



## Brockmares by the Bay B&B

Williamstown

Mary and John Barron

Tel. 9397 5718

info@brockmaresbythebay.com.au

www.brockmaresbythebay.com.au

*When Mary and John Barron decided to enter the world of boutique accommodation they not only knew that they had to learn as much as possible about their new industry, but that their B&B had to have a major point of difference.*

*The retired teacher and semi-retired consulting engineer applied their professional research, organisational and people skills to the task of meticulous research, long before they even opened the doors of Brockmares by the Bay in Williamstown.*

*They sought out local B&B friends as business mentors. They got them to stay at their home, taste their meals and to sample their hospitality, to provide the Barrons with an objective appraisal of the quality of what they hoped to offer the public.*

*Although Mary and John had always been great travellers, they decided to sample other B&Bs to gain clearer insight into what the public wanted. As a result of their observations, they extensively renovated their Federation style house to better cater for the comfort and needs of people.*

*Although the planning regulations allowed them to host up to 6 people without a permit, they decided to carefully study the local bylaws and state regulations, as well as involve council officers in every step of the process to provide accommodation, food and liquor. This work helped to minimise objections, avoided any last minute surprises, and it smoothed their path through the bureaucracy.*



*“Do your research before you start. Don’t believe that you can tell Council after you’ve done things. Keep them informed and be completely clear about your intentions”, says Mary.*

*Their major source of enlightenment came through a B&B course operated by the University of Melbourne’s Faculty of Land and Food Resources – a unit of competency from the University’s Glenormiston Diploma of Agriculture. To pass the course they had to prepare and have assessed a comprehensive business plan.*

*Of the 40 people who began the course, the Barrons were one of the few to finish it, but they agree that it enabled them to enter their business with eyes wide open.*

*“ We both said that we wouldn’t dream of starting a B&B without first doing a course like that. It covered the full spectrum of operating and marketing a B&B business in a realistic, practical way”, said Mary.*

## UNDERSTANDING VISITOR NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS



TOURISM  
EXCELLENCE

*"It provided us with so much information, which we still often refer to - everything from risk exposure and licenses to suitable crockery. The costing exercises they put us through showed that it wasn't going to be a goldmine and that occupancy could take quite some time to build".*

*The course encouraged them to examine other local B&Bs, to help find a point of difference.*

*" We found that there was a 'sameness' about the B&Bs, as well as a market need for high quality, personalised accommodation for the higher-end retiree market - much like ourselves I suppose ! "*

*Research through the internet, literature and through industry contacts taught them much about the needs of the cashed-up retiree market. Their mentors kept them informed about what was happening in the industry and of changing trends.*

*" We knew we needed to exceed the market's expectations, so we introduced services like airport pick-ups, quality in-house dinners and in-house massage".*

*However, shortly after opening in January 2006, the Barrons realised that their planned market segment was not going to make ends meet and that they needed to quickly rethink their strategy.*

*"The course had taught us to target a market, but also to be flexible enough to quickly shift our thinking if things didn't work.*



*We found that the major market for our product was actually double-income couples in the 25-40 age bracket, who seek most of their information from the web.*

*" We had to get to know the psyche of that segment very quickly, because their needs are very different to most others. They are tech savvy, so we installed wireless broadband. Their personal needs are quite different, such as a desire for both passive and active recreation. We gathered information about scenic flights, abseiling, cycle paths, and learnt about the unique snorkelling right here on our doorstep.*

*" We also became conscious about things to put into the rooms, such as new release DVDs, up-to-date magazines, more simple, stylish décor and even candles in the bathrooms, so that our B&B presented a contemporary environment, rather than an old-world place.*

*" We are now in our fourth year and things are going well, but we're conscious that we learn new things every day. We use the web to find out about new trends and what's happening in the tourism industry. We're heavily networked and we collect every article we can on tourism, particularly the international scene.*

*The industry can change right before your eyes and if you don't keep on top of things, it will leave you languishing.*

*“ When we are dealing with a new nationality we do our research into what type of food is appropriate for them and generally become culturally sensitive to their needs. We even try to fly their national flag as a welcome. They don't just want a roof over their head and a breakfast, most are looking for a new 'experience' and often to be educated about a new culture and lifestyle. They want an interactive visit, tailored to suit them.*

*“ We've learnt so much through running this business. Unless you're prepared to learn and be flexible, then it will not bring you the joy and satisfaction that it can. We have retained the passion and I think that shows in what we do, how we promote the business and how we present the property to entice a broad spectrum of guests. It really is the basis for the success of this business, I think”.*

*The Barrons never cease to learn more about the industry that they now work in - to build their business acumen, to increase their customer service, and to understand the culture of many of their guests. John and Mary recently completed a cookery course in Singapore and John has undertaken a barista course to improve his coffee making ability. Mary is liaising with Victoria University to develop mentoring opportunities for Tourism and Event Management students, as well as doing a Diploma in Tourism at V.U.'s School of Enterprise.*

*It's not only glowing comments in the Barron's guest book that attest to their success. In October 2007 Brockmores by the Bay won the Best Business in Tourism Award for the Greater Western Region Chamber of Commerce, which covers seven Melbourne municipalities.*

*The judges commented “ The owners operate a truly wonderful business: they have taken the bed and breakfast concept to the highest levels of sophistication. They have not only established a 6 star product, their business model sets them apart from most of their competitors”.*

### Key findings:

*Enter the industry with your eyes wide open and keep them open to changes and new trends,*

*Find a suitable course to prepare you for all aspects of the business,*

*Determine a target market, but be flexible enough to change quickly if things don't work,*

*Know the psyche of your target market so that you can meet and exceed their expectations; there are lots of resources to help you,*

*Never stop learning and try to make that learning an exciting and enjoyable part of running the business.*

