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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Wednesday 15 May 2013

### **APPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL TOURISM FUNDING NOW OPEN**

Minister for Tourism and Major Events, George Souris, today announced that regional tourism providers can now apply for funding from the Regional Visitor Economy Fund.

Speaking at a forum with local tourism operators in Wollongong, Mr Souris said: “The Government has provided funding of \$7.2 million, which will give a much needed boost to tourism in NSW regions.

“This funding will assist regional tourism providers to improve services and promotion to potential domestic and overseas visitors. This will ensure that the diversity and beauty of regional NSW is recognised both in Australia and across the world.

“This is the first year of a \$21.6 million commitment made by the Liberals and Nationals Government. This represents a \$6 million funding increase and is part of the Government’s Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan, which was developed based on recommendations by the Visitor Economy Taskforce. It aims to boost regional economies through increased tourism.” Mr Souris said.

“Funding of \$3.7 million will be devoted to funding Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs), while \$3.5 million will be awarded as part of a competitive application process. Providers may apply for both marketing and product development funding.”

The Member for Heathcote, Lee Evans, was also at the forum and stressed the importance of tourism to the economy of both regional areas and the state as a whole.

“Tourism to regional NSW is vital to rebuilding the NSW economy. Visitor expenditure in regional NSW was worth more than \$12.8 billion in 2012, an increase of more than three per cent compared to the previous year.

“This funding will allow this vital industry to grow and develop, which will bring a wide array of benefits to rural and regional communities. I encourage all operators in the Wollongong area to apply and not miss out on this great opportunity.”

Applications close on 29 June and funding will become available from 1 July.

Further information on the application process can be found at the Destination NSW website, at the following address: <http://www.destinationnsw.com.au/tourism/business-development-resources/funding-and-grants/regional-visitor-economy-fund-rvef>