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Wine conference focuses on change agenda

Smarter pricing strategies, shifts in target markets and greater adoption of technology to provide innovative routes to market must be part of the change agenda for Australian wine.

That message will ring loud and clear when the industry gathers in Melbourne for the biennial Wine Industry Outlook Conference on October 23 and 24. The program will include a keynote address on the importance of a strategic approach to pricing and the presentation of WFA-commissioned research mapping the scope and performance of online sales channels.

“Our focus is not on the need to change but the way to change if we are to establish a platform for profitability and sustainability across the sector,” said WFA chief executive Paul Evans.

“We have put together a comprehensive program examining the shifts in global competition, consumer sentiment, sales channel options, markets and marketing that impact on us all. Everyone involved with making and marketing wine needs to be clear about where Australia’s future success lies and how their businesses are positioned.”

Leading wine writer and commentator Jeremy Oliver will guide proceedings during the conference and will moderate a major panel discussion on the first day focussing on how successful wine businesses will look and act in the future.

“As in 2010, when we first expanded Outlook to two days, we have sought to get the right mix of big-picture thinking and hands-on skills development,” Mr Evans said. “I think the workshop program on day two offers something for everyone.”

Workshop options include a marketing “bootcamp”, financial advice and strategies for building winning brands or turning a website into an online cellar door. Beijing-based distributor Campbell Thompson will deliver a plenary address on the evolving China market then host an interactive Q&A workshop.

The Day 1 program will mix hard data from Rabobank and Nielsen with insights from international presenters Mike Paul, Chris Savage and Lulie Halstead, who was voted the standout presenter at Outlook in 2010.

Mr Paul, a leading wine consultant who represented Southcorp when it became the UK market leader by value, will revisit his 2007 prophecy that Australia’s success would be its undoing because it was too easy for others to replicate.

Mr Savage, who directs all environmental compliance efforts for the world’s largest family-owned winery, E&J Gallo, will examine the growing social pressures on wine’s legitimacy.

And Ms Halstead, the CEO of strategy consultant Wine Intelligence, will present new insights on how social and cultural drivers underwrite consumer demand for wine and the opportunities this presents for marketing wine as more than just another fast-moving consumer good.

The Change Agenda will be held in the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre.

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