

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



Thursday, 1 July 2021

SOVEREIGN HILL BLAZES TRAIL FOR REGIONAL RECOVERY

The Andrews Labor Government is accelerating regional Victoria's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic by investing in dozens of projects that create jobs, encourage visitors and support local communities.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today announced support of \$500,000 for acclaimed tourist attraction Sovereign Hill in Ballarat – to back its *Winter Wonderlights* campaign to encourage more visitors.

The allocation is part of a \$10 million investment in more than 50 projects through the Government's *Regional Recovery Fund* – designed to address community needs and help businesses thrive.

Each year, Sovereign Hill is transformed into a winter wonderland with Christmas decorations, light projections and falling snow but due to the pandemic, the event was cancelled last year. The new funding will drive a marketing campaign to encourage more visitors over the winter months, including overnight visitation.

The campaign will support the region's recovery from the pandemic, which severely reduced visitor numbers to Sovereign Hill – a major economic driver for the Ballarat region.

More support from the *Regional Recovery Fund* for local events will be announced in coming weeks. The fund addresses priorities identified by regional communities and is part of almost \$30 billion invested by the Labor Government in regional and rural Victoria since 2015.

Successful projects were identified based on their ability to provide an immediate economic response and assist with recovery efforts while also laying the groundwork for future growth.

For more information visit rdv.vic.gov.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"We've heard directly from local communities about how the past year has impacted them and that's why we are investing in projects which will boost jobs and improve the economy through our Regional Recovery Fund."

Quote attributable to Member for Buninyong Michaela Settle

"Winter Wonderlights is a highlight for many families in Victoria and I'm so pleased that we've been able to support a campaign that will encourage more people to consider a winter getaway in our beautiful state."

Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison

"The Government's \$500,000 support for Sovereign Hill Winter Wonderlights is most welcomed by the community, as it supports local jobs and generates economic activity for other businesses during Ballarat's cold winter."

Quote attributable to Sovereign Hill Chief Executive Sara Quon

"Recovery marketing will be critical to bringing visitors back to Ballarat – this funding will enable Sovereign Hill to partner strongly with local industry to drive heightened Ballarat awareness, visitation and overnight stays."

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