

# Parks to discover bright new future



ADELAIDE ADVENTURE: Karen and Collin Jackson with their dog Saxton at the Discovery Parks in Semaphore yesterday

Picture: MORGAN SETTE

## TOURISM

VALERINA CHANGARATHIL

AUSTRALIA's largest holiday park operator, SA-based Discovery Parks, will be ready to welcome tourists as soon as possible after regional travel restrictions are lifted.

Discovery Parks, which is majority-owned by superannuation fund Sunsuper, has a network of 290 holiday parks nationwide, 43 of them in SA.

The group has reinstated 1000 workers nationwide – almost half of the workforce it stood down because of COVID-19 closures – with the

support of the Federal Government's JobKeeper payments.

"Bringing back our staff and getting our properties ready for tourists this early is an amazing outcome for us," Discovery chief executive Grant Wilckens told *The Advertiser*.

"Together with the expectation that the next 12 months are most likely all going to be about affordable holidays in our own backyards, we see it as

a great opportunity." Beside maintenance works, including mowing, painting and general sprucing up of the properties, Discovery Parks is also bringing in contactless check-ins, increased cleaning, social distancing and other measures for safe operations.

"From our perspective, we see SA, NT and WA opening up first and so those locations and the self-contained cabins

are a focus for us," Mr Wilckens said. "We are already talking to local councils on working with the community to ensure they are willing and ready to welcome visitors and also looking to partner with local restaurants to work together."

"For every tourism dollar, there is a \$2 benefit to the regional economies."

"We want regional tourism to be a 'pull factor' as communities recover."

Discovery's new-found confidence comes after a tough summer because of bushfires and COVID-19's devastating impact on its traditionally busy Easter holiday period.

"This could be a bit of a renaissance, a mini-positive phase," Mr Wilckens said.

"There is still a lot of nervousness around the risk and desire to travel. But we are feeling like we are on the eve of our biggest opportunity ever."

Retired couple Karen, 51, and Collin Jackson, 61, have spent more than two years travelling around Australia in their motorhome but have had to stay at Discovery Semaphore Park since January.

"Spending money locally has been an adventure of a lifetime," Mr Jackson said.

"We can't recommend it enough as we wait to get back on the road."

