

A WORLD CLASS DESTINATION

Since coming to office the Bracks Government has invested heavily in the growth and prosperity of the tourism industry, creating more jobs and opportunities across Victoria. This unprecedented investment has seen the industry grow by a massive 49 per cent since 1999.

The Bracks Government's strategy of attracting higher spending, longer staying tourists, particularly from interstate and internationally, has paid off. According to Tourism Research Australia's International Visitor Survey for the year to March 2006, international visitor nights grew 12 per cent in Victoria compared to the year to March 2005 – double the national growth rate.

Aggressively marketing, supporting and developing Victoria's tourist attractions and major events means Victoria leads other states in several key brand categories, including sporting and cultural events, best shopping destination and a great place to tour by car.

Construction of the 5,000-seat Melbourne Convention Centre has commenced, which will enable Melbourne to attract more and larger international conventions.

The Bracks Government has also cemented Melbourne's reputation as the 'events capital' of Australia and 2006 will be the biggest year of major events in Victoria's history. Victoria's major events calendar offers a huge range of sporting and cultural attractions, including the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, the Australian Tennis Open and Melbourne Winter Masterpieces.

The Commonwealth Games in March 2006 was the biggest event ever hosted by Victoria and more than 4,000 athletes took part. The Games were viewed by two million spectators and more than one billion television viewers worldwide, further enhancing our strong international reputation for hosting major events.

The Bracks Government has also worked hard to include regional Victoria in the major events calendar, with competitions such as the World Hot Air Balloon Championships in Mildura in 2004 contributing millions to the local economy. Victoria hosts the largest regional event in Australia – the Motor Cycle Grand Prix at Phillip Island – contributing over \$50 million to the State's economy.

The Government has reinforced Victoria's reputation for national leadership in arts and culture. We have invested in the arts and in creative Victorians and the state is now recognised internationally as a 'creative hotspot'. Victorians and interstate and overseas visitors are supporting our arts venues in record numbers.

We have invested in major new regional arts and cultural centres and are better preserving Victoria's state collections for future generations. The Bracks Government has also invested in Victoria's film and television industry by building the Docklands Film and Television Studios and we are constructing a \$98 million combined Melbourne Recital Centre and new home for the Melbourne Theatre Company.

As part of a massive arts infrastructure program, the Melbourne Museum, the beautifully restored reading rooms, galleries and public spaces at the State Library of Victoria, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, the National Gallery of Victoria Australia at Federation Square and the National Gallery of Victoria International on St Kilda Road are a rich legacy for the future.