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***Spirit of the Wild* officially launched in home port of Strahan**

The RACT's new Gordon River Cruises vessel – *Spirit of the Wild* – has been officially welcomed into her home port of Strahan.

RACT Group Chief Executive Harvey Lennon said the vessel's first commercial voyage would take place on 16 June 2018.

"We are very pleased that the new vessel is coming online during a strong period of growth for the Tasmanian tourism sector, and on the west coast where the area is enjoying its own growth," he said.

"We believe the introduction of our new vessel will deliver a boost for the visitor economy of the region and bring more people to the area.

"The RACT has made a significant investment in regional tourism across the state, and hopes that other tourism operators will enjoy the benefits of increasing visitor numbers."

Built in Hobart by Richardson Devine Marine, the vessel was designed and built with the Gordon River specifically in mind.

The RACT engaged the services of Tasmanian companies Simon Currant and Associates, Hydrowood and food consultant David Quon, as well as interstate designers Incat Crowther and Spear Green Design in the creation of the vessel and the experience.

"*Spirit of the Wild* will virtually disappear while on the Gordon River thanks to tannin-like exterior finishes that blend into the surroundings, along with the electric motors that will provide a unique cruising experience while in the world heritage area," Mr Lennon said.

Mr Lennon said the RACT understood that *Spirit of the Wild* was the first commercial passenger vessel of its type in the southern hemisphere to be fitted with this particular drive system, featuring both diesel engines and electric motors.

“When the vessel enters the Gordon River we will switch the diesel propulsion engines off, leaving only the electric drive to propel the vessel forward,” he said.

“This means passengers will enjoy a cruising experience like nothing that has ever been available in Tasmania’s World Heritage Area before.”

Mr Lennon said the arrival of *Spirit of the Wild* was further enhanced by the redevelopment of the main wharf and cruise terminal in Strahan.

“TasPorts and RACT have worked together to deliver high-quality tourism experiences at Strahan Port through the development of Strahan’s new multi-million dollar Main Wharf and Cruise Terminal,” said TasPorts CEO Paul Weedon.

“TasPorts congratulates RACT on taking delivery of their new vessel that will further enhance tourism experience on the West Coast.”

www.gordonrivercruises.com.au

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