

# Conferences ready to go

## Bookings 'stream in' after Mildura's credentials showcased

SHOWING off the Mildura region to some of the biggest players in the conferencing and business events industry has paid off, with bookings streaming in from international and interstate companies and organisations.

A conference of 500 people and another of 150 and a two day meeting for 20 business professionals have been confirmed for Mildura. Two companies will also give trips to the region as incentives for high achieving staff.

Cr Mark Eckel said the bookings, which would inject an estimated \$500,000 into the local economy, followed Mildura Rural City Council's participation in the Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo (AIME) last month.

"Prior to the event, 10 professionals who organise conferences, corporate meetings, exhibitions and other business events spent two days sampling the best of what our region to offer," Cr Eckel said.

"They were very impressed by what they saw, from our excellent air links to Melbourne to our fabulous natural assets and superb restaurants and wineries."

Attendees visited local ac-



**TASTING MILDURA:** Delegates from the conferencing and business events industry sampled some of Stefano de Pieri's award-winning cuisine whilst touring the region with Mildura Rural City Council's conference facilitator Julie Jewell.

commodation providers, restaurants, wineries, recreation facilities, historic sites, natural attractions and event ven-

ues. They also got involved in one of the region's most exciting cultural events of the year, enjoying their time on

the PS Mundoo during the Riverboat Parade and taking on the Madec Harvest Grape Crush, which followed the

Sunraysia Daily Mardi Gras street parade.

Mildura Rural City Council's conferencing unit

worked closely with Mildura Tourism, Virgin Blue and the Quality Hotel Mildura Grand to be one of 13 destinations endorsed by AIME and recommended as a pre-expo option for attendees.

"This was the first time we had participated in AIME and the pre-hosted buyer program so we really didn't have too high expectations, but the response has been excellent and just goes to show that we really do have an amazing destination here," Cr Eckel said. A travel journalist based in New Zealand was also one of the delegates who visited Mildura.

"This sort of exposure can only further enhance Mildura's profile as a conference and business events destination. And the rewards for that are huge, from a social and economic perspective especially," Cr Eckel said.

The region's appeal to the conferencing and business events industry has grown dramatically in recent years.

In 2007/08 the industry brought \$750,000 to the region, and more than \$2.3 million in 2008/09. Figures are expected to reach \$5 million by the end of the 2009/10 financial year.