

PRESS RELEASE
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MEMBERS EMBRACE NEW LOCAL TOURISM ORGANISATION

In a landmark decision for the tourism industry, members of the Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association (AMRTA) and Geographe Bay Tourism Association (GBTA) have endorsed the formation of a new, single Local Tourism Organisation (LTO) for the region.

More than 200 member business turned out at Special General Meetings of the AMRTA and GBTA, held at Duckstein Brewery last night, to show their support for the formation of the Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association (MRBTA).

The decision, which will see the region marketed under The Margaret River Region brand, is the biggest shake-up in the organisations' 50 plus year histories.

MRBTA Chair-elect, Trent Bartlett, said he was thrilled with the outcome which showed the industry's resolve to develop a world class visitor experience.

"To have a decision as large as this almost unanimously supported by members demonstrates just how ready the tourism industry here is to propel The Margaret River Region on to a world stage.

"It is also testament to the way in which the AMRTA and GBTA Boards listened to their members and worked up such a strong proposal in response to their needs," said Mr Bartlett.

GBTA President, Clive Johnson, said this was the beginning of an exciting new era for The Margaret River Region.

"By treating the whole region from Busselton in the north to Augusta in the south as a single destination we will be in a much better position to attract and disperse visitors, delivering greater benefits to members and the broader community," said Mr Johnson.

AMRTA Chair, Ross Ashton, said the decision would help ensure a sustainable future for the independent, not-for-profit tourism organisation.

"Not-for-profits around Australia are dwindling in the face of rising overheads – the unified approach delivered through the MRBTA makes a far more efficient use of our resources and means we can continue to deliver quality tourism services," said Mr Ashton.

The MRBTA is expected to formally commence operation on 1 July 2015, with the GBTA and AMRTA continuing to operate in their current format until this time.

Mr Bartlett said he was honoured to be the inaugural Chair of the MRBTA.

"I am looking forward to working with the Board, staff and members to build the foundations of a stronger LTO for the region," said Mr Bartlett.

Four Board members from each of the existing AMRTA and GBTA Boards will join Mr Bartlett on the MRBTA Board. They have been named as: Clive Johnson, Mandalay Holiday Resort; Keith Warrick, Happs Wines; Glenn Callegari, Hillzeez Down South Surf Shops; and Aidan Midgley, Forte Cape View Apartments from GBTA. From AMRTA: Ross Ashton, Margaret River Backpackers; Tony Pickworth, RAC; Jim Challis, Augusta Hotel; and Dave Willcox, Common Ground Trails.

The vast majority of staff will have continuing roles with MRBTA and some exciting new roles have been created to assist with the continued growth of the organisation. Staff who do not have continuing roles with the MRBTA will have the option to remain employed until 30 June 2015 and access assistance to find other employment.

The Boards and Management of AMRTA and GBTA will now embark on detailed transition planning to facilitate a smooth changeover to MRBTA. Further brand development work will commence in the new year.

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Image (left to right): AMRTA Chair, Ross Ashton, MRBTA Chair-elect, Trent Bartlett and GBTA President Clive Johnson.

For more information contact:

Pip Close
M: 0421 151 236
E: pip.close@margaretriver.com

Sharna Kearney
M: 0409 180 383
E: sharnakearney@geopraphebay.com