

Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group - Weekly Bulletin No. 8

Wednesday 30th January, 2007

GTRRG Welcomes Funding Announcement from State Government

The Bracks Labour Government today announced a \$1.75 million marketing campaign for the Gippsland region to assist with the response and recovery process. The initial response from the industry has been positive.

Premier Steve Bracks and Tourism Minister Tim Holding outlined that the promotion package would fund events, public relations and marketing activity, industry development and administration over 18 months.

The GTRRG welcome the announcement from the State Government. The package represents a good starting point for the recovery process.

We look forward to continuing to work with our neighbours in the North East to ensure that the response and recovery process moves forward as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Marketing and Promotional activities funded through these announcements will be overseen by Destination Gippsland.

Gippsland to be Promoted on Melbourne Radio Stations

Gippsland will be featured on radio across Victoria in February as part of a \$20,000 Parks Victoria campaign to promote visitation to Gippsland.

The campaign will feature a number of operators and locations throughout Gippsland in two minute adverts/ community service announcements on Radio 3AW, 774 Melbourne and a number of regional radio stations throughout Victoria.

Gippsland Forum Held at Federation Square

A delegation of industry and local government representatives travelled to the CBD yesterday to present to over 40 volunteers from the Federation Square VIC. It was a great opportunity to highlight Gippsland as a 'must see' destination.

There was a particular emphasis placed on key products including our stunning nature based attractions, arts and culture, food and wine. Our key touring routes - Sydney Melbourne Coastal Drive and

Great Alpine Road as well as promotion of key regional events including the upcoming Inspired By Gippsland - Celebration of Gippsland Food and Wine beginning on March 2nd.

Summary of Survey Results from Tourism Operators across the Gippsland

Tourism operators from Baw Baw, East Gippsland, Latrobe, South Gippsland and Wellington Local Government Areas (LGAs) have been helping to shape the Bushfire Response and Recovery process by taking part in weekly surveys since the beginning of the bushfire crisis.

In the opening weeks, our findings showed that operators believed that there was a lack of clarity of communication in metro media. There was considerable frustration that reports suggested all of Gippsland was on fire and not fit for visitation. South Gippsland was the only LGA **not** to report sustained negative downturn in visitation. Operators noted that tourists were unwilling to travel far off the Princes Highway due to the bushfires.

Post New Year South Gippsland operators report little impact from the fires, while negative economic downturn is being felt across all other LGAs.

Impact around the Gippsland Lakes and along the Princes Hwy is up to 20% downturn.

High Country towns (Dargo, Licola, Omeo region and Walhalla) report declines of between 50 and 90%)

Tourism operators note that cancellations and a lack of forward bookings are still being linked to negative publicity about the bushfires. Operators stressed the need for accurate information from the Victorian Bushfire Information Line and through the media.

Most operators believe that the most important thing they need to get back on track is individualised publicity for their operation/ region.

A big thank you to the operators who are continuing to provide us with valuable information on the where and how the impact of the fires are being felt.

For more information on the evaluation process please contact Jenny Brown on 5142 3462.

Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group to promote High Country at 4x4 Show

On February 18th, the GTRRG in partnership with Parks Victoria will be hosting a site at the Victorian 4WD Show in Wandin. The site will promote areas of the Gippsland High Country that are open for business to 4x4 drivers. This event will give the GTRRG the opportunity to inform up to 15,000 serious 4X4 enthusiasts that which parts of Gippsland are still open for 4X4 vehicles. For more information on the event please visit:

www.victorian4wdshow.com.au or contact Jenny Brown on 5142 3462.

Free Entry to Jazz Festival for Fire Emergency Personnel

The Paynesville Jazz Festival is offering free admittance to all of its venues for emergency personnel who took part in the recent bushfire effort, on presentation of identification. Held over the weekend of 23-25th February 2007, the three day festival will feature some of Australia's finest jazz musicians playing jazz, swing and blues in beautiful waterfront, open air and indoor venues. For more information please visit:

<http://www.paynesvillejazzfestival.com>

Flights over the Fires- Aero Club Aids in Bushfire Recovery

The Latrobe Valley Aero Club is again supporting the Gippsland bushfire recovery effort, having already supplied aircraft and pilots for fire-bombing efforts during the crisis. In this recovery period, the Aero Club is offering visitors the opportunity to have a 'Bird Eye View'. For every flight taken across the fire-affected zone, the Club will donate \$20 to the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund. For further information please contact the Latrobe Valley Aero Club on 5174 2591.

Media/ Public Relations

GTRRG will continue to create positive media coverage for the region in response to the fire situation. Any ideas, issues or concerns in this regard should be forwarded to Jenny Brown on 5142 3462.

Many 'good news' stories have been received in the past week, however, more would be welcome. Please forward these to:

jennybr@wellington.vic.gov.au.

The need for a strong and unified response to bushfires is critical. If you are contacted directly by the media regarding the impact of the bushfires, please refer them to Chris Buckingham on 0429 869 638.

Bushfire Updates

ABC Radio is the best source of up to date information about the fire situation, stay tuned on the following frequencies:

Area:	Frequency:
Melbourne and Surrounds	774am
Latrobe Valley	100.7fm
Sale	100.7fm / 828 am
Orbost	97.1fm
Omeo	720am
Cann River	106.1fm
Mallacoota	104.9fm

Support Services for operators

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

LIFELINE Gippsland 24hr telephone counselling 13 1114

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

Tourism operators requiring financial assistance may be eligible for grants through Centrelink. All interested operators are encouraged to contact **Centrelink on 180 2233 or visit www.centrelink.gov.au** for further information.

The **Department of Human Services** has further information on grants, based on eligibility, to assist fire affected businesses, farms and non-for profit organizations. To be eligible, applicants must have suffered direct damage as a result of the bushfires, be unable to affect the necessary repairs from their own resources and have exhausted alternative sources of assistance. **Please visit www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency for details.**

East Gippsland Bushfire Information Line

East Gippsland Shire Council has established the Bushfire Recovery Information Hotline. People requiring further information within the Shire are encouraged to contact 1800 100 298 (8am-8pm daily) or for urgent enquiries outside these times to phone 0427 950 039.

Reference information

If you want more information on Gippsland's Response and Recovery effort please go to your dedicated tourism industry website: www.gippslandtourism.net.au

People looking for inspirational experiences in Gippsland can go to:

www.inspiredbygippsland.com.au and www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

The Last Word...

Day 62 has come and gone. The way the industry in Gippsland has worked together over the last two months is a credit to the region.

Funding announcements will come and go and despite the generosity of the State Government, no amount of money will get us through the recovery process unless we stick together.

Please keep encouraging people to invite friends and family to Gippsland and Get out in their own backyard.

Cheers

Chris Buckingham

Convenor, Gippsland Tourism Response & Recovery Group

General Manager, Gippsland Tourism

Chairperson, Destination Gippsland Inc

0429 869 638

www.destinationgippsland.com.au

For information on the Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group and industry information please go to

www.gippslandtourism.net.au