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## **NEW WORLD CLASS WHALE WATCHING VENTURE ON THE GOLD COAST**

Village Roadshow Limited and Whale Watch Kaikoura announced today that Sea World, a division of Village Roadshow Theme Parks, and Whale Watch Australia, a subsidiary of New Zealand company Whale Watch Kaikoura, have joined forces to bring a new standard of whale watching experience to the Gold Coast.

Whale Watch Kaikoura is a multi-million dollar nature tourism company based on the East Coast of New Zealand's South Island. Founded in 1987 the company has built an impressive international reputation as a world class innovator and operator of whale watching tours. It is the recipient of a host of international tourism awards.

Since 1971, Sea World has worked with marine mammals on the Gold Coast and Village Roadshow Limited is Australia's largest theme park owner and operator. Sea World, through its Research and Rescue Foundation, has made a meaningful contribution to marine conservation by conducting internationally recognised research studies, promoting marine education and rescuing Humpback Whales which have become stranded or entangled in nets.

Sea World and Whale Watch Australia believe this new venture has all the prerequisites to grow the reputation of the Gold Coast as a serious whale watching destination. Both companies are committed to providing a quality whale watching experience while carefully managing an important natural resource and the ocean environment that supports it.

Commencing in May 2008 at the start of the Gold Coast whale migration season, Sea World and Whale Watch Australia will introduce a new level of education and entertainment to the awe-inspiring natural experience of getting up close and personal with the world's largest mammals.

The new venture represents a \$5 million commitment by Whale Watch Kaikoura, including the construction in Queensland of a \$3.4 million, 24 metre state of the art whale watching vessel.

This custom designed vessel will comfortably carry in excess of 100 passengers and operate daily (weather permitting) from Sea World from June to November during the annual Humpback Whale migration past the Gold Coast.

Whale Watch Chairman Wally Stone: “We are very impressed that in Sea World we have found a partner that also has enormous experience with marine mammals and the business of tourism.... we both share a common philosophy that cherishes the twin values of hospitality to visitors and reverence for the natural world”.

Sea World CEO John Menzies stated that “this approach dovetails perfectly into the traditional values that we have used to build our successful Sea World marine park and will without doubt see extraordinary success for our new whale watching venture. We look forward to working with our new business partners to achieve this outcome”.

Both Menzies and Stone agree that demand for nature and marine base tourism experiences will continue to grow and become an important part of the diversity of choices sought by visitors to the Gold Coast. Wally Stone: “Whale Watching is one of those once-in-a-lifetime, must-do experiences that stay with you forever.”

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