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

Community Talking Tourism

In a regional tourist destination, tourism is everybody's business. That message seems to have struck a chord in one region at least, where the local tourist association is becoming the "in" group.

The merger of the local wine and tourist associations in 2006 marked the birth of Granite Belt Wine & Tourism (GBWT) and in the past twelve months alone, membership has grown from 82 to more than 140. According to the association President Mrs Bobbi Cragg, a significant part of that has been from outside the traditional tourist sector.

Mrs Cragg commented, "Since the wine and tourist operators began collaborating two years ago, we've achieved some significant milestones. This has created a flow on effect throughout the local economy and we now represent a fairly wide group of business operators and community groups."

The majority of GBWT's full members are organisations whose main activity is in tourism, whether selling wine, food, beds or tours. Associate membership has previously appealed to those who benefit from tourism and this group includes the butcher, the baker and local real estate agents but more of those are looking to upgrade their membership.

Mrs Cragg said that aside from individual business operators getting involved, a number of other local associations have seen the benefit of working with tourism. Amongst those also looking to harness the tourist dollar are groups such as the local chamber of commerce and the show society as well as the jockey club and pottery club, plus the sport and recreation club and even the RSL.

It's been a busy year for the GBWT – highlights of which will be presented at the annual general meeting on Thursday 21 August 2008. GBWT members will shortly receive invitations to the AGM. To enquire about membership phone 07 4681 2057 or email info@granitebeltwinecountry.com.au

ENDS

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

- Wine** The history of the Queensland wine industry dates back to the 1860s - and like all good wines it has developed with age. Of Queensland's current 1100 hectares planted to wine grapes, approximately half of these are on the Granite Belt. The Granite Belt is Queensland's premier wine region and one of ten wine regions in the state, of which only two have official GI status. 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.
- Food** The Granite Belt is the only area in Queensland to produce apples: creating a gross value of approximately \$35m per annum (DPI&F 2006). Agriculture is the largest employer in the area, which boasts a vibrant and diverse horticultural sector. In this part of Queensland, the food production sector is expected to experience an average annual growth rate of approximately 8.0% per annum, despite the drought. Over the 10 years to 2017, growth in the sector is expected to result in a 12.7% increase in the regional economy's turnover (source Darling Downs & South West Queensland Centre of Enterprise and AEC Group 2007.)