

Friday 28 April 2006

SNOW LOVERS FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

Environment Minister, John Thwaites, today launched a new climate change awareness initiative to encourage skiers, snowboarders and snow visitors to help combat the effects of climate change on Australia's Alpine environments.

The launch in Melbourne was part of the 2006 Alpine Resorts Sustainability Forum – Leading Attitudinal Change, which attracted over 100 Alpine stakeholders from around the nation.

Mr Thwaites said the *Keep Winter Cool* initiative had been developed by the Alpine Resorts Coordinating Council, the Australian Alps Liaison Committee and the Australian Ski Areas Association and was based on a similar model successfully implemented across North America.

“This initiative is a positive step towards minimising the effects of climate change, which will impact on the amount of natural snow in our Alpine areas,” Mr Thwaites said.

“The good news is that there is something we can all do – business, households and communities – that will minimise the impacts of global warming and reduce the impact on our Alpine areas.”

Mr Thwaites said there were many simple measures people could implement to help cut greenhouse gas emissions.

“Taking the bus to work or the snow, insulating your house or lodge, turning off appliances when they're not being used and cutting hot water consumption are just some of the practical things that will keep our Alpine regions white as snow,” Mr Thwaites said.

The campaign consists of:

- Postcards that will be distributed to visitors to Victoria's Alpine resorts, which include tips on reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Signs at key sites on the ski fields to raise awareness of climate change;
- A charter signed by Alpine businesses, who pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and raise awareness among their visitors and staff about climate change; and
- A *Keep Winter Cool* website that outlines the potential impact of climate change, particularly on the Alpine environment.

All of the Victorian alpine management boards, park managers in Victoria, NSW and ACT, the national ski lift industry, the Bus Association of Victoria and a number of other businesses have already signed up to the *Keep Winter Cool* Charter.

The Chairman of the Victorian Alpine Resorts Co-ordinating Council, Andrew Fairley, said the Alpine industry was taking a leading role in promoting climate change awareness.

“While the Alpine industry is only a small contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, as our visitors rely on good snow seasons it is important that the Alpine industry take a responsible leadership role.”