

## **MEDIA RELEASE—MURRUMBATEMAN ON THE MOVE (5 February 2016)**

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In a new push to make it a much stronger tourist destination, Murrumbateman is planning big things for 2016. And that includes a new, 52-room hotel to be built at Fairley, the residential development rising from the ground adjacent from the village centre. The paperwork for the new hotel is now signed and construction is expected to begin in late 2016. The Yass Valley Council says a major hotel will increase tourist accommodation in the area by 30 per cent.

The newest Abode Hotel, to be built by parent company GEOCON, fills a major gap, with no hotel between Gunghalin and Yass. Local businesses and wineries are throwing their support behind the hotel, including Shaw Vineyards, Helm Wines, Yarrh Wines and McKellar Ridge Wines, all agreeing that quality and affordable accommodation is essential for tourism and the growth of the area.

Nick Georgalis, Managing Director of GEOCON, says a major goal of the hotel—the first outside the capital—is to fit into Murrumbateman, aesthetically and with its functionality. ‘The hotel will feature a large, flexible foyer space and public area that can be used for a range of activities and will complement the local area,’ says Nick. ‘In addition to the hotel rooms, there will be some suites to accommodate larger groups, including wedding parties.’

Nick says it’s fantastic that a local, Australian company was selected to build the hotel. This will be GEOCON’s fifth Abode Hotel. The latest in the capital was built in Narrabundah.

Fairley is being built by Shaw Projects, owners of Shaw Vineyard Estate, a Murrumbateman winery. Shaw Projects has its roots in construction and a long-established reputation as a Canberra builder. The new, 100-home subdivision is named after a Murrumbateman teacher of the 1800s. It will include a commercial and tourist precinct, boutique brewery, café, bakery, visitors centre, childcare centre, children’s park, medical services and post office. ‘It will add 60 per cent more housing to the village and trigger infrastructure and commercial developments,’ says Graeme Shaw.

Neil McGregor and Fiona Wholohan of Yarrh Wines, say the Abode Hotel will be a major boost and the ‘sooner it’s built the better.’ ‘We get regular enquiries from visitors about where to stay in Murrumbateman and, of course, options are pretty limited. The hotel will make a big difference—serious food and wine tourists want to stay within the region and close to the vineyards and wineries, to really immerse themselves,’ says Neil.

The owners of McKellar Ridge Wines, Brian and Janet Johnston, agree. ‘Murrumbateman Cool Climate Wine Country is becoming a “must visit” wine region and having more quality accommodation and services available in the village will enable wine enthusiasts to stay and sample fine wines at the cellar doors, only a short drive away,’ says Janet.

And Ken Helm, of Helm Wines, says the Abode Hotel will also add a ‘new dimension’ for residents and businesses of the Yass Valley Shire. Day-trippers who typically stay in Canberra because accommodation is limited, will now be able to stay in the historic area. Inevitably tourists will boost the local economy by buying items such as petrol, wine, and specialist food.

Fairley will be the first residential subdivision of land in Murrumbateman since 1876, bringing a new generation of residents into the local community and giving older residents who have lived in the area for some time and who don't want to leave, the opportunity to downsize, says Graeme.

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**MEDIA INFORMATION/INTERVIEWS/ADDITIONAL PHOTOS**

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