

SENSE OF PLACE

Until two or three years ago few people would have had a clue where Sinclair's Gully was, or the environmental mini-revolution taking place there.

WORDS NIGEL HOPKINS PHOTOGRAPHY TONY LEWIS

All of a sudden this tiny Adelaide Hills winery has been showered with accolades, including major tourism and landcare awards, and has started attracting pilgrims drawn both by the wine and the environmental experience that its owners, Sue and Sean Delaney, have created.

Just over a couple of kilometres from the landmark Scenic Hotel at Norton Summit, after the bitumen has given way to a smooth dirt road surrounded by candlebark gums, you will find the 11 hectare property. Purchased by the couple 12 years ago, they started to clear vast amounts of blackberry, broom and gorse from the property a year later, and established a vineyard barely one hectare in size.

Along the way they discovered more than 150 native plant species and 66 bird species, many of them rare or endangered. It wasn't a difficult choice for them to elect to use sustainable land management practices in the vineyard, reintroducing native grasses across the vineyard floor.

Sinclair's Gully is now the first eco-certified cellar door in the Adelaide Hills and one of only two nationally. The key elements of their sustainability program include biodiversity conservation including weed and feral animal control, bird and plant surveys – most recently a bat survey – water conservation, 'zero waste' management, energy efficiency and a commitment to volunteer environmental work in the local community.

"We love this place and the animals that live here," Sean says. "On one hand Australia has a terrible record of land clearance, extinctions and introduced pests, but on the other you have places like Sinclair's Gully, just 20 minutes from a

capital city. How can you not be driven to protect it? We knew our focus on our environment made us different to other vineyards and cellar doors. Part of the profit we make from the sale of our cool climate Adelaide Hills wine is re-invested in the protection and restoration of our bushland, ensuring it will continue to be enjoyed well into the future.

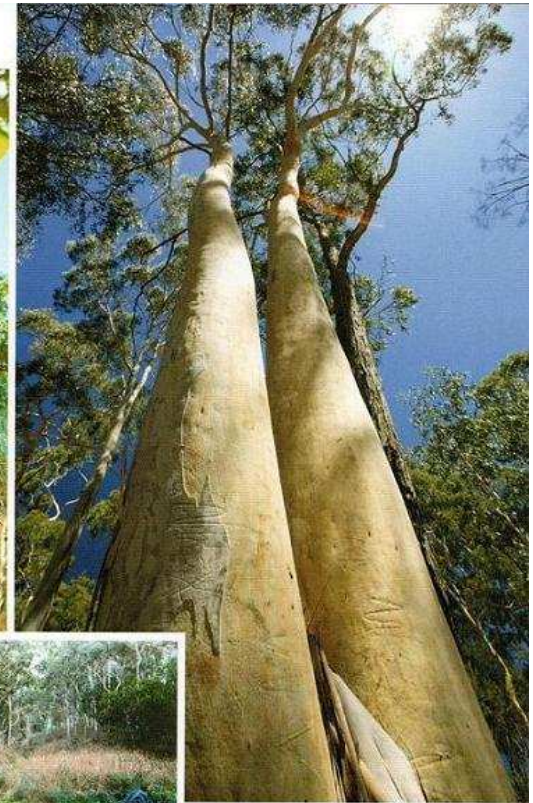
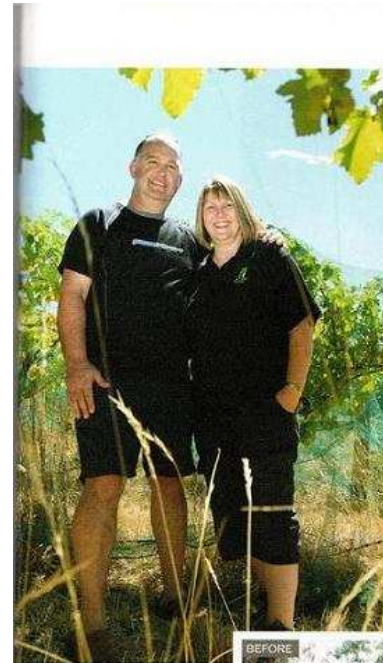
"When you live in a candlebark woodland and you understand how rare and special these places are, you feel a very strong sense of custodial responsibility to care for it," Sean continues.

"Our eco-certification was a way to differentiate ourselves as a business that is sustainably managing the natural environment, is an active part of a hills community and provides an authentic wilderness and natural experience for customers."

Keen to show off their pristine environment, and also to establish a profitable point of difference with other cellar doors, the Delaneys now run sunset wine tastings during the Summer months, when glasses of cool climate Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Shiraz and Cabernet/Merlot are accompanied by platters of Hills produce and the raucous cries of yellow-tail black cockatoos. In Spring they take wildflower walks, seeking out native orchids and lilies.

"I think the key thing here is they are looking for an experience, not a just drink," Sean says. "Our customers relate to what we are doing. They're interested in the place, its history, the birds and animals that live here, but most of all they get an insight into us."

"It's a very personal first-hand experience of meeting a family who are doing their own thing, their own way on their patch."



Authenticity, for Sinclair's Gully, is about allowing people to experience the natural and human aspects of the gully for themselves. Sean believes the Adelaide Hills provides a unique opportunity to bring together wine, food and the love of a wonderful environment.

"The Hills communities are still very rural in nature," he says. "The CFS, Landcare, church, sport, local pubs and primary producers provide strong cultural threads

that tie a Hills community together. In my view these are weakened or cease to exist in a more suburban environment. Our local Hills community is fiercely proud and supportive of us. It's been amazing and quite humbling to be given such support. But I think its because locals see this as their gully and their own cellar door."

"But you don't have to live locally to feel the same bond. We have customers who regularly travel from all over the world to Sinclair's Gully. They share exactly the same bond with the place, and us, as our geographic locals do. They just have further to travel."

The wine industry is a difficult business to be in at the



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moment for many producers, but the added value of tourism provides Sinclair's Gully with an edge that will help them sidestep any crisis.

"There's a strong future for eco tourism," Sean adds. "People want depth to their experiences. They remember the genuine emotional responses they have to people and places. I think people will seek out and find authentic experiences like the one we provide."

For more information on wine tastings and tours, contact Sean and Sue Delaney on 08 83901995.