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

Food Partners Wine in Granite Belt

Culinary tourism is the latest initiative to be dished up by Granite Belt Wine & Tourism Inc. (GBWT) as part of its push to tap into Australians' continuing fascination with food.

GBWT's mission is to develop a sustainable tourism industry on the Granite Belt. As food and wine are the perfect partners, the creation of a food steering committee is a natural development for the GBWT. The group held its first meeting on the Granite Belt this month.

GBWT board member and CEO of the Queensland College of Wine Tourism (QCWT) John Neville chaired the initial meeting, which included a wealth of talent led by Peter Howard.

Peter Howard is one of Australia's best known food and wine commentators. Mr Howard also consults to industry and government organisations on hospitality and tourism issues. He has agreed to work with GBWT to share his wealth of experience on regional food initiatives.

Mr Neville said the group will propose their strategic framework for the food project at the next GBWT next board meeting.

Other successful regional food destinations develop a range of activities including food trails, signature dishes and growers markets. Mr Neville said that these and more will be explored as part of building a strategy for regional food in the Granite Belt.

Mr Howard – who has visited the Granite Belt since childhood - said the area is already a food producing region. He said, "Establishing a food group is a fabulous step forward for the GBWT. Once again they are showing leadership and are to be congratulated on taking the initiative.

"The task now is to help everyone involved in food in the area to collaborate and build a strong, professionally presented culinary tourism experience. A key component will be to build the relationships between growers and the food service industry to establish a culture of incorporating Granite Belt produce in restaurants and cafes, and doing so with pride," he added

Mr Neville said that industry studies show that tourists want "experiences" not just destinations. He added, "Wine and food is a very sensory experience and promoted as a tourist product it has the added benefit of attracting a higher yield visitor.

"We have a well developed wine tourism industry, the next step is to market food along side it. We now have our first foot on the ladder. We plan to host a food forum early in June and will be extending invitation to our members nearer the time," Mr Neville added.

Peter Howard joined the meeting via a conference call. Around the food think tank table were DPI Ambassadors Leeanne Puglisi-Gangemi and Alison Alexander. Mrs Puglisi-Gangemi is the GBWT Chair of Wine. Mrs Alexander is a passionate promoter of regional produce and co-ordinator of Queensland's premier food and wine event, the Brisbane Hilton Masterclass.

Joining them was Kaye Nunan, Food Industry Development Officer from the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries plus Andrew Simpson, Food & Beverage Training Manager at QCWT. The group also included representatives from the local and regional tourist associations and the Southern Downs Regional Council's economic development unit.

To learn more about Queensland's premier wine region visit

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