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PRIME MINISTER

**JOINT STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER,
THE HON P.J. KEATING, MP AND THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM, THE
HON ALAN GRIFFITHS, MP**

LABOR TO FUND TOURISM GROWTH IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

A \$42 million plan to develop tourism in regional Australia is the centrepiece of the Labor Party's Tourism Policy, released today in Bendigo by the Prime Minister, Mr Paul Keating, and the Minister for Tourism, Mr Alan Griffiths.

Labor's record on tourism is unsurpassed.

Under Labor, international tourism has increased over 150 per cent, with tourism now worth \$8.2 billion in export earnings.

Nearly half a million Australians – many of them young Australians – are employed in the tourism industry. A further 200,000 are expected by the end of the decade.

International tourism grew by 9 per cent in the first 11 months of 1992, with significant gains for employment and the economy.

However, less than one in three of our international visitors spends any nights outside capital cities and major international gateways.

There is a rich diversity of tourism experiences throughout Australia, but we need to improve the capacity of regional areas to attract foreign tourists. At the same time we will be improving the tourism infrastructure for the domestic market.

Under a program of regional tourism development, \$20.75 million will be spent over four years on strategic planning and tourism infrastructure in regional Australia.

In addition, Labor will provide \$4 million over four years to help develop and promote a register of farm-stay accommodation. This will help rural and regional Australia attract the tourist market it deserves, just as has been the case in many overseas countries.

We will also spend \$10 million over four years on ecotourism, and \$4 million for the co-operative promotion of the backpacker market.

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To capitalise on the natural advantages of Australia as a centre for marine tourism, Labor will spend \$1 million to develop a coastal cruising strategy.

Compare Labor's record of achievement in tourism to the Opposition, whose only plan is to introduce a new tax which would savage the tourism industry.

Prices for tourist accommodation will rise by between 10 per cent and 14 per cent, reducing demand and causing job losses.

The Opposition has conceded there would be "winners and losers" under Coalition policies.

In Townsville last week they admitted there would be increases in costs in areas "like mums-and-dads' motels".

Mums-and-dads' motels, and the other small businesses that make up 85 per cent of the tourism industry, would undoubtedly be worse off under the GST regime.

We have said so all along. Now the Coalition admits it.

BENDIGO
25 February 1993