

Media Release - Monday 11th February

The 2008 Gippsland Tourism Industry Leadership Program is being launched in Traralgon on Wednesday.

Ms Janiene Ayre, Chairperson, Gippsland Tourism Industry Leadership Program said: 'This is the second year of a Program that is the first of its type in Australia. Participants are going to get access to skills and development opportunities which will help Gippsland become one of Australia's leading tourism regions.'

23 tourism operators from across Gippsland will be inducted into this year's program, which is auspiced by Baw Baw Shire Council on behalf of the Gippsland Local Government Network.

Ms Bronwen Osborn, graduate of the 2007 program will be keynote speaker: 'This program is responsible for the transformation of the Gippsland Tourism Sector. It has brought together and united the industry and we are seeing the benefits across the region.'

The Program is funded by State Government through the Provincial Victoria Growth Fund Regional Leadership Initiative Program with significant support from Telstra Country Wide and Parks Victoria.

Ms Ayre continued: 'The Program is designed to help develop tourism operators with vision, passion and drive to provide ongoing leadership for the industry in the region.'

Members of the State Parliament's Rural and Regional Committee Inquiry into Tourism will be in attendance. 'It is great to be able to share this positive story with parliamentarians who have a demonstrated interest in tourism.' added Ms Ayre.

Mr Chris Buckingham, General Manager Gippsland Tourism said: 'The tourism sector has generated considerable momentum over the past two years. This program is critical to the long term success of tourism.'

'This group of leaders will play an important role in the formation of a peak regional tourism body later in the year.' concluded Mr Buckingham.

This year's participants include:

Trish Reardon	Rawson Village	Rawson
Vida Balhorn	The General Store	Port Albert
Ian Southall	PowerWorks	Morwell
Russell Wright	Walhalla's Star Hotel	Walhalla
Ann Andrew	Frog Gully Cottages	Sale
Mandy Rowe	Minnies Bed & Breakfast	Sale
Jan Davis	Waverley House Cottages	Lakes Entrance
Wendy Flahive	Traveller's Rest Motel	Bairnsdale
Pearl Findlay-James	Chestnut Hill Country Retreat	Swan Reach
Alan Mildren	EGTAFE	Bairnsdale
Trudy Anderson	Omeo BTA	Benambra
David Foster	Parks Victoria	Omeo
Georgia Wilson	Windy Ridge Winery	Foster
Catherine McGlead	Source Café	Foster
Judith Surman	Wild Dog Winery	Warragool
Joanne Kingwill	Kingwill Consulting	Yarragon

Angela Betheras
Cathy John
Mel Neil
Sarah Bush
Julie Cambridge
Barb Snelling

Nickelby at Darnum
Clearly Delicious
Piglets Restaurant
Phoenix Paintball
Parks Victoria
The Outpost Retreat

Darnum
Warragul
Neerim South
Drouin
Tidal River
Noojee

Media representatives: Please contact Janiene Ayre, Chairperson of Gippsland Tourism Industry Leadership Program on 03 5624 2538 or Chris Buckingham on 0429 869 638 for more information, or contact details for individual participants.

Representatives are welcome to attend the launch being held at Latrobe City's Traralgon offices, 12.30pm on Wednesday 13th February. Photographs can be supplied on request.