



MEDIA RELEASE

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HUNTER VALLEY NUMBER ONE WINE REGION IN AUSTRALASIA

The Hunter Valley has been recognized as one of the finest wine districts in the world with the region winning a major award, Minister for Tourism and Major Events and Member for Upper Hunter, George Souris, said today.

TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel site, has announced that the Hunter Valley has won the *2012 Travellers' Choice Wine Destination Awards* for the Australasian region.

The Hunter Valley has been awarded number one destination, based on the reviews and opinions of millions of travellers. No Victorian winery appears in the *Travellers' Choice* top 10 list.

"I am delighted that the Hunter Region has been awarded number one wine destination in the TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards. The Hunter Valley is Australia's oldest wine region, dating back to the 1860's and is recognised for excellence throughout the world," Mr Souris said.

"Many original wineries are still in production, with a proud heritage of some of the oldest vine stock in the world. The Hunter Valley is currently home to over 150 wineries and has a rich history of Australian wine makers, including Len Evans, Maurice O'Shea, Murray Tyrrell, Audrey Wilkinson and Karl Stockhausen.

"Visitors are encouraged to sample the region's famous semillons and shirazes at welcoming cellar doors, including Tyrrell's, McWilliams' Mount Pleasant, Hungerford Hill, Tulloch, Drayton's, Brokenwood, Wyndham Estate, Tempus Two and Lindemans."

"As well as being famous for wine, the Hunter Valley region has an outstanding reputation for quality produce, boasting 65 restaurants and 180 accommodation properties. With a vibrant calendar of events throughout the year, supported by Destination NSW, the Hunter Valley is an international tourist mecca for food and wine lovers.

"The NSW Government has contributed more than \$1.2 million in funding for the region in the past year through the Regional Tourism Partnership Funding Programme," Mr Souris said

CEO of Destination NSW, Sandra Chipchase, said: “I am excited that the Hunter Region has been recognised as the number one wine destination in Australia and New Zealand, in the *Travellers’ Choice Awards*. The Awards are based on the millions of reviews and opinions from TripAdvisor travellers across the globe and are determined by the popularity of the local wineries, restaurants, attractions and accommodation.

“The Hunter Valley showcases excellence in wine production, tourism and accommodation in NSW and the Awards are a great recognition for hundreds of small businesses that ensured the Hunter Valley’s success as Australia’s number one wine destination.

“Destination NSW has directly supported a range of programs in the Hunter Valley through the Regional Flagship Events program, including the *Hunter Valley Food and Wine Month*, the *Aberdeen Highland Games*, *Sculptures in the Vineyards* at Wollombi and *Bitter and the Twisted Beer Festival* in Maitland.

“The *Hunter Valley Food and Wine Month* brings together the very best of the Hunter’s renowned winemakers and chefs together to celebrate the best of Australia’s finest wine and food region.”

“To build on our dedicated support for regional tourism, I am proud to announce that Destination NSW has created a new team to drive tourism sector development and support great outcomes for tourist sector operators.

“The new team is headed by Eileen Gilliland, Manager Sector Development, and includes specialist advisors for the Wine and Food, Aboriginal, Youth and Cruise tourism sectors.

“Ben Janeczko has been appointed as Wine and Food Sector Specialist and will be working with industry, key stakeholders and business owners to develop priority markets and ensure tourism products are promoted for consumer engagement.”