



# Rural & Regional Committee

## MEDIA ALERT

30 July 2008 – for immediate release

### Victoria's regional tourism at the crossroads

A new Parliamentary Inquiry into Victoria's regional tourism industry has revealed a range of problems that could threaten the future of this multi-billion dollar employment sector.

The *Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism* report from the Victorian Parliament's Rural and Regional Committee has identified the need for:

1. greater government support for leadership and key bodies *in the actual regions*, rather than in offices in Spring Street;
2. a long overdue shake-up of VicRoads to ensure it works collaboratively with tourism stakeholders to improve tourism-related signage throughout Victoria; and
3. an urgent investigation into the impact of current planning laws on the development of tourism infrastructure.

Outlining his Committee's findings, Chair Damian Drum MLC said: 'The inquiry generated a high level of interest from a broad cross-section of rural and regional communities: from key operators in the tourism industry to local government and private citizens.

'This is a testament to how important this industry is to all Victorians.'

The Committee confirmed that tourism makes a significant economic contribution to rural and regional Victoria. However, there were a number of challenges that threatened its development and expansion.

'If our rural and regional tourism industry is to truly thrive, then the Victorian Government must urgently "bite the bullet" and accept the key recommendations', Mr Drum said.

Damian Drum will be available to talk in detail about his Committee's new report at a specially convened **media conference**, after first tabling the report in the Victorian Parliament.

Two key contributors to the inquiry will also be present for interviews and to take media questions:

- Mr Chris Buckingham, former Chair of Destination Gippsland; and
- Joane McKnight, Chair of the Kanawinka Global Geopark (covering SW Victoria/SE South Australia).

Media Conference to take place on **Wednesday 30 July at 11am, in the Legislative Council Committee Room, Parliament House**. Copies of the new report, including recommendations, will be available for media representatives. Refreshments provided.



With a family tradition of hospitality management, Dean Oberin opened Oscar W's Wharfside Redgum Grill and Deckbar within the historic Port at Echuca tourist precinct on the Murray River ten years ago. He started with three full-time and three part-time employees and now employs twenty-five equivalent full-time staff. Dean is passionate about Echuca and about its tourism potential. He sees tourism as providing an opportunity for local farmers to recover from the drought and bushfires. Dean's entrepreneurship is evident in his active training of local people for the tourism industry and promotion of new product—he recently produced a cooking show for Chinese pilots using locally produced organic food.

Dean's story is just one example of tourism success in Victoria – fifteen other case studies are included in the Final Report.

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