

# Ex-Banc boss to pick up big bill

By court writer  
WARREN OWENS

**FORMER** Banc restaurant supremo Stan Sarris faces a personal payout of more than \$80,000 after two ex-staffers won court claims against him last week.

A NSW Industrial Commission hearing also heard evidence that \$400,000 worth of wine was mysteriously shunted into off-site storage from the Martin Place eatery just weeks before new management took over.

The \$4.5 million Banc won a restaurant-of-the-year award and gushing praise from food critics before crashing in 2002.

Mr Sarris escaped bankruptcy relating to \$6 million in debts flowing from the restaurant's collapse by offering to pay \$200,000 over three years to a swag of creditors last year.

But none of this deterred Mr Sarris's former beverage manager Phillippe Morin, nor former human resources manager Kate McNamara, from their three-year battle for justice.

The pair were unceremoniously dumped from their well-paid jobs when Mr Sarris handed over his Martin Place operations to new owners in 2002, the commission heard.

Last week, they won repayment of redundancy pay, annual leave and superannuation entitlements against Mr Sarris personally, despite his non-attendance.

Mr Sarris was the only director of the company that hired Mr Morin and Ms McNamara and both



**Must pay:** Stan Sarris

senior staffers answered to him, the commission found.

Justice Anna Backman ruled that Mr Sarris had "an intimate connection" with the hiring of both staffers, and the terms of their "unfair" contracts.

Mr Sarris had directed Mr Morin to transfer almost half the restaurant's \$850,000 worth of wine stock to Wine Ark in Camperdown shortly before New Year's Eve in 2001, the court was told. Mr Morin had told Mr Sarris that he'd try to make the \$400,000 transfer before January 1, but could not guarantee it because of the "busy period at work".

Mr Sarris replied: "Just do your best — don't mention this to anybody else."

Mr Morin transferred the wine stock on January 4.

Weeks later, Mr Sarris told the beverage manager that new business partners were arriving and "it was time for (Mr Morin) to move on".

Mr Morin was awarded \$50,000 in lost pay and entitlements, while Ms McNamara was awarded \$30,000.