MEDIA RELEASE – For immediate release

ICCWS “Excellence In Environmental Sustainability” Award 2026 Winner Announced

Victorian Winery, Wine by Sam, Wins Big on Sustainability

Strathbogie Ranges winery Wine by Sam has won the International Cool Climate Wine Show’s (ICCWS) 2026 Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award (EESA), sponsored by AGL.

Owners, Sam Plunkett and Bronwyn Dunwoodie, accepted the award at the ICCWS Awards Dinner in Melbourne in September, celebrating the show’s 25th year.

The Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award recognises Australian wine producers working hard to achieve lasting sustainable outcomes across viticulture and winemaking. Entrants are assessed on sustainability practices, waste reduction and recycling, carbon footprint reduction, innovation and a demonstrated commitment to measuring and improving their environmental performance.

As part of the recognition, Wine by Sam will receive the ICCWS Sustainability Prize 2026, a bespoke creative content and marketing package valued at up to $5,000. Developed in consultation with the winery, the package will help bring its sustainability story to life through tailored content for digital, promotional and wine industry channels.

The initiative reflects ICCWS’s commitment to celebrating sustainability leadership and helping winning producers share their achievements more widely.

The judges found that Wine by Sam presented a compelling and comprehensive picture of how sustainability is being firmly embedded across its winery operations and its relationships with external winegrowers.

“Their reporting with Sustainability Winegrowing Australia clearly demonstrated progress and provided thoughtful context behind the numbers,” noted chief judge Hayley Purbrick, Sustainability & Innovation Lead at Wine Victoria.

“We were particularly impressed by the scale of their investment in renewable energy relative to the size of the business. Despite devastating fires experienced across their region early in 2026, the Wine by Sam team has maintained its commitment to sustainability action and transparent reporting, an achievement we warmly commend.”

A family legacy with sustainability at its heart

The Plunkett family has been part of the Victorian wine industry since the 1960s, when Sam’s father, Alan, first planted grapes in the Strathbogie Ranges wine region.

Established in 2012, Wine by Sam sources fruit from growers across Victoria. The winery is located in the Central Victorian town of Seymour.

In its award entry, the winery demonstrated its commitment to renewable energy, with a 99.85kW photovoltaic solar system installed in 2018 and a further 104kW solar installation completed in July 2026.

Chief winemaker Sam Plunkett has also adopted a range of practical sustainability measures in the winemaking process. These include using flotation rather than more conventional cold-settling techniques to separate solids from white grape juice, reducing the electricity required to chill the juice.

Other initiatives include using lightweight glass bottles to reduce transport costs and carbon emissions, and reducing wine carton sizes through the use of recycled cardboard.

Progress in recycling, repurposing and renewable inputs continues, with Sam reporting that Wine by Sam is on track to improve its environmental impact and work towards carbon neutrality.

Sharing resources is another important part of the winery’s approach. By sharing tanks, labelling and storage facilities, Wine by Sam helps reduce the need for unnecessary winery expansion.

“The sharing of such resources is important for sustainability,” said Sam Plunkett, “as it reduces the financial and environmental costs of the winemaking process and makes it more accessible to the greater industry.”

Every sustainable step counts

At Wine by Sam, sustainability extends beyond major infrastructure investments to everyday decisions throughout the winery and vineyard.

From repurposing grape marc for compost or stock feed and adding coffee grounds to the compost heap, to encouraging bird and insect life in the winery garden, the business demonstrates how a collection of considered actions can contribute to a broader sustainability commitment.

Wine by Sam has also provided the only public EV charger in Seymour, supporting electric vehicle access in the local community. The winery is preparing to install a second EV charger on site shortly, extending its commitment to practical sustainability initiatives.

These investments reflect a philosophy that sustainability is an ongoing journey, with opportunities to improve continually across energy, resources, production and community engagement.

“Receiving this award will allow Wine by Sam the opportunity to continue being a pioneer of sustainable growth,” said Sam Plunkett, “making it more achievable to others in the Australian wine industry and further cementing Australia’s position internationally as the agricultural powerhouse we pride ourselves on.”

The EESA is part of ICCWS’s ongoing commitment to recognising sustainability leadership and encouraging Australian wine producers to share their progress and inspire positive change across the industry.

About the International Cool Climate Wine Show (ICCWS)

Celebrating its 25th year in 2026, the International Cool Climate Wine Show (ICCWS) recognises and promotes excellence in cool climate wines from Australia, New Zealand and beyond.

ICCWS is proud to be the only wine show to offer an Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award, sponsored by AGL, recognising producers leading the way in sustainable viticulture and winemaking.

Find out more: https://www.internationalcoolclimatewineshow.com/



Brendan Weinert (left) of AGL & Hayley Purbrick (right) EESA chief judge, presents the Excellence in Environmental Sustainability Award to Sam Plunkett and Bronwyn Dunwoodie, Wine by Sam.



The Plunkett family of Wine by Sam celebrates their win at the International Cool Climate Wine Show (ICCWS) Awards Dinner in Melbourne, September 2026.



Sam Plunkett and Bronwyn Dunwoodie, Wine by Sam