



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.



Michael Watson, with his wife Sally, runs Watson's Mountain Country Trail Rides. Their shared passion is the high country made famous by the 'Man from Snowy River' movies. Visitors have the opportunity to travel with experienced guides through the high country, take horsemanship classes and enjoy leisurely High Country barbeques. The Watsons keep 80 working horses and employ 10 staff. Michael is a member of the Mansfield Shire Tourism Advisory Committee, which develops strategies and makes recommendations to the local Council for the sustainable growth of tourism in the Mansfield Shire. According to Michael, improved transport options are essential to the further development of international tourism in regional Victoria.

Michael'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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