

Wayne Kirkpatrick

Wayne Kirkpatrick came to Thredbo in 1979 after an early career in marketing and advertising. He took up a job as Kosciusko Thredbo's Information Officer, but within five years he was appointed as the company's Managing Director and its senior figure in the village. Wayne held this position until 1989, overseeing an upgrading of the mountain with considerable investment in slope grooming, snowmaking, quad chairs and the development at Friday Flat.

The culmination of his years in Thredbo, though, was the staging of Slalom and Giant Slalom events in the 1989-90 FIS Men's Alpine World Cup. This was an ambitious undertaking never previously attempted in Australia: the idea came from a FIS member, who sold it to former Australian Ski Federation president Kurt Lance. Wayne saw the World Cup as a means of selling Thredbo to Australia and the world but realised that major investments would be needed to secure it. Lend Lease, looking to make Thredbo attractive to a potential buyer, agreed and developed a master plan to spend \$40 million on improvements to the mountain, including facilities to manufacture snow and the development of improved ski runs.

Some considered the World Cup to be a serious risk financially and in terms of commercial benefit to the resort, but it brought many positives. The new snowmaking was vital to the event being granted to Thredbo, and Wayne and KT were central to the running of what turned out to be a highly successful event. Many of the world's top skiers of the day were on show including Pirmin Zurbriggen (Switzerland), Lars-Börje Eriksson (Sweden) and Alberto Tomba (Italy).

The competition was telecast by Channel 9's Wide World of Sports in Australia and internationally, and Thredbo won valuable exposure in ski circles worldwide. Everything went well, the skiers were impressed and FIS's World Cup Technical Delegate Hans Schweingruber of Austria rated it "the best Men's Alpine World Cup event ever."

When Lend Lease sold KT to Greater Union in 1986, Wayne was seconded to the new owner until the conclusion of the Cup. He then left Thredbo to pursue tourism interests in the Northern Territory and Queensland before returning to New South Wales and developing a tourism consultancy business which kept him in touch with Thredbo.

Wayne Kirkpatrick played a substantial role in the story of Thredbo's development. He was at the centre of that story for several years and was pivotal to the World Cup's success. Thredbo was better for his efforts.