

MEDIA RELEASE

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Embargo till 4.00 pm, Tuesday 23rd August.

RUTH FORREST MLC TO OPEN KING ISLAND KELP INDUSTRIES VISITORS CENTRE

Ruth Forrest MLC will have great pleasure in officially opening the Kelp Industries Visitors Centre on King Island tonight.

"I know this centre has been a work in progress for some time. I visited in April during my election campaign and again in July, and it is fantastic to see the final product", said Ms Forrest.

"Opportunities for increasing tourism and improving economic returns in isolated communities are often challenging. They usually result from a number of individuals and organisations working together and in a community such as King Island, all tourism operators need to work together to support and promote each other. This centre is an excellent example of this happening", Ms Forrest said.

Kelp Industries was established in 1975 with the initial establishing investment supported by significant State and Federal grants, primarily in the area of infrastructure to improve shipping services to King Island. However, since that time Kelp Industries has been and remains financially self-supporting.

Kelp Industries also provides important employment opportunities for more than 100 people on King Island.

"Employment in remote areas is always important, and not always readily available", said Ms Forrest.

"Employment is vital not only for the financial benefit of the local community but perhaps even more importantly the social benefits, as families are more likely to remain on King Island and contribute in many areas including support of the economy and the social framework of the entire community", the Member for Murchison said.

Kelp Industries has been awarded two national awards, one for the efficient use of energy and the other in a 'Keep Australia Beautiful' competition.

In addition to this, Kelp Industries has also achieved recognition for an excellent work safety record at state level and achieved organic certification in 2003.

Ms Forrest said that Kelp Industries provides up to \$2.5 million in export earnings, with the majority of this flowing directly back into the community.

Ms Forrest noted that the environmental benefits are also significant as kelp that is harvested is the 'cast' seaweed collected from the beaches of King Island before it has time to rot.

"This is truly sustainable development as no 'living' kelp is removed or cut from the rocks on which it grows", said Ms Forrest.

23 August 2005

For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.