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## MEDIA RELEASE

28<sup>th</sup> April 2003

### SCRAPPING ANSETT LEVY NOT OPTIONAL – IT'S NECESSARY

The Minister for Transport deserves no congratulations if he finally scraps the Ansett ticket tax to help the tourism industry through the SARS crisis – the tax should have been scrapped long ago.

The unfair over-collection of the Ansett ticket tax has gone on for too long and the Government is now using the SARS crisis as a convenient cover to axe the unnecessary tax.

Dumping the tax now only proves that the ticket tax is being collected under false pretences and the Government's excuses for keeping it place are nothing short of a sham.

The Howard Government has had more than enough opportunities to do the right thing by the tourism industry but has fraudulently continued collecting the tax for its own financial gain.

Major airlines and hotels have shed staff, advertisements for jobs in the industry dropped by 5% even before the SARS crisis hit and the flow on to the retail sector is showing, yet the Howard Government has waited until after the horse has bolted to consider moving to relieve the tax burden on the tourism industry.

Instead of putting in place a plan to address the challenges facing the tourism industry, the Government has done nothing to help stop the haemorrhage of jobs and revenue in the tourism and associated industries.

More than \$220 million has been collected through the tax so far and the Government has known since last October that asset sales should mean it will get back every cent it loaned the Administrators.

Labor calls on the Howard Government to spend that surplus now rather than later in a constructive way to help the aviation and tourism industries cope with the current crisis.

Dropping the Ansett ticket tax is not optional and should not be the only response to the tourism industry crisis.

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