

AUSTRALIAN ALPINE CLUB FALLS CREEK

AAC Falls Creek COVID Summary August 2020

Further to the evolving events from mid-March 2020 with dealing the COVID 19 pandemic, the following is a brief summary of the actions taken by the committee during the period March to July 2020 in detailing with COVID-19.

During this time various options were considered in relation to the Lodge with regard to its operation and safety to the members, family and guests. The initial discussions reviewed the potential closure of the Lodge over the Winter season or how the Lodge may be able to operate in a restricted format during the season. In the absence of any definitive guidelines from the authorities, it was agreed to commence drafting a COVID Management Plan in readiness for the Winter 2020 season.

The following is a summary of the main events during this time. It should be recognised three members of the committee took on this challenge, as a working group, Justin Checcucci, Jenny Hughes and John Burnett. The other members of the Committee provided a strong sounding board during this time. Additional information also filtered via various sources through the connections with other lodges and resorts during this time. An enormous number of hours have been spent on the drafting, planning and final submission to Falls Creek Resort Management (FCRM) in early July 20.

- i. Draft AACFC Covid Management Plan involving three revisions during the period March – June, based on the authority guidelines in related fields, Construction, Tourism and Hospitality, prior to any definitive guidelines on Alpine Activities. Various assumptions were defined in our draft management plan during these early stages, assuming occupy being reduced to 50%, with communal areas closed and options around the operation of the kitchen. The draft plan was developed with the understanding that a Safe Operating Plan would be required to be in place prior to operation of the Lodge.
- ii. In June, a stream of information followed from various quarters, which was digested and our Covid Management Plan updated in readiness for our final submission to FCRM. The following is a short summary of key information provide on which our plan is based:
 - a. Cleaning and disinfecting to reduce COVID 19 Transmission Building and Construction sites 4 April 20
 - b. Tourism Industry Guidelines 31 May 2020
 - c. Hospitality Industry Guidelines for coronavirus May 2020
 - d. DELWP Snow Skiing and Activities on Public Land 16 June 2020
 - e. DELWP Alpine Activities Guidelines for Coronavirus COVID 19 21 June 2020
 - f. Further information was also issue by DHHS Fed, DHHS Vic, Safe Work Australia, FCRM, Falls Creek Alpine Assoc, & Alpine Resorts Industry Advisory Group (ARIAG)
- iii. On issue of the Alpine Activities Guidelines a template was developed by the ARIAG which was received late June 2020, whereby we integrated our AACFC Covid Management Plan in to their format ready for submission to FRCM. After four revisions during the last week of June 2020 the AACFC COVID-19 Safe Operating Plan was ready for submission.
- iv. During the lead up to the end of June 2020, Victoria appeared to be well placed for the easing of strictions and the committee could see a clear path to opening in some format in July 2020. We had been monitoring other Lodges' progress in dealing with COVID since March 2020. Some Lodges decided to close for the season, with others at various stages with their management plans and others not understanding the huge task at hand to endeavour to comply with the various requirements.
- v. In the first two weeks of June 2020, orders were placed for chemicals, cleaning equipment and signage in preparation for the anticipated opening in early July 2020.
- vi. Our final submission of our COVID-19 Safe Operating Plan (SOP) was issued to FCRM on the 3rd July 2020 for review prior to planned opening on the 13th July 2020.
- vii. On submission of our SOP to FCRM, we received an encouraging and positive email from Stuart Smythe, concerning the work involved and appreciation to the Committee for such a detailed submission.
- viii. During the weekend of the 3rd, 4th and 5th July 2020, Justin C and John B visited the Lodge to prepare the Lodge for opening with Andrew. A detailed briefing of the SOP was provided to Andrew and Myra Rist. Andrew and Myra have provided valuable operation feedback on COVID plan and information generally from the mountain relating to preparation for COVID, which assisted the development of the SOP. The preparation of the Lodge for operation was completed over the three days. This involved placing signage around the Lodge in accordance with the SOP, decommissioning communal areas and testing cleaning equipment.
- ix. Over the weekend of the 3rd and 4th July various COVID events presented in Melbourne metropolitan leading to the reintroduction of lockdown of the Melbourne metropolitan area and state boarder restrictions until late August 2020.
- x. Based on the lockdown imposed by the state government in early July, the position was taken to not to open the Lodge and monitor the events. The operations of the lifts ceased on Thursday 9th July 2020 (after opening on Monday 6th).
- xi. We have not received any further response to SOP from FRCM, which we would not expect until further directives are provided by the State government on easing of restrictions.
- xii. Lifts and xc grooming will not resume. Not even day visitors are permitted till mid-September. Accordingly, the lodge will not reopen this winter. The Committee will continue to monitor the situation as events unfold in the hope of opening in some form for green season. Further updates will be provided to the Members in due course on the easing of restrictions.