

MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday August 13, 2008

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Budget lifted from \$140,000 to \$250,000 per annum

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Riverina Regional Tourism is a winner in State Tourism Plan

The NSW Government just released the draft strategy for NSW tourism through Tourism Minister Matt Brown and Riverina Regional Tourism's input into the strategy is not only paying off for RRT but for all 13 Regional Tourism Organisations, with increased funding from the State Government.

For the first time ever, the 13 regions developed a united strategy, which ensures that the regions can take charge of their own destiny; a strategy now accepted in the draft paper and recommended to the Government.

"In the past, regional tourism was the stepchild of tourism when it came to funding, even though over 70% of the tourism expenditure and overnights in the domestic market takes place in regional NSW, and most of the marketing dollars were spent on Sydney." Sonia Casanova, Chair of Riverina Regional Tourism, said.

"No-one understands regional tourism better than the people who work and live in the regions - that's why we have formed FORTO (Forum of Regional Tourism Organisations) and developed strategies which will increase tourism performance in NSW," Ms Casanova said.

"The new tourism strategy for NSW will fund and establish two new units to look after Sydney (Visit Sydney and Brand Sydney) but also FORTO, who will look after the interests of the 13 regions. In the case of the Riverina Regional Tourism, total funding by the NSW Government can increase from \$140,000 to \$250,000, with a requirement that part of the additional money provided be matched with industry dollars" Ms Casanova said.

In speaking of the Minister for Tourism, Matt Brown, Peter Hale, spokesperson for FORTO said in a speech to the tourism industry in Sydney, "In my fifteen years' experience, this is the first time we have had a Minister with such a passion for the industry and a commitment for change." He also said, "It is the first time that we have had a Director-General for State and Regional Development, Barry Buffier, who has recognised tourism as a serious economic driver.

Under a new initiative, FORTO will also work directly with Tourism New South Wales to assist with the strategy of directing the further \$3,000,000 in tourism funding.

"This is the biggest achievement in the last 15 years in regional tourism," Ms Casanova said.

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