A BOOST FOR REGIONAL TOURISM AND EVENTS

Minister for Tourism and Major Events, George Souris, today announced the O'Farrell/Stoner Government will invest almost $20 million in regional tourism and events as part of the 2013-2014 State Budget.

"Regional NSW plays a critical role in driving overnight visitors to Australia’s most popular state and more visitors than ever are visiting our regions.

"The O’Farrell/Stoner Government supports regional tourism by investing in festivals and events that are exclusive to NSW and supporting operators and the industry to be able to deliver the best possible tourism experiences and destinations."

"Regional events give visitors another reason to journey to NSW. They are often unique and always special, such as the Deni Ute Muster, Ironman Australia Port Macquarie, the Commercial Albury Cup Carnival, Sail Port Stephens, Surfest Newcastle and Rally Australia in Coffs Harbour."

In addition to the $19.4 million regional tourism and events budget, the NSW Government recently announced reforms to strengthen the regional tourism industry and launched the new Regional Visitor Economy Fund.

"$21.6 million will be invested over three years to take the development and promotion of regional tourism to another level – providing a $6 million increase over three years on current funding,” Mr Souris said.

"The annual funding is provided in two streams. The first, $11.1m is for Regional Tourism Organisations and the second, $10.5m for product development and marketing promotions of the regions.

"This reform is part of the Government’s Visitor Economy Industry Action Plan based on recommendations by the Visitor Economy Taskforce and aims to boost regional economies through increased tourism.

"We inherited a regional funding scheme that was inequitable and dysfunctional and this new system rewards innovation, effort and results.

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. Overnight visitation to regional NSW also increased to 73 million visitor nights in 2012, with 15 per cent overseas visitors. This was an increase of more than two per cent compared to the previous year.”

"We have also begun a new program of free workshops called NSW First, taking place from Batemans Bay to Ballina, and Coffs Harbour to Kiama, to provide operators with the chance to hear more information and develop new skills to grow their business and increase tourism in their region.”

"With more than 35,000 businesses and 68,400 jobs involved in tourism in regional NSW, it is critical that we provide resources and support to help them build their business. Our commitment to regional tourism and supporting tourism operators is clear and unequivocal,” Mr Souris said.