

Female entrepreneur Sandra Kneile sees business go from strength to strength following South Australian move

Founder of gift and merchandise brand Vinotopia secures significant contract with Tourism Australia

Sandra Kneile, founder of wine accessories brand Vinotopia has experienced phenomenal growth since relocating to McLaren Vale. Having moved to South Australia from Sydney one year ago to follow her passions, Sandra, 39, has secured a number of significant contracts, including recently a deal to supply merchandise for the 40th anniversary of Tourism Australia's global conference "ATE" at the Perth Convention Centre, taking place this month.

Originally from Germany, Sandra moved to Sydney in 2010 to progress her corporate career internationally. After nearly a decade managing a range of high profile brands in Europe and Australia, she hit burn out and decided to take a leap of faith and launch her own business instead. Having always loved the world of wine, and wine travel, she set up Vinotopia, designing and selling beautiful gifts and accessories for wine-lovers, handmade in small batches by small, family-run businesses in Australia and around the world.

She sells her products primarily through winery cellar doors and via wine clubs, gift shops as well as at select markets and consumer fairs across Australia, and of course online, including through national retailer Dan Murphy's website. She has worked with many big names in Australian wine creating custom merchandise, including McLaren Vale's Wirra Wirra and de Bortoli in the Yarra Valley, and has even managed to land a few customers in New Zealand and Germany as well.

Earlier in 2019, Sandra scored her biggest contract to date with the peak national tourist body, Tourism Australia, which was looking for branded merchandise for its global conference. The organisers were looking for something a little different than the regular 'off-the-shelf' merchandise to gift to their delegate and found Vinotopia through an online search. Sandra created the

bespoke tote bags for Tourism Australia, which will be provided to several thousand delegates at ATE19, taking place in Perth from 8 to 12 April. The custom branded bag celebrates the 40th year of the conference, highlighting the cities throughout Australia it has taken place. Amongst an array of other clever little details, her tote bag creation also features two bottle pockets.

Sandra comments, “Since moving from Sydney to my favourite wine region in the world, McLaren Vale, I’ve been able to cut out all the mental clutter that living in a big city like Sydney comes with, focus 100% on my business and look at making strategic connections both inside and outside the wine industry. I feel fortunate that in today’s day and age, working from anywhere is possible, so it’s not necessary to be in the “big smoke” to really grow my business – on the contrary. This contract has really propelled me forwards and shown that a one woman show based in country SA can absolutely play with the big guys!”

“Everyone I have met here in South Australia since moving to McLaren Vale has been nothing but friendly, welcoming and truly inclusive, so that I’ve already managed to make some good friends and connections here. SA is a fantastic place to do business, people look out for one another and are always keen to recommend local companies and brands. I feel so lucky to be based in such a special corner of the world, not only for the stunning beauty of the region and its world-class wineries, but most importantly, the community.”

Next steps for Sandra include focusing on driving e-commerce sales, as well as continuing to look for opportunities to create bespoke merchandise for wineries, wine clubs and other Australian brands. She’s a huge champion of learning about the industry and the many characters within it, spending her time when not working busy enjoying South Australia’s many wineries, restaurants and bars with friends, new and old.

www.vinotopia.com.au

-Ends-