



### Senate Committee Review into Winegrape Code of Conduct

#### Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with stakeholders, determine the most appropriate model of a mandatory code of conduct for Australia winegrape purchases (code of conduct) in the inland regions of the Riverland, Riverina, and Murray Valley; and then implement this. The code of conduct should establish fair and equitable terms addressing the following:

- Payment terms to be limited to within the financial year of delivery at the latest;
- Quality requirements including minimum standards, measurement methods, and what actions will be taken if the requirements are not met;
- Earlier indicative pricing; and
- Binding dispute resolution.

The committee is encouraged by the development of a National Vineyard Register. Lack of access to information and data was a frequent complaint of the growing community. The work being undertaken to establish the register will ultimately be a useful resource for growers and other industry stakeholders to collate and distribute up-to-date data to inform investment decisions. Wine Australia must continue to focus on supplying easy-to-access data and dynamic price information. Wine Australia must remain cognisant of the changing needs of its stakeholders and prioritise simple dissemination of its information, particularly for those who may not be digitally literate.

#### Recommendation 2

The committee recommends that Wine Australia continue to facilitate and enhance the collection and dissemination of wine and grape information and data that it publishes for the benefit of wine and grape growing sectors.

Australia is suffering from the negative effects of a long-standing oversupply of red wine which was exacerbated by the loss of the Chinese market. The oversupply of wine is not a problem limited to

Australia as, worldwide major wine-producing countries are grappling with the effects of reduced consumption. France and Spain have both implemented adjustment measures to dispose of the surplus wine and to reduce plantings and similar programs have been considered in other jurisdictions. The committee observes that a similar program may be beneficial in reducing Australia's current stockpile and oversupply issues.

#### Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that the Australian Government investigate the feasibility of distilling excess wine into industrial alcohol or otherwise disposing of a portion of Australia's wine surplus.

To reduce the stock to supply ratio over the long-term it may be necessary for some growers to exit the industry. The committee heard that there are alternate crops and land uses that would be ideal for grape growers to divert to or complimentary crops that growers can establish alongside their grapes in order to diversify their product. Many growers are willing to make a change but lack the information, data, or financial capital necessary to exit the industry and start afresh. The committee believes there is a role for government in assisting and supporting growers to make this transition.

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## BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



**Riverina  
WINEGRAPE  
GROWERS**

### **Bruno Brombal and Robert Bellato Appointed as Chair and Dep Chair.**

Bruno Brombal has again been reappointed as the Chair of the Board. He has held this position since 1998. Robert Bellato was also reappointed as the Deputy Chair of the organisation.

Tony Baggio will continue to represent winegrape growers in irrigation matters and

Jeremy Cass represents the region on the NSW Wine board. Bruno Altin is the delegate to the Riverina Winemakers Association, Steve Barbon is the delegate to MIA Vine Improvement Society and Bruno Brombal continues as delegate to the Inland Wine Regions Alliance.

### **Lobbying Politicians for Industry Intervention**

Riverina Winegrape Growers continue to lobby government for intervention

### **Extension/Sustainability Officer Position**

Six applications were received by the closing date, with the quality of the applicants making it a very hard decision of who to turn down after the first round of interviews. The final interviews will be held shortly for the two shortlisted candidates, and we hope to combine our first BBQ of the year, with an introduction to growers of our new staff member.

### **Rootling Conference to be held in Griffith**

Rootlings is an industry group for younger industry participants. The initiative was the idea of Maggie Jarret DPI Development Officer and has been running in NSW since 2022. This year the annual conference will be held in Griffith on the 16 and 17 June 2025.



Riverina Winegrape Growers Meeting with Local Federal MP Sussan Ley

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## Submission NSW Water Price Increases on Riverina Winegrape Growers

The Hon. Rose Jackson      27/2/2025  
 Minister for Water  
 Parliament of New South Wales  
 52 Martin Place  
 Sydney, NSW 2000

### Subject: Submission on the Impact of NSW Water Price Increases on Riverina Grape Growers

Dear Minister Jackson,

I write on behalf of Riverina Winegrape Growers to express our deep concern regarding the proposed NSW Water price increases of up to 20% per year over the next five years. These increases come at a time when Riverina grape growers are already facing severe financial pressure, with grape prices falling below the cost of production. The additional burden of significantly higher water costs threatens the viability of our industry and the livelihoods of the growers who sustain it.

#### Impact on Riverina Grape Growers

The Riverina is one of Australia's most significant wine-producing regions, providing a substantial contribution to both the state and national economy. However, growers are currently struggling with:

- **Unsustainably Low Returns:** The price per tonne for grapes is at historic lows, failing to cover production costs, let alone allow for reinvestment or debt repayment.
- **Rising Input Costs:** Inflationary pressures on fuel, fertilizers, and labor are making vineyard operations increasingly unviable.

**Water as a Critical Input:** Water is not an optional expense—it is the lifeblood of our industry. Any increase in its cost directly adds to the negative returns of growers.

Given these challenges, the proposed water price increases will push many growers to financial breaking point, forcing exits from the industry and causing long-term damage to the regional economy.

#### Concerns Over Capital Expenditure Allocations

A significant portion of the proposed increases in water prices stems from Water NSW's 125% increase in capital expenditure, particularly the funding of major projects such as the Warragamba Dam Resilience Project and the Warragamba Environmental Flows Project. While these projects may be necessary for the Greater Sydney region, they provide **no direct benefit to Riverina grape growers**, yet we are being asked to bear the costs.

The water infrastructure servicing the Riverina is entirely separate from Warragamba Dam. Our water is sourced from the Murrumbidgee system, meaning Riverina irrigators should not be burdened with the costs of infrastructure that does not serve our region. Expecting struggling growers to subsidize projects that provide no benefit to them is inequitable and unjustifiable.

#### Request for Ministerial Intervention

Given the above concerns, we urge you to:

1. **Ensure Riverina irrigators are not charged for capital works on infrastructure that does not benefit them**—any capital expenditure for Warragamba should be funded by those who receive its water.
2. **Reassess the proposed water price increases** and introduce a fairer pricing model that accounts for the financial hardship already facing primary producers.
3. **Implement relief measures** such as subsidies or staggered increases to prevent devastating financial impacts on Riverina grape growers.

#### Commit to genuine stakeholder consultation

to ensure that the voices of regional irrigators are heard before any final decisions are made.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent matter and request a meeting to discuss possible solutions. The Riverina wine industry is a vital contributor to the NSW economy, and we seek your support in ensuring its long-term sustainability.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Cass

CEO Riverina Winegrape Growers

## Water Buybacks

With the exception on a recent purchase of 30GL of water from Duxton for \$120,000,000 the government has been very quiet recently on actioning further water buybacks.

With the Government now in caretaker mode, in the

lead up to the elections, we will have to wait until after the election on the 3 May 2025 to see what happens next and this will all depend on who wins. A Labor win will see them continue buying water but this may change under a coalition government.

## Vintage 2025 Larger than Expected

Vintage 2025 looks to be larger than expected, even after the late frost that affected most of the region and several storms that impacted the greater Yenda area. The crop levels in most varieties were generally larger than we have seen for several years and even frosted crops bounced back better than could be expected. The figures shown in Table 2 on page 5 show the difference of intake 2025 against the figures for the same period in previous years. These are not the final figures, which at a guess, should be somewhere between 310,000 and 320,000 tonnes.

The weather conditions over vintage have been mostly favourable with very few reports of bunch rots that can cause fruit to be downgraded or rejected. The drier than average conditions saw some growers struggle to get through due to higher than average demand for water, added to tight water budgets. Prices remained low see Table 1 below, with the other inland regions of Murray Valley and Riverland reporting similar prices, with the exception of Pinot Gris, Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and to a lesser extent Chardonnay, these varieties received higher prices in these regions than here in the Riverina. Wineries are reporting that the quality of this years

crop is very good, and a big vote of thanks goes out to all involved as this season has seen a marked reduction in the amount of grape spills on local roads. The Chardonnay crop could possibly have been 20% larger if we didn't get frosted and most of the whites made it over the weighbridge, with the exception of some frosted Chardonnay crops that had minimal inputs applied and ended up with powdery mildew, and a couple of blocks that were rejected for mealy bug.

Vintage 2025 also saw a couple of record crops for the region, with both the Pinot Gris and Sauvignon Blanc crops yielding significantly more than they ever have. The last biggest crop of Pinot Gris was just under 25,000 tonnes picked in 2023, with 29,796 tonnes picked this year, up by 32.5% or 10,000 tonnes on last years crop of 19,672. While Sauvignon Blanc has remained fairly stable for the past five years with a slight increase in 2024, this year saw the intake increase by 5,750 tonnes, up by 23.5% See Table 2 page 5.

The red grape crop seems to be up as well with growers reporting above average yields. The frost  
(cont'd pg 5)

| Variety       | Casella<br>\$/Tonne | Caps<br>t/ha | Calabria<br>\$/Tonne | Caps<br>t/ha | Berton<br>\$/Tonne | Caps<br>t/ha | DeBortoli<br>\$/Tonne | Caps<br>t/ha | Meditrina<br>\$/Tonne | Caps<br>t/ha |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Chardonnay    | \$ 400.00           | 17.5         | \$ 330.00            | N/A          | \$ 350.00          | 19.8         | \$ 350.00             | N/A          | \$ 375.00             | N/A          |
| Colombard     | \$ 300.00           | 15           | \$ 300.00            | N/A          | N/A                | N/A          | \$ 300.00             | N/A          | \$ 300.00             | N/A          |
| Muscat Gordo  | \$ 300.00           | 15           | \$ 300.00            | N/A          | N/A                | N/A          | \$ 280.00             | N/A          | \$ 330.00             | N/A          |
| Pinot Gris    | \$ 440.00           | 17.5         | \$ 400.00            | N/A          | \$ 375.00          | 19.8         | \$ 350.00             | N/A          | \$ 375.00             | N/A          |
| Riesling      | \$ 320.00           | 15           | \$ 300.00            | N/A          | N/A                | N/A          | \$ 300.00             | N/A          | \$ 300.00             | N/A          |
| Sauv Blanc    | \$ 380.00           | 17.5         | \$ 400.00            | N/A          | \$ 400.00          | 19.8         | \$ 360.00             | N/A          | \$ 400.00             | N/A          |
| Semillon      | \$ 320.00           | 15           | \$ 300.00            | N/A          | \$ 325.00          | 19.8         | \$ 300.00             | N/A          | \$ 330.00             | N/A          |
| Traminer      | \$ 300.00           | 15           | \$ 300.00            | N/A          | \$ 275.00          | 19.8         | \$ 280.00             | N/A          | \$ 280.00             | N/A          |
| White Fronti  | \$ 320.00           | 15           | \$ 320.00            | N/A          | \$ 275.00          | 19.8         | \$ 300.00             | N/A          | \$ 330.00             | N/A          |
| Cab Sauvignon | \$ 320.00           | 8.2          | \$ 235.00            | N/A          | \$ 300.00          | 17.3         | \$ 240.00             | N/A          | \$ 250.00             | ?            |
| Durif         | \$ 320.00           | 10           | \$ 200.00            | N/A          | \$ 325.00          | 17.3         | \$ 240.00             | N/A          | \$ 250.00             | ?            |
| Merlot        | \$ 320.00           | 12.5         | \$ 235.00            | N/A          | \$ 300.00          | 17.3         | \$ 220.00             | N/A          | \$ 240.00             | ?            |
| Petit Verdot  | \$ 320.00           | 8.2          | \$ 200.00            | N/A          | N/A                | N/A          | \$ 180.00             | N/A          | \$ 285.00             | ?            |
| Pinot Noir    | \$ 400.00           | 15           | \$ 300.00            | N/A          | N/A                | N/A          | \$ 330.00             | N/A          | \$ 300.00             | ?            |
| Ruby Cabernet | N/A                 | N/A          | \$ 200.00            | N/A          | \$ 300.00          | 17.3         | \$ 180.00             | N/A          | \$ 200.00             | ?            |
| Shiraz        | \$ 320.00           | 8.2          | \$ 225.00            | N/A          | \$ 300.00          | 17.3         | \$ 180.00             | N/A          | \$ 200.00             | ?            |

Table 1. Comparison of Local Prices for Vintage 2025

## Cont'd - Vintage 2025 Larger than Expected

does not seem to have made a noticeable impact on the red varieties. That said, there will be grapes left behind that were either over capped fruit or rejected due to desiccation. The quantity that remains is unknown but believed to be in the thousands of tonnes. Shiraz is still the biggest problem as a variety but most reds varieties are still in over supply.

20% loss of growers and vineyards overnight. The response from RWA was that this needs to happen and we can't see an end to the current situation for at least four years, we replied that there would be very few growers still producing if this continues for four more years.

### Outlook for the Future

Two RWG board members and the CEO met with the Riverina Winemakers Assoc. at their AGM, 17 Feb 2025. We reported to them that in the past three years we had lost 3,000 ha of vineyard, down from 22,000 ha to less than 19,000 ha which equates to 50 growers and this number was continuing to rise. We told them that we believed that if the water buybacks were taken up on the expressions of interest placed by growers in the MIA, that we could see a further

The outlook is still bleak and being the region with the lowest yields and in some cases the lowest prices, we will be the worst affected. We can already see this with the amount of vines removed in the past three years compared to both of the other inland regions, that being said we received a report from the Riverland last week that vines were starting to be removed. Our biggest fear is the USA will put tariffs on wine, as this will have a major impact on the entire industry, especially the Riverina, as Casella our biggest winery, relies heavily on the US Market. **At the time of printing it looks like a tariff of 10%.**

| Grape Intake Variety | Progressive total<br>31 March 2025 | Progressive total<br>25 March 2024 | Progressive total<br>27 March 2023 | Progressive total<br>28 March 2022 | Progressive total<br>29 March 2021 |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>White</b>         |                                    |                                    |                                    |                                    |                                    |
| Chardonnay           | 59289.57                           | 58435.95                           | 34092.91                           | 70199.62                           | 68349.42                           |
| Colombard            | 7124.52                            | 7873.06                            | 4529.28                            | 8336.24                            | 8686.05                            |
| White Fronti         | 10967.82                           | 9416.07                            | 7234.7                             | 13566.28                           | 14580.07                           |
| Muscat Gordo         | 4578.55                            | 3624.91                            | 1118.35                            | 3877.01                            | 5138.09                            |
| Pinot Gris           | 29796.68                           | 19672.63                           | 20022.32                           | 23666.47                           | 24134.16                           |
| Riesling             | 1804.2                             | 1654.34                            | 1511.68                            | 2639.78                            | 1740.33                            |
| Sauv Blanc           | 24560.46                           | 18806.19                           | 16177.04                           | 16661.48                           | 17131.86                           |
| Semillon             | 24377.9                            | 17751.79                           | 17690.24                           | 25322.94                           | 29059.89                           |
| Traminer             | 4263.77                            | 3364.53                            | 3586.55                            | 5829.86                            | 5661.81                            |
| Verdelho             | 1940.35                            | 1323.72                            | 781.87                             | 2579.41                            | 2571.96                            |
| Viognier             | 1671.12                            | 925.6                              | 584.7                              | 1593.94                            | 1722.27                            |
| Other White          | 6282.51                            | 6569.78                            | 4270.65                            | 6587.68                            | 7355.27                            |
| <b>Total White</b>   | <b>176657.45</b>                   | <b>149418.57</b>                   | <b>111600.29</b>                   | <b>180860.71</b>                   | <b>186131.18</b>                   |
| <b>Red</b>           |                                    |                                    |                                    |                                    |                                    |
| Cab Sauv             | 17732.26                           | 10926.04                           | 2249.51                            | 10733.34                           | 26330.59                           |
| Durif                | 10679.95                           | 8535.83                            | 825.96                             | 8640.57                            | 10094.26                           |
| Merlot               | 21617.8                            | 17551.87                           | 1190.16                            | 18098.94                           | 21713.61                           |
| Red Fronti           | 561.96                             | 223.44                             | 87.16                              | 367.16                             | 666.8                              |
| Petit Verdot         | 1884.44                            | 2365.27                            | 537.68                             | 2705.55                            | 3744.15                            |
| Pinot Noir           | 5200.74                            | 4129.72                            | 3605.21                            | 4855.59                            | 5844.5                             |
| Ruby Cab             | 2523.89                            | 2872.52                            | 446.26                             | 3181.23                            | 7089.68                            |
| Shiraz               | 52682.2                            | 31273.21                           | 19119.49                           | 59714.07                           | 70046.76                           |
| Tempranillo          | 709.96                             | 324.58                             | 178.74                             | 186.87                             | 465.46                             |
| Other Red            | 16383.22                           | 12645.54                           | 686.44                             | 4470                               | 12277.15                           |
| <b>Total Red</b>     | <b>129976.42</b>                   | <b>90848.02</b>                    | <b>28926.61</b>                    | <b>112953.32</b>                   | <b>158272.96</b>                   |
| <b>Total Grapes</b>  | <b>306633.87</b>                   | <b>240266.59</b>                   | <b>140526.9</b>                    | <b>293814.03</b>                   | <b>344404.14</b>                   |

**Table 2. Reported Crop Harvested up to the 31 March 2025 Compared to Previous Years**

### **Recommendation 4**

**The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in consultation with Australian Grape and Wine Ltd, investigate potential support packages to aid growers in transitioning out of winegrapes and into other crops or land uses in the warm inland wine regions.**

While this is not a problem that Australia can market its way out of, the committee is encouraged by the efforts made to establish new markets, particularly in India and South-East Asia. Establishing new markets, growing demand and showcasing Australia's quality wine to the world will not only aid in alleviating the current stock to sales surplus but also set the industry up to be stronger into the future.

Australian Grape and Wine made a pre-budget submission recommending funding for an export market driven recovery and investment in a domestic marketing campaign to drive food and wine tourism in Australia. The committee endorses the sentiment of this submission and encourages Australian Grape and Wine to prepare an updated submission to the Australian Government to reflect changes to the industry in the last 12 months.

### **Recommendation 5**

**The committee recommends that Australian Grape and Wine provide an updated Pre-Budget Submission reflecting the current status of the Australia wine industry.**

**On the basis of that submission, the committee recommends that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to invest in Australia's wine market through the establishment of new trading partners, expansion of existing markets, and promotion of wineries and cellar doors domestically.**

### **Additional comments from Labor Senators**

1.1 Labor Senators make the following points in line with the Viticulture and Wine Sector Working Group established by Commonwealth, State and Territory Agriculture Ministers and the specially commissioned research from eminent wine economist, Emeritus Professor Kym Anderson AC.

1.2 Regarding Recommendation 3—it is the view of Labor Senators, as noted in Kym Anderson's Australia's Wine Industry Crisis and Ways Forward,

that a subsidy to distil excess wine would not reduce the long-run supply capacity issues. Instead, it would encourage continued overproduction and require ongoing subsidisation to prevent continuing oversupply, effectively subsidising underperforming producers. Distillation into industrial alcohol also nets too little of transport costs to be an effective response. Therefore, Labor Senators do not support this recommendation.

1.3 Regarding Recommendation 4—Labor Senators believe that the support packages and payments as proposed in this recommendation often result in a "moral hazard", as outlined in the Anderson report, which makes clear that there is a "moral hazard reason" for not making a habit of such payments, and that such assistance is not justifiable on efficiency grounds and can even impede helpful adjustment.

1.4 Further, it is the view of Labor Senators that a subsidy to mothball vineyards would assist some growers to leave the industry but would not reduce the long-run supply capacity and be difficult to target. We note that a previous vine pull program in Australia was not considered a success either, by industry or government.

1.5 While some jurisdictions around the world have committed to, or are exploring, vine pull subsidies, the proposed 27,000 ha reduction in capacity is less than one per cent of global capacity, which would not have any material effect on the global oversupply. Given that Australia accounts for just 4.1 per cent of global wine production, reducing our wine production capacity will have little effect on global prices, which is more relevant to our export focused red wine industry.

1.6 Therefore, Labor Senators do not support this recommendation.

1.7 Labor Senators recommend that the Australian Government wait for, and examine, the recommendations of the Grape and Wine Sector Regulatory Impact Analysis being undertaken by Dr Craig Emerson.

### **Additional comments from Greens Senators Recommendation 1**

The Australian Greens recommend that Recommendation 1 of the Senate Inquiry report into the Australian winegrape purchases code of conduct be amended by adding 30 September as the date by which indicative pricing is published, and adding



## Cont'd - Senate Committee Review into Winegrape Code of Conduct

a tonnage threshold to the application of the mandatory code as follows:

The committee recommends that the Treasurer, in consultation with stakeholders and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), determines the most appropriate model of a mandatory code of conduct for Australia winegrape purchases (code of conduct) in the inland regions of the Riverland, Riverina and Murray Valley (including Sunraysia) and for those purchasing large tonnages of grapes over a threshold that would need to be determined; to be implemented by the ACCC. The code of conduct should establish fair and equitable terms addressing the following:

- payment terms to be limited to within the financial year of delivery at the latest;
- quality requirements including minimum standards, measurement methods, and what actions will be taken if the requirements are not met;
- earlier indicative pricing by at least the 30th of September; and
- binding dispute resolution.

### Recommendation 2

The Australian Greens recommend that the following interim measures be implemented this year as a matter of urgency prior to the mandatory code coming into effect:

- indicative prices for all winegrapes should be compulsorily notified by all winegrape purchasers by the 30th of September 2025; and that the announcement of indicative prices be included in the mandatory code to be required by the 30th of September each year.
- the decisions of any expert determination processes are to be legally binding and enforceable with appropriate penalties.

### Recommendation 3

The Australian Greens recommend that, through the implementation of the mandatory code of conduct, the Australian Government mandate fifty-fifty winemaker-grower representation in the industry's peak body and any other bodies where both winemakers and winegrape growers are currently represented.

## Sustainable Communities-Water Buybacks Compensation

On 13 March 2025 DPIRD convened a round table consultation for the sustainable communities program. The event was attended by agricultural and horticultural industry groups and local council mayors and staff. NSW Minister for Ag and Regional NSW Tara Moriarty made a brief appearance to announce the 160 million dollar package that was part of federal funding designed to help compensate regions affected by the water buybacks.

The DPIRD team explained that the money was to be spent on projects that would create jobs and boost the economy of the region. The first round of funding being 15 million dollars is available now for shovel ready projects, with an emphasis on needing to spend funds before the end of this financial year.

I respectfully enquired as to why NSW DPIRD were not setting an example in this space and reminded them that we used to have three Industry Development Officers, one being based in Griffith but now there is one only, based in Orange. I told of the plight of the regions grape growers and how worried I was for the mental health of our members, especially after four years of below cost of production prices. I

spoke of our industry which has been here since the beginning and how the Riverina was once the largest grape growing region in Australia but in just three short years we had now dropped to being the third largest region. I suggested that this trend would continue and given the cost of buying land and water as well as planting costs, it would be impossible to reverse.



Minister Tara Moriarty addressing the DPIRD Event

## Farms of the Future Agtech Brunch

On the 18th of March Sarah Groat NSW DPIRD Development Officer for Farms of the Future hosted and Agtech Brunch at the DPIRD Station on Murray Road.

The aim of the brunch was to showcase tech that had been installed at the DPIRD station in the citrus blocks, Providers of the ag tech were on hand to talk

about their products and demonstrate how they were being used on the station. There was good attendance from resellers keen to see what was on offer and how well it was working in the field .

The event was very informative with some impressive claims being made on how agtech can benefit growers as they strive to get the best from their plantings.



Participants listening to Agtech providers promoting their products

## Letter to NSW DPIRD on PiNDDA (Primary Industries Natural Disaster Damage Assessment)

I am contacting you to express our disappointment with the PiNDDA system, I have been a vocal supporter of this system since I was introduced to it in 2022.

I realise that not every situation will yield a grant to help growers and strongly believe that the data recovered from these reports are vital as aid to inform government.

That said I cannot in all good conscience continue to ask growers to fill in these reports, as all they do is fill growers with false hope and add to the mental anguish that they are experiencing due to negative returns for the fourth year in a row.

Growers fill in these forms and that's the end of it, so they sit around waiting to be contacted with no result, then they contact me out of desperation hoping for some support that was never going to come.

I feel that if they have gone to the trouble of doing the survey they should be entitled to a call to acknowledge the receipt of the survey, enquire into their wellbeing, and let them know what if any assistance is available.

We are dealing with not only people's livelihood, but with their lives.

We experienced another Hail Storm at Yenda on the evening of Wednesday 5 February 2025 that lasted for 25 minutes. *Please see attached photos.*

This was the second time that some of these growers had been hit with hail this season, and I was speaking to the grower whose vineyard the photos are from a couple of days before this event took place, the first question he asked was have we heard if there is any assistance available.

I have pestered your staff to update the survey to include frost in last year, and to get back to me with results of the hail survey which they have very kindly done, sadly none of this has had any positive results for growers that were impacted.

I urge you to instate some form of personal grower feedback to these surveys once they have been completed, and to enquire into their wellbeing.

I look forward to your thoughts on this

Jeremy Cass  
CEO  
Riverina Winegrape Growers



## NSW DPIRD Response to PiNDDA letter

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development  
1 April 2025

Re: PiNDDA Reporting

Dear Mr Cass,

Thank you for your letter of 18 February 2025 regarding the primary industries natural disaster damage assessment (PiNDDA) process.

I acknowledge the impact of ongoing extreme weather events impacting winegrape growers in the Riverina, including the recent storms in December 2024 and February 2025. I also acknowledge the range of other pressures currently affecting growers in the Riverina. I thank you for your ongoing support and promotion of PiNDDA. The data reported to PiNDDA informs the NSW Reconstruction Authority in determining whether to make a Natural Disaster Declaration. In 2024, 370 PiNDDA surveys were submitted, including 34 for the December storms in Griffith.

Reported damages also help the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and other government agencies to better understand the scale and regional distribution of the impacts on agriculture from extreme weather events, which assists in targeting resources and assistance. The Department promotes the PiNDDA survey to winegrape growers in NSW and has included information on PiNDDA in the VineWatch newsletter. Our Viticulture Development Officer also promotes PiNDDA through her networks and can assist growers to complete surveys. I understand you have worked

closely with staff within the Department to share information with your members.

I understand that following the December storms affecting Griffith, DPIRD officers liaised directly with some growers to validate data. Following this work, a report has been submitted to the NSW Reconstruction Authority and awaits a determination. Staff within DPIRD continue to work closely with the Reconstruction Authority team and highlight the importance of a timely determination.

Since adding frost to PiNDDA in 2024, 156 frost reports have been submitted by landholders. This data is used to inform the Department and assist in targeting work with industry. Frost data is not reported to the Reconstruction Authority for declarations, as this is not within the scope of disaster assistance measures.

I value your feedback from survey respondents about progress updates and also note your concern for the mental health of affected growers. The Department is exploring potential options to improve the information available and has included links to wellbeing services in the Contacts section on the PiNDDA webpage.

I have asked Dr Alison Anderson, Director Horticulture, to be available to answer any further questions you may have. Dr Anderson can be contacted on 0400189 576 or by email [alison.anderson@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:alison.anderson@dpi.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Connell

Deputy Secretary Agriculture and Biosecurity

## Wine Australia hosting their Board Meeting in Griffith in June

This year Wine Australia will be holding one of its board meetings in Griffith. This meeting will coincide with **Riverina Winegrape Growers Annual AGM and Dinner to be held on Wednesday 25 June at 6.30pm for 7pm dinner followed by the AGM** and a presentation by Sandy Hathaway of Wine Australia who will launch an exciting new tool for grape growers to help with their on-farm decision making.

Riverina Winegrape Growers have invited the Wine Australia board members and CEO Dr Martin Cole, along with Australian Grape & Wine CEO Lee McLean and NSW Wine Chair Mark Bourne and EO Matt Jessop to attend our AGM as an opportunity to meet with growers and engage with our region.



**Martin Cole CEO & Liz Waters COO of Wine Australia in the RWG board room on a prior visit to the Region**

## Wine Australia Export Report 2024

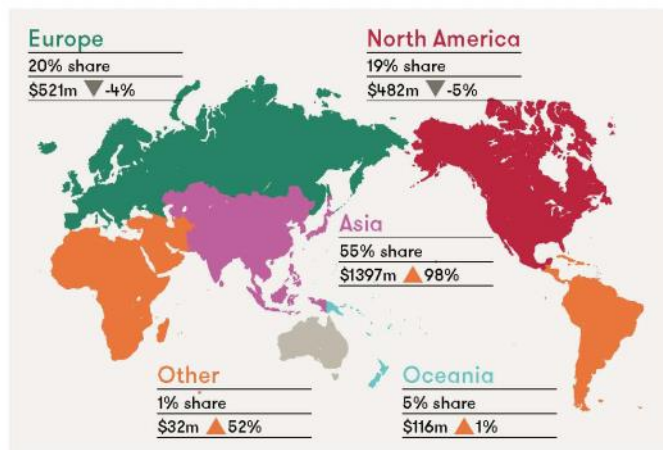
**Wine Australia**

Market Insights

# Export Report

1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024

|               |              |       |
|---------------|--------------|-------|
| Total value   | \$2.55b      | ▲ 34% |
| Total volume  | 649m litres  | ▲ 7%  |
| Average value | \$3.93/litre | ▲ 26% |



### Exports by price point (value)

|               |         |       |
|---------------|---------|-------|
| \$10.00 +     | \$1222m | ▲ 78% |
| \$7.50-\$9.99 | \$128m  | ▲ 30% |
| \$5.00-\$7.49 | \$226m  | ▲ 32% |
| \$2.50-\$4.99 | \$526m  | ▲ 8%  |
| < \$2.50      | \$446m  | ▼ -1% |

### Top 5 export destinations (value)

|  |                |        |        |
|--|----------------|--------|--------|
|  | Mainland China | \$907m | ▲ ++   |
|  | United Kingdom | \$352m | ▼ -3%  |
|  | United States  | \$325m | ▼ -10% |
|  | Hong Kong      | \$171m | ▼ -42% |
|  | Canada         | \$156m | ▲ 9%   |

### Top 5 export varieties (litres)

|  |                    |      |        |
|--|--------------------|------|--------|
|  | Shiraz             | 175m | ▲ 25%  |
|  | Chardonnay         | 137m | ▼ -8%  |
|  | Cabernet Sauvignon | 101m | ▲ 15%  |
|  | Pinot Gris/Grigio  | 41m  | ▼ -14% |
|  | Merlot             | 40m  | ▲ 2%   |

**58%**  
of wine produced  
is exported

**119**  
export  
destinations

**1,788**  
active  
exporters

**21,596**  
different products  
exported

**16.6 million**  
glasses of Australian wine  
enjoyed overseas each day

## Excerpt from ABARES March 2025 Agricultural Commodities Report

### Red wine grape prices to rise but remain below average

Australian wine grape prices are forecast to rise on average in 2024–25, but to differing degrees across varieties and regions. Prices are forecast to rise further in 2025–26, driven by improved demand from winemakers; however red wine grape prices are still forecast to remain well below the 10-year average to 2023–24.

**Prices for red varieties in warm inland regions** are expected to increase slightly in 2024–25, with 8%–12% annual increases forecast for Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot grapes (Figure 8.4). Somewhat improved winemaker demand given higher wine export prices on average is expected to support red wine grape demand. However, high stock levels and declining wine consumption both in Australia and

overseas are expected to keep prices well below the long-term average. Red grape prices in warm inland regions are expected to increase by 14%–17% in 2025–26, but nonetheless remain 30%–43% below the 10-year average to 2023–24 in real terms.

**Prices for white varieties in warm inland regions** are expected to increase in 2024–25, particularly for Chardonnay (Figure 8.5). A lower expected crush – arising from frost damage early in the season to a large area of mostly Chardonnay vines in the Riverland and other regions – is expected to support greater competition among winemakers for Chardonnay grapes. The consumption outlook for white variety grapes is expected to remain more favourable than reds into 2025–26, with white wine grape prices nationally forecast to be just 4% below the 10-year average to 2023–24 in real terms.

## Bonnie's Back As Our Local Rural Financial Counsellor

Riverina Winegrape Growers welcomes the return of Bonnie Hayes to the position of Rural Financial Counsellor, we would also like to thank outgoing Counsellor Julie Andrezza for all the hard work she has done on behalf of growers during her time in the role.

The Rural Financial Counselling Service is a an organisation that genuinely tries to help people on the land going through hard times and Bonnie cares as much as anyone.

I would urge anyone doing it tough to reach out to RFCS as you may be very surprised as to how they can help you. I have spoken with a couple of growers who have availed themselves of the service. They came to let me know how thankful they were of the help they received and how they wish they had acted sooner. They also thanked me for allowing the service to use our board room as a meeting place. This is an initiative that Riverina Winegrape Growers felt would help get people through the door to receive the financial help they need.

The stereotype of male Aussie farmers being too proud to ask for help is our biggest flaw and the main reason that we are at the highest risk of all professions of suicide. This is something that I am extremely worried about for our growers due to the continued depressed state of the industry .

I would suggest to anyone that is struggling with their finances to contact RFCS and see what services are available to assist you through these times of industry turmoil.

One of the options available is the Farm Household Allowance (FHA), FHA is one service that helps you get back on your feet. FHA is an Australian Government support package for farming families doing it tough. Since 2014 FHA has helped more than 17,500 farmers and their partners to improve their situation.

So if you are doing it tough book an appointment to see the RFCS or encourage a mate who could use the support to do so.



Bonnie Hayes RFC based in Griffith

## Mental Health Resources

### 24/7 Counselling Support

- Lifeline –13 11 14
- Rural Outreach Counselling Inc — 0418 762 255 / 0408 221 697
  - NSW Mental Health Helpline – 1800 011 511
  - Mensline Australia — 1300 789 978
  - Beyond Blue — 1300 224 636
- Brother to Brother 24 – hour Crisis Line 1800 435 799
- Suicide Call Back Service — 1300 659 467
  - Kids Helpline — 1800 551 800



## Sour Grapes and Half Measures in Budget 2025—Media Release AGW

Australian Grape & Wine has expressed deep disappointment at the Albanese Government's failure to deliver meaningful support to the grape and wine sector in the 2025-26 Federal Budget, describing it as a second major missed opportunity in as many years.

"This Budget is another blow for growers and winemakers across Australia," said Chief Executive Lee McLean. "It fails to deliver the targeted programs or strategic investment needed to address the serious challenges facing one of Australia's most iconic and economically important regional industries."

Australian Grape & Wine acknowledged the Government's pre-budget announcement to increase the Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) producer rebate cap to \$400,000 from 1 July 2026, describing it as a welcome measure for some small and medium-sized producers.

"We welcome the increase to the WET rebate cap — it will assist some producers with much-needed tax relief in the years ahead," said McLean. "But tax relief alone doesn't address the structural crisis gripping our industry, largely driven by the lingering impacts of trade impediments our producers did not initiate, or deserve."

The Budget includes \$6.8 million for international agricultural engagement and market access, which may benefit some wine exporters. However, Australian Grape & Wine warned that this falls well short of the coordinated, sector-specific investment required to diversify markets and rebuild export momentum.

"This isn't the bold action our sector has been calling for — it's a modest allocation spread across all of agriculture," Mr McLean said. "We asked for targeted investment in sustainability programs, export assistance, and domestic

tourism development. None of that has materialised."

"The re-opening of the China market is a welcome development, but it's not a silver bullet. The oversupply of red wine alone sits at more than 330 million litres. Businesses are selling water rights to put food on the table or pay power bills. They're laying off staff, and many growers haven't drawn a wage in years. The impact on regional economies is profound — and the need for support has never been more urgent."

Australian Grape & Wine remains committed to fighting for growers, winemakers, and the future of wine communities across the country.

"We're not giving up," said McLean. "Our industry contributes \$45.5 billion to the economy yet has once again been left to wither on the vine. It's time for the Government to step up and show it values the people, regions, and industry that have contributed so much to this country. Before it's too late."



Coming to a Vineyard Near You

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Email: [board@wgmb.net.au](mailto:board@wgmb.net.au) Web: [www.riverinawinegrapes.com.au](http://www.riverinawinegrapes.com.au) Office Hours: 8:30am - 5:00pm Mon - Fri

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