



Wine & Spirit Education Trust comes to Australia

The Wine & Spirit Education Trust – the UK-based organisation which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year – ran a series of introductory, profile-raising events in Australia during March.

Ian Harris, Chief Executive of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust, and David Wrigley MW, WSET's International Development Director, hosted presentations in Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, Adelaide and Perth, as well as holding individual meetings with senior figures from the Australian wine industry, existing and prospective providers of WSET qualifications across Australia, journalists, and representatives of the Australian liquor industry including the major Australian trade bodies.

Commenting on the visit, Ian stated: "Over the last decade, the number of international students who have taken a WSET qualification has grown exponentially, and we have developed from a small team educating the burgeoning UK wine trade in 1969, into an international organisation delivering WSET programs across the globe. Last year over 24,000 students took a WSET course and sat for a WSET qualification somewhere in the world".

David added: "We now have a network of over 300 external providers, spread across 47 countries, delivering WSET courses in 13 different languages. Although still predominantly teaching people who work in the industry, or whose jobs involve selling, buying or serving wines and spirits, around 20% of our students have no connection to the industry. The reception and the response to the WSET programme right across Australia, from existing and potential students, programme providers, employers, trade associations and individuals has been extraordinary, and we hope we have demonstrated how we can add value to the Australian industry".

Ian praised the huge amount of support from Fine Wine Partners, who co-ordinated the WSET visit and organised the logistics on the ground: "This profile-raising trip would not have been possible without Rob Hirst and the team at Fine Wine Partners, and they ensured that David and I didn't have a wasted minute during our stay in Australia. It has been very exciting to meet with so many passionate and committed people across Australia during those two weeks, whose involvement will ensure the success of WSET's development in the years ahead".

The next stage of the roll-out of WSET programmes in Australia is now being planned - with David and Ian working on following up all the contacts made with a view to returning to launch the WSET Diploma programme in Australia in 2010, as well as running an Educator course later in 2009 for people wishing to teach WSET courses.

WSET is also working with Wine Australia - who recently became WSET's latest Corporate Patron – to develop a specific specialist qualification in Australian wine. The launch of this is scheduled for early 2010.

Ian concluded: "It is clear from the response we received that the industry and those associated with it recognise the fundamental importance of educating both this, and the next generation for the success of the industry and the professions within it, particularly in times of economic hardship such as we are currently experiencing. As Australia spreads its wings into more and more export markets, we believe it is important to put Australia into a global context, to ensure that everyone whose job involves selling, buying or serving wines and spirits understands the world of wine - not just Australian wines. As the biggest provider of education and examinations in the world, we believe that the Wine & Spirit Education Trust can contribute to the Australian liquor industry, and we look forward to working over the next 12 months to prepare for a full roll-out of WSET's operations in Australia in 2010".

In Australia, WSET programs are currently available in New South Wales (at the Sydney Wine Academy), in Victoria (Prince Wine Store in Melbourne), in South Australia (Stuart Barrie in the Barossa Valley, and Fall from Grace Wine School in McLaren Vale run by Gill Gordon-Smith) and a new centre in Queensland (Hospitality Training Association in Brisbane) – and the number of providers of WSET qualifications is set to more than double over the next year as a result of the recent WSET introductory visit in Australia.

Notes:

WSET has been creating the trade professional for 40 years - and is the largest global provider of education and qualifications in the field of wines & spirits in the world. In the last academic year, over 24,000 candidates in 47 countries sat a WSET examination.

Find out more about WSET at www.wsetglobal.com

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