



FRIDAY 1 JULY 2022 – [PARLAMENTO](#)

**Don't worry
About a thing
Cause every little thing
Gonna be alright**

The [Tech Conference](#) held in Kairua Country would have been a nightmare to plan with all those sniffles. AWRI boss Dr Mark Krstic and his team didn't just pull it off, they increased delegate numbers by 20 percent to 1,200. It's a good

sign that so many winemakers want to learn more. Improving the quality of Australian wine is surely the greatest marketing tool of all. Well done to the organisers for pushing on at all costs. The industry needs more of that kind of can-do attitude. Got the gout? Scared about the future? Push on regardless. There's never a perfect time. The wonderful Welcome to Country by Mickey O'Brien added meaning to the gathering. Monday mornings are corked at the best of times but add a 20-minute obituary for Australian wine by AGW boss Tony Battaglene in a deathly-quiet auditorium and which way to the casino?



Mickey O'Brien. Photo: AWITC Instagram.

We got a free bamboo pen but what we all needed for the first session was a microphone that didn't work. The most positive part of [Battaglione's speech](#) was when he stopped talking and sat down. I've had less negative RAT tests. In fairness we needed to hear the truth and let's not forget Warren Randall showed 88 different photos of Xi Jinping in his 2019 Powerpoint. Battaglione had said [he was leaving AGW](#) the day before his talk. He sounded defeated like at the start of Covid when he told the ABC that up to one-third of wineries could fail. That was *before* China! Tough gig, we wish him well. Pernod Ricard CEO Bryan Fry asked if the industry was over-governed. He thinks it is, otherwise he wouldn't have asked. The NAB guy said if you want a loan and don't have a sustainability plan, jump in the lake, basically. The wine one. All that was missing was Eeyore from Winnie The Pooh and Nick Cave singing *People Ain't No Good*. But we did have economist Saul Eslake. He said it's all shit. "Thanks Saul, that was depressing," quipped panel chair Victoria Angove who, on a positive note, gave her kids the [Pandemic](#) board game for Christmas in 2019.



Photo: AWITC Instagram.

I needed cheering up; a random act of kindness. On North Terrace I pulled up in my Sigma behind an old white van with a big bumper sticker staring me in the face that said "Go f**k Yourself." I bet the driver was an IKEA customer wearing a shirt that said "Jesus is a ****." We know religion is losing more

devotees than Merlot, but City of Churches, what have you done to me? On Tuesday night I was at [Aurora](#) where Patrick Schwerdt and [Cooperages 1912](#) opened Bordeaux and Burgundy for 60 winemakers. Snouts in the trough and more squeals than the pig racing at Wayville. Host David LeMire MW, an elite big-picture thinker, touched on his column in *WBM* which overlaps with some of Fry's thoughts. We don't usually publish paid content on our website because we need to feed the goat but [here is David's column](#) in the interests of adding intelligence to debate about the issues we all face. Australian winemakers are in a perfect storm *within* a perfect storm. We need to make big decisions quickly. Do we want a big industry or just a great one? People are whispering again about climate change and the inland regions. They've been written off before.



Photo: AWITC Instagram.

The mood lifted as the week wore on and the more wine we drank and it turned out to be a great Conference. The only downside was four Penola delegates being treated for stiff necks after looking up at all the tall buildings. Every wine supplier I spoke to at WineTech was happy with the quality of leads. One *WBM* advertiser said the response to his technology was "unbelievable". We need to remember that a lot of people are doing just fine. Mickey O'Brien in bright China-red shoes closed the 18th Festival of the Puffer Jacket & Bald Head with a moving "See You Later" speech. He urged delegates to use the knowledge they had gained to "help other people". Love that. Put it all into perspective with ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) dominating the event. Rest easy, Mickey, the great achievers in the Australian wine industry have never been just about themselves, they've been about the industry, friends and neighbours. Which is recognised and rewarded over time. After the Conference I walked down Hindley Street with a newfound spring in my step because I was being followed by a moving bush. Negativity, go f**k yourself. Besides, Ukraine has taken back Snake Island and we've still got [Dry July](#) to look forward to. – ED

