

Major Frost Event on the 16 September 2024



On 16 September 2024 we had a major frost event in the region. This is the worst frost that we have seen. Usually, we have pockets of frost affected vineyards but this time we had pockets of grapes that look to have missed major damage. Temperatures of as low as minus 3 degrees devastated vineyards from Yanco to Tharbogang. We received many calls from growers telling of how they had been impacted. Due to the broad spread nature and severity of the frost an initial estimate of losses of up to 100,000 tonnes was made. This wont be clarified until we capture the event through a disaster survey or until the crop is harvested. We still have a long way to go before vintage and we may still see damage to vines that look ok, due to poor berry set, bunches that fail to mature, and hen and chicken. Vines that have been

burnt back to the cordon may throw a secondary crop this however will not be as fruitful as the primary crop that has been lost.

We have successfully had the DPI adapt the storm and flood survey to capture frost. The survey link: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/emergencies/emergency/community/primary-industries-natural-disaster-damage-survey> . It is very important that we get growers to complete the survey, as every time a survey is submitted it adds a dollar amount to the size of the disaster. The bigger the amount recorded by the survey the more likely we are to get government assistance. Growers of citrus and other crops that have been damaged are urged to do the same.



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS EDITION

	Page
Major Frost Event on the 16/9/24	1
Board Activities Report	2
Calander of Upcoming Events	2
SWA Resources and Grower Support	3
Sustainable Winegrowing Australia—SWA	4
Julie Mortlock 2024 Local Legend	5
Safework NSW \$1000 Small Business Grants	5
Ciatti Global Market Report September 2024Australia	6
Possible Removal of Paraquat and Diquat	6
Sustainable Riverina	7
Cartoon	8

Riverina Winegrape Growers

BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



**Riverina
WINEGRAPE
GROWERS**

Rebates for SWA Membership

Growers who have become members of the Sustainable Winegrowing Australia are reminded that Riverina Winegrape Growers will provide a rebate for the full amount of the joining fee. To claim the rebate please supply a copy of your receipt to the board office. Ensure your entity name and farm number are included and the money will be transferred into your

bank account, as recorded in our system.

Name Change Official

A staged repeal in September to the Agricultural Services Regulation means we are now officially known as Riverina Winegrape Growers. The Wine Grapes Marketing Board will always be a valued part of our history but will no longer be part of our future.

Riverina Winegrape Growers Board Elections

Four candidates stood for the five board positions and were elected unopposed. Returning members are Bruno Brombal, Robert Bellato and Bruno Altin. Joining the team is grower Robert D'Ambrosio. Whilst we welcome Robert to the team we have to thank outgoing member Frank Alampi for his service to the board.

Tony Baggio could not stand again as he no longer grows grapes however, as a valued part of the team and our delegate to both the NSW & National Irrigators Council, Tony will fill the vacant position as an appointed member. Unfortunately, due to time constraints Dom Shirripa has tendered his resignation as an appointed member which will come into effect after our October meeting. Again, thanks to Dom for his contributions over the years. This will leave a vacant position and we'll be looking to appoint a grower to fill the Board.

Dr Craig Emerson to Consult Riverina Growers

The federal government has appointed Dr Craig Emerson to undertake an Impact Analysis into competition issues along the wine supply chain—from

the vineyard to the retailers. Dr Emerson was responsible for the review into the supermarket code of conduct that was completed recently. Dr Emerson will be in Griffith to meet with and hear from growers on the 17 October 2024. Riverina Winegrape Growers will be hosting Dr Emerson and will put out an invite to growers closer to the event once the details have been finalised.

Rebates: Third Party HACCP & Chemical Accreditation

A reminder that a \$150 rebate is available for Third Party Audit upon receipt of paid invoice. With a \$100 rebate for of Chemical Accreditation course upon receipt of paid invoice.

Weather as a Service Trial

The development of the weather as a service program has reached the trial stage to ground truth the predictive weather service and iron out any bugs before being run out to industry. This was an initiative of NSW Wine based on the aging weather stations needing to be upgraded to the 4g network. The pilot was conducted here in the Riverina showing promising results. We are hoping that this can be run out to all in the near future giving an accurate predictive service as well as actuals.

HACCP for Vintage 2025

Brian Bortolin has begun doing HACCP audits for vintage 2025. Growers are asked to contact Brian on 0401 567 449 or 6962 3944 to book an audit. If you have completed SWA please check with your winery to see if you still need to undertake the HACCP audit.

Rootlings Conference 2025

Rootlings are the NSW Wine Industry under 35's organisation. This was started by Maggie Jarret during her time with the NSW DPI. They have been going for a couple of years now and held their past annual networking get together in Orange and the Hunter. Next year the event is to be held in the Riverina. This has been so successful that Wine Australia want to make it a nation program.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Event	Date	Time	Venue
RWG Budget Meeting	16/10/2024	7:00pm-10:00pm	Yoogali Club
Craig Emerson	17/10/2024	9:00am	Riverina Winegrape Growers Boardroom
Grower BBQ	4/12/2024	11:30am-2:30pm	Riverina Winegrape Growers Carpark

SWA Resources and Grower Support

Riverina Winegrape growers have put together a support package for those growers that are undertaking membership or certified membership of Sustainable Winegrowing Australia. We value growers feedback

and ideas on where we can help make this transition easier and more beneficial. Please feel free to contact us with ideas or suggestions on 02 69623444 or board@wgmb.net.au

SWA Resources Available to Growers

- **100% Rebate for first year SWA joining fee—provide a copy of your invoice to the board office. Please include entity name and farm number if not already on invoice.**
- **Free signs for Biosecurity and Chemical Shed.**
- **Copies of approved supplier forms from resellers.**
- **Help on signing up to and completing the online SWA data and workbooks.**
- **Copies of examples for completion on the auditable documents that reflect our region.**
- **Workshops to help complete and understand what is required for Audits.**
- **Help with completing internal audit before the real audit.**
- **One on one assistance either onsite or at our office.**
- **Lobbying to change the system to be fit for purpose.**



Brain Bortolin Holding a Freshcare Audit Ready Workshop

Riverina Winegrape Growers

Sustainable Winegrowing Australia—SWA

Many growers have been asked by their wineries to become accredited under the Sustainable Winegrowing Australia program. The reason for this is that the SWA trustmark is now a requirement to tender for wine sales both domestic and export.

The SWA process was developed with very little consultation with the warm irrigated regions and no representation from the Riverina. The off shoot of this is that we are now stuck with a system that is not fit for purpose for our region and is very hard to navigate for growers who may not be computer literate.

The word from all local wineries is that they will need their growers to become accredited sooner rather than later. Wineries will need 85% of their fruit by volume to be SWA accredited in order to utilise the trustmark on their products.

The Process of becoming SWA Certified

- Complete the SWA Training
- Sign up to the online SWA program
- Complete the SWA data and workbook
- Pay SWA membership
- Develop your personal SWA program for audit
- Ensure your operation is audit ready
- Pass a third party Audit
- Send a copy of your audit certificate to AWRI to be upgraded to certified member

As the process is date driven please contact your winery in relation to currency. The SWA system changes to the new vintage in early July giving a window of approximately two months to sign up, enter your data, complete the workbook and pay the annual joining fee for the ensuing vintage.

The next step is to prepare for audit. The auditor will look at both the vineyard and prepared paper work. Things that will need to be inspected on the farm will include the chemical shed, fuel storage and anything else that needs to be verified based on your sustainability plans.

Paper work will need to include plans for sustainability, which include topics like irrigation, pest and disease management, soil management, biodiversity, and biosecurity as well as records of how you disposed of waste and where you purchased farming inputs like chemicals, fertilisers and fuel. The spray diary is also an integral part and will need to include every thing that has been used in the vineyard, be it fungicide, insecticide or herbicide. You will also need to capture fertiliser use for the year. This can now be recorded in the grape web spray diary.



Growers attend SWA Training Day with Trainer Liz Riley in the RWG Boardroom

Julie Mortlock 2024 Local Legend

Julie Mortlock became the latest local Legend in the Riverina. Julie has been a winemaker with DeBortoli Wines, rising to the rank senior winemaker and custodian of the iconic Noble One for more than 20 years. When receiving her award Julie told every one that today was her last day of work as she had retired and was moving away. The award was a complete surprise to her as she had absolutely no idea. Julie was welcomed into the legends club by previous recipients Bruno Brombal and Bill Calabria.



Local Legends Bill Calabria, Julie Mortlock, & Bruno Brombal

Safework NSW \$1000 Small Business Grants

26 August 2024 saw Sue Howie from Safework NSW holding two workshops on WHS in the Board room. Attendance at these workshops gave growers the eligibility to claim the \$1000 Safework NSW Small Business Grant. Although a little cramped we managed to fit 30 growers in each workshop. The workshops were broken up by a grower BBQ in the

RWG carpark. The grant enables growers to purchase safety equipment like spill kits and PPE. Up to \$1000 can be claimed back on all eligible purchases of safety equipment. We will try to hold a similar workshop day in the near future as we have had a lot of enquiry from growers that were unable to attend.



Grower s Attending the NSW Safework Workshop

Ciatti Global Market Report September 2024 Australia

Australia's bulk market has been quiet, as is typical for the time of year. With the Northern Hemisphere mid-harvest, demand from Europe and North America has softened as the new intake there gets analysed and/or excess supplied dealt with. Many sellers in Australia are currently seeing a slowdown in shipments to China as the supply pipeline has been filled, but they remain hopeful that more wine will be needed in the lead-up to Chinese New Year on 29th January.

Domestically, enquiries for white varieties remain consistent; smaller batches of premium reds are still being requested. In the vineyards, ongoing dry conditions – following a drier winter – have growers concerned as budburst is underway in many regions due to warm, sunny days.

Update: The night of 15/16 September brought a severe frost to the Riverina region of New South Wales. Riverina Winegrape Growers said that, while it was too early to estimate the crop loss, "it's likely to be more than 100,000 tonnes for the region". South Australia's Barossa Valley and Riverland areas were also reported to have been frost-affected. Further nights of threateningly low temperatures are forecast through September.

Treasury Wine Estates (TWE) has confirmed its intention to sell four of its commercial brands: Wolf Blass, Lindeman's, Yellowglen and Blossom Hill. The company said selling these brands – acquired between 1996 and 2015 and representing less than 5% of TWE's gross profits in the financial year to 30th June – would allow it to focus on more premium brands such as Penfolds, Wynns,

Squealing Pig and 19 Crimes. According to TWE, the commercial wine sector – wines priced in retail at AUD10 or less per bottle – is facing "challenging market conditions" across all markets, and cited this as one of the primary causes in the company issuing a non-cash write-down of AUD354 million.

Australian Vintage Limited (AVL) has reported an AUD93 million loss in the financial year to 30th June, down from a AUD4 million profit the year before. The financial details report the loss as being due to significant write-downs including an AUD37.7 million goodwill impairment and an AUD36.6 million inventory write-down. The public-listed winery did see 1% growth in revenue to AUD261 million. AVL's interim CEO, Peter Perrin, has resigned for health reasons. Meanwhile, there has also been a change at the top at Accolade Wines, where CEO Robert Foye has resigned. After spending four years with Accolade – which was acquired by Bain Capital earlier this year – Foye will return to the US.

In **New Zealand**, the bulk market – not surprisingly for this time of year – remains slow. Good inventory of competitively-priced 2023 vintage Sauvignon Blanc remains, whilst 2024 material is readily available. The country's growers have been expressing some concerns regarding potential frost events now that spring is officially underway and the vines are showing woolly buds. Growers will be on high alert over the next couple of months hoping weather conditions stay favourable and losses from any extreme cold weather events are avoided.

Possible Removal of Paraquat and Diquat

The APVMA recently released a special gazette on the preposed decisions and reconsideration of both Paraquat & Diquat.

"Based on the weight of evidence, the APVMA proposes removing a number of current uses at high rates of application that pose an unacceptable risk to the environment. The APVMA also proposes removing the use of paraquat at higher rates where the short-term risk for poisoning can't be adequately mitigated."

"Research has consistently demonstrated the connection between paraquat exposure and Parkinson's disease."

Riverina Wine grape growers will be putting in a submission for the continued use of the product.



Sustainable Riverina

Riverina Winegrape Growers are worried about the whole Sustainable Winegrowing Australia system and how it is being managed. We acknowledge that we need a system to be able to gain market access for our wineries but this needs to be fit for purpose and inclusive for all growers. One of the things that we are worried about the most are the possible green washing claims that could at best tarnish the brand and at worst destroy it, as how can anyone claim sustainability credentials on grapes or wine purchased below the cost of production. We even received legal opinion on this that suggested we were correct in thinking this way, however this opinion has not altered the stance of the AWRI in the administration of the SWA program. In fact it has been a very hard slog to get them to just come to the table to review even the very basics of the program that don't fit with our region. There have been some very frustrating moments for both RWG staff and growers as we try to come to grips with an ill fitting system. In a bid to support growers RWG have come up with a suite of support measures (see page 3 of this news letter).

How can we do it better whilst making the system more user friendly and inclusive, whilst making next to no headway with the system administrators?

We can make our own system. Lets call it Sustainable Riverina for want of a better name. After many discussions with the board and growers I have come up with a plan to bridge the gap to make a sustainability system for the Riverina.

What would this look like? The foundation will be an updated data base that we are already going through the motions of developing although in its very early stages at the moment. This is the best platform as it already captures a lot of data needed by a sustainability system. Then we add a sustainability module. This module would comprise of an easy to read, tick and flick system. The grower, either at their leisure or with our support, could go over a list of examples that are relevant to the Riverina for all the topics required by the sustainability standard. The grower would pick out the examples that are relevant to their operation by ticking a box, examples that are not relevant to the operation are by-passed. There would also be an other box for the addition of anything unique to the organisation that they would like to add. Once this has been completed a personalised sustainability document would be produced that could be either printer out or downloaded as the main document required for audit. There will still be the outer record that will need to be kept like spray diary and service records, along with receipts from purchases and disposal of waste, which growers would be reminded to update for audit by a check list at the end of the sustainability document. We would still have to do the online SWA and become third party audited but once established and working I would be lobbying very hard for this system to replace the need to do the online SWA data and workbook because it would already be captured in our system. This would cut out a lot of the repetitive parts of SWA and take away the SWA joining fee imposed by AWRI.



Growers attending BBQ between WHS Workshop and collecting Biosecurity and Chemical Shed Signs

Riverina Winegrape Growers

Winegrape Purchasing Code of Conduct Federal Senate Inquiry

The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee announced yesterday that it will perform an inquiry into the Australian winegrape purchases code of conduct, on which it will produce a report by 28 February 2025.

Simultaneously, the independent impact analysis [currently being undertaken by Dr Craig Emerson](#) assessing market function and regulation in the grape and wine industry will continue its investigations, with consultations now open and a draft report expected later this year.

Dr Emerson's analysis will include public consultation, which is open to the industry and stakeholders from **18 September** until **10 October**. A consultation paper detailing an overview of the current regulation within the industry and identifying potential failures in the system was released on Wednesday, titled *Grape and Wine Sector Regulatory Impact Analysis Consultation paper*, which can be viewed [here](#).

Australian Grape & Wine CEO Lee McLean welcomed news of both the Senate enquiry and the release of the public consultation document.

"Australian Grape & Wine is committed to working closely with both Dr Emerson and the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee throughout these important consultations," said McLean.

"The timing of the Senate inquiry is interesting, given that it will run parallel to Dr Emerson's impact analysis," he added. "We note that the Emerson impact analysis will explore issues across the entire value chain—from the vineyard to the retail shelf. It will also examine and draw upon previous studies into the grape and wine sector, including work by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee, Wine Australia, the Viticulture and Wine Sector Working Group, and relevant university reports.

"We encourage the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee to similarly draw on this material, which has already been the subject of extensive analysis.

"We see this as a valuable opportunity for the entire sector to engage in constructive dialogue that will help shape a strong, sustainable future for our industry." Wine Australia



*Recycled glass, recycled paper label, recycled plastic cork...
I hate to think where the wine comes from.*

Wine Grapes Marketing Board 182 Yambil Street Griffith NSW 2680 Phone: (02) 6962 3944 Fax: (02) 6962 6103
Email: board@wgmb.net.au Web: www.riverinawinegrapes.com.au 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.