



### PRIVACY CONCERNS RAISED ABOUT GOVERNMENT REGISTER

Growers need to be aware of the new changes that are in place following the changes to the backpacker taxation. *The ABC Rural online 3rd January 2017 written by journalist Marty McCarthy spells out the concerns.*

**Concerns have been raised about how the Federal Government will use information from farmers who register themselves as employers of foreign workers.**

As part of the introduction of the backpacker tax changes, farmers need to register their businesses to ensure overseas workers are charged a tax rate of 15 per cent.

If they do not, employers must withhold 32.5 per cent of the first \$37,000 a working holiday maker earns.

But Queensland farmer Judy Shepherd, who is also the secretary of the Gayndah and District Fruit Growers Association, is concerned about the privacy of the register and how the information will be used.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) said the register would be used by authorities only, to ensure foreign workers were taxed correctly.

"It will be used to ensure that working holiday makers who work for registered employers are taxed at the new 15 percent tax rate," a spokesperson for the ATO said.

"At this time access to the register is limited to the ATO and other government agencies who are responsible for assisting employers and working holiday makers in correctly meeting their obligations."

#### Register to be kept private

Liberal Democratic senator David Leyonhjelm said he had successfully lobbied the Federal Government to make the register private.

Mr Leyonhjelm said he supported the register, but it should not be accessible to non-governmental groups such as unions.

"We're not talking about whether or not they should be registered. It's about if that register should be public," he said.

"I was concerned that farmers and tourism operators, or any small businesses who are not sophisticated in an industrial relations sense, would be subject to harassment if the register was made public.

"I lobbied the Government so it could be kept private to preserve the privacy of farmers in particular, and the Government has agreed to it.

"Quite a lot of farmers don't trade as corporations. They are individuals and sole traders and there is a privacy issue, so the privacy act does apply to them."

#### Fair Work access unclear

The ATO did not indicate exactly which government agencies would have access to the register.

Mr Leyonhjelm said he was unsure if that would include Fair Work Australia.

"That is a moot point. There has been discussions with the Government about whether or not about this register could be used by Fair Work Australia," he said.

"There was a suggestion the Fair Work ombudsman would not only have access to the register, but also the financial records that the tax office held.

"The Government has agreed to not allow the latter, but whether or not they will have access to the register I don't know.

"I think they probably would have access to it but that was not part of the negotiations I had with the Government."

#### WHAT'S INSIDE THIS EDITION

#### Page

Privacy Concerns Raised about Govt Register	1
Board Activities Report	2
Warning Signs for Grape Transport Vehicles	3
Grape Price Recovery the Key to Sustainability	3 - 4
Media Release from the WGMB	5
Griffith City Council - Prevent Spills and Keep Roads Safe	6
Media Release from the Griffith City Council	7
Please take care on the roads	7
Vintage Laboratory Operations Commence	8

## BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



### Research and Development in the region

The Board in conjunction with local winery representatives has been working on the latest program of Extension and Research and Development. Titled the Incubator program, Wine Australia has on offer \$20,000 annually for a researcher to undertake required research in the region. Wine Australia also has on offer up to \$125,000 under their regional program which previously was managed by the Board. Wine Australia have decided now to provide these funds to NSW DPI so they can undertake the delivery of extension programs in the region. The Board is working with interested winery staff and the NSW DPI to develop a strategic plan for the next 5 years.

### Variable Message Boards

The Board is again going to use Variable Message boards in the region to alert the general public to the harvest period and urge them to be careful on the roads and around trucks. The signs will be moved around the region during the harvest. If growers have any suggestions regarding what the signs say and their location please call the office.

### Weather Stations

The Board have a number of weather stations for sale. These units are solar powered and when enabled growers can dial into them to obtain weather information. The stations would suit a vineyard owner that wants to monitor outbreak trigger points for Downy and Powdery Mildew during the production season.

If any grower is interested please call the office and discuss. The units are still operational and easy to manage with some training and the correct software. The Board is hoping to recoup some of the costs of these as they are no longer required since the Board moved to the newer weather station network that is hosted by the AWRI.

### Board Appointed positions

The Board recently advertised the forthcoming vacancies of the 2 Board appointed positions. So far the Board has received one nomination for the two vacancies at time of writing.

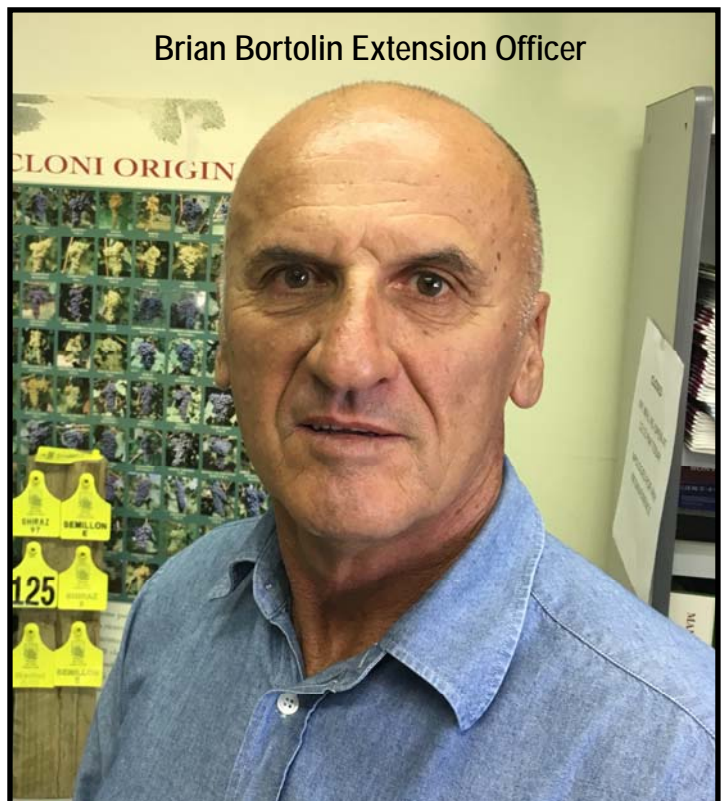
### Board Executive Positions Confirmed

Bruno Brombal has retained the position of Board Chair for the forthcoming 12 months. Robert Bellato was reappointed as the Deputy Chair.

### Appointment of Extension Officer

The Board welcomed Brian Bortolin (*pictured below*) to the role of Extension Officer with the Board at the start of 2017. Brian is well known locally and comes to the Board after working for many years in the viticulture industry.

Brian's role will be different to that undertaken by staff in the past. As an Extension Officer he will still be undertaking the HACCP program auditing and maintenance the vintage laboratory etc. Brian will be looking at new process and methods of getting information out to growers on a regular basis. Please join the Board in welcoming Brian to the position. He can be contacted on [bbortolin@wgmb.net.au](mailto:bbortolin@wgmb.net.au) or via mobile 0401 567 449.



Brian Bortolin Extension Officer

### Farewell and Thanks

The Board would like to offer its sincere thanks to departing Board Eric Berton for his service to the industry over the past years. Eric was appointed to the Board in 2005 and has served as the Board's irrigation representative for much of his term of office.

## WARNING SIGNS FOR GRAPE TRANSPORT VEHICLES

This season the Board has continued a number of initiatives aimed solely at reducing the risk of winegrapes being spilled by trucks. Based on conversations with drivers the biggest concern that they have is other road users cutting them off at intersections and roundabouts. These incidents can cause the brakes to be applied too rapidly and can result in grapes leaving the vehicle in extreme circumstances.

Growers could protect themselves from prosecution if they all had a dashboard camera but it is obvious that this solution does not prevent the grapes from leaving the vehicle.

As mentioned in the Board Activities Report the Board will be operating two variable message boards 24/7 advising all road users that the trucks are out and about and to take care around them.

To compliment the variable message boards the Board also has reflective signs for the back of trucks so that when being followed the vehicle behind will know that you are carting winegrapes and hopefully take all due care if and when overtaking.

These signs are available to growers with truck FREE OF CHARGE on a first in first served basis while stocks last.



## GRAPE PRICE RECOVERY THE KEY TO SUSTAINABILITY

The Board is concerned that the return to industry sustainability and profitability has not arrived as was expected which could see a mass forced exit from the industry by grape producers. Growers are particularly hit hard this season with above average Winter and Summer rainfall events leading to higher disease pressure costs throughout the growing season.

Many growers bottom lines are expected to take a massive hit this season and unless average farm gate returns lift substantially for growers we cannot expect the industry to thrive and generate much needed savings for replanting of winegrapes and replacement of machinery and equipment. Growers are reporting financial pressure and the need to increase overdrafts to cover the rising costs.

Discussions held with some wineries believe that the financial predicament of growers is being overstated and the costs of production analysis is not accurate.

Perhaps instead of arguing the case which was clearly made by the winemakers representative body a number of years ago that many growers are operating at a loss and have for many years these wineries should be focused on sharing the returns through the value chain. *(See image on Page 5 showing losses for up to 94% in 2014 of inland regions grape producers).* Many growers are surviving on other sources of income being put back into their business operations.

Comments from individual growers regarding their predicament is that unless price increases occur they are not going to be able to stay in the winegrape business much longer.

There are an increasing number of grape blocks that appear not to be tended by growers that have taken off the water and are focusing on other sources of income.



This season there have been many growers that have taken their production to other buyers in the hope of making better returns and the Board encourages all growers to look for the best returns in the market. We understand that many growers are subject to binding contracts however those that do not have any formal agreements should actively be looking for the best financial returns for their business.

*(Continued on page 4)*

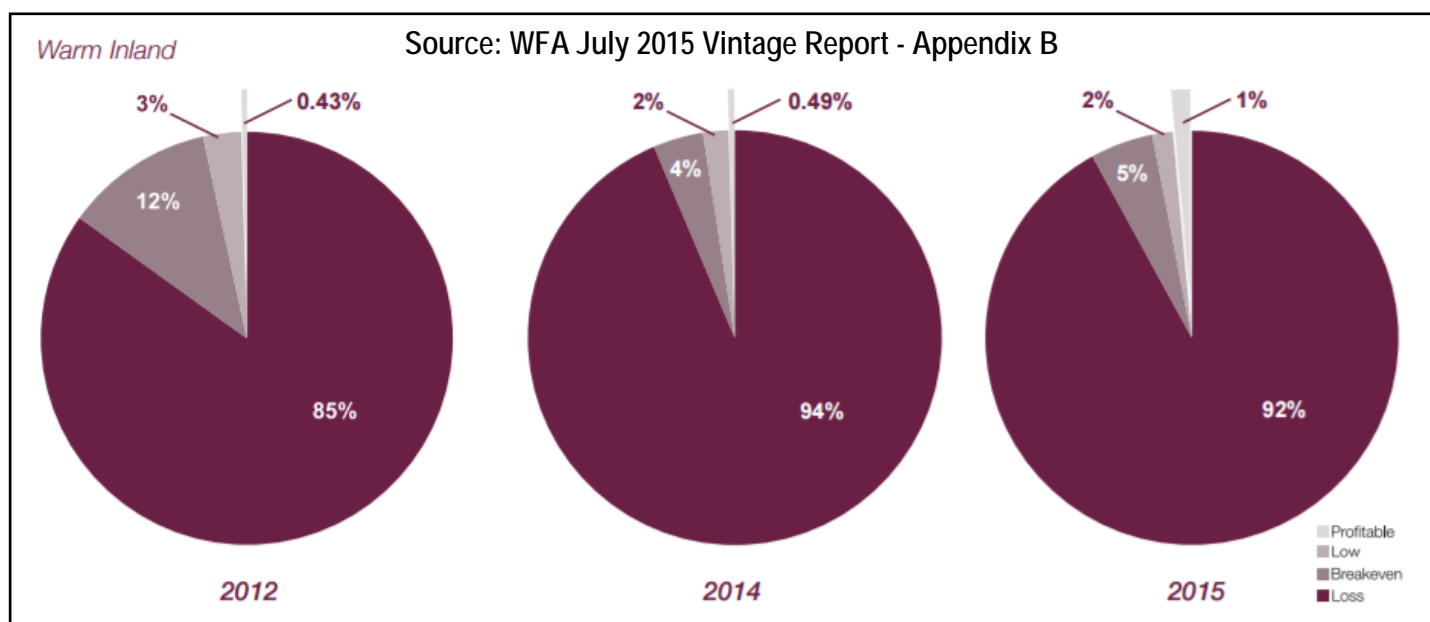
## GRAPE PRICE RECOVERY THE KEY TO SUSTAINABILITY - cont.

As noted in the prior edition of Vine Chat the bulk wine market price has been increases. These actual improvement have been reported along with comments regarding lower wine stock levels at wineries. These changes have led to only minor price movements in the region but no where near the level growers expected and need given the downturn in the industry has dragged on (exasperated by the impact of the continuance of the WET Rebate).

The slower than expected recovery could potentially be to do with the contracting activity of local wineries that have signed growers up to termed contracts with fixed prices. However if yields are not improving and prices are only coming back to a moderate level growers overall financial returns will remain in the same dire predicament.

Board somewhat of a loan voice without members to support its position. Growers have a right to discuss such important matters with your grape buyer especially in an open and competitive environment. If you are unsure about what you could say please call into our office and the Board CEO will be happy to discuss these matters with you on a one to one basis as everybody's circumstance is different.

Another area that growers need to be aware of is what does your contract say. In 2016 the Board held a workshop regarding understanding your contracts which only had a few attendees however it is apparent that many growers still are not aware of the conditions of their contract. The Board can talk to you about your contract regardless of any clauses regarding privacy it is your right to seek legal opinion. Even the Wine Industry



Late last year a number of wineries were seeking grapes and getting growers to sign up to priced contracts which at the time reflected a better price than the prior year. However as the season has unfolded these prices are likely to have had a dampening effect on the price offers being made by wineries. When you look at the Indicative Prices from the other inland regions as released by the major wineries it was always going to be a struggle for grape prices in this region to lift to a position that growers require to be sustainable.

The Board actively encourages all growers to talk to your winery(s) about the grape prices if you are not able to make a return this season. When the Board communicates to wineries it often hears that they have not heard from growers about prices which makes the

Code of Conduct recommends that growers seek third party advice prior to entering into an agreement to sell winegrapes.

The Board is aware this season that some growers have been able to negotiate higher prices per tonne based on their varieties but many growers will never know if this is an option to them unless they make the appointment and speak to the management of the winery.

Growers are able to call into the Board office to discuss these matters before speaking with your winery.

Importantly if wineries are looking for extra fruit this season it is likely that they will contact the Board office in the first instance.

**RIVERINA WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD**

For the City of Griffith and the local government areas of  
Leeton, Carrathool and Murrumbidgee

**MEDIA RELEASE**

25 January 2017

**GRAPE PRICE CONCERNS FOR REGIONS GROWERS**

The Wine Grapes Marketing Board is concerned that a lack of pricing information from Riverina wineries and low price offers noted to date will continue to see growers struggle to remain viable and impinge on their ability to produce quality winegrapes for the market. Growers need now to be communicating their concerns to their buyers amid increased on farm costs as the high disease pressure season has impacted on their costs and forecast price rises will not cover these increased costs of production.

Representatives of the Wine Grapes Marketing Board have been talking with local wineries amid comments that several are looking to purchase more winegrapes this season than in previous years. The Board is hopeful that this demand and a more buoyant bulk wine market would then impact positively on the per-tonne price offers but this has not been overly apparent to date. Many of the regions wineries have yet to disclose to producers how much they are going to offer to purchase winegrapes with growers hopeful that their management efforts this season will be rewarded and they can put some money back into their overdrafts.

"It is disappointing that all wineries do not provide a valid indication of the price that they will be paying to growers" Brian Simpson CEO of the Wine Grapes Marketing Board stated. "Growers in general that are not contracted with a price tend to find out at the last minute and some have reported finding out the price well after they have delivered, it is hard enough to operate in the current environment but operating on faith doesn't have a lot going for it."

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the 2017 harvest will not be as large as the 317,000 tonnes of winegrapes recorded in 2016 as vines have been through a wet winter and seasonal rains have caused higher disease risks to growers leading to greater input costs this season. Growers in general have needed to extend their overdrafts this season to keep their crops disease free and the current lack of certainty in prices shows a lack of respect to the efforts and money growers have invested this season. Vine removals are occurring in the region and with no viable price increase to signal for growers to continue to produce grapes this trend could continue.

"Growers have done their best to manage their crops in difficult conditions and to not know prices at this late stage in the game if their best efforts have been worth it is worse than disappointing." Brian advised, "This is definitely the problem that the ACCC and some members of the Senate have been raising as concerning behavior in the market, the newly appointed Agricultural Commissioner with the ACCC stated recently that this is not the equitable sharing of risk that they would like to see in good contracting practices."

Senator Nick Xenophon from South Australia, where 50% of the national grape crop is produced has been calling on the ACCC to investigate the industry more closely.

Currently the industry is waiting for the grapes to mature to commence vintage in a later start to the harvest than has been the case for the past decade or more. Growers are very anxious, price disclosure and a price recovery is needed if the industry is to move forward and rebuild confidence in the growers.

END

**ENQUIRIES:**

Brian Simpson  
Chief Executive Officer

0438 388 828 or 69 623 944 (during office hours)

Bruno Brombal  
Chairman

0429 630 465

# WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD

## GRIFFITH CITY COUNCIL - PREVENT SPILLS AND KEEP ROADS SAFE



### OVERLOADING COMPROMISES ROAD SAFETY

Spills on the road are slippery and a danger to other road users.

### ROAD DAMAGE

Over-mass vehicles can cause damage to the road surface, which is often expensive to fix.

Any vehicle detected over the 'Legal Mass' will have the breach recorded on weighbridge docket and penalties may apply in line with the seriousness of the breach.

### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

In the event of a grape spill on local roads, please call Griffith City Council on  
(02) 6962 8100 (during business hours)  
(02) 6969 4823 (after hours)

Chain of Responsibility Legislation requires you to take appropriate steps to prevent mass, load restraint, dimension, fatigue and speeding laws from being breached. Everyone should take a risk-management approach for their Chain of Responsibility obligations. This approach is consistent with the management of work health and safety and the quality control of goods and services produced. Accountability for activities that affect compliance with road transport laws is the responsibility of every person. YOU may be held legally liable if you do not meet your Chain of Responsibility obligations.



To find out more about getting your crop safely from vineyard to winery, visit Griffith City Council's website [www.griffith.nsw.gov.au](http://www.griffith.nsw.gov.au).  
For information on the Winegrape Consignment Chain of Responsibility Code of Conduct, please visit [www.riverinawinemakers.com.au](http://www.riverinawinemakers.com.au).



# MEDIA RELEASE

## KEEPING ROADS SAFE DURING 2017 GRAPE

*Wednesday January 5, 2017*

With the 2017 grape and wine vintage about to get underway, a reminder has been issued to all road users to help keep local roads safe this vintage to ensure this year's crop gets from the farm to receival points as intended.

Griffith City Council's Road Safety and Traffic Officer, Mr Greg Balind said complying with relevant legislation and allowing heavy vehicles plenty of room while sharing the road not only ensures safety on the roads but minimises the potential for fruit and juice spills across the road network.

"In the past, a number of grape spills upon our roads have resulted in other drivers losing control of their vehicles or being unable to safely stop at intersections," said Mr Balind.

"To ensure safety and cost minimisation, operators and cartage contractors must comply with relevant legislation and ensure that overloading does not occur and loads are carried correctly within the confines of the relevant vehicle's load restrictions," he said.

Enforcement will be undertaken across the region throughout the harvest to ensure vehicles comply with restrictions and that loads are secured according to the Chain of Responsibility laws. When a grape spill occurs and vehicles are identified, heavy fines can be applied under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act, with any additional costs associated with clean-ups also passed onto operators.

Mr Balind also advised there is a responsibility on other road users to give heavy vehicles the space needed on the road to make their respective journeys as safe as possible.

"Recent consultation with heavy vehicle representatives confirmed there has been many occasions when they have been 'cut off' or forced to take evasive action to avoid a crash due to drivers of smaller vehicles stopping suddenly or pulling out in front of them. Due to their size and weight, heavy vehicles need more distance to stop and more room to turn so I urge all drivers to show courtesy and understand that the maneuverability of heavy vehicles is more extreme than that of a normal vehicle," he said.

The community can also play a role by reporting any grape spills to Griffith City Council so as action can be taken to clear the road and remove the danger to other road users as soon as possible," he added.

**Residents can report a grape spill by calling Council on (02) 6962 8100 during business hours or (02) 6969 4823 after hours (J&J Security)**

Further information on grape spills, including reporting procedures, is available on Council's website, [www.griffith.nsw.gov.au](http://www.griffith.nsw.gov.au).

Further information on the Chain of Responsibility obligations, including local winery penalties, can be found at [www.riverinawinemakers.com.au](http://www.riverinawinemakers.com.au).

## PLEASE TAKE CARE ON THE ROADS

Please be advised that the industry will continue to come under scrutiny if it continues to spill winegrapes on a regular basis. In discussions with RMS staff it has been suggested that the industry may need to progress toward containerised transport of winegrapes from the vineyard to the winery. While the logistics of this are hard to imagine it would align itself with the current load restraint legislation.

Growers need to also be aware that the allowances provided by many of the winemakers are to try and assist you in getting your fruit to the winery. If people abuse the system and consistently load to the allowances provided (3% at many wineries) it is likely that you will be fined for all loads above your legal mass limits. Be safe and take care.

# WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD

## 2017 VINTAGE LABORATORY OPERATIONS COMMENCE

The vintage laboratory of the Wine Grapes Marketing Board is currently open for winegrape sampling, this service continues to be free to all constituted growers (those that pay the statutory fees and charges).

Please note that a charge will apply to grape producers that are not constituted growers of the Board.

Analysis is available for red winegrape colour, Baumé, pH/TA and average berry/bunch weight.

Grapes should be delivered to our office at 182 Yambill Street Griffith in a sound and cool condition:

**Samples to be in after 8:30am and before 10.30am**

Results should be available by the end of that day.

Should you have **more than two** samples from your vineyard for colour testing it is important that you book your samples in by phoning the Board before you collect your samples to ensure that these can be accommodated in our schedule. If grape samples are delivered at other times or in large numbers (without bookings) then results may not be available so promptly. However the Board staff will endeavour to get these done as soon as it physically can.

Each sample will need to contain a minimum of 12 bunches, but optimum of 20 bunches as this gives much better accuracy, especially when testing for colour.

Bunches should be taken from across your block and from all locations on the vine to ensure a representative sample is collected. When samples are dropped off, growers that have not used the service previously will be required to complete a registration form. This is essential to enable the Board to report the results back to the grower.

If you want to monitor your Baume at home the Board has for sale items of equipment that are able to be used by growers. These are available at cost price as the Board purchases them in bulk. Some wineries require growers to take regular samples with specific equipment. The Board are able to provide growers with options for recording the maturity of their winegrapes.

### ITEMS FOR SALE

Baumé measuring kits \$65.00 (inc GST)

Each kit contains the equipment and instruments to test samples in the field reliably and quickly.

Items in the above kit can be purchased separately.

- Baume hydrometer \$55 (inc GST)

- Baume thermometer \$5 (inc GST)

- Measuring Cylinder \$5 (inc GST).

WINE-2ATC Bé refractometer \$137.50 (inc GST)

For further information regarding any vintage analysis services contact Brian Bortolin, Extension Officer at our office 6962 3944 or on mobile 0401 567 449.



A batch of baume samples being measured in the Board laboratory

Wine Grapes Marketing Board

Email: [board@wgmb.net.au](mailto:board@wgmb.net.au)

Web: [www.wgmb.net.au](http://www.wgmb.net.au)

Phone: (02) 6962 3944

Fax: (02) 6962 6103

Office Hours: 8:30am - 5:00pm Mon - Fri

**DISCLAIMER** The content in this Newsletter "Vine Chat" has been prepared by the Wine Grapes Marketing Board (the Board).

**General Advice Warning** The information contained is general in nature and does not take into account your personal situation. You should consider whether the information is appropriate to your needs, and where appropriate, seek professional advice from your personal advisors.

**Accuracy & Reliability of Information**

Although every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this document, the Board, its officers, employees and agents disclaim all liability (except for any liability which by law cannot be excluded), for any error, inaccuracy in, or omission from the information contained on this document or any loss or damage suffered by any person directly or indirectly through relying on this information.

**Copyright**

The Board owns copyright in the information contained in this document where none currently exists. Information may be duplicated for personal use only. The information may not otherwise be reproduced and must not be distributed or transmitted to any other person or used in any way without the express approval of the Board.