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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOURISM INDUSTRY WELCOMES BAY SUPPORT PACKAGE

Tourism Alliance Victoria (TAV) is delighted with the State Government's announcement this morning of a \$9.2million package to support businesses and improve infrastructure around Port Phillip Bay.

It comes after months of lobbying by Tourism Alliance Victoria for recognition of, and assistance in dealing with, the impacts of the channel deepening project on bay tourism operators.

"The package will provide real confidence for businesses that provide the Port Phillip Bay tourism experience, and who have coped with the uncertainty that the channel deepening project has thrown up," said TAV Chief Executive Anthony McIntosh.

The package provides \$3million for a marketing campaign promoting bay tourism and business support services and funding for eligible businesses.

A further \$2million will be used to improve boating infrastructure; the remainder of the package provides for enhancing beaches and managing coastal areas, as well as developing the maritime precinct around Mordialloc Creek.

"The marketing campaign is vital for promoting the great experiences to be had literally on Melbourne's doorstep. With fuel prices dropping, driving holidays are affordable again and Port Phillip Bay is a great touring destination," said Mr McIntosh.

"Improving boating infrastructure and maintaining the health of our beaches are also essential to attracting visitors to the Bay and we are pleased that the funding provides for such long-term benefits," he said.

TAV Chairman Roger Grant was equally positive. "This is a great result for Victorian tourism," he said.

"For too long the social and environmental benefits of Port Phillip Bay have been taken for granted, and so we're very pleased that the Government has thrown its weight behind enhancing our most valuable tourism asset," he said.

The announcement comes a couple of months into the peak season for bay tourism and at the halfway mark of the project. Whilst dredging works in the south of the Bay enter hiatus from 18 December to 31 January, they will continue in earnest from February through to December 2009.

Tourism Alliance Victoria advocates for the interests of tourism operators and industry groups across the state and provides support and representation on issues that affect the tourism industry. It represents over 3000 Victorian tourism businesses, including tourism attractions, tour operators, adventure and nature-based tourism businesses, local and regional tourism organisations and visitor information centres.

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