in terms of snow conditions, 2023 was a season to forget.

However, as we know, it's not all about the snow.

In the true traditions of the Club, our members continued to book in and stay at the Breathtaker Lodge in Mt Buller, and many found that a good book and glass of vino by the fire was far more enjoyable than battling the sloppy and sometimes rocky conditions outside.

The year began with the usual work parties. Much was achieved with mainly repair and maintenance and minor improvements to the accommodation sections of the lodge.

The most notable improvement was a new awning over the BBQ balcony which will allow more comfortable cooking in all weather conditions and keep the snow off your steak. Designed and built by long term member Peter Mioni, the awning has unofficially been named, 'Pete's Pergola.'

Our thanks to the regular band of helpers who front up time after time to the work parties. After a day of hard work, a highlight is always the tall stories regaled around the bar in the evenings. With over twice as many beds as the northern lodges, there is usually plenty of room at the Buller work parties. Those that have made the weekend trip from north of the border have always enjoyed themselves.

A highlight on the sporting and social calendar at Buller is always the Navy Ski Club Championships. As described elsewhere in this newsletter, the Championships were a resounding success once again and went ahead, despite the somewhat patchy snow conditions.

In fact, because of the relocation of the course to the well covered summit racecourse and the sunny conditions, the racing was first class and a welcome change from battling the blizzards of the last couple of years.

Despite the best efforts of those praying for snow and the admirable efforts of the snowmakers, the unusually warm weather finally took its toll, and unfortunately, the season came to a premature end in mid-September.

In fact, the Australian Interschools Snowsports Championships, scheduled for early September, was cancelled – the first cancellation of this event in living memory. A shame because our Club Champions were favourites for a medal in this national competition.

Likewise, one of Australia's premier international FIS events, the ABOM Mogul Challenge, was also cancelled for the first time in its 32-year history.

And finally, the National Pond Skim event was cancelled, denying Navy the chance to defend our title. Bring on 2024!

Planning is now in full swing for the 'green-season' activities. A clean up weekend was held in mid-November and the lodge is looking great, ready for visitors over the summer.

The plan is to open the lodge for various periods over the summer, many to coincide with key activities being held at Buller. Check the Club website for details.

Finally, a big thanks to the Buller Committee who kept things ticking along nicely this year while I was away for most of it with work commitments.

Adrian
vpbuller@ranskiclub.com.au

Daughter: "Dad, why is my sister called Summer?"

Dad: "Because your mother loves the summer."

Daughter: "Thanks, dad. I love you."

Dad: "I love you too, Fresh Pow."





The 'green season' started early in 2023 as the snow melted before our eyes.

Breaking news

The Green Season kicks off

----- JEREMY BUTLER

We all love the mountains for their winter offerings, but did you know you can also enjoy them in summer?

All our lodges are available for bookings outside of the winter season.

Why not escape the summer heat and head for a cool, refreshing alpine change.

There is something for everyone in the mountains during summer, some might say there are too many options to count!

Just to name a few: hiking, fishing, camping, mountain biking, horse riding, road cycling, kayaking, golf, swimming, tennis, bush walking, rock climbing, abseiling, trampolining, picnics, music festivals, trail running and even bobsledding - the options are endless.

Mt Buller even has a visit from Santa on his sled, complete with real snow. Throwing snowballs at Santa in the summer can be very therapeutic ☺

The resort management at Thredbo and Mt Buller have worked hard to make these two resorts the premier 'green season' options in Australia.

Perisher is also encouraging more visitors during the non-winter months.

The Club is looking to place managers in the Buller and Thredbo lodges for key periods. Check the website for dates.

Whole of lodge bookings may also be an option during the non-winter season.

If you are cleared by the respective lodge VP to open / operate/close the lodge, then these bookings can be made without a manager in residence.

As an example, a whole of lodge booking at our Breathtaker Lodge in Buller works out a \$12 per head per night if you fill the lodge. A great idea for hosting significant birthday parties and other special occasions.

As always, any queries about these types of bookings, please contact Liz in the office. Or the respective Lodge VP.



Navy Ski Club traditions

Did you know?

The Navy Ski Club has a 'lodge rule' to remove your headgear when in the communal areas of the lodge.

Taking off your hat, or headgear when inside is simply good manners and it's a sign of respect to others.

In the military, the tradition dates from medieval times when knights would remove their helmets to identify themselves and as a sign of friendly intent.

The Navy tradition has evolved that a person wearing their cap in the mess risks having to shout the bar for all who are present.

So, wear a hat inside at your peril 😊



'W' is for Work parties

Who: All members. No specific skills required. (Some age limits apply – check with the VP)

Why: Our lodges need some TLC after the winter and member participation helps keep our costs down. The added bonus is that it is a great way to meet other members and lots of fun.

What: Not all jobs require 'trade' skills. There is always plenty of cleaning, painting, etc, etc.

When: Usually about four work parties per lodge between November and May. See the website for dates and details.

Treasurer's Wrap up

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ SEAN NOBLE \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Hello Members,

I am excited to be your new Treasurer. Paul Jones who has done the job for the past 30 or so years has passed me the calculator and set me the task to continue his great work and continue to improve our Club.

Paul has been studiously squirrelling away the pennies for our next big expense, the long-awaited Thredbo redevelopment.

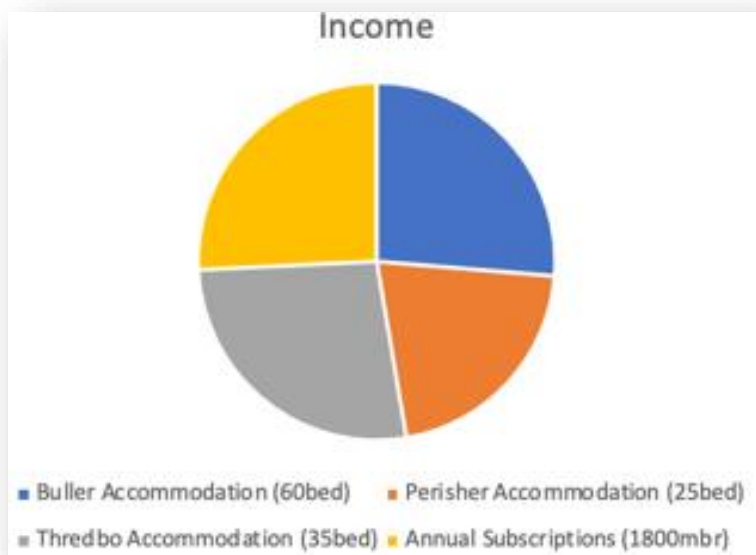
The good news is that this means we will not have to borrow uber chunks of cash and Paul has proven his savings plan equals our anticipated loan repayments. Thanks Paul, you have left us in great shape. So, when you see Paul about at our lodges, please buy him a drink and let him know we all appreciate his service to our Club.

Yes, prices are going up next year mostly aligned with CPI (5.4%). And yes, I know, inflation is higher and utility costs have increased about 20%, and yes, I am worried about how much building costs in Thredbo will increase. But your Board decided a moderate rise will keep us financial and keep to our principles of providing low-cost accommodation, with only moderate CPI like increases.

Which makes a good discussion point: where are our expenses? and how much do we spend? how much do we save up for renovations noting we are not in this business to make a profit but to improve the members experience and our Club?

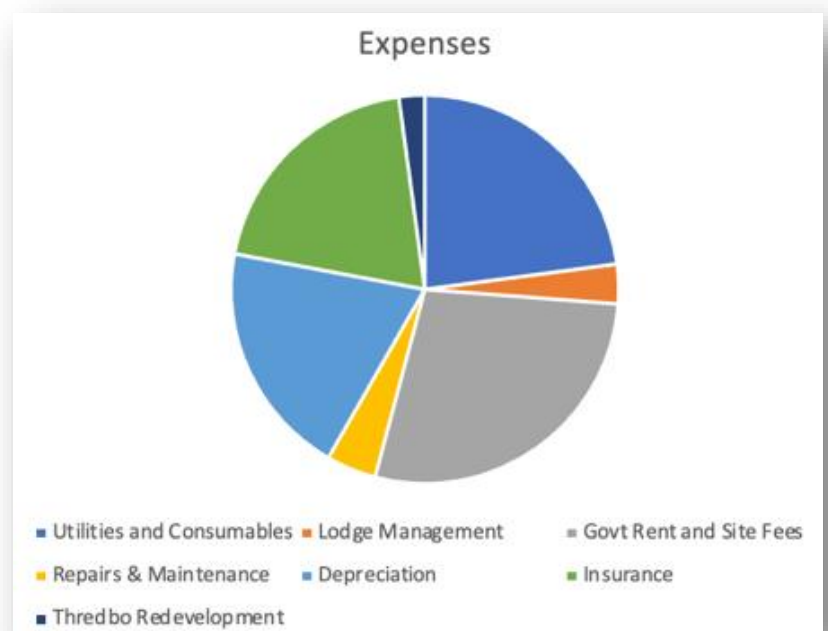
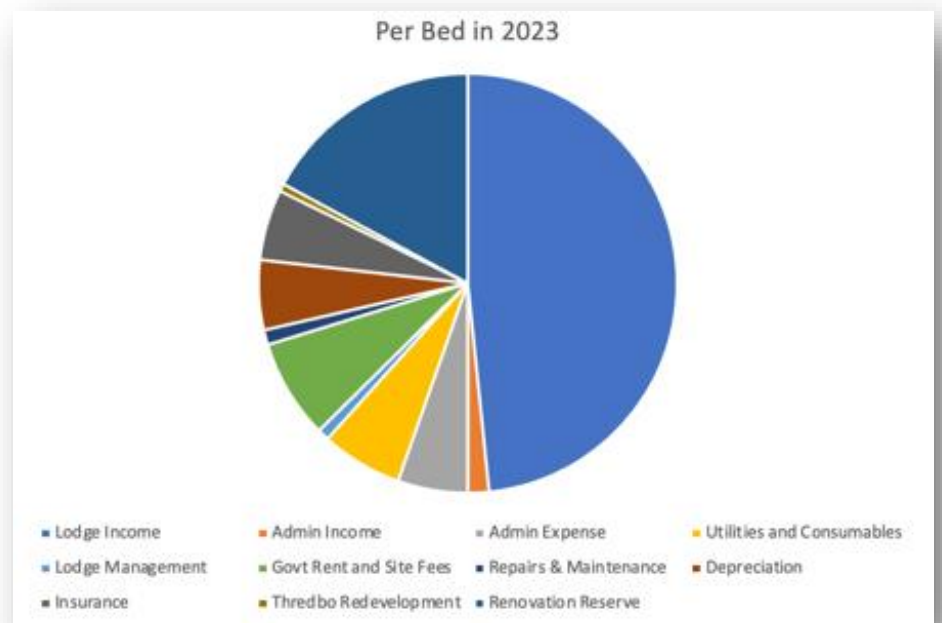
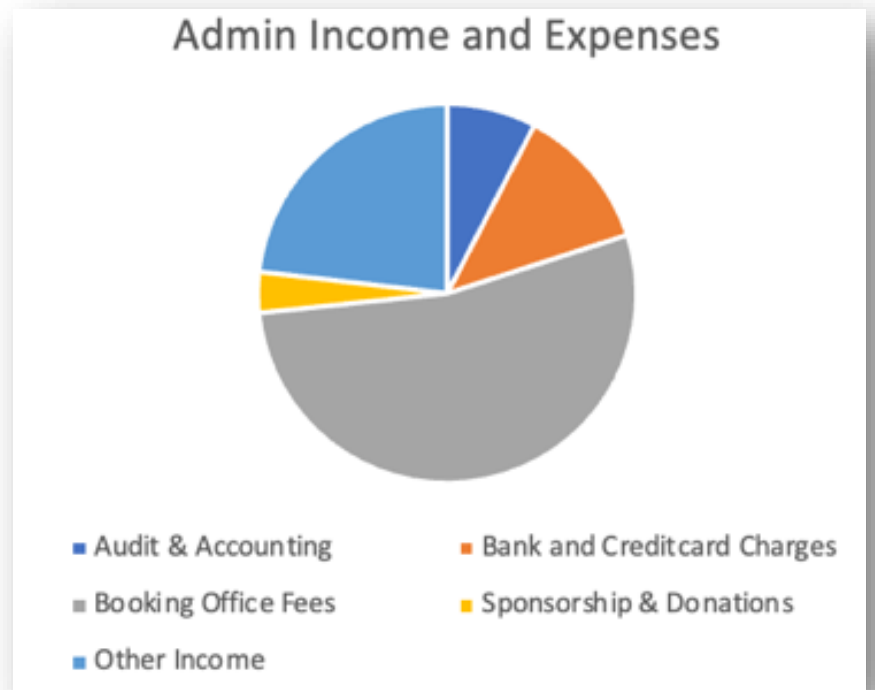
You will note we have no paid employees, all unpaid volunteers. Another plug – please volunteer after all it is your Club too.

The lodges generate about 75% of our income and membership the other 25%.



Our biggest expense is Government site fees and leasing at 28%, then Utilities and Consumables (23%), Depreciation (20%) and Insurance (20%).

Our administration costs, such as the booking office, audit and accounting, bank fees and credit card charges makes up the remainder. At the time I wrote this article; our income was \$1021K and our expenses was \$671K leaving us with a renovation reserve of \$350K.



Our strategic plan accounts for a significant renovation every 30 years or 10 years between our three lodges, so we are saving up to pay for those renovations. We do not make a profit or pay taxes. We push the funds back into our Club.

Booking Rules

Terms and conditions (important to know!)

----- VICE PRESIDENT MMC

Online Bed Availability

Due to our need to closely manage bed allocations to take account of the gender and age mix of members and guests, we cannot allow all beds to be available for online bookings. We must keep a small number available for the Booking Officer to manage these issues. At times it is not possible to use all beds in the lodges.

This means that at some busy periods, Online Bookings will show no beds available when some might be. In these circumstances, members should contact the Booking Officer offline to check whether individual bookings can be taken, and to register interest in being placed on a waiting list in case of cancellations. Of course, you can always phone the lodge manager to check if any last-minute beds are available.

Changes

Please remember that all transfers of bookings from one member to another for the same period must be handled by the Club's Bookings Officer. Members are not to transfer bookings between themselves. Such transfers may be rejected by the Club's Bookings and Administration Officer where there is a waiting list or where the proposed change cannot be accommodated because of bedding allocation limitations.

Priority Bookings

Priority bookings are managed in accordance with the booking rules prescribed in the Club By-Laws. These are also annotated on the Club website.

As this newsletter goes to print, it is not yet confirmed whether Priority bookings will be able to be made using the new booking system. As in the past, it is likely that these bookings will need to be handled offline as it is not possible to easily identify who has work-party credits through the membership database, or when/how to apply them.

Guest Bookings

Guests can only stay at our lodges as part of a booking made by a Financial Member. The host member must be present at the Lodge for the duration of the booking, meaning that if the host member is unable to stay or needs to depart prior to the end of the booking, the guests are unable to remain at the lodge.

Payment for a member's guest booking must be made by the host member. This also applies to any amendments, cancellations or requests for refunds made to the booking.

Children

Family Members 18 years and over may stay in the lodges without their related Ordinary or Associate Member. Family Members under 18 years must be accompanied by an adult member (i.e. a member aged 18 or over).

There are no restrictions on accommodation of children at the Thredbo and Mt Buller lodges. Children under four

years of age cannot be accommodated in the Perisher Lodge during the snow season.

Children pay the same rates as adults. This is due to the fact that all our lodges are governed by strict limits on the number of persons that can be accommodated on any one night. So, because children, no matter how little, effectively take up a bed allocation, there is no special rate and they are classed as either a member or a guest, with the applicable member or guest nightly rate being charged.

The Buller lodge provides 'porta-cots' and 'hi-chairs' for our little folk. Check with the lodge manager prior to arrival.

Cancellations & Refunds

We continue to get large numbers of applications for refunds. Amazingly, there seems to be a correlation between poor snow conditions and members becoming sick or injured prior to their planned holiday!

The conditions for full refunds (more than 42 days' notice) and partial [50%] refunds (14 to 42 days' notice) are clearly articulated in our By-Laws and on the Accommodation Rates Form on our website.

Remember that there are no refunds for cancellations with less than 14 days' notice unless for exceptional circumstances (see below).

Additionally, some discounted rates (e.g. the midweek 'get 5 days, pay for 3 days' deal has a "no changes/no refund" policy). *It is important to consider all of this prior to committing to a booking.*

In exceptional circumstances, the Board of Directors may approve a full refund for a cancelled booking. Exceptional circumstances are those where the reasons for the cancellation could not have been foreseen and/or are outside the member's control. Changes in work and family commitments are not considered exceptional circumstances. Members are encouraged to consider travel insurance to protect themselves against these types of events.

Whether you are seeking an 'exceptional circumstances' refund or not, members are encouraged, as a matter of courtesy, to contact the respective lodge manager if plans change at the last minute.

IMPORTANT: Bookings must be cancelled with the Booking Officer prior to submitting a Request for Refund application.

Winter bookings open in March.

Check the website for details and know the rules prior to booking!

CLASSIFIEDS



While supportive of the RAN's values, the RAN Ski Club seeks in its members and guests:

- **Friendliness** • **Good Humour**
- **Co-operation** • **Camaraderie**
- **Contribution** • **Participation**
- **Resourcefulness** • **Selflessness.**

These values are core to our 'self-help' operating methodology for lodge management.