

## **Press Release 24th January**

# **Workers Support Community and Get Out In Their Own Backyard**

Local Unions are calling on their 12,000 members to visit local tourism attractions and help Gippsland's tourism sector get back on track.

Mr John Parker, Secretary of the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council, said: '4,500 Gippslanders rely on the tourism industry for employment. As union members we can help our community recover from the Bushfires by getting out in our own backyard and having a good time this weekend.'

Mr Michael Leaney, President of the Walhalla and Mountain Rivers Tourism Association, said: 'These fires are having an impact on local businesses' capacity to employ people. We commend John Parker and the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council for their gesture of support.'

Mr Chris Buckingham, Convenor of the Gippsland Tourism Response and Recovery Group, responded: 'The majority of tourism operators in Gippsland are small family owned businesses who employ people in their own community. We really appreciate the assistance given by the Union Movement and by the Community.'

With the milder weather and recent rainfalls, people are able to visit High Country towns like Walhalla, Omeo and Dargo as well as the Gippsland Lakes and coastal areas like Inverloch and Wilsons Prom.

Mr Parker said: 'One of the great things about Gippsland is that our attractions are within easy reach. We do not have to drive vast distances to enjoy some of the best attractions Victoria has to offer.'

People wanting to get out and about in their own backyard and support their community can contact their local Visitor Information Centre for ideas and suggestion places to go this weekend.

Mr Parker added: 'The tourism industry has earned respect in recent weeks for its positive attitude. The efforts of Yarragon and Walhalla have been inspirational. These small Gippsland towns have demonstrated their commitment to the Gippsland Region through fundraising activities for the Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund and the Biscuit Bake off for the Fire fighters.'

Mr Buckingham said: 'We can all make the time to support a small tourism town in our own area and help local businesses get through these hard times by spending money locally. It is not too late to ring friends and relatives and invite them down for the weekend.'

Mr Leaney observed: 'The Australia Day Weekend is traditionally one of the busiest weekends of the year. There are heaps of great local events and activities for people to see and do. By spending a few dollars and having fun, people can really make a difference in their community.'

Mr Parker concluded: 'Everyone has a favourite place to visit - a spot where you can take your friends and family and know you will have a good time. We will be going to Walhalla this weekend to ride the train, visit the gold mine, see the photographic exhibition at the Mechanics Institute and stop for a cup of coffee.'

**Media Representatives:** Photo opportunities will be available at Walhalla on Australia Day with Mr John Parker and Michael Leaney.

For more information please contact

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

[www.gippslandtourism.net.au](http://www.gippslandtourism.net.au)