

Wine Odyssey Forced to Close

Landlord Seeks "More Relevant" tenant

Wine Odyssey opened in October 2008, after a meticulous restoration of a high traffic site which lay derelict in The Rocks, Sydney for more than eight years.

The concept was to offer visitors and Sydney-siders the opportunity to have a "cellar door in the city" experience without the need to travel to the wine regions of Australia, but more importantly Wine Odyssey set out to offer the small all-Australian producers a route to market for their wines. Over the past 8 years Wine Odyssey has become the lifeline for many small Australian wine producers who's production would otherwise have not made it to the major market and had serious consequences for many in a time fraught with economical and agricultural challenges.

It seems that putting their own life savings, exhaustive personal stamina, and the interests of the small businesses that they set out to support, was never enough.

Sadly the privately owned business has today been forced to close its doors due to the decision of the landlord, the state owned, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, who are seeking a "more relevant" tenant for the site.

"Naturally we're gutted. Not only have the decisions of a couple of public servants been able to have such a devastating effect on our business, but its our livelihood, and that of the small wine producers which we represent that hurts us the most." says Angela Brown, owner of Wine Odyssey.

The crippling effect on the business took hold when the landlord forced capital renovations to the premises without offering any rent relief which closed the business for a number of weeks some 18 months ago. At that time Wine Odyssey's owners were assured that a new five year lease was in the pipeline however negotiations for the new lease soured in light of the renovation fiasco which continues and set down for hearing in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal later this month. With the initial lease term having expired and without warning, the landlord put the lease of the premises out to public tender in late 2015, yet only one week ago the fully paid-up, incumbent tenant was told that its bid for a new lease was unsuccessful and given one week to vacate and "make good" having occupied the site for almost eight years.

As it turns out, the owners of Wine Odyssey were sitting on a highly sought after old Australian On/Off Liquor licence in the middle of a lock out zone, which wasn't known to the landlord until it was pointed out to the landlord by Wine Odyssey, having a further devastating effect on the negotiations for a new lease.

"While we are completely crippled, mentally, physically, emotionally and financially, we hold our heads high, in the knowing that we have done what we can do for the Australian wine industry, and small business. We pride ourselves on the fact that we always paid our suppliers, staff and rent, and we have put our all into developing what was a great little business on so many fronts, that we put our heart and soul into." continues Angela.

"We regret that our Wine Odyssey journey has had to come to an end under these circumstances, but we had to draw a line in the sand somewhere. It feels like the big end of town have some sort of power over us little people in the knowing that we won't put up the money to fight what we believe is unconscionable. And that's another win for the Authorities and certain individuals within these Authorities who's conduct is questionable. We can sleep at night knowing we gave it our all." adds co-owner Lynette Rae.

"We sincerely thank all our supporters; customers, staff, colleagues and suppliers who have been of great strength to us over the past 8 years. We'll see you on our next journey, whatever that may be." the pair concede.

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