

Wednesday, 31 January 2007

CRAIG'S HUT THE CENTREPIECE OF \$4M TOURISM RECOVERY PACKAGE

The State Government will rebuild the iconic Craig's Hut, as part of a \$4 million funding package to assist in the recovery of tourism in bushfire-affected areas of North East Victoria and Gippsland.

Premier Steve Bracks was joined by Tourism Minister Tim Holding today to announce the Bushfire Taskforce rescue package.

Craig's Hut is a replica of a high country cattleman's hut built in 1983 as a set for the movie *The Man from Snowy River*. It was destroyed by fire on December 11 last year.

Mr Bracks said Craig's Hut was a key marketing image for Victoria in Australia and overseas and was central to recovery of the region's tourism industry.

"Encouraging tourists to come back to regions devastated by bushfire is an important way we can help local communities and businesses get back on their feet quickly," Mr Bracks said.

"Craig's Hut attracts about 80,000 visitors a year. Not only will we work with local community groups and councils to rebuild this iconic hut to its former glory, local access tracks will also be repaired and walking trails upgraded.

"We are sending a clear message that Gippsland and North East Victoria are open for business," Mr Bracks said.

Mr Holding said although the bushfire season was by no means over, it was important to start the recovery process as soon as possible.

"Tourism is the lifeblood of many towns in these regions, and the impact of such devastating fires on tourism-reliant businesses cannot be underestimated," Mr Holding said.

"As with the earlier Grampians fires, a key element of the Taskforce package will be tourism recovery. We will work with local communities to ensure tourism recovery is sustainable and long-term."

Mr Holding said the tourism promotion package would fund events, marketing and public relations activity, industry development and administration across Gippsland and North East Victoria over an 18 month period.

"We want to see visitors return to Gippsland and North East Victoria to enjoy the great events, food and wine, adventure activities and natural attractions the area has to offer," Mr Holding said.

The funding package will see the North East region receive \$1.95 million towards recovery over 18 months. The Gippsland region will receive \$1.75 million. The Craig's Hut project is estimated at \$300,000.