



MEDIA RELEASE

SENATOR THE HON NICK SHERRY

Minister for Small Business
Minister Assisting on Deregulation and Public Sector Superannuation
Minister Assisting on Tourism

ROSE CENTRE INVESTMENT BRINGS RIVERLAND MORE VISITORS

The Minister Assisting on Tourism, Senator Nick Sherry, has officially opened the visitor centre extension at the National Rose Centre in South Australia's Riverland, made possible with \$100,000 in Australian Government funding.

The *TQUAL Grants* program helped to expand the conference and function venue in Renmark to hold 150 people. Since October, visitor numbers have increased and functions have trebled in number since 2009.

"The Centre is one of Australia's treasures and it's not just good for roses – it's good for the regional economy," Senator Sherry said.

"The garden has an unrivalled diversity of rare and interesting plants, proudly displaying more than 40,000 bushes and 4,000 varieties.

"The Rose Festival already attracts thousands of visitors to the region and the extension gives greater scope to welcome more.

"In turn, more visitors will support the growth of the National Collection and the important work of the tea rose collection – and the local economy.

"Nearly half a million visitors spent \$111 million in the Riverland region last financial year.

"More than 700 businesses in the Riverland region depend on tourism and almost half of these employ fewer than 20 people, so the vibrancy of the region's small business sector increasingly hinges on tourism," Senator Sherry said.

Over the years, the garden's business plan has moved from primary production to retail and tourism.

"Before the opening of the visitor centre, tourism and retail accounted for less than five per cent of the business. Today, it's well over one-third," Senator Sherry said.

"The Government has already provided over \$8 million in *TQUAL Grants* to help tourism operators right across Australia and we've committed a further \$40 million.

"Applications are now open for *TQUAL Grants* — *Tourism Quality Projects*, for innovative projects that refresh, upgrade or develop products and experiences.

"Our support will help tourism companies and consortiums make an even greater contribution to economic growth," Senator Sherry said.

RENMARK

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