

Chapter 4

Australia: Australian Winery Ballandean Estate Wines Champion Women in Business and Leadership

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Ballandean Estate Wines is Queensland's oldest family-run winery, passing through five generations (Ballandean Estate Wines, 2023b). Along with her father, Josephine Puglisi built the foundation of the business in 1942, in the rural south-east region of the Granite Belt. The business was handed down to Angelo Puglisi and his wife Mary in 1968, and the next generation daughters Leeanne and Robyn (Fig. 1) with their husbands continue to grow the organisation to this day. In all facets of business, from production to sales and business management, the family business, with women in leadership roles, has continued to uplift the quality of Queensland wines globally.

Introduction

Gender equality is central to social sustainability and the growth of organisations (Leire, 2021). As reported in the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2022), even though more women have been moving into paid work over the last decades and into leadership positions in industry, challenges are still present for women and girls around the world. The Global Gender Gap Report testified that within the top 10 economies for closing gender gaps, Australia is not present in the list in 2022. For such a developed nation, and with neighbouring country New Zealand obtaining a position in the top 10, this highlights the need for more Australian businesses to follow in the footsteps of Ballandean Estate Wines and champion women in business and leadership positions in their respective industries. Globally, achieving gender equality by 2030 is not within

Attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality, 37–56



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Fig. 1. Leanne and Robyn – Owners of Ballandean Estate Wines.

reach. None of the 18 indicators of SDG#5 ‘met or almost met’ the targets and only one is ‘close to target’. Ballandean Estate Wines champions gender equality by promoting women in managerial positions (Target 5.5.2) and offering women access and ownership to agricultural land (Target 5.a). In recent times, women have grown their representation within leadership positions in organisations and subsequently share innovative and dynamic viewpoints ([Women in Family Business, 2023](#)). The aim of this case study is to share insights into how Ballandean Estate Wines empowers women in business and leadership, offering benchmark tools and best practice initiatives for family businesses in Australia and around the world.

Vision and Mission

A respected Australian wine brand in the International Marketplace. A regular, informed choice for restaurateurs, wine shops and customers alike. A great family business.

([Ballandean Estate Wines, 2023a](#))

Products and/or Services Offered by Ballandean Estate Wines

Ballandean Estate Wines is home to two vineyards. Ballandean Estate, the original vineyard, is situated 800m above sea level and situated in Ballandean. This vineyard grows shiraz, merlot, cabernet sauvignon, sauvignon blanc, malbec, semillon, cabernet franc, Sylvaner, Malvasia, fiano, Nebbiolo, white muscat and muscat giallo. Bellevue is the second vineyard owned by the family, situated 850m above sea level at Girraween. This vineyard grows shiraz, saperavi, cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, semillon, cabernet franc, durif, fiano, black and white muscat. Both vineyards have free-draining granitic soils and a cool climate.

In 2018, the family released the Ballandean Estate 50th Anniversary Opera Block Shiraz, which was a milestone for the Granite Belt region, the Puglisi family and Queensland wines. The 50th anniversary of the Shiraz was a remarkable achievement as most wine producers pulled up their vineyards in the 1980s but Mary and Angelo held true to their vision. Further, it was uncommon for Queensland wine producers to establish Shiraz, which was most popular in well-established wine regions of Barossa and Hunter Valley in Australia – yet Angelo rose to the challenge.

As well as traditional wines, the Puglisi family values innovation and expresses the unique characteristics of the Granite Belt region through alternative varietals – Saperavi (Fig. 2), delivering 13 new Strange Birds (a unique wine). In 2019, the



Fig. 2. Saperavi Varietal.

family launched Queensland's 27th Strange Bird, Malvasa, the first to be released within the region.

In addition to selling wine as a product, Ballandean Estate Wines also offers an experience through the Cellar Door, as well as the Barrelroom. In the Barrelroom Wine Lounge, visitors can taste wines, as well as enjoy platters and cheese boards (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Visitors Enjoying the Estate.

Background to Ballandean Estate Wines

In 1911, Salvatore Cardillo migrated from Sicily to Australia in search of a good future, and in 1930, after time in northern Queensland, purchased the Ballandean farm, which had vegetable and fruit crops. Together with their daughter Josephine, they cleared the farmland and used the table grapes to make wine and sold it to other Europeans living in Queensland. Winemaking at the Ballandean farm was established in the early 1930s. Josephine married Alfio Puglisi, and she went on to build the foundation of Ballandean Estate with her father and husband over four decades. In 1942, Josephine negotiated with the Australian army to supply their crops to feed the army as an alternative to sending her husband and father to internment camps.



In 1968, when Angelo and Mary Puglisi took over the farm from Angelo's parents, they recognised the opportunity for a new industry and began to make wine commercially. They replanted the vineyard, this time with wine grapes instead of table grapes, becoming one of the first wine grape vineyards in the region. In 1972, the cellar door was opened to the public. The next generation, daughters Leeanne and Robyn, with husbands Mario and Ian, have played an important role in developing Ballandean Estate Wines over the years. [Table 1](#) depicts the family business by outlining the generations, roles and characteristics of each member.

Along with these key family members, Leeanne highlights the contribution of Angela Crema, Mary's mother, to the business. Angela helped to run the business and was very busy with the cellar door. She didn't speak English very well but that didn't stop her. She would babysit the children, or cook meals, to allow Mary and Angelo to grow the business. People remember Nonna Crema as she was a big part of the business and had a big presence. She didn't shy away from hard work. She was a fantastic role model and offered so much support to the family and was a strong contributor to the family dynamic.

List of Awards won by the family:

- [Angelo] 1977 Churchill Fellowship to study winemaking in Europe,
- [Angelo] 1995 Paul Harris Fellow Award for community service,
- [Angelo] 1998 Tourism Ambassador Award,
- [Angelo] 1999 Ambassadors for the Wesley Hospital,
- [Angelo] 2001 Qld Tourism Yellow Pages Business Directions Award,
- [Angelo] 2001 Centenary Medal,
- [Angelo] 2001 Qld Wine Press Club Most Significant Contribution Qld Wine Industry,
- [Angelo] 2003 Queensland Great – awarded by Queensland Government,
- [Angelo] 2003 Bassett Award – awarded by Queensland Wine Industry Association,
- [Angelo] 2006 Dante Alighieri Society Award for the diffusion of the Italian Language and Culture,
- [Angelo] 2005–2011 Australia Day Ambassador,
- [Angelo] 2011 Attended lunch in Brisbane with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Duke of Edinburgh as a guest of the Governor of Queensland,
- [Mary] Bassett Award – awarded by Queensland Wine Industry Association,
- [Mary] 1995 Paul Harris Fellow Award for community service,
- [Leeanne] Paul Harris Fellow Award for community service,
- [Leeanne] Bassett Award – awarded by Queensland Wine Industry Association,
- [Leeanne] Qld Wine Press Club Award for contribution by an individual to the Qld Wine Industry,
- [Robyn] Paul Harris Fellow Award for community service,
- [Mario] Paul Harris Fellow Award for community service.

Table 1. Generations of the Family.

Generation Role Family Member/s	About (Taken from Ballandean Estate Wines, 2023a)	
Generation 1 Estate Founders Salvatore Cardillo		<p>In 1911, Salvatore Cardillo decided it was time to leave Sicily and emigrate to Australia. Salvatore lived in Far North Queensland and worked on the railways for three years. To convince his wife she needed to join him in Australia, he returned to Sicily in 1914, but on the boat journey home World War I broke out. It wasn't until 1919 that Salvatore could continue his dream to live in Australia. He convinced his oldest daughter to accompany him, and they bought a sugar cane farm in Moresby, south of Innisfail. Subsequently, two more daughters arrived to live in Australia, leaving their mother and two smaller siblings back in Sicily. Mrs Cardillo had motherly hopes for her only son entering the priesthood, and grave concerns that Australia was not the place for Catholic ambition.</p> <p>The success of the farm in Moresby and its subsequent sale gave Salvatore the seed money to move to Stanthorpe with his daughter Josephine, where Italians had already started to farm fruits and vegetables. In 1930, Salvatore and Josephine bought the Ballandean farm, on which they grew crops of vegetables, fruits and table grapes. These grapes were made into wine for the first time in 1932.</p>
Generation 2 Estate Founders Alfio and Josephine Puglisi		<p>Salvatore's daughter Josephine was a true Australian pioneer and businesswoman. Arriving in Australia from Sicily at just 12 years of age, she went on to build the foundation of Ballandean Estate with her</p>

Generation 3
Estate Owner
Angelo Puglisi



father Salvatore and husband Alfio over four decades. She stared down the Australian army demanding to put her husband and father in internment camps and surrender farm machinery during World War II, and instead, she negotiated a deal to supply their crops to feed the Army as an alternative. Inspirational!

Alfio Puglisi arrived in Stanthorpe in 1939, he also had come to Australia from Sicily seeking a better life in the 1920s. He had lived in North Queensland and spent many years in the cane fields. Alfio had been left a widower when his first wife died during childbirth. He met Josephine while working in Stanthorpe at a regular Sunday afternoon Italian gathering and subsequently joined his new wife and his father-in-law in the family business.

Angelo Puglisi is the founder of Queensland’s wine industry and the son of hardworking and passionate Italians, Josephine and Alfio Puglisi. He has spent his entire life on Ballandean Estate, and over the past 80 years, his family business has been at the forefront of developing and promoting the Queensland’s wine industry.

In his early twenties, fruit and vegetable grower Angelo Puglisi had a vision to develop a viable and sustainable commercial wine industry in the Granite Belt region, inspired to pursue this dream from a young age.

In 1968, Angelo planted a block of Shiraz vines with his new wife Mary on the Opera Block, after purchasing the farm from his parents in 1967. Angelo’s decision to convert from table grapes to wine grapes was brave, and he and Mary worked hard to produce wines of quality and create a market for their Granite Belt grown wines.

Angelo has a strong sense of community and commitment to family.

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Generation Role Family Member/s	About (Taken from Ballandean Estate Wines, 2023a)
Generation 3 Estate Owner Mary Puglisi	<p>He has been a Rotarian since 1971 and continues to be an active member, supporting charities throughout the community.</p> <p>Angelo's awards and highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1977 Churchill Fellowship to study Winemaking and Wine Tourism in Europe; • 1995 Paul Harris Fellow Award for Community Service; • 1998 Tourism Ambassador Award. <p>Mary has forged her way as a wine pioneer since her 1968 marriage at just 19 years of age to Angelo Puglisi. Together they purchased the winery and vineyard from Angelo's parents. Visionaries from the start, the newly-weds visualised opening a cellar door and kickstarting Queensland's wine and wine tourism industries.</p> <p>While Angelo grew the grapes and made the wine, it was Mary who fostered the humble beginnings of the cellar door at Ballandean Estate when it opened in 1972. As the matriarch of Queensland's oldest family-owned winery, it was her commitment to a seven day a week hospitality business that saw tourism and the industry grow.</p> <p>'We knew that wine tourism would follow once there was wine to sell and some more cellar doors in the region. When we opened the cellar door four years after planting the Shiraz, there were only 300 wineries in Australia – now there is over 3300!', says Mary.</p>



Generation 4
Client Relations Manager
Leeanne Puglisi-Gangemi



Mary and her team catered lunches and dinners to thousands of people visiting the Granite Belt for over 35 years. In 1997, this catering business blossomed into The Barrelroom restaurant. In 2022, this evolved into the Barrelroom Wine Lounge, where guests now enjoy local produce platters and wine tasting.

Leeanne has worked for Ballandean Estate Wines since 1992. Coming back to the family business was always her intention as her passion for the wine industry and the beautiful Granite Belt could not keep her away. She is married to Ballandean's production manager, Mario Gangemi.


During high school, Leanne intended to study winemaking. However, after struggling through high school chemistry, she decided that it was the business part of the winery that would be her forte – particularly managing the cellar door – as we know, she loves a chat! A true wine ambassador, Leanne can be found:

- on the telephone, or in the cellar door ... but always talking!
- moving and shaking in the political arena;
- chatting up the media;
- lecturing at university symposiums;
- acting as the local go-to person for Australian wine industry news and what's happening in tourism on the Granite Belt and Southern Downs;
- managing the wine clubs and being in contact with customers creating the best deals;
- taking visitors behind the scenes on a winery tour;
- hosting guests in the Barrel Room Wine Lounge.

Leeanne's awards and highlights:

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

Generation Role Family Member/s	About (Taken from Ballandean Estate Wines, 2023a)
Generation 4 Business Manager Robyn Puglisi–Henderson	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries – Ambassador Since 2006; • Australian Grape and Wine – Board member since 2018; • Winemakers Federation of Australia – Qld Representative on The Small Winemakers. <p>Robyn is Ballandean Estate’s problem solver who keeps the business thriving. Her expertise in export trade, sales, human resources, accounting and administration while mixing in a family business makes Robyn’s life in a regional winery fulfilling. She is married to Lirah Vinegar maker Ian Henderson.</p> <p>Robyn has served Ballandean Estate since 1999 and worked in government and private industry before returning to the Granite Belt. Every day is different for Robyn! You could find her:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking visitors behind the scenes on a winery tour; • managing export, reporting, people and projects; • chatting to customers at the cellar door (Leeanne is not the only sister who likes a yarn!).



Generation 4
Production Manager
Mario Gangemi



As Production Manager, Mario maintains relationships with suppliers and customers alike. He plays a vital role in the relationship between the vineyard and the winery throughout the year. With more than 25 years in the role, Mario is a mentor to the younger staff starting out in the industry.

A glazier by trade, Mario's diverse skills mean there are few problems in the business he cannot solve. This man is a quiet achiever who can build anything, has an excellent rapport with the winemaker and vineyard staff and has a great palate.

Father of two and husband of Leanne, Mario married into the family business a few decades ago.

Generation 5
Production Coordinator
Steven Gangemi



Ballandean Estate welcomed its fifth generation into the family business in 2022 with the arrival of Steven Gangemi, grandson of Angelo and Mary Puglisi – and eldest progeny of Mario Gangemi and Leanne Puglisi-Gangemi.

'Steven spent plenty of his youth working at the cellar door, but like all of us next-gens, he was keen to spread his wings and do something completely different!', says Leanne.

Steven left Ballandean to pursue an engineering career starting at the University of Queensland, St Lucia, segueing into information technology and the education sector. After spending the last few years working in Yeppoon with his wife Callie, the gravitational pull of the Granite Belt and family saw the high school sweethearts return home at the end of 2021.

'There was always the opportunity to work in the family business, but never any pressure', says Mr Gangemi.

SDG#5: Gender Equality and Ballandean Estate Wines

Research from 1993 shared that the status quo for the family business was that men made solo decisions (Ponthieu & Caudill, 1993), yet at Ballandean Estate Wines at that time, and even earlier, the opposite was true. Since the beginning of Ballandean Estate Wines, women have played a critical role in the development and innovation of the business. Further, Ballandean Estate Wines also opposed the status quo in that women were not typically groomed to enter the family business (Salganicoff, 1990). The family business proudly champions the women who led Ballandean Estate to where it is today. Within SDG#5 Gender Equality, target 5.5.2 is the proportion of women in managerial positions. It is evident that Ballandean Estate Wines contributes positively to this target and has done so for generations. In Generation 2, Josephine founded Ballandean Estate Wines and was a remarkable businesswoman, succeeding in business negotiations with the Australian Army. In Generation 3, Mary paved the way for the business to expand into the tourism sector, opening the cellar door and creating experiences for the state. In Generation 4, Leanne and Robyn continue to grow and innovate the business.

The inclusion of women into the family business was a very natural progression. Leanne remembers hosting her first wine tour (albeit a little bit brief and potentially not very comprehensive) when she was six or seven years old, and her father was busy working. Leanne always knew that involvement in the business was something she wanted to do. For Robyn, progression also felt natural, although spent some more time away from the farm in the early years when her children were young. Leanne and Robyn always felt accommodated. Purchasing Bellevue was driven by the choice to ensure that the business could expand to offer positions for all employees/family members.

The women within the family note that they never felt like they couldn't do anything, be businesswomen or choose to work how they wanted to work. Gender barriers never felt like a 'thing'.

I grew up not knowing that women had those limitations against them. The limitations and negativity came during high school when people would make comments about what subjects I was choosing. . . Dad never told me what subjects I should choose. So many people were surprised that I did science instead of home economics. But we never had that growing up. Even Aunties and Uncles – no one ever set a limitation. . . We had so many examples of strong women who dealt with migration and other huge obstacles – bold, strong women who can deal with challenges and even disabilities. So, we always knew we could do what we wanted to do, and we just got it done.

Business Model and SDG#5

Ballandean Estate Wines supports women in a range of positions as indicated by the supply chain mapping in Fig. 4:

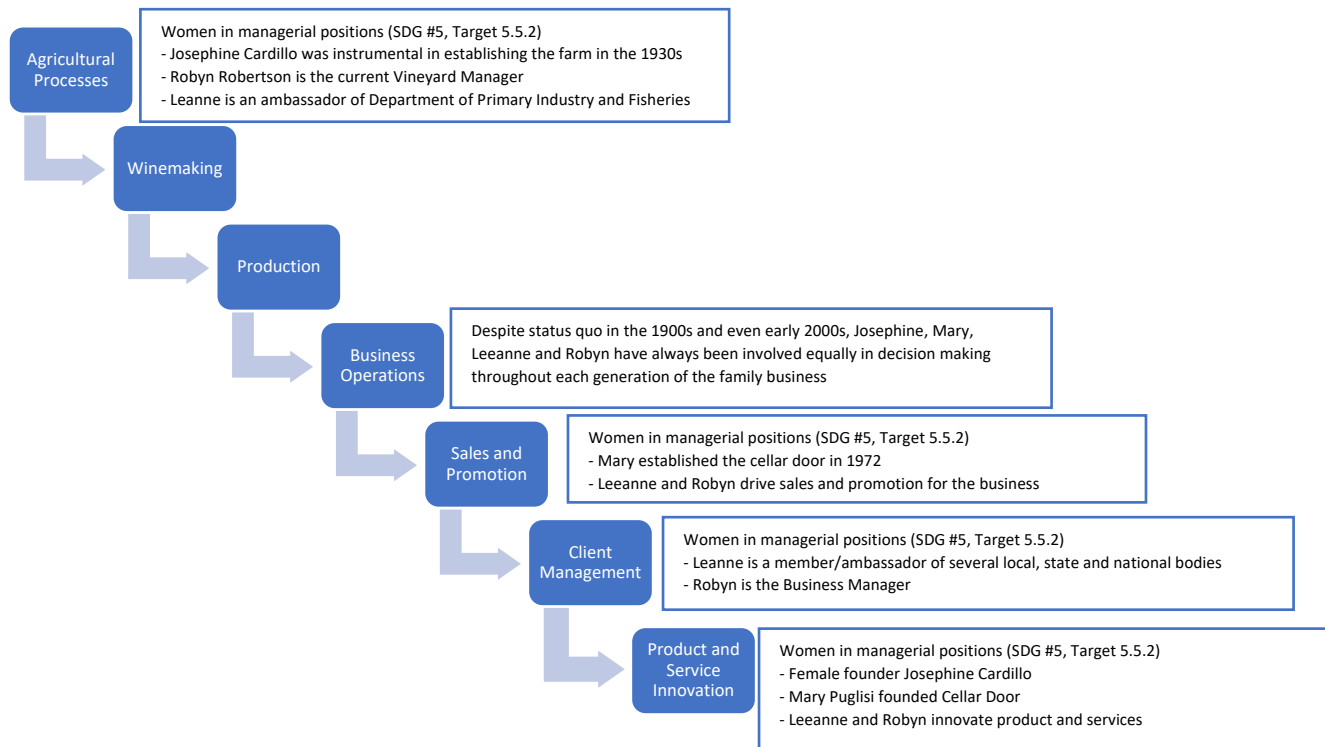


Fig. 4. Supply Chain Mapping and SDG#5.

In addition, strong values underpin the success of Ballandean Estate Wines, and the organisational culture is values-driven, with all employees and internal stakeholders committed to, and leading via demonstration of the following values as in Fig. 5.



Fig. 5. Values-Based Approach of Ballandean Estate Wines.

- *Innovative and premium product and service offering*: The family business focuses on consistently offering a premium product, evidenced by such products as the Shiraz (50-year milestone). In addition, the family has always focused on innovation of products and services, evidenced by products such as the Strange Bird labels and services such as the picnic basket hamper offering.
- *Family-centric approach to business operations*: As evidenced by the company structure, family members are supported in their growth in the business, and are given opportunities to engage in the business in a way that highlights their passions and interests.
- *Championing equality in management and leadership roles*: As demonstrated in the supply chain mapping above, women have always been key contributors to the family business in decision-making processes and managerial roles.
- *Celebration of the region and stakeholder collaboration*: A passion for the local region and its produce is also a driving factor for this family business, and Ballandean Estate Wines is proud to represent and promote the region, as well as engage in consistent collaborations with key stakeholders in the region, in Queensland, in Australia and even worldwide.

Ballandean Estate Wines does not have a hierarchical structure. Leeanne notes that they are all equal and it is a horizontal structure. Everyone from the most experienced to casual staff is included in all business decisions. ‘No one is kept out of any conversations’, Leeanne explains that inclusion is important for them to reach milestones within the business. For example, the winemaker Boxi gets all the staff to taste a new wine. This inclusion changes the company dynamic and ensures everyone feels part of the family business. When I was interviewing Leeanne on a Friday afternoon, I could hear employee chatter and laughter in the background. Leeanne explained that they were all getting together over a wine as they do every week (or more often sometimes), and preparing for an event they were hosting the following day.

When it comes to hiring, Leeanne explains that gender is not a key consideration, but they search for the most skilled talent for the position, and the person with the most alignment.

Gender is not a consideration. We don’t actively try to achieve diversity. We try to find the best person for the job. That might be a women, or it might be someone who is from overseas. We look for the right fit for us, and the right person who would fit the business. (L.Gangemi, personal communication, 14 July 2023)

Leeanne went on to explain that their Vineyard Manager is a woman, but that had nothing to do with her obtaining her position. Robyn Robertson was the most skilled person for the job and brought an extensive array of experience and expertise to the business. ‘We’ve got the best team. We work hard, but we have so much fun’. Equal opportunity is also a driver when it comes to reward and recognition. For example, Angelo was awarded the Samuel Basset Award for individual contribution to the Queensland Wine Industry from the Queensland Wine Association. Later, Ballandean Estate Wines submitted an award application for Mary. Some considered that because Angelo had already been awarded it, Mary was naturally recognised as his wife, but the family advocated for Mary to receive individual recognition for her hard work, and so she too was awarded the Samuel Basset Award. This again evidences that the family supports all employees, regardless of gender.

Ballandean Estate Wines is also committed to building safe environments for employees where everyone feels confident and able. Leeanne explained that they get great feedback from employees, in particular casual staff who move into full-time roles elsewhere. ‘We get confirmation that they are confident and competent, and we do hope we have had some influence over that’. Recently, Ballandean Estate Wines employed a staff member who had a negative experience working elsewhere. The team worked together to foster confidence and a sense of safety for this employee, aiming to see the employee thrive again.

SDG#5 and the Ballandean Estate Wines Stakeholders

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, in their report ‘GEM 2021/22 Women’s Entrepreneurship Report: From Crisis to Opportunity’, ‘women entrepreneurs are very active globally in growth-oriented, highly innovative businesses focused on national and international markets’ (p. 15). Despite systemic challenges in the business world such as rules and systems designed based on male norms and behaviours ([Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2022](#)), the women leaders at Ballandean Estate Wines have been able to rise in the business world and bring forth innovative ideas to local, national and international markets. Women in business must create an identity as a leader for themselves to support their personal growth, inspire their families, and create examples for external stakeholders ([Hytti et al., 2017](#)). The women at Ballandean Estate have proudly done so. By identifying themselves as leaders, they fostered a strong sense of self. Having women in leadership positions since the company’s inception, inspired a belief that women within the family could rise and take managerial roles within the business. And further, establishing themselves as leaders in the business, in the local community and economy, and in the wider industry, set a precedent of what women in business can achieve.

When talking with Leeanne about the stakeholders of the business, and those who influence the business, Leeanne responded ‘It’s the family’, explaining that the story of her family inspires her daily. They love to share the story of the family, of Josephine, and how their family business started. It’s the reason the business is where it is today. The stories are the fabric of Ballandean Estate Wines, and they are stories that Leeanne, Robyn and the family continue to share. Leeanne explained that a high-profile winemaker called for advice the other day, and she was most obliging. She explained that learning the business from her parents taught her that collaboration was key to keeping the business prosperous; ‘We can’t do this alone. We couldn’t be the only ones on the Granite Belt. We aren’t worried about competitors, we can address our shortcomings. We have a “more the merrier” approach to business in the region. Why not? It doesn’t cost me anything other than time, but encouraging people to be a part of what Mum and Dad helped create is a nice thing to do. A lot of the reason that I am on these boards is because Mum and Dad wanted to use my time as their way of giving back. Community service is a big part of what we do. Being part of the conversation, and as leaders as well’.

Reporting and Measurement

The [Global Entrepreneurship Monitor \(2022\)](#) outlines actions that can be taken to better support women in business and Ballandean Estate Wines aligns with these measurements. One such measurement is to ‘support high-potential women entrepreneurs in all sectors and levels of nations income’ (p. 17). Ballandean Estate Wines has continuously supported women in the family business to step into managerial roles and leadership roles. The women of Ballandean Estate have also taken leadership roles in community projects and state and national-level initiatives, which further support other women in the industry. For example, Leeanne’s involvement in the Granite Belt Wine Association, Queensland Wine

Association, Winemakers Federation of Australia, Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries as well as many others, encourages other women in the industry to find their place within business and feel confident. Leeanne's encouragement of women in business extends beyond wine, and she offers support, mentorship and guidance to any women who are new to the business, particularly tourism businesses within the region.

A second measurement outlined by the 2022 Global Entrepreneurship Report is to 'address structural barriers by debunking gender norms in entrepreneurship through a recognition of the stronger predictive power of business forms, markets and industry sectors' (p. 17). Since the early beginnings of Ballandean Estate Wines, the family business has always been open to innovative ideas from women since Generation 2 (refer to History section). This way of business operation is a centric value that is embodied within the business, and all ideas presented for the family business, regardless of the gender of the person who suggested the idea, are considered carefully and taken on board with the business's best interest in mind.

Another measure is to 'celebrate successful women founders as important role models to show younger women what is possible' ([Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2022](#), p. 18). Leeanne sits on a range of boards as a way to provide mentorship to women in the field. Further, unofficial mentoring occurs often. Leeanne recalls a conversation with another local winery owner. 'When they first came here she did a wine tasting and told me that I was so enthusiastic about it. She was telling us, they were looking to buy a business and that because I talked about it so much I inspired her to buy a winery. She always says "You know it's because of you, that we ended up here." I don't believe it because she has done such a great job on her own, but it's nice to hear that maybe our conversations had something to do with it. We do hear it in the cellar door too. One of our employees used to be a wine club member for years and decided to move here because of our stories, and now works here! They explain that they wouldn't have come if we didn't love what we do so much. We talk so lovingly about the Granite Belt that I do hope it inspires others' (L. Gangemi, personal communication, 14 July 2023).

Challenges of Working With SDG#5

When asked about the biggest challenges they face in business, she responded 'Weather, water. Agricultural challenges. Even if we wanted to expand the business, could we? Government taxes. Things out of our control are our big challenges. The concern in the Granite Belt at the moment with big growers is wages and water. We won't be able to afford to grow food. That is the bit that hurts. It's about food security. And we are a part of that. It's a part of our environment here even though we are winemakers we are still an agricultural business. We are focused on the fundamental stressors that we face in the next few years, gender is not a thing for us. We will continue to grow our business putting the best people for the job in the right positions, and celebrating the achievement of all employees. That will help us maintain the strong team we have so we can face these issues together'.

I probed further, to see if Leeanne felt she or other women in the business faced gender-related challenges. Leeanne explained that even now people do say things.

For example, if Leeanne is speaking at an event, people will approach Mario and assume Leeanne is there to support, not to lead. But they just laugh it off as within their family that would never happen. Leeanne then explained that when gender challenges arise, she is happy to have Mario's support and also referred to the support that all of the women in their families receive from their husbands. For example, Leeanne referred to the times when Mario would cook and clean and look after the children when Leeanne was busy at work; 'Everyone shares the business mentality and we all just "get it"'.

Leeanne also explained that on boards people are learning not to make inappropriate comments or assumptions. And even shared that they have a diversity issue with the Rotary Club they have too many women!

Business and Greater Good

Leeanne and Robyn are committed to business as a force for good and have been operating as a purpose-driven business. Rather than focusing solely on profit, purpose is a driving force of the business at the moment. The current focus is the wine club – making it feel like a family and giving consumers a really big value proposition. For example, they just invited the wine club members (aka the 'family' as they have lovingly called it) to Mario's birthday party to celebrate with the family. They refer to their wine club as the 'Italian Cousins' and aim to deliver 'the Italian way' which focuses on inclusivity. Leeanne shared a story of a customer who recalled being at the cellar door over 20 years ago. The customer explained that Mary had given them a bowl of pasta as they never forget it – and that captures what Leeanne and Robyn are achieving with the wine club. The Italian Cousins Wine Club logo is featured in [Fig. 6](#).



Fig. 6. Italian Cousins Wine Club.

The wine club has adopted new technology as they are the first of 1600 in the world to adopt the new Customer Relationship Management technology. It's fun and interactive and makes it easier for the business to talk to the customers and to buy and enjoy wine. The new system captures how Leeanne and Robyn want to engage with their customers via gamification – it is very responsive and has enhanced the way they engage online. An example of this is when wine club members are sent a mystery wine. They open the bottle and try to guess what it is. Then, they scan the label which has a QR code, and it opens a webpage of Robyn or Leeanne speaking about the wine.

While the business is still open to export as it has been in the past, the focus now is on experience. Leeanne acknowledged that with the growth of AI, they recognise that lots of things can be replicated or replaced. But one thing that cannot be replicated is the experience. 'We want to focus on the welcome. We want everyone to feel they are part of the family. That can't be copied'.

What's Next for Ballandean Estate Wines?

The next big thing for us is sustainability. It's the next big thing for the industry too (L. Gangemi, personal communication, 14 July 2023).

Leeanne explained that Wine Australia has offered five things to do to improve sustainability. Wines Australia has identified five priorities for the wine sector in relation to sustainability these are: practical ESG support, certification and market access, sustainable packaging, innovation for ESG outcomes, and marketing and market insights (Wines Australia, n.d.). Ballandean Wines is also focussing on the same priorities. It happens naturally given the harsh conditions they farm in. For example, water is an issue for agricultural farms, so water conservation is an essential function of agricultural businesses in the region.

We are going to experiment with different ways to make wine that are more environmentally friendly (L. Gangemi, personal communication, 14 July 2023).

Leeanne also explained that they want to implement sustainability when it comes to wines. This means a focus on being a better business for future generations and also the community. It's not just about growing business for Ballandean Estate Wines, but being a better corporate citizen too. Even though Ballandean Estate Wines is the oldest winery in Queensland, they want it to be known that they are still progressive. Leeanne explains that her father Angelo has always embraced new technologies and so have all of the winemakers.

We are staying on top of trends without losing our heritage. We have new stories to tell (L. Gangemi, personal communication, 14 July 2023).

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