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4th of September 2023

Mr Michael Dafnomilis
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
8 Nicholson Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

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Dear Michael,

Re: Buildings, works and vegetation removal associated with the construction of an extension to the Mid-station building for use as a Snowmaking Compressor Building

We make this submission for your consideration.

Mid-station Building

1. Planning Context

We are proposing to extend the existing Mid-station building with snowmaking compressor building and increase the capacity of our snowmaking system.

In 1984, the existing Bourke Street and Baldy Double Chairlifts were replaced by the Blue Bullet 1 and Blue Buller 2 detachable chair lifts. The top station of the Blue Bullet 1 (Bourke St) and the bottom station of the Blue Buller 2 chairlift (Baldy) were enclosed by a terminal building which became known as mid-station.

Mid-station was made up of 2 Levels. Level 1 comprised of a workshop, Level 2 comprised of the ski lift stations and chair parking garage.

In 2007, the Blue Bullet 2 chair lift was removed, the western half of Level 2 mid-station which housed the bottom terminal of this lift was turned into a storage area. Blue Bullet 1 continued to operate for another 10 years which utilised the eastern half of Level 2.

In 2018, the Blue Bullet 1 chair lift was decommissioned and replaced by the Bourke Street Express chairlift. This resulted in the eastern half of Level 2 mid-station being modified so that the top station of Bourke Street express could be situated in the same place. The western-half of Level 2 mid-station remains as a storage area/facility for public shelter. Level 1 of Mid-station remains as a storage area, locker room, and offices.

Snowmaking infrastructure is an essential part of the operations of ski resorts across the world and at Mt Buller in particular. Buller Ski Lifts (BSL) and Alpine Resorts Victoria Mt Buller & Mt Stirling Resort Management (ARV) have invested more than \$5 million over the past ten years.

The Mt Buller Resort Master Plan of 2011 recognises the importance of snowmaking to the ongoing viability of Mt Buller and these proposed works are within the scope of the master plan.

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With the ongoing impact of climate change on the quantity of natural snow on the ground, there is a need to continually invest in the snowmaking system to increase capacity. Buller Ski Lifts utilises snow making guns which combine high pressure water and compressed air to create snow. The compressed air is currently generated at the existing snowmaking facility compressor building on Baldy and reticulated around the mountain.

The current limiting factor to the quantity of snow that can be produced is availability of compressed air. There is insufficient space at the existing compressor building to enlarge it to house more compressors. As a result, an alternative site needed to be chosen, with this extension to Mid-station building in a westerly direction being the most appropriate site in terms of proximity to the existing snowmaking reticulation system, other services, existing road access and with minimal environmental and visual/aesthetic impact.

The existing building has a gross floor area of 1,517m², and the building extension will have a gross floor area of 340m², increasing the extended building to 1,857m², or an increase of gross floor area of 22% with the site area being within the ski field lease area.

2. Public Amenity

This will be a purpose built facility for the Mountain Operations Department and is essential ski field infrastructure to house electrically driven air compressors for the purpose of snowmaking. Any increase in the capacity to make snow in the ski field adds to visitor experience in terms of having more ski field area open for skiing and snowboarding, and the more area available also makes for a safer experience.

3. Environmental Impacts

The area where these works are proposed to take place has been previously highly disturbed. No remnant vegetation exists and the entire footprint of the proposed compressor building was excavated in 1984 for the construction of the Blue Bullet 2 chairlift (a photo of this excavation taken in 2007 can be seen in Photo 3 of the SEMP Appendix attached as part of this submission). This excavation was later backfilled in 2008 after the removal of the Blue Bullet 2 chairlift to the levels seen in Photos 1 and 2.

In the Alpine Planning Scheme Section 52.17-1, it states that "a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation", no native vegetation, including dead vegetation, will be removed, destroyed or lopped as part of these works.

In the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP December 2017), in section 2.2 a remnant patch of native vegetation is defined as either:

- An area of vegetation where at least 25 per cent of the total perennial understory plant cover is native
- Any area with three or more native canopy trees where the canopy foliage cover is at least 20 percent of the area

Additionally in section 1.3 the guidelines state that:

"If vegetation does not meet the definition of native vegetation in section 2.2 of these Guidelines the biodiversity considerations in Clause 52.17 and these Guidelines are not required to be applied. An application for a permit to remove vegetation that does not meet the definition of native vegetation in section 2.2 should not be objected to on the basis of the biodiversity considerations in Clause 52.17, and an offset is not required".

A site inspection was conducted by Buller Ski Lifts staff who have completed the Alpine Ecology Course to ascertain the amount (if any) of native vegetation present within the site boundary and the works footprint, and none was identified (see attached SEMP appendix photos). There is no native vegetation on the site of the proposed works.

Vegetation removal will be limited to low lying non-native grasses only, as per the attached Site Environmental Management Plan (SEMP), CMP and Site Rehabilitation and Revegetation Management Plan (SRMP).

Additionally, attached is Vegetation Management Plan (PA2011011306) Reference Information and shows the area is outside Mountain Pygmy-possum Habitat and shows the known locations of Broad Toothed Rat, which are across the ski field area which is 660ha and as such, due to the relatively minor nature of the footprint of this proposed building extension, within a very small geographic extent in relation to the entire ski field area (650m² within 660ha or 0.001%) and with no loss of any native vegetation there are no significant or direct impacts on Broad Toothed Rat habitat.

In terms of vegetation (native) removal guidelines we have avoided removing (destroying or lopping) any native vegetation as part of these proposed works

Since the works area is an area that has less than 25% native vegetation and has no tree cover, no assessment under the guidelines would not be required and the NVIM, risk-based pathways and offsets are not applicable.

4. Contents of this submission

1. Planning Permit Application Form
2. Cover Letter
3. Site Plan
4. Site Environmental Management Plan (SEMP) and Appendix (site/vegetation photos)
5. Site Construction Management Plan and Site Rehabilitation and Revegetation Management Plan
6. Vegetation Management Plan Reference Information
7. Design Drawings
8. Preliminary Geotechnical Risk Assessment Report
9. Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 Practice Note Response
10. Alpine Planning Scheme, Design and Development Overlay Schedule 3 (DDO3) Clause 2.0 Response
11. Snow Management Plan
12. Bushfire Management Statement (Pathway 2)
13. Site Lease Area
14. Copy of owner notification email to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Action C/- the Department of Energy, Environment, Land and Climate Action, Planning and Approvals, Hume Region

We trust this submission provides you with the information you require and look forward to your timely and favourable response. Given the poor 2023 winter snow season which witnessed warm temperature and minimal natural snowfall, this project has far reaching benefits for all the visitors of Mt Buller and regional communities “downstream”. It is our intention to commence works early January 2024 to enable completion prior to the 2024 ski-season. Should you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



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