



For immediate release

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Tasmanian business entrepreneur who started Australia's first online culinary travel guide takes out prestigious business award

A Tasmanian business entrepreneur who established Australia's first online culinary travel guide covering the entire country, has won a coveted innovation award in what are touted as the most prestigious business awards for women in the country.

Robyn Lewis, the founder and CEO of VisitVineyards.com, was awarded the Nokia Business Innovation Award for Tasmania at the 2010 Telstra Business Women's Awards last week.

The award recognises the importance of innovation to business renewal and growth.

VisitVineyards.com started with the assistance of a Tasmanian ecommerce IT grant in 2002 and is now Australia's largest online culinary travel guide.

It connects more than 30,000 wine, food and tourism businesses in regional Australia to wine and food travellers, and has more than 28,000 highly targeted subscribers – outranking the popularity of three State tourism websites.

But success hasn't come without its hardships and Robyn is the first to admit it hasn't been an easy ride.

"Raising capital as a Tasmanian was extremely difficult; doubly so being a woman. Then the business officially launched two weeks before the global financial crisis, forcing us to change strategic direction from business to consumer to business to business. So far it has worked – and we're by no means slowing down."

In fact, Robyn plans on expanding the business even further.

"We already enable travellers to plan and maximise the benefits of visits to vineyards, cellar doors and food producers across more than 60 regions of Australia, and are finding more and more people want to connect with food and wine producers, so we are building on that."

In a clear commitment to that growth, she recently established an unprecedented alliance with motoring giants RACV and RACT, an Australia-first initiative supporting regional Victoria and Tasmania, giving their members – and those of AAA in Australia and worldwide visiting those States – significant cellar door and other discounts.

The initiative has only just been launched, and is already being touted as providing vital economic benefits to regional Victoria, and in particular wineries, many of whom are struggling with wine oversupply, the impact of climate change, and the current high Australian dollar.

Robyn says the award is great recognition of the hard work which has gone into establishing the business.

"Anyone who has started their own business will tell you, success does not come easily. It's about clarity of vision, tenacity, sheer determination and hard work."

Her advice to others considering establishing their own business is simple.



“If you believe in what you are doing and have supporting market evidence, never give up. And aim high, because if you don’t, you’ll never achieve it.”

For more information and high resolution images:

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About VisitVineyards.com

VisitVineyards.com is Australia’s first and largest comprehensive online guide for wine and food travellers, providing up-to-date information, recommendations and reviews of the best regional culinary travel experiences in the country. In two years it has attracted more than 27,000 subscribers and is building its brand amongst culinary travellers.

VisitVineyards.com brings together more than 30,000 wine, food and travel providers across every Australian region to enable wine and food travellers to find out what’s going on, the places not to be missed and information about their next destination. It features a range of current itineraries and Australia’s largest wine and food events calendar.

Up to 20 wine, food and travel writers nationwide have contributed to the site, and VisitVineyards.com has also developed international alliances, including world-renowned wine writer Jancis Robinson MBE.

www.VisitVineyards.com