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**A New Global
Brand on the
Rise**

**Focus:
Tasting Australia 2005
Adelaide**

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Dear Reader,

Greetings. Australia is a single nation occupying the whole of a continent. The statement sounds impressive. But what it does not convey is the remarkable strides Australia has taken in every field of the economy in the last decade and a half. One effect of wide-ranging reforms carried out during this period is that Australia's minimum wage, at A\$467 (\$365) a week, is among the highest in the world. In fact, a recent survey of Australia, conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), has said that in "the last decade of the 20th century, Australia became a model for other OECD countries". The survey has also found Australia's far-reaching financial and labour reforms have given the country the second highest growth in the OECD over the last few years. In the overall economic development of Australia, the role of agriculture is significant. The current issue of Indo-Australian Business carries the speech of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade Mark Vaile, emphasizing this point. On the same subject, we have an address by Dr. Jim Peacock, President of the Australian Academy of Science, who talks about the importance of agriculture in WTO debates, especially from his country's point of view. What makes the Australian economy flexible, productive, and resilient? It is the overall character of the nation as well as its people. These attributes get reflected in another recent global survey of consumer attitudes, which has placed Australia right on top ahead of Canada and Switzerland, on the basis six criteria; tourism, exports, governance, investment, immigration, culture and heritage and people. Tim Harcourt, Chief Economist at the Australian Trade Commission, Sydney, cites these reasons in an argument to show how Down Under has get to the Top and why it is an emerging Global Brand. The highly innovative and professional people that they are, the Australians have dovetailed tourism and culture into an attractive package for foreign tourists. Their food and wine festivals spread across various tourist destinations are a great success. The mother of all such festivals is the biennial Tasting Australia 2005, where a host of chefs will be offering their most innovative culinary creations. There will also be a bitterly fought contest for the Top Prize, which is a gourmet tour of India for the winning team. We present a detailed coverage of the event from both angles, a fabulous combination of great food and the most beautiful tourist spots. Plus we have other regular features.

Wish you happy reading

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Satya Swaroop', followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Satya Swaroop

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The Challenge of Feeding the Hungry World

Australian farmers have enough Brains & Grains



Australia is a surplus country in agricultural products. In fact, the country's farm exports sustain part of its imports, including some very sophisticated goods. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade Mark Vaile understands very well the strength of the country's farm sector. Vaile has put across his thoughts lucidly in an address to the annual conference of the North South Wales Farmers' Association, held recently in Sydney.

It's almost dinner time in Silicon Valley, where a web designer will sit down to a hamburger made with Australian beef. It's an hour before dawn in Khartoum. After the sunrise prayers, a Sudanese shopkeeper will eat flatbread made from Australian wheat. Australian farmers have been feeding the world since the days when the *Strathleven* sailed for the Suez Canal and London, with our country's first cargo of refrigerated meat and butter.

We should never forget that Australian farmers are the heart of our regions and much of the soul in our national identity. One of the challenges we now face is that so many people in the cities have forgotten the importance of the farm sector, even though agricultural exports help pay for their imports of plasma televisions and South American coffee.

The Nationals in a Coalition Government have continued to deliver good policy for Australia's farmers. We have done it by putting forward disciplined and rigorous arguments within the government.

Today I'm going to talk about some of the key issues that we are dealing with as part of a strong Coalition Government - and how the NSW Farmers Association could make a positive contribution that benefits its members.

Multilateral trade reform

Australia exports two-thirds of its agricultural production, so expanding our trade access overseas has always been one of our principal objectives. The World Bank has estimated that trade liberalisation would boost the world's income by \$ 269 billion.

- Australian farmers would be huge beneficiaries, with income gains of between 50 and 65 per cent;
- It would also be the single most effective policy the world could adopt to alleviate global poverty, because almost half the total increase in world income would go to developing countries. It would lift 140 million people out of poverty.



We are therefore determined to achieve an ambitious outcome to the Doha Round of Negotiations in the World Trade Organization. We have reached a crucial stage in the talks. There are no major overseas elections in 2005, so we have the opportunity - if the world has the vision to take it - to break the back of the negotiations by the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference in December this year. We would then be able to conclude the Round during 2006.

In the meantime, we face an exceptionally difficult environment for trade liberalisation:

- In the United States, there are strong domestic political pressures against reform;
- The European Union is facing significant internal issues that are compromising its ability to show strong leadership in the negotiations;
- Rich countries such as Japan, Norway, Korea and Switzerland are not only large subsidisers but often maintain prohibitively high tariffs on agricultural goods; and
- Developing countries are generally in favour of reform by developed countries, but are much slower to make reforms themselves.

So there are challenges ahead if we are to agree on the guidelines for a new agreement - what we call modalities - in Hong Kong. Australia has made it clear to everyone, however, that the subsidising countries cannot expect to make progress in other areas, such as services and industrial goods, if they are not prepared to address agriculture. It is the most distorted sector of world trade; it affects the welfare of developing countries more than any other area; it must be at the forefront of the Doha Round.

Farm Subsidies Must Go

My discussions in China in July confirmed the difficulty and importance of our task. The meeting did not live up to the expectations created by the G8 summit in Gleneagles in Scotland. The leaders there called for renewed momentum in the world trade talks, but those press conferences have yet to be turned into action. To do that, there has to be more vision and leadership from the countries who maintain the greatest agricultural protection. European farmers receive 33 per cent of their income from the Government, in the US the figure is 18 per cent - and in Australia the figure is four per cent.

The WTO is our priority, but as last week's meeting showed, progress is slow and difficult. To ensure we maintain our trade competitiveness the Government will keep on pushing for comprehensive Free Trade Agreements to open up markets faster than we can through the WTO negotiations. We have recently announced an extra \$11 million to ensure we have adequate resources to negotiate our broad trade agenda.

- The FTAs we have already concluded with the United States, Thailand and Singapore will deliver real benefits for the Australian economy and Australian farmers.
- For example, the Centre for International Economics has

predicted that the US Free Trade Agreement will add six billion dollars to Australia's GDP and create an additional 30,000 jobs.

We are now working on a possible Free Trade Agreement with China.

China is already Australia's second most important export market, and its demand for agricultural products is changing and growing rapidly. For example, its consumption of dairy products has more than trebled over the last decade.

The Government recognises that industry itself is best placed to identify the areas of greatest potential and the problematic trade barriers that need to be reduced. We have already consulted extensively with industry and are planning more rounds of consultation in the future.

We are also undertaking FTA negotiations in conjunction with New Zealand and are also negotiating FTAs with Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the UAE and Malaysia.

Australian farmers have an important part to play in advancing our trade agenda and selling our message to the global community. The participation of the NFF at the Cairns Group Farm Leaders' Meeting, along with the Cairns Group Ministers' in Colombia earlier this year, was an important demonstration of how we can work together.

Our focus on bilateral agreements has delivered significant and lasting benefits - but our main focus and key priority is a successful outcome to the Doha Round.

Fruit and vegetables

Farmers must have a fair go when they sell their produce. That's why we announced in the election campaign that we would develop a mandatory code of conduct for the wholesale fruit and vegetable sector.

An independent consultant, the Centre for International Economics, will shortly release a draft code which will propose some options and help facilitate industry discussion.

The consultants will hold a series of public forums around Australia before the code is completed, which should be in September this year.



It has been suggested that the mandatory code should cover the supermarket chains as well as the wholesale sector. However, supermarkets are already covered by a separate, voluntary code - the Produce Grocery Industry Code of Conduct - so they are already

supposed to be meeting all the essential requirements of the planned wholesale code.

Labelling has become a very contentious issue. We need to have a healthy debate about this issue. To this end, Food Standards Australia and New Zealand recently sought comments on possible changes to the country of origin labelling that applies to unpackaged food, like most fruit and vegetables.

They proposed that retailers should have the option of providing country of origin information on request, rather than using labels. The key element of this discussion should be the consumers' right to choose. Consumers would not get the information they need to make informed choices if country of origin labelling were optional.

Workplace reform

The Government is also undertaking significant reform in an area of vital importance to rural and regional Australia - the workplace.

Can I start by posing a simple question to you - is it still sustainable for a country of 20 million people to have seven different industrial relations systems when our competitors are offshore, not interstate? How inefficient is that?

For Australia to maintain the strong economy and living standards we have enjoyed over the past nine years we must continue the reform process. We can not afford to stand still.

Our objective is the creation of more jobs and higher wages. Under the Government's proposed changes, we will free up the system to make it easier for employers and employees alike, while maintaining the principle of a fair go for all Australians.

Importance of Telecom in farming sector

It would be remiss of me to speak to you today and not make a few comments on telecommunications and the stance we are taking to secure the services that regional Australia needs now and in the future.

Australia is undergoing a telecommunications revolution, driven by Moore's Law - the exponential growth of computing power - and the increasing availability of broadband.

In the years to come, we will see:

- The widespread use of Voice over IP to replace conventional phone calls, which will reduce the cost of international calls to about a cent a minute;
- Farm managers using sensors and wireless internet technology to monitor their fences and livestock from

anywhere in the world; and

- Dairy exporters making sure their products are at the right temperature from their loading dock to the cold room of a supermarket overseas.

All these technologies are possible now and will be cost-effective for farm businesses soon. We cannot allow regional Australia to fall behind as they become more common and are adopted by our competitors.

Fighting the century's worst drought

I want to now turn to how we are supporting the farm sector through the worst drought in a hundred years. The Government is providing an extra \$250 million in drought assistance, on top of the billion dollars we have already committed.

- We have increased the Exceptional Circumstances Interest Rate Subsidy from 50 per cent to 80 per cent for farmers in the second and third year of an exceptional drought;
- We have introduced, for one year, a \$10,000 offset against the Exceptional Circumstances income support test. It means that farmers can earn an extra \$10,000 in off-farm income without affecting their eligibility for drought assistance.
- We have eased the assets test allowing a more generous assessment of off-farm assets.
- In addition, the Government will maintain the streamlined Exceptional Circumstances rollover assessment process, to make it easier for farmers to have their EC declarations extended.

Despite the recent rain, the drought is a warning that we need to manage Australia's natural resources better - and in a way that does not leave farmers bearing the full burden of the community's environmental expectations.

The Nationals will continue our emphasis on good natural resource management, and we will push on with implementing the National Water Initiative. It will provide farmers with the security to make long-term investment decisions and the ability to manage their own farm environment.

It is backed by our \$2 billion Australian Government Water Fund, which will invest in water infrastructure, improved water management, and better practices in looking after our water resources. It has enabled us to provide adjustment assistance to farmers and irrigators in six major NSW groundwater systems. They will receive \$110 million in support from the Australian and NSW governments; they are contributing \$50 million to the package themselves to secure their future. +

A New Global Brand is Emerging

Down Under is on TOP



We all know Australia is the best place in the world (or pretty close to it) but what does the rest of the world think? Pretty much the same way, according to a new international survey of country 'brands'

The GMI-Anholt Nation Brands Index, which surveys consumer attitudes to a range of selected countries, has put Australia number one in its first year in the survey. Australia came first, Canada second, with Switzerland third. The previous first-ranked country, Sweden came in fifth, behind the UK prompting the survey to remark that Australia and Canada are thought to be 'more Swedish than the Swedes themselves'.

How does the GMI-Anholt survey work? It basically ranks each country by six criteria: tourism, exports, governance, investment and immigration, culture and heritage, and people. The criteria then form a 'Nation Brand Hexagon' that shows how the nation fared overall as a national 'brand'.

Australia's top ranking was due to its particularly high ranking as a tourist destination, and as a place to immigrate to or invest in. The world regarded Australia's climate as ideal, its natural environment unique and a place that would be on everyone's 'must see list'.

Australian people are regarded as not only friendly and fair minded but also hard working and very well organized partly as a result of staging events like the Sydney Olympics ('the best games ever' effect).

The Australian economy's success is widely admired and Australia is regarded as a place that 'works' a good place to travel to and do business in. In addition, the survey showed that Australia has built not only an efficient economy but a great society as well with fair-minded straight forward people without the social tensions and conflict in other parts of the world.

However, despite our top place ranking we did not rate as highly in terms of exports and culture and heritage. Why is this so? In terms of exports, I can think of two reasons. Firstly, many Australian exports are hidden. Australia doesn't have strong manufacturing export brands like Germany or Japan. Think of German manufacturing and you think BMW, think of Japan and you think of Sony, think Korea and you think of Hyundai. There are many global brands that have iconic status that are associated with their home country like Volvo or Ikea (Sweden),



Steve
Sydney

Nokia (Finland), Coca Cola (USA), and so on. Australia doesn't have the same consumer product icons, although according to GMI-Anholt, that might be changing with Billabong, Quiksilver and RM Williams being identified in the survey as well known Australian brands in the global market place.

By contrast, many of Australia's great exports are not consumer icons but are adding value behind the scenes with commodities such as coal, iron ore, wheat, alumina, or liquefied natural gas (LNG) playing an important role. They are part of an industrial process rather than things you can buy in a shop.

In addition, Australia produces a lot of services and knowledge-based manufactures that are also hidden from view. There are many mining software exporters doing well in the exploration industry in Russia and China and many agricultural services companies doing well in the Middle East and South America.

Celebrity Exports

Secondly, many great Australian exports are far from hidden; in fact they are very well known celebrities. As we all know, Australia has been very successful in the exports of popular entertainment. In Hollywood, there's Nicole Kidman, Geoffrey Rush, Toni Collette and Russell Crowe (ok, an Australasian export), in modelling there's Megan Gale and Elle MacPherson, in music Kylie Minogue, Natalie Imbruglia, silverchair, Jet and the like and in television there's Home and Away, Neighbours, the Crocodile Hunter and now Kath and Kim are making their charge up the export ranks.



Australia's celebrity exports do help people know about Australia, they have not so far led to people buying more Australian products but they do raise Australia's profile as a desirable place to go to especially with our natural environment on display thanks to a range of stars from the Crocodile Dundee in 1987 to the Crocodile Hunter today.

Culture & Heritage

On the culture and heritage front there is something else going on. According to GMI-Anholt, there is a

'Hollywood effect' where non-English speaking people in the survey think that all the western singers in the pop videos or the stars in the movies are Americans. Fortunately, Australia did not suffer from this effect as much as Canada or Ireland where many of their stars were assumed to be American. In the survey, countries with a European culture like France rated highly on this score, whilst Canada and Australia did not. This suggests that perhaps the world has still not learnt about Australia's indigenous culture, which could be an area for increased awareness and export potential.

So what do we make of all this. As Simon Anholt, the author of the survey says, this is just the beginning not the end. According to the survey, Australia clearly has some great strengths to build upon. The world regards us well, people like us, they like our country and they think that Australia is a model of a modern economy, has well developed institutions and has built a strong community. It is clear that our image as a tourist destination is in really good shape although we shouldn't all be panicking about renting out the spare room. After all, as the survey points out although people would love to visit Australia, not all of them will do so because of perceptions of distance. As Megan Gale, who as well as being a model is also Australia's Tourism ambassador to Italy, put it in Milan last year "Australia is often there as a dream

destination but they think it is like going to the moon, so I am working hard to make their dream a reality".



And whilst Australia has scored lowly on the export product stakes, Simon Anholt believes that now the time is ripe to capitalise on the world's desire for all things Australian: "Now is the time for Australia to be producing great Australian branded-

products, culture, events, services, ideas and media as fast as it possibly can. Anything that reflects, promotes and sustains those essential and admired Australian values will sell".

In short, we've seen RM Williams, Billabong, QuikSilver making a start and joining our big celebrities on the world stage, and according to the GMI Anholt survey this could well be just the beginning of an increasing global awareness of the Australian brand. +



Agriculture: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

Tuning New Knowledge to Global Market Needs

Agricultural commodities play a vital role in global trade. No wonder, agriculture dominates the discussions at the WTO. In a speech delivered at the National Press Club of Australia, Dr. Jim Peacock, President, Australian Academy of Science, delves deep into the issue of WTO-linked farm trade and its impact on farmers in general and those in Australia in particular.

Today's agriculture is not yesterday's agriculture and tomorrow's agriculture cannot be today's agriculture. Winston Churchill said 'the farther backward you can look the farther forward you are likely to see' he was emphasizing change and improvement.

Today, farmers know they have to look after the natural resources; maintain the fertility of the soil; be careful with water use; use chemicals wisely; and use the biological advantages of rotation farming.

The difference between yesterday's and today's agriculture has depended upon better management, better varieties and better understanding and response mechanisms to market requirements. In turn, these improvements have depended on research and the translation of new knowledge into farming practice.

We can expect research to continue to produce further new knowledge providing the basis for continuing improvement in management techniques, in new and better varieties with products able to meet the increasingly differentiated specifications of global markets.

Right to good food

There has never been a time when improvement in agricultural performance has been needed so much. The world's population is increasing, we need to produce more food, but we need to produce it with greater reliability, greater empathy with the environment and with products having increased nutritional quality. Every person on Earth should have the right to enough food, but it should be good food, as good as we can make it!

The demands are great but we do have remarkable opportunities to respond. So do our competitors, who trade in the same global markets and even in our own Australian market.

Biological research has been transformed by technologies which are allowing us to understand the workings of genes, providing a new level of understanding of how plants function in their environments and of the molecular and cellular bases of their development. These are areas critical to crop performance and food production.



Understanding genes and their role in crop performance has been important for our cotton industry. The industry has been a profligate user of chemical insecticides to protect the crop from pest insects, which have the

capability of reducing yields to zero. A problem arose with the pests becoming resistant to the pesticides which our society approved for use and which were affordable to the farmer. The new technology of modifying the biological software of the crop so that it could protect itself against its worst pest has reintroduced competitiveness and the prospect of a continuing and improving industry.

Two gene constructs have been added to the 30,000 genes already in the cotton genome, its genetic software. These two gene constructs have enabled the plant to produce specific molecules in their leaves and bolls which kill the major pest, moth larvae. Another gene construct has provided protection against the best possible weedicide for the crop and has revolutionized weed control in the cotton farming system.

The transgenic cottons were introduced with important management constraints on the farmers. These management practices look to preserve the value of the impacts of the new technologies. Yield, quality and profits have gone up, chemical usage has gone down drastically. The environment has benefited enormously and the farmers and farm workers have a better quality of life.

New Technologies

This is not the end of needed improvements. There are severe challenges from pathogens and although our breeders have given us wonderful fibre quality for the markets, we need to look for further differentiation from the products of other cotton producing countries.

In a non-drought year, the new technologies support a \$1.7 billion industry, a 98 per cent export industry, a planting seed industry within Australia worth \$175 million. Already our varieties are 30 per cent of the planting seed in the United States and becoming a significant component of the cotton industry in southern Europe and South America.



Transgenic Canola

The same imperative of improvement applies to



our other crop industries. In regard to transgenic technology, canola is the next crop being considered in Australia. As you know there are state-based moratoria against its introduction. At present the advantages being offered through transgenic varieties relate to herbicide resistance and the introduction of high yielding hybrids. Australian canola growers suffer a considerable yield penalty relative to the Canadian farms where the transgenic hybrids have been so successful. There are a number of other possible input and output traits that will need the new technologies.

My suggestion is that the canola industry itself must become intimately involved. It is not a question for individual farmers to decide or even small groups of farmers. It needs to be an industry decision. I would recommend canola growers and marketers to take a look at the way in which transgenic cotton was introduced into Australia.

The industry, through the Australian Cotton Growers Research Association, played a major role in interacting with the researchers and government regulatory bodies. The transgenic crop was introduced gradually with strict controls of management. Ongoing decisions were made with recommendations to the regulatory bodies from industry committees who looked at the performance of the transgenics in relation to the conventional varieties. These were crucial success factors in adoption of the transgenic crop. Before any transgenic crop was grown, there was a cleared market pathway.

The canola industry should be able to adopt the same process. As I understand, we have three major markets for our canola and at least two of these countries have cleared the way for transgenic canola to be used within their borders. It should be possible for the industry to confirm market opportunities and remove that particular criticism from the equation of consideration.

The other oft cited difficulties of dangers of super-weed production have been dispelled by careful research studies. The industry should easily be able to organize itself with necessary segregation procedures.

The canola industry as a whole needs to be behind the decisions to define a sensible, practical way of introducing the new-technology crop, integrated with the alternative farming systems.

Cereal crops, wheat & barley

Looking now at our cereal crops, wheat and barley. The breeders have enormous challenges ahead of them. In many cases the germplasm is not available to meet the challenges of disease and environmental stresses. It is highly likely that the new technologies will be able to significantly increase the capabilities of the breeders. That doesn't mean that we have to move to a transgenic crop in the near future. What it does mean is that we can make full use of the power of the new research methods to define ways forward, either in better input traits or in developing new quality features for these grains.

It is possible in these cereals to use conventional breeding technologies to achieve new objectives that have been defined by genetic technology research. Nevertheless, it is highly probable that there are some improvements either for increased yield, meeting stress environments or the addition of new grain qualities that will need



transgenic technologies.

With so many customer countries, the wheat industry faces a major challenge to open up assured market opportunities for the crop. Once again, the industry has to play a central role in deciding in what way transgenic varieties can be introduced to be grown alongside conventional varieties and with different farming systems, like organic farming. I am certain that we will need to find a way to do this because our competitors are not standing still.

Agriculture & Public Health

I want to mention one area of challenge to our cereal industries where I believe that transgenic technology will be critical. In the near future, agriculture, more than ever before, will be linked directly to matters of public health. The diseases of our western societies are largely a consequence of lifestyle changes, including diet. Many diet-related diseases, like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, colonic cancer, result in large part from the way we live.

We can change our foods so that our most common staple foods will help guard against the onset of these diseases and will make a significant contribution to reducing the enormous expenditure of therapeutic medicine.

Diabetes is the epidemic of the 21st century. This is true in developing countries as well as in western countries like Australia.

People in different countries consume the staple cereals, wheat, rice or maize. If the important starch component of these cereals had a low glycemic index, we would be a long way to reducing the incidence and severity of diabetes. It is possible to modify cereal grains so that they will be of greater nutritional value and more closely meet our requirements. Remember, our cereals are not very far removed from the wild plants from which they were derived during the last 10,000 years. It is highly probable that we will be able to modify their biochemical constitutions to our advantage.

An example in barley is where a single genetic letter change in one gene, a gene in the starch biosynthetic pathway, changes the starch composition of the grain to a situation where clinical trials have already demonstrated its value as a low glycemic index food. This variety can be introduced to the market right now, not as a transgenic barley, but as a barley changed by mutagenesis and conventional breeding. We are likely to see it soon in breads and breakfast cereals.

The grain is a sophisticated delivery package of a variety of ingredients essential to our health. As well as starch, proteins, fatty acids and antioxidants can all be adjusted to better fit human nutrition requirements.

We can now teach plants to make long chain omega 3 fatty acids, oils that we currently mostly get now through the consumption of fish. Fish do not make these oils, they are made by microscopic algae in the ocean, and the fish just store the oils from their food supply. Researchers have been able to take the genes from the microscopic ocean plants and put them into our crop plants so that they too can make long chain omega 3 oils, so important for cardiovascular and other body systems.

Importance of GM Crops

Our food will increasingly be an important component of our preventative health system.

Is safety of genetically modified crops or food a real consideration? This is something that our regulatory systems have addressed very effectively. There is no reason to suspect that any food made with, or using components from, genetically modified crops will be any less safe than any other food we consume at present.

There are 80 million hectares of GM crops around the world at present and the area is increasing rapidly, 5 per cent of agricultural production in the world is a convincing safety recommendation, particularly since there has been no substantiated negative effects on human or environmental health. 30 million farmers are growing genetically modified crops, we should see this as a wake-up call.

Even within Australia, our agribusiness is faced with the challenge of imports, which are frequently cheaper, finding their way into our supermarkets. We need consumer preference for Australian agricultural products and this must be based on recognition of quality and the efficiency of production leading to competitive pricing. Consumer acceptance and preference will be hard to achieve, because most people are urban dwellers and do not know where their food comes from.

A product grown with 86 per cent less chemical insecticides means little to the consumer. It is not until we have direct health benefits at fair prices, that we can expect real acceptance and preference for our agricultural products transgenic or conventional.

The same applies to our export markets. If we want to be assured of markets for our products, we have to make sure that the whole business chain for any crop and its products has an integrated drive for export performance.

Market pathways need to be opened with consumer countries accepting our products, including transgenic products, and they need to be persuaded, as we have done in the past, that Australian products are superior quality products.

Where we have a market opportunity we need to make sure we do not make any mistakes. In the case of cotton, as big a success as the transgenic crops have been, the success was determined not only by the new genetics, but by the farmers who adopted the appropriate management protocols. In this case, as in every case of transgenic cropping, it is the genetics and the management together that will make a lasting success. This technology is so powerful and valuable that it would be a tragedy if we lost it through inappropriate practices.

Biotechnology

In this brief picture of the prospects of biotechnology contributions to future agribusiness, I have painted a mosaic image, but I have emphasised that already there have been some major successes and that we can expect more of these successes.

Biotechnology is like any other business system in the earlier stages of any project the opportunity and the objectives need to be defined carefully. There needs to be the development of a realistic business plan, extending from basic research through the placement of protective intellectual property claims, through the cost of adherence to regulatory requirements and very probably to the formation of the partnerships that will be needed along the business chain.

Finally, I want to emphasize the need for effective communication at all levels of the community, and of business and extending to decision makers. It is important for our Parliamentary representatives to fully understand what is being proposed so they can assess the benefits, perceived risk balance on factual evidence. In Australia we have put a number of regulatory bodies in place to examine the safety, performance and environmental impacts of GM crops and of all food products. Their recommendations deserve to be recognized. It is sometimes easier for a politician to say no to any proposition, say to a new technology, than to have the courage to say yes, even though to say no may ultimately have untoward and serious negative consequences to business, to the environment and to human health. +



Products from Brookfarm Pty Ltd, a food processing company based at Bangalow in New South Wales, have made it onto the shelves of select high-end food outlets, health food stores and boutique hotels around the world.

The company, which produces high-quality, gourmet macadamia nut products, has experienced 100 per cent growth since it began exporting its macadamia oils, macadamia mueslis and roasted macadamia nuts two years ago. It now produces three to four tonnes of muesli per week.

What is the Brookfarm's recipe for (exports) success?

- Take two committed individuals
- Plant 4500 native macadamia trees on fertile volcanic soil in the sub-tropical Byron hinterland of New South Wales
- Combine with the principles of sustainable farming and agriculture practices
- Mix with a dedication to healthy, high-quality foods
- Add high-quality macadamia nuts and add fresh ingredients such as chopped fruits, honey and Australian spices
- Stir in customised products for overseas markets, which are hungry for different, healthy products
- Combine with Austrade's global in-market knowledge and assistance
- Share with the world!

It all started in 1989 when, while still working and living in Melbourne, Pam and Martin Brook purchased land outside Byron Bay with the intention of converting an old dairy farm into a macadamia farm to create gourmet macadamia products. After 10 years, the transformation yielded its first crop of macadamias and it was time for the Brooks to move

to the farm. After two more years of product development and research, the Brooks' dream was realised.

Today, Brookfarm exports to the US, UK, Canada, Maldives, New Zealand, Scandinavia and Singapore, and now has a dedicated staff of 12.

And after the implementation of the Australia US Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA), exports to the US market are on the rise. With the added incentive of reduced tariffs and higher visibility for natural, healthy Australian food products, Brookfarm has seen increased sales and interest in its gourmet macadamia products on both US coasts.

"We considered the impact of the AUSFTA when researching new products and in our product development cycles to capitalize on specific tariff reductions and eliminations on certain ingredients," said Ms Brook.

Brookfarm has substituted certain ingredients in its muesli to not only appeal to US consumers, but also take advantage of the AUSFTA and reduced tariffs.

"Austrade has helped us find export success. We participated in Australia Week this year in Los Angeles where Austrade invited key players in California's food industry. We've already started to get business through our participation in these events.

"In addition to seeking export assistance, a secret to our success is the care we take in producing unique high-quality Australian products. Brookfarm is a member of the 'slow food movement,' completely opposite to fast food. For example, our toasted muesli is slow baked in the traditional way with a beautiful unprocessed bush honey; we roast nuts in trays using fine Australian sea salts and Australian spices. We then provide unique packaging which enhances our brand," she said. +

Trisco's foray into the Indian market

There's Great Synergy!

- Kempster

Could you tell us about Trisco Food's interest in the Indian market and what is the special strategy planned and research work done to tap it?

Trisco Foods is committed to expanding its sales to include many destinations outside Australia. India is a market we have identified as having inherent synergy with Australia in terms of its highly developed dairy industry, and resultant cultural acceptance of consumer products which involve milk, such as milk shakes and thick shakes. As our traditional core products include flavoured syrups for shakes, it is a natural process to seek acceptance in the Indian market.

As experienced in recent years in many markets, the café/coffee scene remains on a steep growth curve. Trisco Foods currently manufactures gourmet syrups in Australia for adding to espresso coffee in-store. A new international range of Casablanca Gourmet Coffee Syrups will be launched to cater to this niche market in the next few months.

Further, we have identified a growing bakery sector in India, which dovetails to our recent launch of bakery fillings in Australia. In preparing a range of these products for the Indian market we have taken into consideration local factors such as taste preferences, packaging style, and logistics optimization.

All products destined for the Indian market will be 100 per cent vegetarian.

Where does the Indian food sector stand in comparison to the Australian market?

As the Indian food market continues to expand and consider new and interesting products from around the world, we expect to see a convergence of market preferences. The Indian market is much more sophisticated and demanding than many exporters are ready to accept..

Those who accept this and offer specialized products to satisfy the huge demand will succeed. Too often we see exporters pushing their existing range into an international market, and wonder why it fails, when they have failed to tailor it to suit local requirements.

What is the specialty of the Trisco Food?

Trisco Foods prides itself on being able to work with experienced Indian food industry experts, listen to what is wanted, and develop products suited to the market and its constituents.

Trisco Foods is ISO9001 certified, and operates a strict HACCP food safety program. Our customers can be assured of only the very best quality Australian food products, with the Trisco Guarantee of satisfaction.

What kind of a tie-up are you looking for with your Indian counterpart, if you are looking for any?

Trisco Foods has been working with several industry specialists in India in the past two years in preparation for its serious launch into the market. We have strategic alliances with existing importers and distributors who have an existing profile and are held in high esteem in the Indian food market.

With the opening up of the Indian retail sector, what opportunities do you think it throw up to the food sector and how will it benefit companies like Trisco Foods?

Trisco Foods will present a range of 100 per cent vegetarian products for retail as well as food service success, based on the existing strong dairy culture, and offering new alternatives to the Indian consumers.

Could you tell us about the food preservative techniques in which Australia excels?

Trisco Foods uses food preservative methods to ensure the quality of its products and to protect them in their long export journey and their storage.

+



Exporting for the future

The Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) will run a workshop - Exporting for the Future - for teachers in Adelaide in the first week of September 2005. The workshop's aim is to encourage lessons about local export opportunities and increase student understanding of Australia's future in the globalized marketplace.

Leigh Derigo, Austrade's Education Program Manager, said the lessons will result in bringing students and businesses in their local area together.

"Teachers are in a unique position to contribute to Australians' understanding of global opportunities and growth," Ms Derigo said. "They inspire students to apply their higher levels of education and understanding of the global environment to innovative small business enterprises with export potential.

"These teachers, responsible for training our future business leaders, will learn about the benefits of exporting, which contributes to one in five jobs (one in four jobs in regional Australia) and offers higher wages and training opportunities," she said.

The seminar will discuss how teachers can use the Austrade teaching resources, including the new set of eight globalisation posters and activities book, in the Years 9 to 12 Society and Environment, Economics, Business and Geography courses.

Presenting the Austrade "Exporting for the Future" workshop at Sacred Heart College Senior School is Wendy Jacobs, Austrade presenter and experienced teacher. Ms Jacobs will discuss the Austrade education resources.



Ms Jacobs will tell the teachers how they can use the Austrade Export Plan Competition to bring real business relevance and learning to these subjects.

"The Export Plan Competition enables students to explore the export potential in their local area and study a local business in depth. This gives students a head start when it comes to enterprise, business and exporting," Ms Jacobs said.

The state and regional competition winners of the Export Plan Competition for 2005 will receive \$500 while the national winner will win \$2,000 and attend the Australian Export Awards Gala Dinner and Awards presentation along with their teacher and manager of the local business studied.

Part of the Federal Government's Exporting For The Future program, the Austrade Export Plan Competition and books of teaching resources have been developed in line with state and territory curricula and have been requested by teachers in 95 per cent of South Australian schools in Social Sciences (SOSE), Business, Geography and Economics courses.

+



Veteran diplomat Gribble new AIC chief, board reconstituted

Darren Gribble has been appointed Chairman of the Australia-India Council (AIC). Gribble has been a member of the AIC since 1997 and succeeds Michael Abbott QC, who has retired from the Council.



As Australia's High Commissioner to India from 1994 to 1997, Gribble has made a substantial contribution to AIC activities and will bring an astute understanding of both Indian and Australian government policies to board deliberations.

The following board members have also been appointed or reappointed:

Professor Suzanne Crowe, Professor of Medicine at Melbourne's Monash University and Head of the AIDS Pathogenesis and Clinical Research Program at the Macfarlane Burnet Centre for Medical Research, has been reappointed to the board. Professor Crowe is actively involved in the development of Australia-India research links in the HIV/AIDS field.



Professor Bruce Bennett AO, a former Rhodes Scholar and a graduate of the Universities of Western Australia, Oxford and London, has been reappointed to the board. Based in Canberra, he is Professor of English at the School of Language, Literature and Communication, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy. Professor Bennett's work has focused principally on the literature and culture of Australia and he has been instrumental in the development of Australian Studies in Indian universities.



Vinod Daniel, Chairman of AusHeritage and Head of Materials Conservation and the Built



Environment at the Australian Museum, has been appointed to the board. Daniel has been instrumental in building cultural heritage links between Australia and India. He is an Australian with Indian roots who understands the intangible aspects of the two cultures and has been successful in managing many Australian heritage preservation initiatives in India.

Gillian Bird, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has been appointed to the board. Ms Bird is a career officer who has overall responsibility for Australia's bilateral relations with South East Asia and South Asia, including India.



Other board members are: Sandy Hollway AO (consultant) and Suzanne Davies (Director and Chief Curator of RMIT Gallery in Melbourne).



The Australia-India Council was established by the Australian Government to broaden and deepen Australia-India relations through contacts and exchanges in a range of fields which promote mutual awareness and understanding.

Australia places great value on its multifaceted relationship with India. The government has worked hard to expand Australia's political, commercial and cultural links with India and it continues to pursue opportunities to develop the bilateral relationship further.



The AIC is playing a key role in the process of initiating and supporting collaborative projects in a range of areas such as the arts, education (in particular Australian studies), film, sport, health, social issues and institutional and professional links.

+

Australian Pavilion a big draw at Japan World Expo 2005

More than two million visitors have seen the latest in Australian products and technology on show at the Australian Pavilion at World Expo 2005 in Japan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade Mark Vaile has said.

"Visitors have been particularly impressed by the innovative Australian technology used in the pavilion. This is a standout accomplishment for an event held in one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world," he said.

involvement in the Expo," Vaile said.

"Australians can be proud of the magnificent Australian Pavilion which projects a contemporary image of our nation and provides a unique platform for our businesses to promote exports to Japan."

The Australian Pavilion has hosted more than 60 business events promoting a wide range of industry sectors including tourism, energy, film and TV, education, agribusiness, food and wine, investment,



"It is pleasing to note that the Japanese media have rated the Australian Pavilion in the top 5 of 121 national pavilions at the Expo. Our Pavilion has been consistently profiled in the Japanese media with more than 500 newspaper and 90 television stories since Expo opened".

The feedback from pavilion visitors also showed they were impressed with the outstanding Japanese language abilities of the Australian Pavilion's staff.

"This milestone of two million visitors underscores the popularity of the Australian pavilion at this important global event and reinforces Australia's commitment to the Australia-Japan relationship, including through our

environmental technology, information and communication technology, automotives, sport and fashion.

"Australia's involvement has also promoted our arts community to an international audience, with more than 500 Australian arts and entertainment performances held to date."

"I congratulate the hundreds of Australians who have contributed to making the Australian Pavilion a success and enhancing the profile of Australia's business and cultural assets on the world stage," Vaile said. +

Pre-fab houses for Tsunami victims, Aussie firm bags big Lankan order

The ability to manufacture pre-fabricated homes within a week has spelt success for Queensland-based Easybuild Australia Pty Ltd who is contributing to Tsunami reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka.

Founder of Easybuild, Ric Berenger said his company had just patented its polystyrene-based pre-fabricated homes this year when the Tsunami hit.

the Tsunami. In doing so we also provide employment to about 40 of the locals. We're expecting to build 1200 homes per annum. I foresee that over time we will need three to four-hundred staff when we are forced to open more manufacturing plants."

Easybuild's panels use rigid foam, sandwiched with an acrylic render making structural wall panels of the home.



"Our pre-fabricated homes provided the answer to speeding up housing construction efforts in Sri Lanka where much of the country suffered extensive damage," Berenger said.

"Our homes take just three days to erect which is an improvement on the standard nine to 12 months it usually takes to build a home in Sri Lanka.

"We've licensed a company to build the pre-fab homes in Colombo (the Capital of Sri Lanka) which wasn't hit by

Berenger said Austrade assisted his company in the entire negotiation process to win the project in Sri Lanka.

"We needed Austrade's help to secure the project, the demand was so great. Sri Lanka needed 50,000 homes to be constructed or reconstructed. Many of the people even now are living in sub-standard conditions with the rainy season causing water to seep into their temporary shelters," he said.

Easybuild's Queensland head office operates with just

five staff and its primary purpose is to manage intellectual property. Berenger said he outsources all the engineering work.

"In the case of the Tsunami project, we had all our structural drawings engineered locally by an outsourced engineering company to make sure everything was operational before we went to Sri Lanka," he said.

"At the moment our houses do not provide a huge price advantage, it's the speed of construction that wins us the jobs. In time we hope our homes will be 20 to 30 per cent cheaper. The cost of our homes is affected by import costs in countries like India where they have safeguards in place to protect their own brick, sand and construction industries."

Easybuild is following up interest from the Maldives, India, China, Philippines, Argentina and Indonesia.

The Easybuild construction solution is a layered acrylic render, steel and polystyrene panel system that has an attractive, finished look that does not require covering or painting on-site. It can be pre-fabricated with a stained look of rock or stone, or matched to any desired colour scheme.

The Easybuild solution enables construction of a house possible in around a week.

Polystyrene rigid foam, the core material used in the construction of the panels, is impregnated with a fire retardant and insect repellent.

Structural strength panels arrive to the site ready to install, so there is minimal on-site construction required. Walls are erected in minutes. Once installed, the panels provide a perfect finish both inside and out - no additional plastering, painting or rendering is required. This means that a house can be erected within a number of days, compared to traditional systems that commonly take up to six months. Faster construction means cost savings to your bottom line.

Because the panels utilise a polystyrene foam core, houses built using the Easybuild panel system offer excellent temperature and noise insulation. This is a significant benefit in areas that experience extreme weather conditions or those areas that are impacted by industrial or urban noise.

Key benefits of the Easybuild panel system are: Pre-fabrication saves time; structural strength and durability - no wooden or aluminium frame required; attractive finish inside and out; excellent insulation; factory controlled quality; fire retardant; insect repellent; light weight. +

India, Australia vow to protect whales

India and Australia have agreed to step up cooperation in the conservation and protection of whales. This was indicated at a meeting between Indian Minister for Environment and Forests A. Raja and Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer in the southern city of Chennai recently.

Stating that Australia is committed towards protecting whales, Downer emphasized the need for pursuing an international ban on commercial whaling.

On his part, Raja reiterated India's commitment to continue supporting ban on commercial whaling and said that India had always stood for non-

consumptive use of wildlife wealth and was against killing of endangered species.

Raja also informed Downer that emission of green house gases by India was very low, both in terms of per capita as well as aggregate emissions, amounting to about

3.0 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. He

said India was in favour of all countries joining hands in the efforts to mitigate the problems arising in the wake of climate changes across the globe. +



Tasting Australia 2005

ADELAIDE Oct 21-30

The Countdown
Begins for...

The Greatest Food Show

The countdown has begun for Australia's biggest gastronomic event. In less than two months from now, Tasting Australia, the biennial gourmet extravaganza, will be spreading its delicious aroma across the world for 10 days from 21 - 30 October 2005.

South Australia is giving final hectic touches for the nation's major international food and wine event to be held in Adelaide. This year's Tasting Australia will offer as many as 67 events to an anticipated huge gathering of 40,000 ardent connoisseurs of food and wine.

The events comprise cookery demonstrations featuring the top Australian and overseas chefs, wine and beer experiences, celebrity lunches and dinners, conferences, talks and panel discussions, tastings and master-classes.

Says Ian Parmenter, Festival Director: "Tasting Australia is our fifth. The Festival has become a huge international success because of the ongoing support of the South Australian Government. It has also been able to grow and improve thanks to our corporate partners, whose backing has made Tasting Australia a 'must do' event on the gastronomic calendar."

Tasting Australia is an initiative of Australian Major Events, a division of the South Australian Tourism Commission.

Though Tasting Australia is a unique festival of South Australia and the nation at large, it provides a showcase for the world's top culinary talents. Besides the large public, professionals attending the festival include world's best-known media specialists covering food, drink, travel and tourism.

The festival and the accompanying exhibitions cover produce, food products, wines and beers, hospitality and tourism.

Another innovation is the Adelaide Food Summit - also a two-day event - which looks at food in Australia, past, present and future. It will be open to the public.

Other major events for the public include the Feast for the Senses presented by Sanpellegrino, the James Squire Food, Beer and Wine Writers' Festival and a number of celebrity lunches and dinners in Adelaide and South Australian regions.



Chefs' Showcase - A Demo by the Best in Business

The LifeStyle Channel Chefs' Showcase is another unique event. It is presented by Australian Gourmet Traveller. What is it like? Take a dozen or so of the finest Australian and overseas restaurant chefs, put them in a theatre kitchen at the Tasting Australia Village on the bank of Adelaide's River Torrens. Give them the finest produce, some great recipes and put them on closed circuit television coverage and you have a great culinary experience. Three days of cooking demonstrations with the best in the business from October 28 to 30.

It's free: Bring only your appetite with you A Feast for the Senses

The Feast for the Senses is a major public event of Tasting Australia. It will be staged at the Adelaide Riverbank Precinct in Elder Park and along the banks of the River Torrens. Visitors are invited to enjoy a wide range of exciting activities and entertainment - making this a perfect day for everyone!

With free entry into the event, more than 40,000 visitors are expected to attend the Feast for the Senses, bringing with them their appetites for the best in gourmet food, fine wine, premium beer, coffee and beverages that Australia has to offer. A tempting array of tasty treats will be offered by more than hundred exhibitors.

This prestigious competition provides a great opportunity for chefs, apprentices, accredited trainees in Australia and New Zealand regions to demonstrate their skills by using local produce and wine. Held from 24-27 October, 2005 at the Regency International Centre for Hospitality, Leisure and Food Studies, it is an opportunity not to be missed by culinary professionals.

There are eight award categories and substantial prizes to be won. The chance to enter is limited to 30 teams. Entries will be accepted on a first-come-first-served basis. Each team is to develop a 3-course menu for four persons with matching wines in three hours.

This year the theme is the elements: Earth, Air, Fire and Water, the four vital components we rely on for what we eat and drink.

The Taste of the Right Word

One of the most popular of Tasting Australia's events, The James Squire Food, Beer and Wine Writers' Festival presented by Scoop Traveller is a feast of the spoken word, held this year from October 27 to 29.

More than 50 experts are from Food Media Club Australia Inc., which is the "Who's Who" of the Australian food industry will participate in this festival. They comprise food professionals dedicated to the sharing of information and communicating food issues. Members are drawn from magazine, newspaper, internet, radio and television, writers, editors, and presenters; food marketers and public relations specialists; food stylists, nutritionists, product developers and home economists; cookbook authors, speakers and educators. And it's free! +





Aussie cooks hone skills for Food Fest Contest

The TOP Prize India Tour

From Tasmania to Far North Queensland, from Margaret River to the ACT, and from Stradbroke Island to South Australia's Limestone Coast, teams of chefs and apprentices are honing their culinary skills in preparation for this year's "LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition," Australia's premier culinary challenge. And the top prize is a trip to gourmet India.

With its emphasis on local cuisine using regional ingredients, the competition will be held in the kitchens at Adelaide's Regency International Centre for Hospitality, Leisure and Food Studies. It requires each team to produce a three-course meal to be judged by some of Australia's most respected food and drink professionals.

Held as part of Tasting Australia 2005, The LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition offers a unique opportunity for regional teams from Australia and New Zealand to win major prizes including a gourmet overseas trip for winners of the Gold Award for Best Region.

This year's top prize will be a hosted visit to the Indian sub-continent, sponsored by the ITC chain of luxury hotels in India. The prize includes flights to and from India, accommodation, first class meals, visits to food producers, and an opportunity to cook in Indian kitchens. For the fourth time The LifeStyle Channel is the major sponsor of the Competition.

"There is no other culinary competition in Australia which so

perfectly reflects our regional differences," said Ric Burns, General Manager of The LifeStyle Channel.

"The Competition is a terrific opportunity to showcase the best Australia has to offer in food, wine and culinary skill. We are delighted to again be part of this prestigious event and look forward to celebrating the exciting new talent of the 2005 teams."

Other prizes include the illycaff  Silver Award, comprising illy coffee machines and illy signature coffee cups and the Bronze Award winners will receive Wusthof Professional German Cutlery, and Le Creuset and Calphalon cookware.

A Best Apprentice Award provides an aspiring young chef with the opportunity of travelling to Western Australia and experiencing the kitchens of top WA chefs in Perth and Margaret River, courtesy of njo Australian olive oils.

Other Awards will be presented for best entr e, main course, dessert, and food and wine matching. The judges are Shannon Bennett, Greg Malouf, John Lethlean, Kate Lamont, Jeremy Strode, Alain Fabregues, Bethany Finn and Heidi Van Gerwen and some 25 teams are expected to take part.

The LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition winners will be announced on Thursday October 27, 2005 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Adelaide. +

Signature Dishes Sharing the Secrets

Some of the biggest names in the food business will share the secrets of their signature dishes this October in an event, which food-lovers cannot afford to miss. It will be staged in a 'theatre kitchen' on the bank of the



River Torrens, Adelaide. between 28-30 October.

British food guru Sophie Grigson, Italian-born culinary father figure Antonio Carluccio, and popular television chef Paul Rankin (Ireland) will take to the culinary stage with some of our home-grown A-list including television chefs/restaurateurs Neil Perry, Peter Evans and Iain 'Huey' Hewitson, as part of this year's star line-up for The LifeStyle Channel Chefs' Showcase presented by Australian Gourmet Traveller.

Food-loving fans see many of these acclaimed chefs each week on The LifeStyle Channel but few get to see them as up close and personal as this event promises.

The LifeStyle Channel Chefs' Showcase presented by Australian Gourmet Traveller is a highlight event for the public in the fifth and largest Tasting Australia festival - an event that is now a major date on the world's gastronomic calendar.

Those who get in early to secure a ticket to the major sessions will get to see their favourite superchefs unveil the secrets to their most signature dishes, and everyone is promised an intimate view of each chef's individual techniques and

produce through closed-circuit television coverage at the Showcase.

Ric Burns, General Manager of The LifeStyle Channel, who are sponsoring the event for the first-time, said: "We're really pleased to be sponsoring the Chefs' Showcase as it is a natural association for us. We look forward to being part of this terrific event."

Other big-name national identities presenting at the showcase include Shannon Bennett, Lyndey Milan, Darren Simpson, Jeremy and Jane Strode, Gabriel Gaté and Geoff Lindsay.

Tickets are selling fast for these sought-after sessions which cost \$15 for each 40-minute session and include a full recipe book and the latest Australian Gourmet Traveller. +



Ashes with a difference

English cooks take on Aussies



While Australia's finest cricketers were taking on England in the 2005 Ashes test series in the UK, a first class British side with a difference is planning to descend on Australia - to cook.

British food guru Sophie Grigson, Italian-born culinary father figure Antonio Carluccio, acclaimed television cook and restaurateur Rick Stein and author Jill Norman form part of a large team of food professionals appearing at Tasting Australia.

The British celebrities will be joined by Ireland's favourite TV cooks, Paul and Jeanne Rankin, along with a large delegation of high profile food, drink and travel professionals from around the world.

And the Australian team is a veritable A-list of top restaurant and TV celebrity chefs including Cheong Liew, Tim Pak Poy, Geoff Lindsay, Greg Malouf, Peter Evans, Lyndey Milan, Gabriel Gate, Peter Howard, Darren Simpson, Kate Lamont, Jeremy Strode, Alain Fabregues, Iain Hewitson, Shannon Bennett, Serge Dansereau and Stephanie Alexander.

They'll be strutting their stuff at a number of public activities including the LifeStyle Channel Chefs' Showcase presented by Australian Gourmet Traveller, the James Squire Food, Beer and Wine Writers' Festival, and a number of celebrity lunches and dinners in Adelaide and South Australian regions.

Tasting Australia kicks off with the two-day Hyatt Culinary Studios, which are guaranteed to be a sell-out success with sessions featuring some of the above restaurant chefs plus Hayden 'Woody' Wood and Ian 'Herbie' Hemphill. Gastronomes will have a chance to learn about - and taste - the best in olives and olive oils, cheeses, breads, mushrooms, oysters, herbs and spices, seafood, meats, wines and cocktails.

This will be the most comprehensive Tasting Australia ever, with plenty for all appetites, according to Festival Director, Ian Parmenter.

"This has become a terrific event for the world to get to know the great things we're doing with our foods, wines, and beers, and what our chefs are accomplishing," he said.

"It's also a great way for Australians to get to know some of the finest of international culinary performers. And there are plenty of innovations this year."

Food and wine lovers at large can look forward to a full menu of activities with many exciting events taking place, such as WineDown 05, a new two-day event at the National Wine Centre is chiefly aimed at young wine industry professionals, but has components for the general public.

+



Food for thought! Why not drink for Thought?

Fest that culls the Best



out of Culinary Writers

Has the world gone food- and- drink- mad? Or is it just us? Is French cuisine passé... or becoming de rigueur? Can too few cooks spoil the broth? Has the food coach replaced the personal trainer? Is beer the new wine?

These are some of the questions likely to be posed to the experts at the James Squire Food, Beer and Wine Writers' Festival presented by Scoop Traveller, a highlight event of Tasting Australia 2005.

The three-day free event - features some 50 national and international writers, broadcasters, restaurant critics, chefs, food producers, TV presenters and assorted food media professionals.

To be hosted by respected food journalist and TV presenter Joanna Savill (SBSTV's Food Lovers' Guide to Australia), this

event is one of Tasting Australia's most popular and successful, featuring such international writers as Benedict Beaugé from Paris, Vinod Advani from India, Gina Mallet (author of newly released *Last Chance to Eat - The Fate of Taste*) from Canada, and a star line-up from the UK including Antonio Carluccio (TV chef/chef/restaurateur), Sophie Grigson (TV chef/author - who has been described as 'a post-punk Delia') and Jill Norman (author of several highly regarded food books, who worked closely with Elizabeth David for several years and is trustee of her literary estate).

Among the Australian speakers are Alan Saunders (ABC Radio and magazine writer), legendary author and restaurateur Gay Bilson, Sally Hammond, Allan Champion, Michele Curtis, Jane Adams, Maggie Beer, Ian (Herbie) Hemphill, Maeve O'Meara, Peter Forrestal, Lyndey Milan and John Lethlean.

Chefs with books will be having their say too, including Serge Dansereau, Damien Pignolet, Shannon Bennett, Christine Manfield, Neil Perry and Russell Jeavons.

With an increasing number of books and magazines focusing on drinks, wine and beer makers, writers and aficionados will be participating, including beer writer Willie Simpson, famous wine maker Andrew Hardy, historian and James Squire descendant James Donohue and renowned brewer Chuck Hahn.

"We are delighted to once again be sponsoring this important event of Tasting Australia", said Chuck Hahn "It is clear the Australian public are taking what they eat and drink very seriously. Beers have become as acceptable as wines in the accompaniment of great foods. This is an opportunity to demonstrate to the food, beer and wine media the development of Australian beer culture."

+



Kiwis join the fray for the World Food Cup

Entries are now open for the 2005 LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition and for the first time New Zealand's top chefs and apprentices have a chance to compete against the cream of Australia's cooking exponents.

Teams of professional cooks from across Australia and New Zealand will do battle for the region's top culinary honours: the Gold Award for Best Region.

Peter Clark, Team Captain from the Barossa team that won in 2003 said, "Tasting Australia for me is a real chance to show the terrific produce from our region coupled with the skills required to prepare this produce and match it with wine. This event is the best in Australia, well organised and executed, not to be missed by any chef who wants to be at the forefront of his/her craft".

The LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition was initiated to nurture and promote

professional cookery in Australia and now includes New Zealand. The contest emphasises the use of locally grown and produced foods, and Australian and New Zealand wines, with teams creating a three-course menu for four in three hours.

Sonia Anderson, Marketing Director, The LifeStyle Channel and LifeStyle FOOD Channel, said, "We are thrilled to again to be part of this prestigious event and look forward to celebrating the exciting new talent of the 2005 teams. Australia and New Zealand are now attracting world attention to their produce and cuisines. This competition represents a terrific opportunity to showcase the best Australia and New Zealand have to offer in food, wine and culinary skill".

The theme for Tasting Australia in 2005 is 'Taste the Elements', with Australia's finest chefs conjuring taste sensations from the best Australian food and wine.

+

Where the Best Apprentices are trained

The 2003 LifeStyle Channel's Australian Regional Culinary Competition has given Yarra Valley chef, Hayden McFarland the chance to train with Neil Perry's team at the world-renowned Rockpool Restaurant in Sydney.

Awarded Best Apprentice as part of Tasting Australia's - The LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition - McFarland has watched over the shoulders of Neil Perry's team's work experience for a week.

McFarland says working with up to 15 chefs in the three-level Rockpool kitchen is like a whole different world compared to his Yarra Valley training ground. "Without the Culinary Competition I would never have had the chance to work in one of the most famous kitchens in Australia," says McFarland. "It's been a blast working in such a massive kitchen.

"The team is encouraging me to help where I can but to even stand back and watch such a dynamic team is pretty

amazing." Now a qualified chef, McFarland says if you're going to aspire to be like any chef, then Neil Perry is a credible choice - the set up of his kitchen is almost unimaginable to any apprentice"

"The experience has been invaluable and I'm particularly looking forward to the weekend when the kitchen will be in full-swing."

The LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition, which was held at the Regency International Centre for Hospitality, Leisure and Food Studies in Adelaide was initiated to nurture and promote professional cookery in Australia's regions and to help up-and-coming chefs experience the intensity and enormity of working in the kitchen of a world-leading restaurant. The LifeStyle Channel Australian Regional Culinary Competition is a significant part of the Tasting Australia program of events.

+

Look at What's Cooking and...

Savour Australia!

In Australia, over the years, the chefs have accorded eating the status of a gourmet art. Capitalizing on the country's culinary talents, tourism people have stepped in to take the growing numbers of gourmands to places of extraordinary beauty where food is exotic and eating an experience. Food writers and presenters Maeve O'Meara and Glynn Christian (a descendant of Mutineer Fletcher Christian of the Mutiny on the Bounty fame) look at what is cooking across this beautiful continent.

Australia

Canberra, A.C.T.★

Hamilton Island

A Gateway to Great Barrier holiday Reef

Hamilton Island is nestled amongst the Whitsunday Islands, a group of 74 islands just off the Queensland Coast and at the edge of the world famous Great Barrier Reef.

As the ultimate Great Barrier Reef holiday destination, Hamilton Island is the perfect gateway to explore the unique tropical environment of the Whitehaven Beach or Heart Reef. You can snorkel, scuba dive or swim off the reef and witness one of the world's most spectacular natural wonders and its abundant array of ocean life.

Hamilton Island also boasts some of the finest cuisine you'll find in the whole of Australia. As presenter Maeve O'Meara discovers this island resort offers a wealth of culinary experiences, with five-star catering to match the five-star views of palm-fringed beaches. Resort chef Byron Moore is on hand with a tropical marinated salmon and a mustard covered rack of lamb.

With over 40 different activities to choose from, you can experience sea-kayaking, game fishing, scenic helicopter flights, or even have breakfast with the Koalas at the Koala Gallery. Of course, you might simply want to concentrate on doing nothing at all, like lazing around one of the pools or simply relaxing on the beach.

+

Melbourne

The City of Gardens & Flowers

Victoria is widely regarded as the garden state of Australia and it is not too hard to realize why. There are hundreds of parks and gardens around Melbourne and throughout Victoria. The Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne is considered to be one of the most significant botanical gardens in Australia. Established in 1846, the Royal Botanic Gardens cover 36 ha. The gardens are home to over 12,000 different species of plants and are a natural sanctuary for native wildlife. There are a number of other regional botanic gardens in Victoria.

The public gardens of the Dandenong Ranges are at their best in spring and autumn, but are well worth visiting at any time of the year. The National Rhododendron Gardens are host to a variety of brilliantly coloured blooms.

Around Melbourne, a number of gardens are within minutes of the city centre, including: Fitzroy Gardens, Treasury Gardens, Flagstaff Gardens, Carlton Gardens, Queen Victoria Gardens, Alexandra Gardens, King's Domain and Royal Botanic Gardens.

Melbourne's long been regarded as the culinary capital of Australia and when you add TV celebrity chefs Jamie Oliver and Rick Stein you have all the right ingredients for the first ever Good Food Show. Food writer and

broadcaster Glynn Christian joins the crowds as they nibble and sip their way through some of Australia's finest food, rubbing shoulders with the celebrities. It's not hard to see why when you tour the city's huge Queen Victoria Market, Glynn Christian shops his way around hundreds of stalls selling everything imaginable from purple carrots to black chickens. And for pudding there's a trip to the seaside suburb of St. Kilda for some wicked cakes.

Victoria is famed for its award-winning food and wine. The state boasts a fabulous range of quality produce everything from roasted venison and barbecued quail to fresh fruits, vegetables and cheeses. Within this easily accessible state, there's also a wealth and diversity of wine regions, wineries, vineyards and cellar door businesses.

Victoria's capital and Australia's premier 'wine city', Melbourne has a well-deserved reputation for offering a superb food and wine experience. Chic restaurants serving a variety of cuisine types, inspirational chefs and a lively café scene, not to mention an array of boutique wineries circling the city, are just some of the reasons why Melbourne is considered the height of gastronomic excellence.

The Mountains are *Blue*

Your journey to the Blue Mountains begins with the ascent along Bellsline of Road. You will arrive at Blip, the citrus region of Sydney, where you can purchase fresh fruit. Next, travel past the Tomah Botanic Gardens and further up the mountains for a stop at Mt Banks. Enjoy a short nature walk and learn about the native flora as it is described in an informative and interesting manner. See the wonderful valley of the Blue Mountains and walls surrounding it.

Next the tour crosses the mountains to Mt Victoria and continues to Govetts Leap for magnificent valley and waterfall views. Enjoy lunch at the historic country pub, the Imperial Hotel. Next driven to the Megalong Valley for views from a fabulous viewing vantage point.

Leaving the stunning view of the Megalong Valley behind, continue along Cliff Drive and stop at the Three Sisters. You'll have fantastic photo opportunities from a viewing location that is away from the crowds. Listen to an Aboriginal Dreamtime story about the Three Sisters. You'll also have the opportunity to enjoy the Scenic Rail and Scenicender (at own expense).

Set in this World Heritage site the Blue Mountains resort is famed for its stunning gorges and ancient cliff walls. But as Maeve O'Meara finds out it's also becoming a magnet for lovers of fine food

and there's now no shortage of high-class restaurants as chef Ralph Potter from the Lillianfels Resort demonstrates with a three-course meal which includes his sought-after braised pigs cheeks!

Now descend down the mountains for a stop at Euroka Clearing to enjoy one of the most memorable highlights of the day, seeing Kangaroos in their natural environment whilst you sip on a complimentary glass of champagne or fruit juice.

Leaving the mountains, head to the Olympic Site for a short tour before meeting the River Cat for your ferry trip down the river into Sydney Harbour. Cruise past beautiful waterfront homes before arriving into Circular Quay where tour concludes.

Sydney High on the Bridge & Tower

The Sydney Bridge Climb is a three and a half hour unparalleled experience. In groups of 12 climbers, you make your way from the base of the summit of Sydney Harbour Bridge's famous arch. The Climb takes you over ladders, catwalks and arches, in all weather conditions (excluding electrical storms) during the day, in twilight or at night.

The Sydney Tower takes you to the highest point above Sydney for breathtaking 360-degree views of the beautiful harbour city. It sits a whopping 250 metres above Sydney city, the views from the tower are breathtaking - from the Harbour Bridge and Opera House to sights as far away as the beaches to the mountains. You'll look down on one of the most beautiful cities in the world. To get there you can travel in one of three high-speed double deck lifts take 40 seconds to travel from top to bottom or if you register for the annual Sydney Tower Run-Up you can get there by climbing 1504 stairs.

Departing the city, you'll arrive at Featherdale Wildlife Park, to enjoy an exclusive breakfast before it opens to the

general public. Next, enjoy meeting Australian animals including Kangaroos, Emus, Wombats, Dingos and more... without other tourists!

The City of Sydney has a vibrant culinary scene with a fast growing reputation as one of the world's premium locations for fine food. A large number of city restaurants, cafes and bars are keeping their kitchens open for late night diners and partygoers in the Eat Streets at Night Program, initiated by the City of Sydney.

Whether staying in the city after work or coming into town for a big night out, Eat Streets at Night is the cool place to be on warm summer nights. You can eat after a movie at a city cinema, a concert at the City Recital Hall, a play at the Opera House or a dance party at a city club - the city is open late and the menu choice is yours.

You can find just about every cuisine in the world in Sydney - and it's high class, too. Maeve O'Meara takes us on a tour as she visits the biggest Chinese dim sum restaurant in South East Asia, samples freshly made pasta, tastes Portuguese muffins at the annual Bread Makers' Carnival and cooks her own lunch in the Korean district of Campsie

With a climate as good as Sydney it's not surprising there's been an explosion in outside dining. Maeve O'Meara visits the re-vamped wharf at Woolloomooloo where she meets a master noodle-maker. There's a trip across the harbour to Watson's Bay to the world famous Doyle's' seafood restaurant, right on the beach as well as sampling the delights of Sydney's newest food location - at King Street Wharf. And no trip would be complete without cruising the stalls at the world's longest buffet.

Brisbane

Cuddle a Koala, handfeed Kangaroo

Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary in Brisbane, Australia, is the world's first and largest koala sanctuary, with over 130 types of koalas. Cuddle a koala anytime, handfeed kangaroos and encounter a large variety of Aussie wildlife, all in beautiful, natural settings. Brisbane's premiere tourist attraction is only 50 minutes from the Gold Coast. The motto: there is: "The earth is not only for humans"

In the week's leading up to Christmas a disused plot of land is turned into a thriving open air market where local farmers and food producers show off their wares which range from olives to emu sausages. Brisbane also wouldn't be Brisbane without its beers and there's visit to the 4X brewery while Chef



Philip Johnson talks about his best-selling book and creates a simple seared salmon salad.

In Brisbane, Maeve O'Meara learns that life revolves around the serpentine Brisbane River and where the blooming café society and pre-occupation with barbeques is being

matched with a fast growing interest in fine foods. There's also a visit to one of the State's newest and biggest wineries at Mount Cotton

+

Hunter Valley The Total Winery Experience

Hunter Valley offers the total "Winery Experience". The on site winery is by far the largest, and most advanced in the Hunter Valley. The Wine Tasting Cellars are open everyday to try the fruits of their labour. Crushing some 6.500 tonnes of grapes each year, the winery produces around 6.0 million litres of wine.

When the Brokenwood winery teamed up with top Sydney chef Luke Mangan they challenged him to create a world-class menu to match their wines. Maeve O'Meara also shows us that breakfast is big but if that doesn't satisfy you lunch at the Banc restaurant certainly will as Chef Liam Tomlin shows off one of his favourite dishes - a medley of seafood on pasta.

Hunter Resort offers a range of dining options second to none. San Martino (St Martin) is the patron Saint of

Churchgoers, winemakers, and the protector of all drinkers. All are most welcome at San Martino Restaurant. Open seven nights for dinner, experience one of Wine Country's better restaurants. The restaurant features a glass fronted air-conditioned wine cellar offering an extensive range of wines available by the glass, bottle or magnum. They are from all over the world and include some rare vintage wines from local private cellars. Next door to San Martino is the Bluetongue Brewery - ideal for a cleansing ale after a hard days wine tasting!

If you have enjoyed the food - and you will - perhaps you would like to learn some of the secrets! The Hunter Valley Cooking School has regular classes.

+



Fremantle

Fishing Harbour & Fresh Seafood



A long time back, the passenger ships were the preferred mode of transport for world travellers. Fremantle was the western gateway to Australia. Millions of migrants arrived by ship and many made the area their home. Let it all change. Fremantle's prominence as a destination but the port city was to give it the drive not to become the centre for world attention during the Australia and defence of the America's Cup in 1987.

Once the final destination for transported convicts, Fremantle now combines colonial grace with vibrant modernism. As well as inspecting the infamous gallows in the city's gaol, Glynn Christian goes sardine fishing and learns more about the town's culinary traditions.

Fremantle today retains much of its old charm: its situation at the mouth of the Swan River, its picturesque old buildings, its cultural diversity and what its longtime residents still call the Fremantle feeling. This sets it apart from the capital, Perth. The feeling comes upon you when you cross the bridge over the Swan River from the northern suburbs, pass historic Cantonment Hill from the east or (ideally) drift down river from Perth in a pleasure boat.

Fremantle is a working port, host to a big fishing fleet as well as container ships and the occasional large cruise vessel. It maintains a vibrant commercial life and is a desirable tourist destination. It has, however, retained its cosmopolitan nature and preserved its identity, largely

through the good sense and dedication of its modern-day civic managers.

In a few square kilometres, it would be hard to find a bigger variety of sights, sounds and experiences. And they can be encompassed comfortably on foot. Perhaps a visit should begin, mid-morning, with a coffee or a locally brewed beer on South Terrace, sometimes called Cappuccino Strip for its outdoor-cafe atmosphere.

Fishing Boat Harbour A special feature of Fremantle is its maritime atmosphere and this can be best appreciated on a stroll around the Fishing Boat Harbour. This is a working harbour all year round and you may see fresh seafood being unloaded from the fishing boats ready for export or local dispatch. There are many waterfront restaurants in the Fishing Boat Harbour with spectacular views over the Indian Ocean. The atmosphere is similar to San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf, with cuisine catering



for all tastes. Italian influences feature heavily, and, of course, the taste of freshly caught and cooked seafood should not be missed. +

Margaret River

Where Wine Flows like Water

Geographically, the Margaret River Wine Region is one of the biggest in Australia, stretching 120 km from north to south and 30 km west to east. Despite its size, it produces just three per cent of the nation's grapes, but it is responsible for more than 20 per cent of the nation's premium wines.

The wines that flowed from the first vines of the region, planed as late as 1967, received an early acclaim and the clamour to get into the Margaret River region began. By 1986, 400 ha of land had been planted to vines. In the following years, the rate of planting increased and the region now has more than 2500 ha under vines.

There are about 90 vineyards with cellardoor sales open to the public for tastings and more than 110 grape producers. The district boasts of big estate vineyards like Leeuwin, Voyager, and Cape Mentelle, as well as boutique family operated concerns.

A three-hour drive south of Perth takes you to the lush wine-growing region of Western Australia. Glynn Christian tastes his way around the annual wine festival and goes in search of the lobster-like marron.

The district is renowned for its Chardonnay and Cabernet sauvignon wines, but the selection does not stop there. Shiraz and Merlot are other standout red varieties along with white varieties such as Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc,



Chenin Blanc and Verdelho.

The first vines were planted in the Willyabrup area, which is still the most heavily planted. Vines are now grown along the entire length and breadth of the region, with exciting plantings of experimental varieties such as Viognier and Sangiovese in new locations within the region.

The south-west of Western Australia has one of the richest and most diverse floras in the world, attracting visitors from many countries. Of the 11,000 species recorded from WA, 75 per cent grow in the south-west. Many can be seen along road sides, but a walk in the national parks and forests can be very rewarding.

Margaret River is also blessed with a wonderful array of walk and cycle trails. They have been developed in the past 15 years with funds from the shire council, state government and private developers. Some of the trails have been established along the route of old railways built to service the timber industry. Others have been hewn through scenic bushland along the riverbanks. +

Kangaroo Island Wildlife Parks & Beaches

Located 110 km south-west of Adelaide, Kangaroo Island is easily accessible by Ferry or Plane. It is a mix of attractive small townships and fascinating wilderness.

Due to its size and the number of things to do and discover, it is impossible to see the island in a day or two. If you only have one or two days available on your itinerary, choose places from the things that interest you most.

Nestling just off the coast of South Australia, Kangaroo

Island is the continent's third largest island and once made its name from whaling. But Glynn Christian discovers it's now eucalyptus oils and rare bees, which are making waves.

From the start of the 20th century, tourism has a fundamental component of the island's economy. To this day, Kangaroo Island's numerous natural wonders, beaches, conservation parks and wildlife sanctuaries are visited by tens of thousands of people each year. +

Barossa

Valley of the Whispering Wall

The whispering Wall is the retaining wall for the Barossa Reservoir. Its shape enables a whispered message at one end to be heard 140 metres away at the other end. It also provides excellent scenic views of the reservoir and barbecue and picnic facilities.

The Barossa is more than just a wine region - it has a culture all of its own, too, as Glynn Christian finds out when he takes a vintage car trip along the valley, exploring the food heritage left behind by early settlers fleeing religious persecution in Germany.

Gawler Folk Museum: Built as a Telegraph Station in 1859 this building now houses a display of pioneer memorabilia. The different displays include a pioneer kitchen, sitting room, bedroom with four poster bed,

music room, grocery store and dairy. Special features include a sewing machine and milking machine collection.

Seppeltsfield: From Marananga, an imposing avenue of date palms lines the route to Seppeltsfield, a mini village of 19th century stone winery buildings, the focus of the large winemaking operations of B. Seppelt & Sons. The complex offers tasting, picnicking spots and touring, while the old Seppelt's family home has been restored and is available as accommodation. Halfway to the winery, the Seppelt family mausoleum sits on a hill which provides wonderful views over Seppeltsfield

+

Riverland

Cruises, Houseboats & Canoes

The Riverland is a two-hour drive east of Adelaide and includes 300 km of the Murray River. Most people come here to take advantage of the water and the activities it offers. Many take part in a relaxed river cruise on paddle steamers or hire their own houseboats, others choose to explore the secluded creeks and billabongs by canoe, a great way to view the local wildlife.

Another attraction here is the food, and more importantly the wine. More than 45 per cent of South Australia's grapes are crushed for winemaking in the Riverland and more than 90 per cent of the state's citrus, stone fruit, and nuts are grown here too.

A trip along the mighty Murray River reveals the stark contrasts between desert scrub and rich farmland hosting vineyards and orchards. Glynn Christian sets off from Adelaide - via the National Wine Centre; calling in on food guru Maggie Beer and

ending up at the world's only wetlands winery nature reserve.

Some of the other must-see attractions include the Banrock Station Wine and Wetland Centre. Here in an attempt to give something back to the environment, the winery has restored the Banrock Station wetlands, with a walking trail that takes you past a six million year-old seabed of limestone. Ruston's Rose Garden is the

largest rose garden in the southern hemisphere with several thousand varieties and 50,000 rose bushes. For those more interested in

engineering than nature, the Port of Morgan Museum has recaptured the days of river trading with its display of paddle steamers, steam engines, cranes and carriages. There are also a number of magnificent golf courses in the area.

+



Alice Springs the Oasis of the Nation

Alice Springs - It's Australia's Oasis, the capital of the Outback and the most romantic country town in the world. It's where the Arrernte Aboriginal tribals have lived for 20,000 years and where pioneer men and women gave "tough" a new meaning. It's where they race camels, hold hilarious holiday regattas on dry river beds and where Peter Finch finally caught up with Virginia McKenna in the 1956 film classic "A Town Like Alice".

Most tourists associate Alice with Ayres Rock, but there's much more, especially when it comes to food and drink. Glynn Christian dines out on camel, visits an organic herb farm, tours the local vineyard and experiences a night-time outback safari.

What's so great about "The Alice"? Well we reckon it's the

5 C's; the Climate, the Colours, the Culture, the Characters and the Closest proximity to every beach in Australia. So don't forget to check out the "Tide Times" around the country.

So whether you fly, drive or take the train, you might want to set aside seven days to take in everything there is to see and do in Alice Springs as well as the stunning scenery of the Western and Eastern (Mac)s MacDonnell Ranges.

If you think "The Alice" is hot, flat and dusty then you had better think again, because there are stunning ranges, spectacular gum trees, refreshing waterholes, beautiful palm trees, awesome colours, more waterholes, amazing wildlife and a lush green golf course.

Jajarawong the Gold & Spa Country

Jajarawong is located in the heart of Victoria's Gold and Spa Country. You can visit historic gold towns and visit the Mineral Springs bath house complex at Hepburn Springs and Daylesford. Enjoy great regional food and wine at award winning restaurants.

The big attraction in Daylesford in mid-Victoria isn't just the healing qualities of its spa - it's a fabulous retreat for foodies, too, as Glynn Christian discovers when he matches wines with puddings, takes tea at a lavender farm and buys herbs at a Sunday market

Ballarat & Pyrenees From Gold Rush to Café Culture

A gold rush in the mid 19th century was Ballarat's first claim to fame. Now, as Glynn Christian finds out, it's known for its café society. He also visits the local art gallery where the restaurant chef welcomes customers into her kitchen and he calls in at a vineyard where the wines are stunning.

Wine lovers are spoiled on the Great Grape Road touring route, which encompasses the wine regions of Pyrenees, Grampians and Ballarat. A multitude of flavours and experiences await both the passionate collector and the casual tourist. Easily accessible from Melbourne and the

Western Highway, the area presents an intriguing blend of history and innovation. Townships still bear the remnants of the goldrush days and proudly preserve their heritage. The scenery is as varied as it is beautiful.

The Pyrenees, Grampians and Ballarat regions produce some of Australia's finest cool climate wines. Most notably, Shiraz (from producers such as Mount Langi Ghiran, Dalwhinnie and Seppelt Great Western) has earned both domestic and international recognition. The long, cool ripening period and low fruit yields combine to produce fragrant, earthy fruit flavours supported by elegant acids and tannins. Wineries are mostly smaller producers, with a hands-on approach and an emphasis on quality.

Cellar door experiences range in style - from sophisticated tasting rooms to underground tunnels and rustic farmgate charm. Winemakers are keen to share their experiences and their produce. Plenty of cellar door discussion and information are the trademarks of a visit to the area. The unique characteristics of the wines form a lasting impression when sampled in the spectacular surroundings.

Mudjee Knockout dinners & relaxed lunches

Indulge yourself and spend a long weekend exploring the exceptional food and wine of the region - the rich red earth produces great Shiraz and Chardonnay as well as many other types of wine. Enjoy a couple of knockout banquet dinners with two of the best chefs in Mudgee, some relaxed lunches and the best examples of fresh produce in the area including magnificent, freshly-made goat cheeses direct from the farm and whole local lamb, marinated and stuffed with a mix of rice, almonds and

pistachios.

There are specially organized tastings of wine and local produce, including a visit to a specialist herb nursery, tastings of delicious Mudgee honey, new season's berries and fresh fruit ice-creams. You will visit a local olive producer and see the olive press in action; see the Mudgee bush oven in operation and sample delicious food cooked in it.



Target 250 million by Dec 2007

Pro-rural policies must for boosting phone Connectivity

Ever since the government initiated effectively in the telecom sector in 1998, the rate of growth in telephone connectivity has been phenomenal. The enthusiasm, and sometimes impatience, of the government in pushing global telecommunication reforms is well meaning and understood. Because telecommunications constitute the very nerve structure for the nation's much-needed infrastructure and a vital for the country's global connectivity, especially in the technology-driven 21st century.

The rate of growth has been consistent so far. During June 2005, around 2.57 million subscribers, 1.98 million for mobiles and 0.59 million for fixed lines, were added to the national network as compared to 2.33 million additions in the previous month. During the first year of the present government, that is May, 2004 onwards, an all-time record growth had been achieved in terms of the numbers added - 23.6 million phones. During the first quarter (April-June) of current financial year 2005-06

approximately 5.16 million mobile subscribers were added, making it a total of 57.38 million mobile subscribers at the end of June, 2005. In the fixed segment, the subscriber base reached 47.70 million with addition of 1.79 million during the quarter.

The tele-density has increased from 7.15 per cent on April 30, 2004 to 9.15 per cent in April 2005. Now the number of mobile phones has overtaken the number of fixed

phones. The share of private sector has also increased to more than 45 per cent in the total phones.

At the end of June, 2005, the number of fixed telephone lines stood at 47.70 million, while that of mobiles added up to 57.38 million taking the total number of telephone subscribers in the country to 105.08 million. Now, this number is impressive, but is much lower compared to the target of 250 million, which is to be achieved by December 2007. Can we achieve the target? That is the question.

While the overall growth of the telephony has been heartening, its pace in the rural areas is causing dismay. The urban rural divide is increasing faster than before, primarily due to the explosive growth in mobile subscriptions in cities and towns and negligible mobile coverage in rural areas. In order to quicken the pace of growth, between now and 2007, the number of additional subscribers must rise to 4.0 million per month as against the present trend of 1.52 million per month. This can come about only through a policy push to ensure a higher rural tele-density. The growth should be competition-driven, as has been with mobile companies operating in urban areas.

Policy initiatives to encourage private operators offering connectivity for both fixed lines as well as mobiles be encouraged through certain concessions related to their tariffs. There must be funds available for this purpose. The telecom sector contributes about 30 per cent of country's service tax. The annual turnover of telecom industry is more than Rs.51600 crore. The telecom operators contribute about Rs.6,000 to Rs.6,500 crore per annum to central exchequer through Licence Fee, USO levy, spectrum charges, dividends, etc. Hence, money is not the problem. It is the political will. Of course, this government is committed to the development of rural areas. It also wants to give its reforms package a human face. So, a hard push to the reform process to boost rural telephone connectivity is a must and this government knows it and will do it.

- Tripat Oberai

+

discover

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