



# Australia's silver lining: golden beaches

**William Shrubbs**

AT a time of unrelenting bad news about financial doom and gloom, recessions and job losses, thousands of summer holiday-makers are coming to the same conclusion: it's hard to beat a low-cost trip to the beach.

Scores of schools are breaking up by the day and businesses are closing for the Christmas-New Year holidays, or for good, sparking a surge to the nation's beaches in the ever-warming

weather.

The weaker dollar and falling fuel prices are providing relief for domestic tourism operators, who hope the next few months will provide a ray of sunshine in a year dominated by bad news.

One holiday-maker choosing to stay in Australia amid the financial downturn is Edna Nowland, who was enjoying the 26C weather at Sydney's Bondi Beach yesterday. It is the first time in eight years that Ms Nowland has chosen not to travel overseas as

part of her timeshare accommodation arrangements. In previous years she has travelled to New Zealand, Fiji and The Philippines. This year, she will travel to Coolangatta in Queensland to see her husband's family.

Ms Nowland said she and her husband "need a break" and that a trip to their timeshare apartment in Queensland was "essentially free".

The release of Baz Luhrmann's film *Australia* was being credited by tourism operators

with creating an "enormous buzz" about domestic travel, Tourism Australia managing director Geoff Buckley said.

Michael and Suzanne Whitten are driving three young children and a dog from Melbourne to Brisbane this summer.

Yesterday, their journey took them to the surf.

The Whittens said the economic downturn had not affected their travel plans; rather they were "more keen to explore more parts of Australia".



**Embracing the summer:** Swimmers cool off at Bondi



**Weathering the economic storm:** Thousands take advantage of Sydney's sunny weather yesterday at Bondi Beach

Pictures: Renee Nowyarger