Hon James Meager

Minister for the South Island
Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Minister for Youth
Associate Minister of Transport

22 OCT 2026

JMITC – 70

Vicki Morrison-Shaw
Expert Panel Chair

By email: substantive@fasttrack.govt.nz

Fast-track Approvals Act substantive application – Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion

Dear Vicki

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on NZSki Limited's substantive application under the *Fast-track Approvals Act 2024* (FTAA 2024) for the Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion project (the Project).

The FTAA 2024 has been established to provide a regime that makes it easier and quicker for regionally and nationally significant infrastructure projects to gain the approvals needed for development, in support of this Government's economic growth objectives.

NZSki Limited has applied for approvals to upgrade and expand the existing Remarkables Ski Area and develop new ski terrain and associated infrastructure within the adjacent Doolans Basin. The Project includes upgrades to existing visitor facilities, construction of new gondola infrastructure and base facilities, expansion into approximately 262 hectares of new skiable terrain, and supporting infrastructure such as water, wastewater, stormwater, transport, telecommunications and power services. The Project is intended to create a multi-valley ski destination and increase the ski area's capacity from approximately 3,500 to 6,000 skiers per day, supporting future growth in visitor numbers.

NZSki Limited provided an economic assessment report to support its application for the Project:

a. Skier days are projected to increase from approximately 294,500 per year to between 436,000 and 505,000 per year within 10 years, supporting both domestic and international tourism growth.
b. The Project includes approximately $193.3 million in capital investment and is projected to generate a one-off economic impact of approximately $61.9 million in gross domestic product (GDP) or $12.4 million per year over a five year period.
c. The Project is expected to support more than 150 seasonal construction jobs during peak construction and increase tourism-supported seasonal employment across the Otago region from 2,388 jobs to between 3,834 and 4,443 jobs within 10 years.
d. Annual visitor expenditure associated with the Project is projected to increase by between $112.0 million and $168.0 million across Otago within 10 years of operation.
e. The expansion into the south-facing Doolans Basin is expected to improve the ski area's resilience to climate variability and support the long-term sustainability of the region's winter tourism sector.

As Minister for the South Island, I have considered the information provided and its alignment with my portfolio priorities. The Project represents a significant investment in tourism infrastructure and is expected to provide substantial economic benefits for Queenstown, Otago, and the wider South Island through increased visitor spending, employment opportunities, and regional economic

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activity. Given the scale of these projected benefits, the Project appears likely to deliver significant regional economic value.

As Minister for Hunting and Fishing, I note that the recreation report assesses the likely effects on hunting as minor, reflecting the relatively low level of hunting activity in the basin and the availability of alternative opportunities elsewhere in the region. I also welcome the proposal to establish a Recreation Users Group. I want to emphasise the importance of working closely with recreational users, including hunters, to maintain practical public access and ensure opportunities to facilitate access into the wider Remarkables/Hector Mountains conservation area are fully considered.

As Associate Minister for Transport, I have not considered the operational impacts of this project on local transport networks, but I am pleased to see the applicant engaging with the New Zealand Transport Agency. Their ongoing engagement and provision of advice will be important to the success of this project.

The application has clear implications for regional economic development, tourism growth, and supporting infrastructure. Commentary from the Regional Development, Tourism and Hospitality, Infrastructure, Transport, and Conservation portfolios may also assist in assessing the broader strategic significance of the Project.

Yours sincerely

Hon James Meager
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