

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**ERNST & YOUNG ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY REVEALS SOVEREIGN HILL'S CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORIA**

Today the results of Sovereign Hill's Economic Impact Study, prepared by Ernst & Young, reveal that Sovereign Hill contributes \$259 million to the State of Victoria and generates 1,665 full-time, part-time and casual jobs.

Since opening its doors in 1970, the outdoor museum has become one of the most important drivers for Ballarat's work force and economy, and has significant importance to Ballarat, regional Victoria and the wider Victorian community and economy.

"In 2015/16, admission to Sovereign Hill's attractions totalled over 789,000, making it one of the largest attractions in regional Victoria. Not only does its award-winning reputation attract tourists to Ballarat who may not have visited the region, but we are also one of the largest employers in Ballarat," says Sovereign Hill CEO Jeremy Johnson. "The training and work experience provided by Sovereign Hill also contributes to building the overall skill set and productivity of the region."

Using Sovereign Hill's 2015/16 operations, admission numbers and visitor profiles for both Sovereign Hill in aggregate and separated by its key attractions including Blood on the Southern Cross, the Gold Museum, Narmbool Farm, and Sovereign Hill generally, the study also revealed:

- Sovereign Hill's broader social and cultural value is estimated at \$40.2 million, and takes into account its contribution to cultural heritage preservation, education, the environment, regional tourism, regional productivity improvements, and community development.
- Visitor numbers continues to grow each year, with over 789,000 visitors in 2015/16, compared to 734,000 in 2013/14. This growth can be attributed to the development of innovative products and special events, like *Christmas in July: Winter Wonderlights*.
- Christmas in July: Winter Wonderlights, inspired by Melbourne's White Night, rocketed normally low June/July attendance figures to the most commercially successful event with 42,000 visitors in June/July 2014, then 95,000 in June/July 2016.
- Sovereign Hill is Ballarat's most visited tourist attraction. This supports the growth and expansion of other major attractions in the region, including Krial Castle, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka (M.A.D.E) and the City of Ballarat itself.
- In 2016, Sovereign Hill's educational programs attracted approximately 140,000 students and teachers, including attendance at their four on-site costumed schools, and the sustainability education programs at Narmbool.

In addition to the economic contribution generated by Sovereign Hill's operations Sovereign Hill also contributes to the economy via the expenditure of Sovereign Hill visitors either before and/or after visiting Sovereign Hill on items like accommodation, meals and retail. The direct economic contribution of Sovereign Hill generated tourism to Ballarat is estimated at \$67.2 million in 2015/16, representing around 16% of Ballarat's total Tourism Output.

Sovereign Hill is a not-for-profit tourism attraction and has won 10 State and 4 national major tourism awards. It is a multi-award winning outdoor museum that has earned an international reputation as a living museum with a strong emphasis on delivering creative and interactive exhibits, and is one of the state's most valuable assets.

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