

Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group

Weekly Bulletin - Friday 15th December, 2006

The Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group (GTRRG) has been formed this week with the objective to assist the tourism industry with the impact of the bushfires.

Tourism employs 4,500 people and generates \$600million per annum in direct spend for Gippsland. These numbers reinforce the need to work in partnership with business, community and government to ensure that the response effort is as efficient and effective as possible.

A **Crisis Communications Plan** has been formulated by the GTRRG. This plan will be used in conjunction with Tourism Victoria's Crisis Communications Handbook and will provide strategic guidance for the industry through the response and recovery phase. This will be made available to the industry early next week via the industry website www.gippslandtourism.net.au

The GTRRG will be the conduit for communications with State Government on the Tourism Response and Recovery Process.

GTRRG Membership

The GTRRG has representatives from Industry Associations, Local Government and State Government. There is total commitment to working together to assist the industry through the response and recovery phase. Please see list of members at the end of this bulletin.

Ongoing Communication with Industry

The GTRRG will distribute a weekly bulletin to the industry to ensure that people are kept in the loop. This response and recovery process will require a sustained effort. During the Christmas and New Year period the GTRRG will continue to provide support for Gippsland's Tourism Industry.

Operators who are not receiving regular updates should contact their Local Government Tourism Units.

Sally Hutchinson from SMS Marketing is providing project management support for the GTRRG on an interim basis. Feel welcome to make contact with the GTRRG with your ideas, concerns

or suggestions. Please call Sally on 0414 558 314 or email sally@smsmarketing.com.au.

Lines of communication with DSE, PV, CFA

There is a need for clear communication of where fires will impact on visitor safety and where people can still have an enjoyable experience. The GTRRG is working with Parks Victoria, DSE and CFA to ensure that people know where they can go for an enjoyable experience. Please be patient, these organisations are coordinating the fire fighting effort with a primary focus on keeping people safe.

Unified Response

It was agreed that the way the tourism industry across Gippsland has responded so far is great. The majority of operators in the region are small family businesses, who live in the communities where they operate. They are feeling the impact of the bushfires, but understand that the only way to recover from the impact of these fires is to stick together.

Data Collection

Work has commenced ensuring that effective data is collected from operators in areas that have been directly affected as well as places that are seeing a downturn in business because of the perceived risks in the region.

If you are contacted by your local government tourism manager requesting information on how the fires are impacting on your business, please respond as quickly and as accurately as possible. The collection and collation of data on the fires' impact will play a very important role in guiding GTRRG activities through the response and recovery period.

Counseling Services for Tourism Operators

If things are getting you down and you need someone to talk to, call:

LIFELINE GIPPSLAND 24hr telephone counseling 13 1114

To access business planning support and advice through State Government please contact **Business Line 13 2215**

Partnership with North East Tourism

The Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group will be teaming up with North East Tourism to ensure that a streamlined and effective response is delivered by government.

EPA Air Quality Website

The Gippsland EPA has established a temporary air monitoring

station in Bairnsdale to complement permanent monitoring stations in Moe and Traralgon.

If you have customers wanting reassurance regarding air quality before coming to the region please direct them to the following link.

<http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/air/bulletins/aqbhour.asp>

Media relations

The need for a strong and unified response to bushfires is critical. The Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group have nominated its Convenor Chris Buckingham as the spokesperson for the region with the media. If you are contacted directly by the media regarding the impact of the bushfires, please refer them to Chris on 0429 869 838.

If you have a positive story to tell about how your business or community is responding please let us know. We can provide some PR support.

List of GTRRG Members

Chris Buckingham Gippsland Tourism (Convenor)
Frank Norden Wellington Shire (Deputy Convenor)
Geoff Brooks East Gippsland Regional Business Tourism Association
Michael Leaney Walhalla Mountain Rivers Tourism Association
Christian Stefani South Gippsland Shire
Lois Fairburn Wellington Gippsland Tourism and Promotions Inc
Linda Brock Latrobe City
Phil Rickards East Gippsland Shire
Gail Wright Parks Victoria
Diane Smith Parks Victoria
Carole McMillan Department Sustainability and Environment
Karen Smalley Tourism Victoria
John Munns East Gippsland VIC
Fiona Barr Wellington VIC
Bruce Graham Wellington Shire
Gabrielle Vaughan Baw Baw Shire
Janiene Ayre Baw Baw Shire

Sally Hutchinson Project Manager (interim)

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Chris Buckingham
General Manager, Gippsland Tourism
Chairperson, Destination Gippsland Inc
0429 869 638

www.destinationgippsland.com.au

People visiting Gippsland spend \$614.7 million per annum and generate more than 4,500 jobs in direct employment. *Source Tourism Victoria: Gippsland Economic Profile 2004*