



MEDIA RELEASE

SENATOR THE HON NICK SHERRY

Minister for Small Business
Minister Assisting on Deregulation and Public Sector Superannuation
Minister Assisting on Tourism

TRACK REVAMP STRENGTHENS GOLDFIELDS TOURISM

The Minister Assisting on Tourism, Senator Nick Sherry, has today opened the revamped Goldfields Track for bushwalkers and mountain bikers - adding to regional Victoria's list of unique attractions.

An Australian Government TQUAL Grant of \$500,000 contributed to new sections of track along the 210 kilometre route between Bendigo and Ballarat, with stops in Creswick, Daylesford, Hepburn Springs and Castlemaine along the way.

Senator Sherry took the V/Line train from Southern Cross Station to Castlemaine, joining the many travellers who head towards the only track where they can take regional rail from Melbourne to three of the track's major entry points including Ballarat and Bendigo.

"It's hard to think of a shared walking and biking experience in Australia that matches this one for quality," Senator Sherry said at today's opening in Fryerstown.

"And it's equally hard to think of a track that's so easy to get to from one of our major capital cities, as I did this morning on the V/Line train.

"The Goldfields Track project has benefits for private enterprise and for the community and stands to make the Goldfields region an even more attractive place to visit.

"Tourism is vital to the region's economic fabric, with the 2.8 million visitors who came to the Bendigo Loddon region last financial year spending \$424 million.

"Investing in tourism products and experiences makes the industry more resilient to shocks and helps attract more high-yielding visitors, who stay longer and spend more."

To date, the Australian Government has allocated over \$8 million to *TQUAL Grants* projects. This investment helps tourism operators to carve out more business in a challenging global market.

The Australian Government has committed an additional \$40 million to *TQUAL Grants* over four years. Grants of up to \$100,000 are available for collaborative community projects through *TQUAL Grants Tourism Quality Projects*. The current round has recently closed for applications and the next round will open in early 2012.

Information on *TQUAL Grants* funding is at www.ret.gov.au/tqual

FRYERSTOWN

17 May 2011

Media contact: Joe Scavo 0413 800 757