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MEDIA RELEASE

TITLE: *Naturally Loddon puts the local environment on show*

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(3 August 2010) The Loddon Shire, in collaboration with local partner agencies, is driving the inaugural Loddon Nature Tourism Festival entitled *Naturally Loddon: A Wonderland in Spring*, to be held throughout September-October this year.

The festival is an objective of the Nature Tourism Advisory Team with the aim to bring more people to the area, and to pull together new and existing key environmental events to market under the one umbrella.

"We essentially wanted to promote our beautiful environment and to highlight the biodiversity, natural assets and cultural heritage of the Loddon Shire – and in doing so it will enable all of our partner agencies within the area to get greater exposure by marketing their individual activities as part of a festival, rather than simply running incidental events during this time," said Mrs. Vella.

"Many local events occur during the spring, so the timing seemed right to get everyone on board to come together, working as with a "whole-of" approach, and each event would benefit from the additional publicity," she said.

These thoughts are echoed by Loddon Shire Councilor, Christine Brooke, who helped instigate and encourage the establishment of the festival.

"We formed a working group early this year, bringing together agencies such as the North Central Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria, local Landcare groups and environmental networks, various government departments, and community organisations such as the YMCA," explained Cr Brooke.

"The group has worked tirelessly in pulling together events to add to the festival calendar. Each organisation still organises and runs their own events, although now with much greater support and subsequent exposure."

The festival is aimed at all age groups and incorporates the popular annual Kooyoora Wildflower show, along with a variety of fun, interactive and educational events such as bushwalking, tree planting, bird watching, photography, canoeing and bike riding – as well as highlighting areas of Indigenous and European cultural significance – all showcasing the great Loddon outdoors.

"We have just released a brochure outlining of festival schedule, and a calendar of events is available from the Loddon Shire website, along with contact information relevant to each event," said Mrs. Vella.

"We would like to encourage everyone to have a look at what is on offer and come along to one or several events. Many activities are being held during the school holiday period and the majority are free for the whole family to enjoy.

The festival will be held from 4 September to 3 October this year, with the official inaugural launch to be held on Friday 10 September at the Loddon Visitor Information Centre. For a brochure or further information, including a full program of events, visit www.loddon.vic.gov.au or telephone the Loddon Visitor Information Centre on 03 5494 3489.

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