

Tas Wine Fest Winter Edition set to be cancelled



The festival has been a major contributor to the wine industry and the economy.
(Supplied: Crispy Media)

Hobart, TAS: The Tas Wine Fest Winter Edition is set to be cancelled in yet another blow to Tasmania's destination events calendar. As a key multimillion-dollar cornerstone of Tasmanian wine culture and business, the festival is being forced to cancel due to lack of worthy support from Events Tasmania and the State Government.

Under Events Minister Sarah Courtney, yet another major tourism draw card and cultural event has been forced out of business. Tas Wine Fest's cancellation follows in the wake of Taste of Tasmania and Falls Festival cancellations, as market conditions and worthy funding requests continue to fall on deaf ears.

Attracting 10,000+ patrons, the two summer versions of Tas Wine Fest provided not only a boost to the tourism, accommodation and hospitality sectors, they also created vital sales scope through international opportunities for Tasmania's 120+ wine producers. Approximately 15% of visitors to Tas Wine Fest in 2020 came from the mainland and overseas, providing valuable opportunities and exposure for Tasmania's great wine industry.

"Building a wine festival in the middle of winter is a perfect addition to the

calendar, which would celebrate and showcase our Tasmanian cool climate wines, not having this event is a real loss!" James Skabo Frogmore Creek CEO.

The winter edition planned to build on that success, and help Tasmania's wine sector during the traditionally quiet winter period. The industry has done it tough in recent times after bushfires and COVID. Tas Wine Fest would have provided a much-needed boost to winemakers, as we saw with the summer event in which many stallholders sold out of product and connected with loyal customers.

"These types of events are what sustain our business thought the year especially at this point in time where we are so impacted by COVID-19! I understand that you need support from the government to run events like the wine festival and it goes without saying that failing to secure support from them at this critical time, is another hard blow we will have to deal with. I can only hold out hope for more support and a better future for all the small business like mine that need the events to survive" Steven Browning owner of Bruny Island Oysters.

Managing Director Brendan Self of Vandemonian, the company behind Tas Wine Fest, said it was a difficult, disheartening decision made through essential risk mitigation. *"It's a very disappointing decision considering that other major events have also fallen, and the Tas Wine Fest is beneficial to multiple industries. It's sad to think another great event not supported by government must be cancelled. As the Events Minister is a former vineyard owner herself, we hope she can come to the table with support for future Wine Festivals and industry."*

"We are so disappointed by the cancellation of the Winter edition of the Tas Wine Festival. After the success of the Summer edition we were looking forward to showcasing our Wines once again, and enjoying the company of so many Tasmanian wine enthusiasts!" Angela Morgan Derwent Wine Estates

Tas Wine Fest injects millions of dollars directly into hundreds of local businesses, and like any other event of its type, requires government support to allow event promoters to tap the multibillion-dollar global tourist trade. Without this guaranteed return on investment, promoters are forced to prop up entire industries through private endeavour whilst government departments wander in circles attempting to find a home for the tens of millions of dollars available for distribution.

"Deeply disappointed in the news that the winter wine festival is not going ahead, Tempura festival mushrooms are a local Tasmanian family owned business employing our two sons, 4 casual staff and local suppliers, growers from southern Tasmania, this was the biggest event we had lined up over winter and we were relying on the revenue from this event to keep staff employed, the last 18 months have been extremely tough on all of us in the events industry

and to have an event cancel with no good reason is devastating for us all"

Events Tasmania offered Tas Wine Fest an insufficient amount of funding towards interstate marketing; an offer turned down by Vandemonian on the basis of "too little, too late."

"As a developing business this is really disappointing both from a financial and networking point of view - the winter period is typically slow" "with the lack of tourism the cancelation of anything beneficial to our industry is devastating to us and the wider community" Julie Finnerty co-owner of Cabbage Tree Hill Wines.

"This cancellation hurts — not only is it a slow time of the year for my business, but with the restrictions and cancellations over the past year the revenue we would have derived from this festival would have kept us afloat," said Gus Jedamzik, a vendor at Tas Wine Fest impacted by the cancellation.

"Willing Bros Wine Merchants have always enjoyed a spike in business over the days leading up, during and after the Tas Wine Fest, along with other festivals of a similar ilk it truly adds to the vibrance of the Hobart hospitality calendar. We have found that it helps to put a focus back on wine, which for a business like ours is a huge bonus. To hear that Vandemonian Touring is winding up such a well run event is another sad day for an industry which is still very much on the back foot and trying to trade out of one of the darkest chapters in hospitality's history." Carl Windsor Co owner Willing Bros Wine Merchants.

The overall lack of government support is not only having an effect on this event it is having an effect on the events, tourism, hospitality and accommodation sectors and the thousands of people that work within.

Key points:

- Hobart City Council nor Events Tasmania provided no support towards Tas Wine Fest in the past
- Whilst in "caretaker mode" the Minister has watched the collapse of the state's major events
- The festival is a key event in Tasmania's wine producing industry, associated vendors and to the Tasmanian economy as a whole

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