

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

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'I'VE GOT TO JUSTIFY MY EXISTENCE'

She's known for being "all work, no play". But NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian can explain - it all goes back to a birth, and a death

By Andrew Clennell

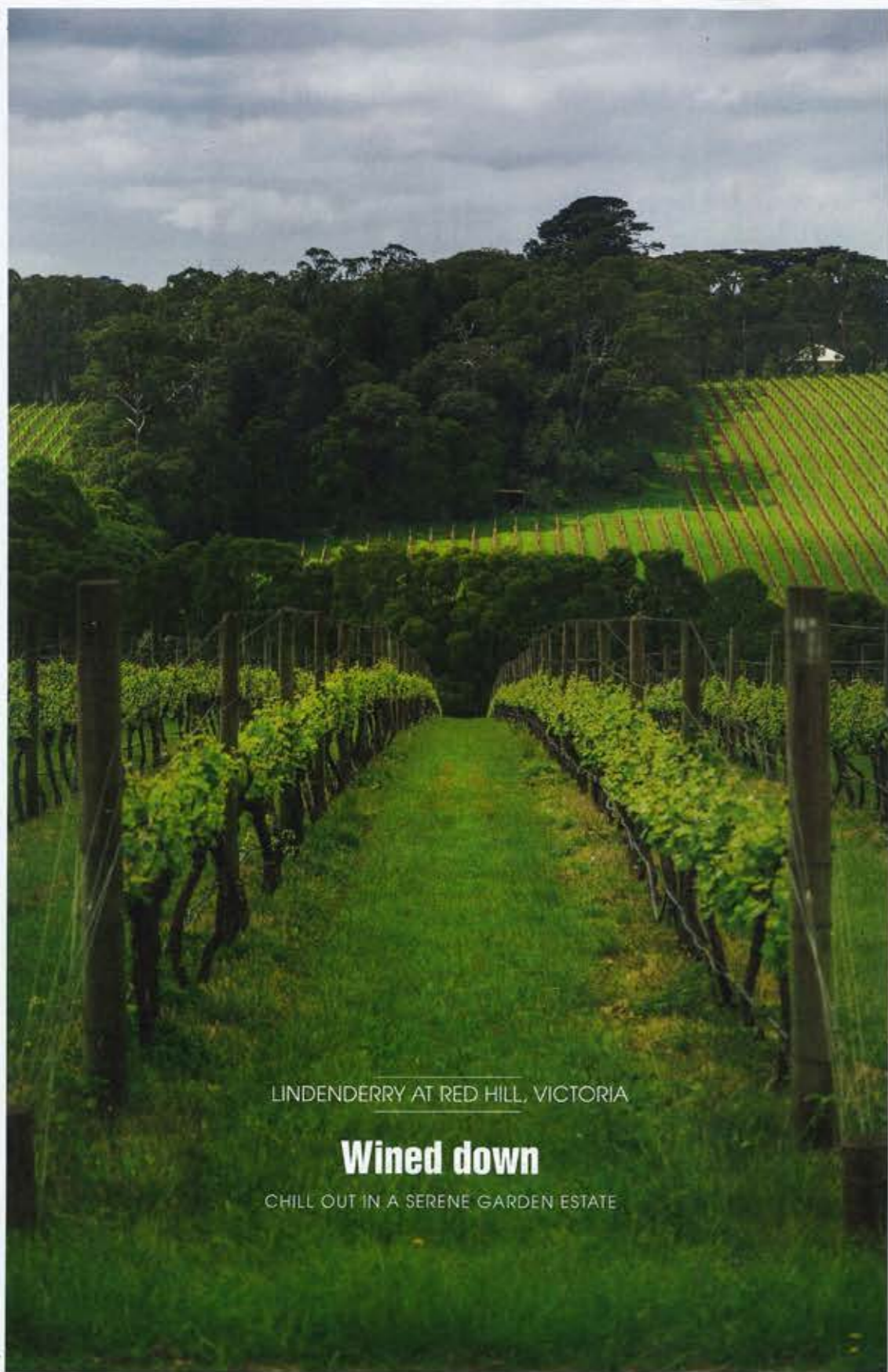
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BY CAROLINE OVERINGTON



LINDENDERRY AT RED HILL, VICTORIA

Wined down

CHILL OUT IN A SERENE GARDEN ESTATE

Up front, let me confess that I don't know as much about wine as the next person – lack of exposure, my bad. So why go to Lindenderry? The experience would be completely wasted on me. Well, they do make wine at Lindenderry – well-regarded pinot noir and chardonnay – but it's not primarily a winery. It's a boutique hotel, a place of rest and relaxation, with snowy beds and romantic walking trails, set in 14ha of gardens.

The hotel, surrounded by vineyard estates at Red Hill on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, has been transformed by Australian design company Hecker Guthrie for the boutique hotel group Lancemore. There are only 40 guest rooms, with courtyard, garden-view and balcony options (the latter a suite with an open fireplace in the bedroom). That's 80 guests, maximum, on any given night, and far fewer mid-week. The effect is soothing: on the winding roads beyond the estate, parking attendants can be seen frantically directing traffic from one cellar door to the next, but here? Serene.

The peninsula is Victoria's pretty place: all seaside villages, sandy beaches, cherry orchards and vineyards, and it's got something of a reputation for people rushing around to see and taste everything. Lindenderry wants to be more than a place for people to drop into. They want you to stay for a weekend, or longer, or maybe have your wedding or conference there. To that end, they've designed a hotel with four communal spaces, furnished with leather couches, bookshelves and reading lamps. There are established gardens: think long walks, perhaps with a picnic hamper. The result? A contemporary Australian take on the traditional English garden estate.

The winery has a Halliday



Relaxed: Lindenderry; supper at The Dining Room; communal area; bedroom



five-star rating and the cellar door is popular, especially on weekends. Drop-ins are welcome, but if you're keen on lunch, or travelling with friends, you should book. David Green, formerly of Lake House in Daylesford, is executive chef in the restaurant, The Dining Room, a lovely space with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the garden. It sources its produce locally, including plump heirloom tomatoes, summer squash, yabbies and snapper, organic eggs, and the strawberries on the elderflower Eton mess. The atmosphere is friendly – you may well find yourself chatting to fellow diners. Breakfast is a buffet, with more than anyone could eat.

Were you to book for the weekend, you wouldn't necessarily have to leave the property. They'll make a hamper for you to have in the vineyard, or else you could take your own. And there's a small library with an open fire.

If you want to explore the area, staff will give you a list of places to visit, including the Peninsula Hot Springs (lovely warm thermal pools, not more than 20 minutes away) or Arthurs Seat, where you can ride The Eagle, a gondola, soaring above the trees. They will also point you to other fine places to eat and drink in the area, among them Point Leo Estate (20ha of vines and a sculpture park, owned by Melbourne's Gandel family), Cellar & Pantry (a grocer, delicatessen, cellar and cafe in one), and Foxeys Hangout... wait, Foxeys? I know that name.

Twenty years ago – maybe more, but who's still counting? – I worked in Melbourne with journo Cathy Gowdie, who fell in love with chef

and winemaker Tony Lee. They moved to the peninsula to raise kids in a romantic farmhouse with a rolling lawn and a timber swing hanging from an old tree. Tony and his brother Michael make the wine, and one of Cathy's now-grown kids was, on the day we visited, helping at the cellar door. If there's anything better than a morning spent chatting over mugs of tea with somebody you haven't seen for 20 years, I haven't found it. Cathy has written a beautiful hardcover book about her experience of moving here from the big smoke – something many people, after visiting, dream about doing.

From there it was home to Lindenderry, where plump armchairs were set before the fireplace – it was too hot outside, but next time – and four handmade chocolates were waiting on the bed. Not waiting for long, however.

Perfect for: Oenophiles, couples, road-trippers, foodies.

Dining: The Dining Room is open for lunch Friday-Sunday, dinner Monday-Saturday, and breakfast every day. Picnic baskets (\$105 for two people; 24 hours' notice) include charcuterie, dips, duck liver paté, fresh bread and cheeses. The cellar door (weekends 11.30am-5pm) has wood-fired pizza and grazing plates. On March 17, Lindenderry will hold a Meet the Producers long-table lunch among the vines; \$151 per head including wines (book at melbournefoodandwine.com.au).

Getting there: It's a 90-minute drive from Melbourne Airport.

Bottom line: Rooms start at \$370 a night.

lancemore.com.au/lindenderry