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### **KANGAROO ISLAND IS AUSTRALIA'S BEST FOOD DESTINATION**

Kangaroo Island was last night named Australia's Best Regional Food Destination at the Vogue Entertaining and Travel Audi Produce Awards.

Tourism Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says the national award is a prestigious accolade for Kangaroo Island.

"In the past three to four years, there has been a commitment to promote the fantastic food and wine available on Kangaroo Island," she says.

"South Australians have always known the quality of food and wine from Kangaroo Island is superb and this is now recognised on a national scale.

"The award also acknowledges the commitment of Kangaroo Island's primary producers, the Kangaroo Island Grapegrowers and Wine Association Good Food Kangaroo Island and Tourism Kangaroo Island."

Minister Lomax-Smith says the State Government, through the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC), regularly encouraged international and national media to visit Kangaroo Island.

"We have worked hard to raise the profile of all industries on Kangaroo Island and this has paid off with the Award, which was judged by some of the nation's best-known food identities," she says.

The Minister also paid tribute to Food SA's regional food group program, run out of the Primary Industries and Resources SA. Food SA employs 12 regional Food Industry Development Officers (FIDOs), who are based with Regional Development Boards or similar organisations, and deliver a range of services to assist regional producers expand and add value to their business.

"Good Food Kangaroo Island has worked with producers on the Island to open up their businesses to tourists nationally and internationally," she says.

"Promoting and encouraging primary producers in the regions is high on the agenda for Food SA and this Award recognises the effectiveness of this important program."

The Vogue Entertaining and Travel Audi Produce Awards reward and acknowledge outstanding producers who "create the vibrant food culture" enjoyed in Australia.

The Regional Award is for an Australian food group or individual who has successfully created a culinary destination and identity for a region by actively encouraging a support network for its food community.

Judges for the Awards included some of Australia's best-known food identities, such as Maggie Beer, Cheong Liew, Matt Moran for Aria Restaurant in Sydney and Simon Marnie from ABC in Sydney.

Tourism Kangaroo Island's Regional Marketing Manager, David Honner says the award recognises the evolution of Kangaroo Island's produce from a bee sanctuary to a leader in food and wine.

"Kangaroo Island's economy is built on agriculture, and these same generational farms are now offering some of the best hand-made produce in the world, including quality dairy, seafood and of course, honey," he says.

"First-time visitors to Kangaroo Island are surprised to find a burgeoning wine industry, with some of the most scenic cellar doors in the world, and a fantastic range of produce and food businesses that are open to the public as tourist destinations."

Good Food Kangaroo Island's Food Industry Development Officer, Justin Harmon, who accepted the award, says credit needs to go to producers who diversified from general farming more than 10 years ago to develop a vibrant food and wine industry.

"Our original producers set a benchmark 14 years ago and should be congratulated for their commitment to the industry on Kangaroo Island," he says.

"For the past few years, we have also concentrated on promoting food and wine businesses as tourism attractions and this is also paying off.

"The Award is testament to the fact that not only do we have some of the best produce in Australia but we now have first-class tourism attractions that compliment the industry."