



## Sam Signs Off as Smithy Steps Up

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Wirra Wirra Senior Winemaker Samantha Connew has tendered her resignation after 10 successful years at the iconic McLaren Vale producer.

Sam joined the winery back in 1999 and worked alongside Ben Riggs for three years, before taking over the mantle of Senior Winemaker in 2001.

Following her promotion, Sam formed a formidable partnership with former Wirra Wirra boss Tim James, culminating in their joint nomination for Australian Gourmet Traveller Wine Magazine Winemaker of the Year in 2004. In the years following Tim's retirement, Sam's star has continued to rise, with Wirra Wirra being named International Red Winemaker of the Year in 2007 at the London International Wine Challenge.

She leaves Wirra Wirra to complete a Masters Degree, fulfil a goal of running the New York Marathon and returning to the world of winemaking in a more hands-on capacity.

Wirra Wirra Managing Director Andrew Kay said Sam should be very proud of her achievements at Wirra Wirra. "Her dedication to quality and detail has seen our reputations grow together and the discipline that she has instilled into the winemaking here will resonate for many years to come," said Kay. "We wish Sam well wherever her career takes her and know that she will continue to excel at whatever she does."

Kay also took the opportunity to announce that Sam's successor would be Wirra Wirra Winemaker Paul Smith. "Call it good fortune, or a masterstroke of succession planning – and this being Wirra Wirra, it's most likely the former," said Kay, "but we have been very fortunate to have someone of Paul's calibre waiting in the wings."

Already a senior winemaker in his own right, Smith joined Wirra Wirra in mid-2008 after a stellar career that had seen him progress through the ranks of Petaluma under the guidance of Brian Croser; Jeffrey Grosset in Clare and culminating in his role as General Manager of the Knappstein winery – also in the Clare Valley.

"Paul has brought an exceptional white wine-making pedigree to Wirra Wirra which has already borne positive results and he has been keen to further develop his winemaking talents in a region renowned for producing world-class reds," said Kay. "His time working with such an exponent as Sam has set him up nicely to take over the number one mantle at Wirra Wirra."

Smith said he was excited about the challenge. "Obviously Sam has left a wonderful legacy and I have been fortunate to witness that first hand over a short period of time," he said. "To now be responsible for a stable of wines with such a formidable reputation is a great honour and a wonderful challenge. We have a talented and enthusiastic winemaking team in the cellar and together we plan to continue to create world class wine at Wirra Wirra."

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