



# First lady of wine helps the minister

■ Eliza Brown makes her mark on the future of winemaking domestically and overseas

## By Jodie Flemming

WHAT do you do when the Federal Minister for Agriculture taps you on the shoulder and asks if you would be interested in representing Australia's wine industry on the inaugural Agricultural Industry Advisory Council?

Naturally, you say 'yes' and become one of the 10 hand-picked council members who will assist Barnaby Joyce and the Federal Government in its endeavors to reduce red tape and to drive regulatory reform.

As the only Victorian appointed to the council, chief executive officer and director of Peter R. Brown Family Vineyards (All Saints Estate and St Leonards Vineyard) Eliza Brown said she was "honored" to be representing the wine industry and felt it was a "fantastic way to give back to the agricultural industry".

"When Barnaby Joyce was travelling around during the 2013 election campaign he visited All Saints," Ms Brown said.

"I started talking to him about the winery and what I was involved in with the industry.

"After the election he called me and asked if I would be interested in this job on the Agricultural Industry Advisory Council.

"Our job is really to help the minister to look at the agricultural industry across Australia, which is so diverse, and provide

the government with a broad understanding of the industry.

"Things like offering

opinions on what returns are like for each sector of agriculture and what we can do to make those better and how to create investment opportunities, like Australia's export future," she said.

Eliza Brown, with siblings Angela and Nicholas, form the fourth generation wine family who own All Saints Estate and its nearby sister winery, St Leonards Vineyard.

All Saints Estate was established in 1861 by Scottish owners George Sutherland Smith and John Banks who harvested their first vintage in the midst of the Victorian gold rush.

The winery is located on the banks of the Murray River in Walgaunyah and been owned by the Brown family since 1992.

The historic winery features the iconic All Saints Estate castle, which was classified in 1965 by the Historic Buildings Council.

It also has a butting hall and cellar that houses the Indigo Chinese Company and the Chinese Dormitory.

Besides her commitments to the newly formed Agricultural Industry Advisory Council, CEO of All Saints and director and board member of the famous Brown Brothers Wines, Ms Brown is a mother of two girls, seven

year-old Coco and eight-month-old Charlotte who keep her "exceptionally busy" while her husband, Denis Lacey runs his Melbourne restaurant 'Bottega', commuting back home for some of the week.

However, she did not always work for the family

business, having studied photography, travelled around Europe and obtaining an Advanced Business Diploma in Advertising.

She then worked for a number of advertising agencies in Melbourne, and in 2001, after many years of her father, Peter Brown, trying to persuade her to work for him she decided to move back home and help her father at the vineyard.

In 2005, Peter Brown was tragically killed in a motor bike accident, leaving Eliza and her siblings with the huge decision of whether to take on the challenge of managing the vineyards themselves.

"I am so glad that I came to work with him when I did," Eliza said.

"He seemed to have a grand plan for us, but we just didn't know it.

"He knew I would fall in love with the whole idea when I got there and he was right.

"Agriculture is not easy and Dad never explained that to me, but I am so glad I did it," she said.

One of the things Eliza loves about working in the wine industry is its diversity, something you do not get in many other industries.

"Wine is so interesting," Eliza said.

"We are planting, growing, making wine, marketing and then selling.

"You have a finger in every pie.

"It is so complicated too.

"You have to understand the land all the way through to marketing and being a sales person.

"It's a real juggle and

you don't know what's going to happen every day.

"That's why agricultural people are so resilient, they are at the mercy of the gods," she said.

One of the hardest parts of Eliza's role is to source good staff, particularly marketing roles that are difficult to fill in the country.

"I have a great team of people who work here, but the tough part is getting more," Eliza said.

"When they do come and work here they stay for a long time, which is great.

"I guess that's a pro and a con.

"Marketing roles are hard to fill in the country.

"We have an international crew here and it is fantastic and we are all like a family," she said.

The family's vision for both properties is to continue growing, making and selling fine wine, and to make a mark on the future landscape of Australian winemaking domestically and overseas.

This year marks the family's 150 years in winemaking.

To pay homage a number of events will run in March at both the All Saints Estate and St Leonards Vineyard including Tastes of Rutherglen 2014, Twilight Dinner in the Vines and the Regional World's Longest Lunch.

And in what has been a "tough time" for everyone in agriculture thanks to the Australian dollar, the celebrations have come at a great time.

"In agriculture we need to look at things like what infrastructure we need for the future," Eliza said.

