

Sam Connew (Chief of Judges)



A highly experienced and respected winemaker, Samantha Connew launched her Tasmanian solo project, Stargazer, in 2013. Prior to establishing this and her consulting company, Compass Wine Consulting, she was employed working in applied research, development and extension for the AWRI as Manager of the Hunter Valley Node. Before this she was the Winemaker/Manager of boutique Hunter Valley winery, Tower Restate, after working in McLaren Vale for ten years as the Senior winemaker at Wirra Wirra vineyards.

Amongst her many achievements, in 2007 she was awarded International Red Winemaker of the Year at the prestigious International Wine Challenge in London, and in 2008 she was a South Australian finalist in the Telstra Business Women's awards. She has served on the boards of several regional associations, the ASVO and was a founding advisory board member of the Australian Women in Wine Awards.

She is a highly respected wine show judge and has been a panel chair at many regional and capital city wine shows, having completed both the AWAC and LET. In 2014 she was appointed Chair of Judges at the Sydney Royal Wine Show, the first female and the youngest judge in that position.

In 2016 she acquired a small vineyard and olive grove in the Coal River Valley outside of Hobart and is busy planting more vines and learning to drive a tractor.