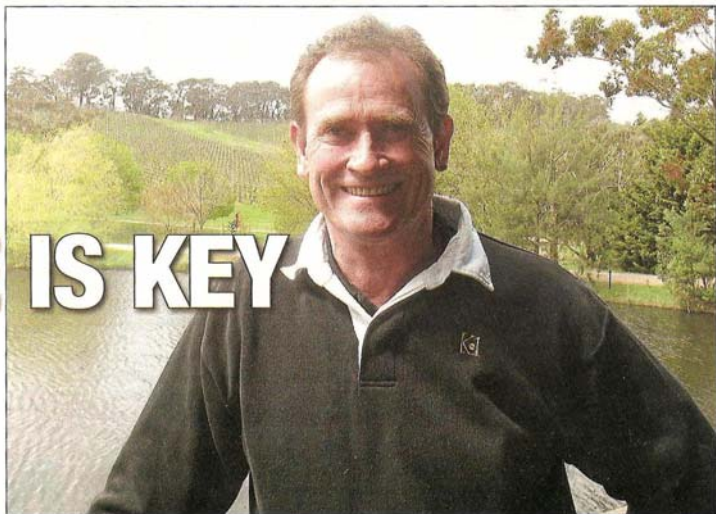


FIFTH-generation descendant of wine industry pioneer Thomas Hardy, Geoff Hardy has his eyes set firmly on the light at the end of the tunnel. He believes pride in the excellence of the local wine and eliminating a negative focus will help the industry turn the corner

CONFIDENCE IS KEY



1 What makes Australia a great place to produce wine?

There's no doubt the southern half of Australia has been blessed climatically with numerous very good viticultural sites with significantly less problems than the old world regions where grapevines have been cultivated for many thousands of years. Lower humidity and relatively dry autumn conditions help enormously with the consistency of flavour and condition of the fruit so that we can dependably show off the impacts of each individual site's terroir on wine flavour. Australia is not held back by traditions and people 'give it a go'.

2 What excites you about the future of the Australian wine industry?

We have a great opportunity to

show the world the impacts of our terroir on grape varieties and clones best suited to each region. There is an important job to do to increase the awareness of the individuality of our wines and winemaking. Our passionate, knowledgeable and gregarious Aussie grape-trekkers will tour the world having fun and showing off the personality and quality of our produce.

3 What changes do you anticipate for the Australian wine industry in the next decade?

During this period of over-production and low grape prices, rationalisation will continue where water availability and quality and poor site selection is impacting on the viability of production. This, along with

factors like ineffective marketing, distribution or a lack of teamwork is likely to force perhaps 25 per cent out of our industry.

4 What challenges does the Australian wine industry face and how well-placed is it to survive and thrive?

We must all show confidence and pride in the excellence of our wine industry and quell any areas of negativity creeping into the dialogue, particularly during this period of financial stress. We still have competitive costs of production while producing

the highest number of awards and accolades of any winegrowing country in the world. This quality value ratio needs to be promoted at every opportunity.

5 If you could invest in any agricultural sector other than winegrapes, which one would it be and why?

Right now it would be South Australian grain with the best crop I have ever seen being harvested – but I guess this is being a little opportunistic in an industry that has just had three bad years. Other agricultural

pursuits I've been interested in getting involved with have been growing truffles, strawberries, olives and blueberries or moving well north into coffee and chocolate - but I think I should stick to what I know well.

6 What is the most important business advice you have received?

There are too many pearls of advice to choose from, each of which has an impact. If I was to choose one it would be to set goals for where you want to be in one, two, five and 10 years so as to focus your plan.