



# Tourism Boost for Victoria's Central Highlands Forest Region

Growing sustainable local economies for regional Australia

The Australian Greens are pledging \$3 million of federal funds to invest in the tourism potential of Victoria's Central Highlands region and its precious forests, contributing to a sustainable economic future for the area. Increased tourism in the Central Highlands will benefit our rural communities.

**Tourism is good for Australian jobs.** Tourism is Australia's number one services export, employing around half a million Australians, twice the amount employed by the mining industry.<sup>1</sup>

**Tourism is good for Victorian jobs.** The direct and indirect contribution of the tourism industry to the Victorian economy was estimated at \$16.6 billion in 2011-12, generating nearly 200,000 jobs.<sup>2</sup> We know forest tourism is a drawcard in Victoria – bushwalking and rainforest walks are in the top five activities undertaken by visitors to the Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges adjoining the Central Highlands area, and these activities are more of an attraction than visiting wineries.<sup>3</sup>

**Tourism is good for regional jobs.** Tourism contributed \$3.3 billion to the Victorian regional economy and employed more than 50,000 people in regional Victoria.<sup>4</sup>

**Nature tourism is good for the budget bottom line.** National Parks attract millions of domestic and international tourists each year<sup>5</sup>, bringing in over \$4 billion in revenue annually<sup>6</sup>. Economic modelling shows that nature-based outdoor activities,

including nature tourism and outdoor recreation, add \$6.2 billion per year to Victoria's economy, supporting 71,000 jobs.<sup>7</sup>

## > INVESTING IN REGIONAL TOURISM

The Greens will contribute \$3m to tourism within the Central Highlands region of Victoria area, comprising:

- Grants to local tourism businesses and community-led tourism attractions. These grants will invest in innovations in tourism attractions and services, taking advantage of the natural environmental assets of the region.
- Funding contributions to local government, to invest in additional services to accommodate increased visitor numbers.

Examples of planned and in-progress tourism innovations already in the Central Highlands area include<sup>8</sup>:

- A zipline tour in Toolangi;
- A world-class 5 day overland track from Healesville-Marysville-Eildon;
- A skywalk (tree-top walk) in Cambarville adjacent to Lake Mountain;
- A Warburton to Walhalla Trail – a 5 day trek with huts for accommodation;
- Greater signage and interpretation sites;
- Greater accessibility in the mountains for 'grey nomads';
- Increase day picnic sites; and
- Greater signed and listed campsites.

<sup>1</sup> Tourism Research Australia, Tourism's contribution to the Australian Economy 1997-98 to 2011-12, July 2013

<sup>2</sup> Tourism Research Australia, State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2011-12, Canberra, June 2013

<sup>3</sup> Tourism Victoria, Market Profile for Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges, December 2014

<sup>4</sup> Tourism Victoria, Victorian Regional Tourism Satellite Accounts Summary, 2013-14

<sup>5</sup> In 2011, 2.4 million international visitors and 10.4 million domestic travellers visited a national or state park in Australia: Tourism Research Australia, National Visitor Survey, 2011 and International Visitor Survey, 2011

<sup>6</sup> Almost two thirds (61%) of all inbound visitors to Australia selected nature-based activities as the key purpose of their visit, bringing in over \$4 billion in revenue in 2012: Tourism and Transport Forum Nature Based Tourism Report, 2014

<sup>7</sup> Victoria's nature-based outdoor economy, report by Marsden Jacob Associates commissioned by Sport and Recreation Victoria and Outdoors Victoria, released March 2016

<sup>8</sup> The Great Forest National Park - An analysis of the economic and social benefits of the proposed Great Forest National Park (Hamish Scully, Monash University, June 2015)

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## > VICTORIANS LOVE OUR FOREST PLAYGROUNDS

Investing in tourism and establishing the Great Forest National Park will make sure our forests are intact for future generations, and will ensure sustainable jobs for rural communities in its surrounds.

We know that the Great Forest National Park proposal is supported by 89% of Victorians<sup>9</sup>. Establishing National Park protections for the area would not only preserve the towering mountain ash trees, wildlife habitat, clean water sources and carbon stores – it would ensure the viability of local tourism providers in the area into the future.

Melbourne is growing, and as our population grows, we need to ensure there are places for everyone to connect with nature and unplug from our increasingly 24/7 lives.

Melbourne has some of the best day-trip locations in Australia, and the Central Highlands area is one of our gems. It is a forest playground for Melburnians to enjoy, just 90 minutes from the CBD. Let's preserve its natural beauty so everyone can enjoy it, now and in the future.

Establishing the Great Forest National Park and investing in its surrounding towns will provide something for everyone - whether you're a mountain biker, a foodie, a wildlife spotter or a camper, there will be a place you can reconnect with our beautiful natural landscapes.

Sydneysiders have the Blue Mountains just 50km from their doorstep, yet Victoria continues to allow logging in the Central Highlands just outside our city. If we don't act now to preserve these precious places, our children will not have the same experiences we had growing up, taking our time to marvel at towering trees and tiny ferns, meandering along a bubbling creek, and connecting with nature. We must preserve these experiences, which we just can't have in the city.

## > THE GREENS WANT TO END NATIVE FOREST LOGGING AND INVEST IN SUSTAINABLE JOBS

The Greens are the only party committed to sustainable economic future for our regional areas. This investment is a plan for moving regional economies beyond the old 'dig it up and ship it out' mindset of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Instead, we want to work with regional communities to transition to long-term prosperity via industries like regional tourism.

Only the Greens are committed to ending clearfell logging of our native forests and instead investing in sustainable industries like tourism.

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<sup>9</sup> Essential Media Communications (EMC), Victorian National Parks Association: Attitudes to National Parks and Conservation Survey: October 2014, Andrew Bunn, 14 October 2014, version 2. **A total of 89% of participants supported the proposal with 42% strongly supporting and 47% supporting. Of the 3% who opposed, only 1% strongly opposed;** <http://vnpa.org.au/admin/library/attachments/PDFs/Surveys/survey-attitudes-parks.pdf>