

# WBM Australia's Wine Business Magazine



**It's something unpredictable  
But in the end it's right  
I hope you had  
The time of your life**

The Australian Wine Industry has an IQ of Bin 389. Dropping to Bin 65 for certain sections of the Wine Acronym Industry. For direction and leadership, we need all the brains we can get. That's why it's sad that [Wirra Wirra](#) CEO [Andrew Kay is leaving](#) after 15 years in charge. He's the new boss of [Business SA](#). This is a blow for wine. It's like someone has launched a watermelon from a trebuchet and knocked out a pillar of the wine community. Andrew will now be wearing an expensive suit on Channel 7 a lot and having long lunches and stuff. He was at the same long lunch we went to at Adelaide Oval in September 2006 after we pressed the button on the first issue of *TWTW* and literally ran out the back

door anticipating a backlash. I was too nervous to eat the rubber chicken.



Andrew Kay

The backlash didn't disappoint. Whenever this organ needed clarity on industry issues, Andrew was always accessible. He is a great thinker and communicator and is affable with a good sense of humour. A rare blend in wine or anything for that matter. Andrew ran Church Block but he's not the Messiah. He sent me a Wirra Wirra rugby top once which Humphry B. Bear and Clive Palmer could have worn together down the main street of McLaren Vale and still had room for a third large man. Andrew was meant for Wirra Wirra. He went in to bat for the company like he owned it. He was genuinely fond of the legendary stories and colourful characters that had gone before him and his keen humour kept the quirkiness alive in the brilliant *Bellringers* newsletter he wrote himself.



Greg Trott. "The CEO of Business SA? Why are you taking a step back in your career?"

[Business SA](#) sounds like something that would have a cricket team just to write the newsletter and a 12th Man to hold the Liquid Paper. And a Bentley outside The Adelaide Club with a driver in a white hat with gold buttons. Andrew will be a great ambassador for Australian wine in business circles. On his first Monday morning on the job he will surely replace the 30-pack of Great Northern in the board room mini-bar with Clare Riesling and Adelaide Hills Chardonnay. And Andrew, if it's not too much to ask, please bring back the long lunch. Australian winemakers have carried the RCI (Rubber Chicken Industry) for way too long. Tonight raise a glass of The Absconder to someone who is not absconding at all, he's just leaving quietly after an innings Trott would have stood and applauded. Andrew deserves a watch. But somebody lost it. – **ED**

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# Andrew Kay two-minute exit interview

(Even though he doesn't leave for another eight weeks)

## *How do you feel about the state of the Oz wine industry?*

"I sense Australian wine is going through a transformation right now. There are so many positive stories, particularly at the regional level. When I think about all the young winemakers doing interesting projects and start-ups; innovation around no/lo alcohol; breakthroughs in vineyard management and water usage; greater awareness of our role in biodiversity and climate change, I think the technical side of things is in good shape. Then if you consider the way cellar doors have invested in wine tourism and started to demystify the tasting experience, spending time in wine regions has become a regular weekend option for the average punter. Domestically, our relationship with wine is very positive. We have a way to go with managing gender diversity and we are a long way off fully appreciating and understanding the history of First Nations people with respect to our regions, but at least the conversations are happening."

"Where I see a gap is a cohesive strategy that pulls all this together in a way that can be easily understood and digested on the global stage. What does Australian wine stand for? We've spent the last two years working in isolation from each other and grabbing whatever opportunities presented themselves to offset the loss of China. That has probably led to less cohesion than ever before. It's become easy to find your own little niche, set up an online business and do your own thing. That insular approach does not support the bigger picture for Australian wine and that's why I feel it's never been more important for the wine community to band together to present a united front, become visible again and make some noise. I'll be watching – and drinking – with interest."

