

## Tourism

**Tourism is Tasmania's growth industry. Visitor numbers have almost doubled in the past 10 years, with a record of more than 742,000 visitors in 2003. The industry contributes more than \$1 billion each year to the State's economy and directly employs more than 22,500 people (Tourism Council Tasmania).**

The Australian and Tasmanian governments are keen to foster this valuable and growing industry. The State's ancient forests and other natural features are at the core of Tasmania's attraction for tourists. The creation of the new reserves in the Tarkine and the Styx Valley will boost the attractiveness of these areas as significant tourist destinations.

The Australian and Tasmanian governments will invest a further \$4 million over the next two years to improve visitor facilities in forest areas of Tasmania, focusing on the new reserves created as part of the RFA Supplementary Agreement. The governments will determine shortly the arrangements for the management of the program and the nature of the projects to be supported and will consult with the Tasmanian tourism sector on needs and priorities.

Carefully managed development of the tourism industry will ensure that the commercial benefits of Tasmania's unique environment are realised, while conservation values are protected. The new reserves to be established in the Tarkine and Styx areas will be managed to protect the areas and to encourage visitor access to the forest.

In the Styx Valley, the creation of the new reserves to protect the world's tallest hardwood trees within easy travelling distance (less than two hours) of Hobart will serve to attract more international and domestic visitors to Tasmania. The increased number of visitors will boost and increase the diversity of local economies in the surrounding communities including New Norfolk and Maydena.

The Australian Government will provide \$1 million over two years to assist the development of bushwalking tracks in the Tarkine area in north-west Tasmania. The Government, in consultation with Tasmania, will seek proposals that will allow improved visitors access to some of the special features of the Tarkine: the tall myrtle rainforests, the streams and waterfalls, the vistas. High environmental standards will be mandatory, consistent with the values of the region. The call for proposals will be coordinated with Tasmanian environmental and land-use approvals and licence processes.