



PRIME MINISTER

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP

REGIONAL VICTORIA FEDERAL TOURISM FUNDING

Regional Victoria is to receive almost \$500,000 in Federal funding to help it become more involved in the State's growing tourism industry.

The funding will be provided under the four year, \$23 million Regional Tourism Development Program (RTDP) which aims to help spread the economic and social benefits of tourism beyond metropolitan Australia.

Grants will go to six key tourism projects covering areas from Bendigo to the Dandenongs.

The largest grant of \$213,000 will go to the Bendigo Tourism Board, to relocate the visitors centre from Kangaroo Flat to the city's recently restored historic post office.

This funding recognises Bendigo's importance to the State's tourism industry, particularly as the regional gateway to the goldfields of central Victoria.

An additional \$55,000 grant will enable a signage system to be developed throughout the goldfields to educate people about the region's grand history, including its fine buildings which are a legacy of the gold rush era.

A new tourist information centre at Heathcote, to receive \$100,000 in funding, will not only highlight that town's natural assets it will provide information on attractions throughout the broader region, including the 'Pink Cliffs' which developed their unique character as a result of past gold-mining activity.

Other funding includes \$71,500 to build a world-class walking track along the Great Ocean Road between Cape Otway and Princetown, \$45,000 to develop a tourist drive with linked walking tracks from the Puffing Billy Steam Train in the Dandenong Ranges through the Casey Cardinia and Westernport regions, and \$15,000 to develop a tourist trail along the rail line between Mirboo North and Boolarra.

Regional Australia can offer both domestic and international tourists a wealth of experiences that they could not find in our major cities.

Tourism is one of Victoria's growth industries, currently employing around 130,000 people and pumping more than \$7 billion annually into the State economy.

BENDIGO

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