

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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\$58 million investment in Australia's leading eco-tourism attraction

Phillip Island's iconic Penguin Parade, one of Victoria's most popular tourist attractions, will receive a much needed upgrade, boosting jobs and tourism in regional Victoria.

Premier Daniel Andrews announced at the Penguin Parade this morning that the Andrews Labor Government will provide \$48.2 million in the 2016/17 Victorian Budget for a major redevelopment of the attraction's Visitor Centre, replacing the out-dated 1988 facility with a larger and better equipped centre that has a smaller environmental footprint. Phillip Island Nature Parks will add \$10 million to the project for a total cost of \$58.2 million.

Nature Parks' Chair Jeff Floyd stated: "The Penguin Parade is critical to the success of Victoria's tourism performance. Without ongoing major investment, Victoria will not maintain its leadership in eco-tourism."

Phillip Island Nature Parks is the area's largest employer, providing tourism jobs which are vital in regional Victoria. This investment has been made possible through the new \$101 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund, designed to help boost regional tourism and drive new jobs across Victoria, and will be delivered as part of the upcoming Budget.

This major redevelopment in Phillip Island will create 620 new jobs a year, including around 110 construction personnel while redevelopment is underway. Phillip Island Nature Parks already supports 1,350 full time jobs.

Phillip Island Nature Parks is one of Australia's most popular wildlife attractions with over 600,000 visitors per year to the Penguin Parade, and almost 1.3 million visitors per year to all of the Nature Parks' attractions. This project will potentially increase visitation to the Penguin Parade by more than 20 per cent over ten years.

Mr Floyd said, "There has been a lot of talk about tourism investment for decades. This Victorian Government has stepped up and committed to this major tourism investment to ensure Victoria remains at the forefront of global tourism."

"It is essential that we continue to revitalise our tourism offerings to capture a big share of the booming Chinese tourism market," Mr Floyd continued.

In addition to its significant eco-tourism activities, the Nature Parks is also recognised as the home of world leading research and preservation efforts to protect seabirds and other threatened species. This redevelopment will allow over eight hectares of habitat to be restored back to the island's penguin colonies, with the Nature Parks better placed to achieve environmental outcomes by reducing impacts on penguins and increasing penguin habitat.

Mr Floyd concluded by saying: "This investment and redevelopment would not have been possible without the incredible support of the Phillip Island community, particularly the members of our Community and Environment committees."

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