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## Media Release

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### The family that works together, wins together

The famous O'Reilly family have proved that working together spells success taking out the award for Australia's best 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation Family Business on the back of stunning growth that has seen business turnover and staff expand four-fold in ten years.

O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat edged out stiff competition from well-known family businesses Australia-wide to take out the top prize, recognition not just of their stunning growth, but particularly the professional way they do business.

Proud 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation O'Reilly, Jane, received the award on behalf of the family and believes it's a credit to the way they are able to involve the family, while still operating on corporate lines.

"It's really about keeping open lines of communication and being transparent," Ms O'Reilly said

"We have a non-family board chairman and two directors joining four family members on the board, so we combine outside expertise with family passion and experience."

"At the same time we have twice yearly family meetings, so that everyone feels they have a continuing stake in the business – and they are great social occasions as well in a large family like ours."

The O'Reilly's may subscribe to the philosophy of treating guests as friends, friends as family and family as gold – the warm welcome has become the cornerstone of their legendary hospitality over almost 80 years.

But that doesn't mean family members have an automatic right to work in the business – all but one of the eight family members employed have brought outside qualifications and experience to their positions.

"We have over 90 staff and in a sense family members are just like everyone else, earning their jobs on merit."

As Managing Director, Jane's cousin Shane has overseen major expansions – including the development of the Canungra Valley Vineyard sister business, a multi-million dollar upgrade of guesthouse facilities and recently the launch of the \$35 million Mountain Bowers freehold development adjacent to the guesthouse.

O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat now offers accommodation for 150 and hosts more than 35,000 visitors for close to 40,000 room nights a year and Shane O'Reilly is proud they have been able to grow the business, without growing apart.

"When it is a family business, there are history and tradition at stake in all your business decisions," Mr O'Reilly said.



“You have to carefully consider the risks, but at the same time keep on looking to change, otherwise the business will stop moving forward.”

Unafraid of being entrepreneurial, Shane O'Reilly said the challenge now was ensuring the business was in good shape for a fourth generation – one of whom has joined the employee ranks, but most of whom are still pre-schoolers. Needless to say, their goals are long-term.

“With the third generation, we all grew up together on the mountain, so there is an emotional attachment to the place not just as a business, but as our childhood home,” Mr O'Reilly said.

“Sometimes emotions can get in the way of business, so it has been a balancing act.”

“At the same time, the fourth generation has not grown up on the mountain, so we are trying to pass on the passion we feel for the place.”

The O'Reilly's are also committed to sharing their knowledge and experience with other family businesses and Jane O'Reilly was heavily involved in developing a new national program, launched last week at the Australian Family Business Conference, to bring the generations together.

The 'Next Generation' program aims to 'making succession a success' and was well received at the conference.

“It is important to share our experience, because all family businesses face the same challenges and we can learn a lot from each other,” Ms O'Reilly said.

“I'm proud that the award makes us a real model for other businesses and in general raises our national profile in business circles.”

The O'Reilly family opened the original guesthouse in their Lamington National Park paradise in 1926, effectively pioneering ecotourism in Australia, and will celebrate 80 years in business in 2006.

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