

THERE would be few people around Mt Beauty and Falls Creek who do not know long term local resident Allan Marsland.

Mr Marsland has spent decades as part of the local skiing community, having first moved to the area in the 1970s to teach at the Bogong School Camp.

"I was attracted here by the opportunities, the lifestyle and the job," Mr Marsland said.

He later moved to the Tawonga/Mt Beauty area.

By the late 1970s, he had become part of the Birkebeiner Nordic Ski Club, then in its early days, and he has not looked back.

A keen cross country and downhill skier, he became more closely involved in the pastime and with the club as the years went on.

These days, he can be found at Falls Creek several days a week in the winter.

For him, nothing beats being out on the mountain.

"I love enjoying the beautiful environment, getting out there in the beautiful scenery," he said.

His favourite run sees him head out "over the dam wall" before heading along Bogong High Plains Road and into the Alpine National Park, where he can explore where his mood takes him.

"It's a lovely, and more or less level, track," he said of the run.

Over the years he has been heavily involved in a range of winter events, including one of the biggest in the area, the Kangaroo Hoppet.

"The Hoppet's been a fantastic opportunity for me," Allan said.

"It makes you feel proud of your town, and it's really great for Australians to be involved in, it gives locals a fantastic opportunity to be part of an international ski race," he added.

Allan said he has made many friends from all over the world due to his involvement with the event, and has even traveled overseas to help share his knowledge with the international cross country skiing community.

This has included him being involved in Worldloppet (the organisers of an international series of ski marathons) and the International Ski Federation cross

country ski committee.

"It's opened up a whole new world where I get to contribute something and give back to the sport," Allan said.

He said the Hoppet also boosted the local economy and opened up a whole new world for local youth.

"It opens up the eyes of the young people in the area to other opportunities," Allan said.

And although he was recognised for his work over the years with a Medal of the Order of Australia last year, Allan said that any work he has done for the community is truly credit to not just him, but the people working with him.

"You're aware of what you've done, but you're also aware of the people behind you doing the work," he said.

Allan said he would not trade living in the alpine region for anything, and said he was proud to be part of the

local ski community, which over the years has also produced many Olympic standard cross country skiers.

He said he is keen to help face the challenges of the future, including the continuing development of cross country ski facilities at Falls Creek.

Allan said he is looking forward once again to this year's upcoming hoppet, adding that the contingent of international competitors is as strong as ever this year, with 100 or more overseas skiers expected to compete.

Among the prominent skiers involved this year will be last year's Worldloppet Cup winner, Aurelle Dabudyk, who will be training in the area in the lead up to the hoppet, as well as competing.

This year's Kangaroo Hoppet is happening on August 25 and more information is available on www.hoppet.com.au.