



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Minister for State and Regional Development

Monday, 13 March 2006

TIMELY \$250,000 TOURISM BOOST FOR WALHALLA

Walhalla's tourism amenities will be upgraded thanks to a \$250,000 Bracks Government grant that will help attract visitors back to the historic gold rush town, the Minister for State and Regional Development, John Brumby, announced today.

Mr Brumby said the funding to Baw Baw Shire Council was being brought forward through the Bracks Government's *Small Towns Development Fund* in response to the bushfires that swept through the area in January.

"The Government is doing all it can to help support fire affected communities and this project will provide a timely boost that will help to attract tourists back to Walhalla and the surrounding region," Mr Brumby said.

"The bushfire in the Moondarra State Forest forced the closure of access roads around Walhalla, which seriously affected the tourism market and businesses in Walhalla that relied upon it."

"This project will provide new visitor facility infrastructure in Walhalla in order to promote day visitors to the township; it will provide a more attractive entrance to the township, and it will help to attract visitors to other tourism attractions in the area including the Walhalla Goldfields Railway, the township and Long Tunnel Mine."

The project works include:

- toilet facilities including water storage for re-use;
- visitor information signage;
- picnic tables, seating and a barbecue facility;
- vehicle turning and parking bays for both cars and coaches; and
- new landscaping

Member for Narracan, Ian Maxfield, said the Government was providing \$250,000 toward the \$375,000 total project cost, with Baw Baw Shire Council contributing the rest.

"The project is strongly supported by the local community and by community groups including the Walhalla Board of Management, Walhalla Heritage League, Walhalla Goldfields Railway and the Walhalla and Mountain Rivers Tourism Association," Mr Maxfield said.

Mr Brumby said upgrade to Walhalla's facilities was an important part of Government's overall \$10.8 million recovery package for Victorian communities affected by the January 2006 bushfires.

The recovery package includes:

- **\$3 million** to assist farmers and rural landholders with business recovery, pest control, soil erosion and the de-silting of dams;

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- **\$2.2 million** for a range of initiatives to rejuvenate the natural and built environment including:
 - rebuilding walking trails in the Grampians to reactivate tourism, the continuing engagement of summer fire crews until April to rebuild trails, with priority given to “iconic” trails to enable them to open before Easter;
 - boosting the State’s fire mapping capacity to assist Parks Victoria with assessing the extent of fire damage;
 - measures to assess and protect cultural works; and
 - repairs to damaged water authority works.
- **\$1.6 million** in new tourism industry support, including a marketing and advertising campaign to help bring people back to the bushfire affected areas;
- **\$300,000** for Ararat, Northern Grampians, Southern Grampians shires and the Rural City of Horsham for community development initiatives;
- **\$135,000** for small-scale community projects across all the fire-affected areas;
- and **seven** community infrastructure projects brought forward under the Government’s *Small Towns Development Fund (STDF)*, in Ararat, Halls Gap, Rawson, Walhalla, and Yea.