



*Sound environmental management is good business*  
**CAWTHRON MARLBOROUGH  
ENVIRONMENT  
AWARDS**  
2019

Sponsored by



## **JUDGES' REPORT**

### **BUSINESS INNOVATION**

#### **VINES VILLAGE CAFÉ, WINE CELLAR AND STORES**

|                    |                                     |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>INTERVIEWED</b> | Jeff and Tim Fulton                 |
| <b>DATE</b>        | November 16, 2018                   |
| <b>JUDGES</b>      | Alec McNeil, Helen Smale, Bev Doole |

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Jeff and Tim Fulton are constantly coming up with ways to make the Vines Village Café, Wine Cellar and Stores a place where families and tourists feel welcome and the environment is looked after as well.

The twin brothers own the property and run the Vines Village Café and associated beer, wine, and accommodation businesses. There are also leased premises offering boutique local products, gifts, quality clothing and cycle hire.

In the past five years they have transformed the property with native plantings, garden beds, a small lake and relaxed seating areas. Behind the scenes their efforts have gone into waste reduction, recycling, supporting local producers and hosting community fundraisers.

Each project is approached with a strong environmental and business perspective, based on personal ethos and a desire to keep improving.



They see great potential for Marlborough as a cycling destination and have been instrumental in setting up Ride the Golden Mile cycle trail that connects cellar doors and restaurants in the Rapaura/Renwick area.

The judges were impressed with the brothers' open and co-operative approach to business. Rather than focusing on protecting their slice of the market, they're growing the tourism pie to be bigger for all, backed by a strong belief in looking after the environment.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Jeff and Tim Fulton bought the Vines Village on Rapaura Road in 2013.

Jeff has a background in music promotion and events and Tim is based in Wellington and is a qualified winemaker with considerable experience in wine tourism and marketing. Together they manage the Café, Village initiatives and future projects.

They bring their personal values to their business and are keen to create a family-friendly venue that gets children off their devices and out into the garden and playing area. Even the family dog is catered for with the Dog Parking Area, including beds and water bowls, that allows pets to be part of family outings.

Vines Village Café is Qualmark Silver certified and the tenant companies are encouraged to meet the same standard.

The Café focuses on locally produced, quality ingredients. That includes veges and herbs from the on-site garden, honey from the FlowHive and eggs from their chooks, who get café food scraps in return.

The extensive gardens have been planted as part of Council's Tui to Town programme to attract native birds on to the Wairau Plain. As well as the biodiversity values, the shade and calming outlook is welcomed by customers. Jeff and Tim's efforts have been recognised by twice winning the Garden Marlborough best commercial garden award.

Based on EFTPOS sales, it's estimated that Vines Village and Café hosts 200,000 people a year, making it the biggest attraction in Marlborough.



Environmental practices include:

- Water efficiency – water is pumped up from their own bore. Waste water is filtered and UV treated and irrigated on to the gardens
- Proposed gin distillery to be built from recycled containers. A closed water system will ensure no wastewater
- Use of grape marc (wine waste product) as distillery's raw spirit
- Waste paper, plastic and glass is separated and reused if possible
- Recycle bottle tops for Kidney Kids
- Takeaway food is in compostable bags and they encourage regular customers to use reuseable coffee cups

- Mainly stock organic drinks. No longer sell Coca Cola (despite better profit margin)
- 90% of drinks are in glass containers or recyclable cans, not plastic
- Cardboard drinking straws have replaced plastic
- Kitchen cooking oil is collected for conversion into biofuel
- Recycling bins inside and outside the café
- Food waste to chooks and compost
- Organic growing philosophy – no spray on vege gardens, hand weeding (no chemicals)
- Native plants and gardens provide biodiversity
- Cluster planting of natives to suppress weeds
- Garden beds and children's playground built from mostly recycled materials, thanks to the efforts of maintenance man Bryce Abelen
- Support for local producers including stocking Marlborough olive oil, kombucha and cheese
- Promote cycling for tourists, reducing carbon emissions

Sustainability also involves treating staff well and being connected to the community. Several local school students are employed in the kitchen and given ongoing training and encouragement. Vines Village Café hosts fundraisers for Renwick and Rapaura Schools and Jeff is a firm believer in “paying it forward”.

The wide reach into the community is good for their business and good for the community. Activities include: A book exchange fridge, yoga in the amphitheatre, live music, outdoor movies, an annual beer festival and wedding fair, as well as events that link to Marlborough's Wine and Food Festival and the Easter air show.

Vines Village Café was named the Best Environmental/Sustainable Business in the national Hospitality Awards for Excellence in 2018.

## PROBLEMS AND HOW THEY HAVE BEEN TACKLED

*Lack of Council services:* There is no rubbish collection, no reticulated water, no kerbside recycling and no sewerage. The response has been to provide for themselves:

- All recycling is sorted and the collected by a contractor. Jeff and Tim are working with tenants to reduce their waste and recycle more as well
- Rubbish collection is expensive, which is a strong incentive to reduce waste
- Water comes from a bore and is filtered after use for irrigating the garden
- Septic tank to process sewage
- Installed own fibre connection to provide internet access

*Seasonal business:* Summer is very busy, especially with the growing number of cruise ship visits, and winter is a lot slower. This can impact on customers when overly busy and also creates staffing issues during the quiet period. The Fultons have taken a multi-pronged approach to the seasonality issue:

- Expanded the indoor seating area to cater for busloads of visitors and encourage people to have a walk in the gardens
- Installed an Express Kitchen for takeaway customers
- Working on raising their profile through use of social media

- Attracting local custom by supporting school fundraisers and providing entertainment events throughout the year
- Developed new wholesale businesses with the brewery and deli, which also provide employment for staff during the off-season
- Work to retain staff by providing training and treating them fairly

*Competitive market:* There are more than 30 cellar doors in Marlborough and many other cafés. Vines Village has diversified with the brewery and planned distillery on site to provide a point of difference. The gardens and playground have created a family-friendly option, where parents can relax and children can play nearby.

## SUMMARY

Jeff and Tim Fulton are independent thinkers who know how to connect with other businesses and their community to constantly improve what they're doing.

Their personal belief in providing locally produced food and drink in a family-friendly setting drives their business and brings benefits to their customers and to the environment.

The native plantings and developed gardens provide biodiversity in the heart of vineyard country and are an example of how to improve the landscape and attract customers.

Recycling and waste reduction measures are woven throughout their business.



The judges were impressed with Jeff and Tim's open management style and confidence to work with others. The Ride the Golden Mile is a model for other sectors to follow in bringing together like-minded businesses and improving opportunities for all involved.

Their innovations address a wide range of environmental issues while helping promote their business and the Marlborough region. The Vines Village Café, Wine Cellar and Stores is showing how to achieve economic development in tune with the environment – not at the expense of the environment.

## SUGGESTIONS

- Feature New Zealand imagery in the posters on the café walls, e.g. Marlborough Sounds rather than Greek Islands
- Share your environmental initiatives with customers by providing information on café tables (table talk) where people have time to absorb the messages.
- Encourage people to wander in the gardens while their food/coffee is being prepared. Provide personal buzzers that let them know when their food is ready.
- Look to broaden your reach into lower decile schools, such as Mayfield, exposing more children to healthy food and environmental initiatives. Offer as a field trip for children and parents

- As solar technology and battery storage improves, consider installing PV panels at Vines Village. Marlborough District Council is due to extend its energy efficiency funding service to solar panels in 2019). Renwick School has an extensive solar power system and may have some pointers
- Harness Jeff and Tim's style of thinking and good practices more widely in Marlborough. Contact the council about being involved in the Smart and Connected programme. Share your experience with the Chamber of Commerce
- Install water collection off the roof for irrigating the gardens
- Pursue plans to provide an electric car charging station