

Dr Richard Smart

Philip

Kia ora, good afternoon or good morning everyone (depending on where you are)

My name is Philip Gregan and I am CEO of New Zealand Winegrowers and it is my pleasure to welcome everyone to this on-line event to induct Dr Richard Smart as a Fellow of NZ Winegrowers.

My task is simple, I am going to give you a little background on the criteria to be elected a Fellow of New Zealand Winegrowers. I will then hand over to our Chair Fabian Yukich who will induct Richard, and then we will hear from Richard's daughter ... who will speak on his behalf.

To be made a Fellows, recipients must have provided meritorious service to our industry and they must be distinguished by their eminence, talents, innovation or contributions. In short, Fellows must leave their mark on our industry.

When we look at the list of Fellows they have certainly done that – from the likes of John Buck, Kate Radburnd, Peter and Joe Babich, Hermann and Agnes Seifried to more recent inductees such as Nick Hoskins, Xan Harding and Michael Brajkovich who were inducted last year. All our Fellows have made a tremendous and lasting impact on our sector.

Fellowship is the highest honour that can be granted from our industry to an individual. It recognises the contribution they make to New Zealand wine's standing on the world stage.

And on that note I will hand over to Fabian Yukich, Chair of New Zealand Winegrowers

Fabian

Welcome everyone to the induction of Richard as a Fellow of New Zealand Winegrowers.

Richard, I am pleased to advise, that at its meeting in December 2024, the New Zealand Winegrowers Board agreed to induct you as a Fellow. The vote in support was unanimous which is testimony to the high esteem in which you are held by winemakers and growers across the length and breadth of New Zealand.

After a distinguished academic career in Australia, Richard arrived in New Zealand in 1982, a pivotal time in our sector, as he took up the role of National Viticulture Scientist with MAF, a position held many years before by Romeo Bragato.

The early 1980's was a pivotal time for the industry we were struggling with phylloxera, , deregulation of markets, and increased competition from Australia under CER.

What was our future? Where was our future? How do we get through the tough times? These were the questions being asked.

Vision was needed at the same time as immediate challenges were addressed, notably the vinepull of 1986, which saw 25% of the vineyards in New Zealand pulled out of the ground.

But tough times were also times of opportunity. Wineries were increasingly focused on producing higher quality wines grown in New Zealand's distinctive cool climate, not simply imitating Europe. This at the same time as consumers in English speaking markets globally turned to wine in large numbers, lifting demand and creating new market opportunities for producers, including those from this country.

It was into this tumultuous environment that Richard landed in New Zealand, bringing a vision, a new and dynamic focus on viticulture to drive grape and wine quality, particularly in areas such as vine improvement and canopy management. A great communicator, as well as a scientist, he cajoled and badgered producers to think differently, to understand that they were growing grapes in a cool climate, and to make informed, science-led decisions about the design of their vineyards and how they grew their grapes, in order to maximise quality and profitability. Through his research and his communications he led a fundamental re-think of how grapes were grown in our industry – and it was that change that underpinned the surge in New Zealand wine quality from the 1980's onwards.

Fuelled by his modern and science led vision, Richard oversaw a significant vine importation programme which was catalogued in the National Grapevine Register, significantly improving the quality of the base vine material available to producers. He founded the New Zealand Society for Viticulture and Oenology which is still a force today in the industry. He chaired the Second International Conference on Cool Climate Viticulture and Oenology held in Auckland in 1986. The Conference was a huge success, due in large part to the unrelenting drive and enthusiasm that Richard brought to the project. The Conference helped to launch the modern New Zealand wine industry onto the global stage.

During his time in New Zealand Richard was relentless letting nothing get in his way, not even cancer. Colleagues reference him turning up at meetings connected to a drip and a tripod as he continued to urge the industry to become more modern, more science based.

Richard's full time commitment to New Zealand ended in 1990 when he returned to Australia, but his influence lived on.

A significant part of his legacy was that he had inspired a new generation of viticulturists and researchers in this country, but he also continued to consult to various companies in New

Zealand for many years. In 1991 he authored '*Sunlight into Wine*' which strongly reflected his New Zealand experience; the book received an award from the OIV and is still an important reference to this day. Over the years, he has continued to prod and provoke the producers to think about the big issues, including climate change, confronting our sector.

The mark Richard has left on our industry is indelible. The way we think about our vineyards and how we grow our grapes in the 2020's, still reflects the principles that he espoused 40 years ago. Equally New Zealand left an indelible mark on Richard, and we regard him as one of us.

This enduring, mutually beneficial relationship, changed the New Zealand grape and wine industry, and makes you Richard, a deserving Fellow of New Zealand Winegrowers.

Warm congratulations from all your friends and colleagues in New Zealand.

Please place the medallion around Richard's neck.