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The 2026 International Cool Climate Wine Show – changing the way we view and judge wine

The role of sustainability in the production of wine has never been more important, or of greater consumer interest.

What happens in the vineyard, in the winery and, ultimately, in the glass has a huge role to play in combatting climate change and, as consumers join the global fight, they are seeking quality wines that meet those expectations.

This year, the ***International Cool Climate Wine Show*** will once again judge the ***Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award (EESA),*** shining a light on those wineries proving that sustainability and the highest quality wines can - and do - go hand in hand.

Supported by AGL, the award will not only achieve recognition for the important work of the winner, but they will receive up to a $5000 tailored marketing package designed to help communicate their sustainability journey to the wider wine community and the consumer. Entries open midnight June 1, 2026. The award, in its second year, is open to Australian ICCWS wine show participants only.
The show is thrilled to have AGL, one of Australia's leading energy companies and top private investors in renewable energy, as a supporting partner.

The sustainability message and its deep connection to the overall quality of wine deserves to be acknowledged by more and more Australian and international wine shows. The International Cool Climate Wine Show is helping to lead the way, to set in place changes to how we view and judge wine.

"Sustainability is not just an environmental issue — it's a human one," says ICCWS chairman, Paul White. "The choices made in vineyards and wineries shape the wellbeing of our communities, our landscapes and the generations who will follow us.

“The Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award celebrates producers who understand that great wine is the result of care, respect and stewardship. Their work reminds us that sustainability and quality are not competing ideas; they are partners.
“This award allows the ICCWS to honour that connection and to champion those who are leading with purpose.
“I’m proud,” he adds, “that the ICCWS is helping lead that shift.”

Chief wine judge for the 2026 ICCWS, Robert Paul, is a long-time wine consultant to the Australian wine industry and acknowledges that wine judges can increasingly see and taste the benefits of wines grown in a more sustainable manner. The connection between the land and the glass of wine is there to taste.
“I do think that in the right hands, sustainable wines from properly grown grapes do show a brightness, a more direct terroir feel and, for want of a better word, a verve that other wines do not,” he says.

This year, the Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award will be judged with a shortlist announced at the end of August before the award presentation on Friday, September 18, at the ICCWS Awards Dinner.
Leading sustainability award judge, Hayley Purbrick, the Sustainability & Innovative Lead at Wine Victoria, says at its heart sustainability is about relationships. “Meaning, she adds, “a relationship with the land, to natural resources and between the decisions we make today and the legacy we leave behind.”

“To me, sustainability is really about maintaining a living system in a healthy enough state that it can continue to adapt, innovate and renew itself over time, while sustaining profitability into the future,” she says.

It’s a philosophy that last year’s inaugural winner of the EESA can only agree with. James Robson at Ross Hill Wines in Orange, NSW, had, in the judges’ finding, displayed outstanding leadership across the areas of environment, sustainability and innovation. As a result of his win, Mr Robson was thrilled to have the award acknowledged in the NSW Parliament and to also receive a certificate awarded to him.

Importantly, he believes awards such as the EESA have a role to play in driving broader industry change. “I think it’s a huge catalyst for change,” he says. “The increasing interest and importance of where and how things are made, and the ethics behind a product, is enormous. From a marketing point of view, it also provides a strong point of difference. We’ve received fantastic feedback from both within and outside the wine industry.”

Mr Robson also notes that Ross Hill’s sustainability credentials have helped attract outstanding talent to the business, with both its winemaker and vineyard manager strongly influenced by the winery’s carbon neutral status when choosing to join the team.

He said the EESA can only grow in prestige as it becomes a solid fixture on the Australian wine show calendar.
We can’t help but agree.



Chrissy and James Robson, second-generation owners of Ross Hill Wines, pictured at their Orange winery with solar-powered sustainability in action.



Brendan Weinert of AGL presents the inaugural Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award to Tom Robson, accepting on behalf of Ross Hill Wines.