



## **Planning for USG 'Conference Season' Underway**

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The potential for the Upper Spencer Gulf to grow as a destination for major events is continuing to gather momentum, with the region gearing up to host a number of statewide and national conferences later this year.

Whyalla will kick off the 2017 conference season, hosting the 'Global Maintenance Trade and Resources' expo in late August. This will be followed by the Australian Rangelands Society national conference in Port Augusta late September, the national 'Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia' (SEGRA) national conference being jointly hosted across the three cities 25-27<sup>th</sup> October, and Port Pirie hosting the South Australian Local Government Association board in November.

Chair of Spencer Gulf Cities, Mayor Sam Johnson, said the number of state and national conferences being hosted in the region this year is a strong indication of the growth potential.

"The Upper Spencer Gulf is the largest population base outside of Adelaide, making the three cities ideally placed to grow our collective capabilities in 'Event Tourism' and build on our existing history of hosting successful sporting and cultural events", explained Mayor Johnson.

"Not only does event tourism inject a significant amount into the local economy, it also brings people into the Upper Spencer Gulf who may never otherwise visit," he added. "Once they are here, visitors usually form a very different, and much more positive view of the area".

"We have ample accommodation in the region, a variety of transport options and fantastic event and conference facilities, such as Whyalla's Middleback Theatre, the Northern Festival Centre in Port Pirie, along with the new Central Oval complex in Port Augusta", said Sam.

"With further facility upgrades either underway or proposed across the three cities and our proximity to neighbouring areas such as the Flinders Ranges, Clare Valley and Eyre Peninsula, we have fantastic options to package up a whole experience for conference delegates, extend their stay in the area and importantly, entice them back again for another visit".

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Photo (overpage):

Upper Spencer Gulf conference planning team representatives from the Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla Councils, Regional Development Australia, University of SA Whyalla and Regions SA met recently with the 'SEGRA' conference national secretariat Kate Charters and committee chair, Simon Boughey to progress arrangements for this year's national conference, being held in the region from 25-27<sup>th</sup> October.

