



9 February 2009

Victorian Bushfire tragedy

Like all Victorians, the tourism industry is shocked and saddened at the devastation wreaked by the bushfires across the State. We extend our deepest sympathies to all those who have lost loved ones, and in particular our thoughts are with those that have also lost their tourism livelihoods.

VTIC Chairman Jeremy Johnson said that the fires have had a massive impact on many Victorian communities that have provided world-class tourism experiences to visitors from all over the world for decades.

“Whole communities and countless tourism assets have been wiped out by the fires. Also, the travelling public will be denied at least for some time – in some cases forever – some of Australia’s best experiences”, says Mr Johnson. “While loss of life and injury is paramount at the moment, those that remain will have to pick up the pieces and this will be a difficult process,” he said.

The industry has resolved to support communities get back on their feet in part by calling for a co-ordinated response by Government to assist affected tourism operators and destinations.

“Tourism businesses will appreciate prompt emergency assistance from Government, whether it be counselling, clean-up assistance, infrastructure repair, marketing support or business transition assistance.”

“We urge insurers to process payouts speedily and we are encouraged that a number of insurers have already set up hotlines to deal with enquiries,” said Mr Johnson

Tourism Alliance Victoria Chairman Roger Grant said: “A really important part of the recovery process will be to support devastated regions in the months to come. The industry, Government and the media can help by promoting those areas that are open for business,” he said.

“Tourism can play a critical role in getting a community back on its feet economically and socially.”

“Many tourism operators have donated their time and staff time to fighting fires and relief efforts and thank them for doing so – Victoria owes them a debt of gratitude”, says Mr Grant.

Many offers of in-kind support have been received from the tourism industry, such as temporary accommodation and professional business services. If you are in a position to extend similar assistance to the people of the affected communities, please go to www.vic.gov.au for information on how you can help and contact details of the appropriate authorities coordinating the emergency relief effort.

For information on access to the State's parks please visit <http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/>. Tourism Alliance Victoria is also assisting with dissemination of communications from Parks Victoria and will send updates as they come to hand.

For latest updates on the fire situation visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on freecall 1800 240 667.

For updates on road closures due to the fires visit <http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au>

Anyone concerned about family and friends in the fire areas is advised to call the National Registry Inquiry Service on 1800 727 077.

Individuals and organisations wishing to make a donation to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund or offer assistance in-kind can go to www.redcross.org.au or call the toll free number 1800 811 700. Blood donations are also urgently required.

Tourism Alliance Victoria will continue to monitor the situation, provide updates, and formulate how to effectively support members and the broader industry in the weeks and months to come.

Regards,

Anthony McIntosh
Chief Executive Officer
Tourism Alliance Victoria