



PRESS RELEASE

Bluebird day at Mt Ruapehu attracts thousands

MT RUAPEHU, 1 SEPTEMBER 2019: Spring has arrived in stunning style delivering a bluebird day at Mt Ruapehu with thousands heading up the mountain.

Mt Ruapehu's Tūroa and Whakapapa ski fields are full of skiers, snowboarders, tobogganers and sightseers enjoying the pristine conditions.

Whakapapa GM Jono Dean says, "Mt Ruapehu, like the rest of the ski fields around the country has had a slow start to the season due to warm weather conditions and we've also recently just come out of an extended storm cycle. The great news now is that spring skiing has arrived and it's fantastic."

Jono says that there are queues for both the ski lifts and transport and have been throughout the day, which is to be expected on such a beautiful Sunday.

"When thousands of people decide to head up the mountain it always puts the pressure on infrastructure and services, it's inevitable. But in the end, it's all worth it, there's a lot of very happy people out there on the slopes."

On busy days like today the buses transporting people up the mountain are running at capacity and depart as soon as they fill up.

The RAL appointed transport contractor's buses servicing the public transport for both Whakapapa and Tūroa all meet the new Alpine Vehicle Specification Code. This does present a challenge on peak days as the service runs at capacity and sourcing additional buses that meet these heightened safety specifications is underway.

The Alpine Vehicle Specification Code standards were designed to enhance passenger safety in alpine environments with specifications of this code requiring that buses must be 4WD and have seatbelts.

Jono says that Whakapapa Road closed at 7.30am this morning due to full carparks, which in turn resulted in delays for the bus transfers.

"Now that the storm cycle has passed our teams are working extremely hard to open up the remaining facilities to assist with weekend congestion with the Far West T-Bar and West Ridge Quad due to open this coming week."

Around the other side of the mountain at Tūroa traffic coming up and down the Ohakune Mountain Road flowed smoothly both yesterday and today. Car parking has been managed and everyone coming up the mountain has been able to find a park without too much delay.

JP Chevalier GM Tūroa says, "The ski field itself is skiing and riding well with extensive groomed slopes and expansive off piste terrain that's easily accessible.

"Lift queues saw the typical first run pressure but once the guests spread out, the lift wait times reduced. We know that everyone is keen to ride the High Noon and after a massive effort earlier today I can confirm the team have just opened this lift."