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Association's Approval Rating: A figure a Politician Would Envy

Consolidation has certainly paid dividends for one local organisation, as the results of a new member survey revealed today show. Ninety percent of those surveyed said overall they were happy with their membership of GBWT.

Granite Belt Wine & Tourism Inc. (GBWT) was born out of a merger in 2006 between the local tourist and wine industry associations. Its recent membership survey shows significant participation and a very clear approval rating.

Key findings of the GBWT Membership Pulse Survey, Autumn 2008:

- Ninety percent of members said that overall they were happy with their membership.
- Of the benefits, the top three singled out for praise were the new Granite Belt Wine Country promotions, the services provided at the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and the newsletters and regular flow of information to members.
- Just over half (52%) of members reported an increase in their summer business over the previous summer. This is in line with increases in numbers through the Stanthorpe Visitor Information Centre for the same period.
- Forty percent of members are predicting a busier autumn than in 2007.
- An impressive fifty-two percent of members participated in the on-line survey in April 2008.

GBWT President Mrs Bobbi Cragg said, "We've covered a huge amount of ground since the merger both at a strategic and practical level. Although we run the association as a professional body, the achievements have taken thousands of volunteer hours."

"The board is delighted to see that our commitment to managing the VIC has proved successful and is recognised by our members. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the former Stanthorpe Shire Council for their vision in passing the management rights to GBWT in February 2007 and we are pleased that their faith was well-founded," Mrs Cragg added.

Mrs Cragg also mentioned the impact of the Granite Belt Wine Country brand which was unveiled by Minister Margaret Keech last May. "Although a week short of being twelve months old, this brand has helped instil a sense of common pride in our members and galvanised them to working as a team. It provides a single identity for our professional marketing activities and is having an impact in the market."

The Association has two categories of membership and both have grown solidly. For those whose primary activity is tourism related, Full membership applies. These members pay an annual subscription plus contribute to a marketing levy. Participation in the levy scheme shows real commitment by industry to its own development. Considering their investment, Mrs Cragg said it was particularly pleasing to see that the members were happy with the collaborative marketing under the Granite Belt Wine Country brand.

Also encouraging was the growth in Associate member status. This category is open to business operators and associations who benefit from the growth in tourism, but whose main enterprise is not tourism. Their contribution is just \$110 a year with the option to upgrade to derive certain benefits. Current combined membership stands at 128.

During April 2008 GBWT members were invited to participate in the survey, using an online tool. From the findings the GBWT has identified a number of action items, which include helping members develop a better understanding of tourism marketing and make better use of their website.

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

ENDS

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.

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