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Contact: Michele Cozzi 07 4681 0411 or 0417 620571 marketing@granitebeltwinecountry.com.au

Wine Tasting to the Max

Some may not have noticed, but slipping into the Queensland wine capital between the Winelander train and the famous Apple & Grape festival was one very influential individual, Max Allen.

Respected wine writer to a number of prestigious titles including *The Weekend Australian* and *Australian Gourmet Traveller*, Max Allen is the latest journalist to be smitten by the Granite Belt's Strange Bird.

Strange Bird is the name given to the Granite Belt Alternative Wine Trail. It has captured the imagination of the Lonely Planet and ABC TV's Landline programme as well as the wine press.

Allen visited the Granite Belt during a trip to Queensland last week. The opportunity to familiarize himself with the Strange Bird wines, and their winemakers was ideal research for his next book, due to be published in the autumn.

Granite Belt Wine & Tourism (GBWT) President Mrs Bobbi Cragg said that attracting a wine commentator of Max Allen's calibre was a coup Queensland's premier wine region.

True to form, Allen assiduously worked his way around eleven wineries. He also agreed to sample Strange Birds from others which time prevented him from visiting during his overnight visit.

Mrs Cragg added: "He was very complimentary about the places he visited and the alternative wines he tasted. Interestingly Max shared our belief that the Granite Belt is a diverse and special place. He commented that our greatest selling point to visitors is our unique sense of place, the geology, the terroir, the diversity of wine styles and cellar doors."

Mrs Cragg said that this latest milestone would not have been possible without the GBWT's full time professional marketing activity. "This is funded through members' subscriptions and marketing levies and is money very well spent and the profile it attracts benefits the entire region," she concluded.

To learn more about Queensland's premier wine region see www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au or phone 1800 SO COOL and *Expect to be surprised!*

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1. The history of the Queensland wine industry dates back to the 1860s - and like all good wines it has developed with age.
2. Of Queensland's current 1100 hectares planted to wine grapes, approximately half of these are on the Granite Belt. It is also the largest of the ten wine regions in the state and one of only two with official GI status.
3. 64% of Granite Belt plantings are of Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Merlot with an increasing number of plantings of alternative grape varieties proving popular.
4. The Granite Belt is home to approximately 50 wine cellar doors, the state's most awarded winemakers, plus the Queensland College of Wine Tourism - the first of its type in the world.

Granite Belt Wine & Tourism Inc ABN 34072882028 PO Box 749, Stanthorpe Queensland 4380 Australia
Facsimile +61 7 4681 1200 www.granitebeltwinecountry.com.au
The Stanthorpe Visitor Information Centre 28 Leslie Parade, Stanthorpe Queensland 4380 Australia
Telephone +61 7 4681 2057 Email info@granitebeltwinecountry.com.au