



Time for Riverina Winegrape Growers to Make Tough Decisions

With grape prices continuing to sit **below the cost of production** and water-related challenges mounting, **Riverina Winegrape Growers (RWG)** is calling on growers to carefully assess their operations ahead of the 2026 vintage.

Despite hopes for improvement, the reality is clear: the **grape oversupply crisis**—driven by domestic and global market saturation—remains unresolved. For many growers, the path ahead will require **difficult but necessary decisions** to ensure long-term viability or manage an orderly transition out of the sector.

RWG Chair Bruno Brombal said that ongoing engagement with major wineries confirms that **demand for grapes will remain subdued**, and **prices are unlikely to lift** in the coming season.

“We understand how hard growers have worked to remain productive under pressure, but the numbers simply don’t add up. The market isn’t turning around fast enough, and input costs—particularly water—continue to weigh heavily,” Bruno Brombal said.

In addition to water price pressures, growers are also contending with rising input costs like fuel and fertiliser—**making it harder to break even, let alone profit.**

Adding to these challenges are the **growing costs of compliance**, including the requirements of programs such as **Sustainable Winegrowing Australia**. While such initiatives support best practice and market access, they also demand significant investment in **record-keeping, audits, and sometimes infrastructure upgrades**. For growers already under financial strain, these compliance demands are increasingly seen as unsustainable without **meaningful support or cost-sharing from wineries or retailers**. The burden of meeting evolving sustainability expectations is too often falling disproportionately on growers—many of whom are struggling just to stay afloat.

While RWG cannot provide advice on individual business matters, it is urging growers to **seek timely and informed input** from their financial advisors, Murrumbidgee Irrigation, water brokers, and key

supply partners.

“Whether the decision is to reduce plantings, exit part of the business, or adapt in other ways, growers need to be having these conversations now—before they’re locked into another season of loss, mothballing may be an option in the short term but there are still costs involved and you need speak to wineries to find out when these are likely to be brought back into production” Bruno Brombal said.

Wineries are also encouraged to provide clarity to their grower base as early as possible regarding expected volumes and prices.

“Transparency and early engagement from wineries will help avoid unnecessary hardship. Everyone in the supply chain needs to be honest about what the next vintage looks like,” Bruno Brombal added.

RWG emphasises that the current crisis doesn’t just affect growers—it flows through to the entire Riverina community, with local businesses and jobs dependent on a sustainable and profitable wine sector.

“We know this is a tough moment for the region. But pretending the problem will fix itself only delays the inevitable. It’s time to confront the reality and make decisions that protect the long-term future—for families, businesses, and the broader community.”

For more information and resources, growers are encouraged to contact **Riverina Winegrape Growers** directly on 0269623944 or 0427759094.

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BOARD ACTIVITIES REPORT



**Riverina
WINEGRAPE
GROWERS**

2025 Vintage Levy Return

The wine industry is in a state of crisis with no end in sight, it has become extremely evident that the warm irrigated areas of the Riverina, Murray Valley, and the Riverland are most impacted. However the Riverina has arguably been the worst affected region due to fact that our average yields are lower than the other 2 regions, and that prices for varieties like Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, and to a lesser extent Chardonnay don't compete with the other 2 regions. The large crop that was delivered during vintage 2025 has helped grower returns to get closer to the cost of production, but has not helped with the oversupply. This can be seen as local wineries advise growers on what to expect for Vintage 2026, most wineries have imposed caps, restricted intakes, and or dropped certain varieties altogether. Riverina Winegrape Growers have reviewed our finances and have decided to give a **\$2 per tonne levy return on the 2025 vintage**, as a way to help growers during this time. Growers will receive correspondence in the near future on the details of what the return will look like for them and what account it will be paid into, we ask that you check this and advise us if there is any mistakes or changes to banking details.

RWG Review and Future Strategy

As part of the ongoing crisis it has become evident that we still need to reduce the size of the wine industry to bring it back into balance, as a way to returning to profitability. This will mean that income from levy's will diminish, so as a way to future proof Riverina Wine Grape Growers the Board has started a review of the organization as a way to reduce expenditure, without reducing the services to growers.

Staff Changes for RWG

There have been several staff changes since the last issue of the Vine Chat news letter, our long time office manager Julie McMahon has resigned her position, we thank Julie for her service and wish her well in her future endeavors. As part of our business review we will be reassessing the position to best meet our needs for the future, we will then advertise the new position. We have also employed Thomas Lefebvre as our Extension and Sustainability officer, Thomas will work with Brian Bortolin and take on Brians duties as he slowly transitions to retirement. Wine Australia have been generous enough to fund 50% of Thomas's position for 3 years, many of you may have already met Thomas when visiting the office, on grower visits with Brian or at our last BBQ. Please see a bio on Thomas on page of this edition of Vine Chat.

Spray Diaries

Riverina Winegrape growers have sent out hard copy spray diaries to all growers, as most growers now use electronic spray diaries like Grape Web we have decided to stop this practice as many of these may end up in land fill. We are aware that some growers still find these useful as a way to record sprays before entering into the computer, so we will still be providing this service with the only difference being they will be available free from the office on request .

SWA

Its that time again where growers signed up to SWA need to update details for the previous vintage on the SWA website, we can help with this and also provide assistance and support on navigating the accreditation process pre audit. Those wishing help with the SWA website update will need to make an appointment with us and please bring with you details on fuel, electricity, water and fertilizer usage for the last 12 months.

**Are You Removing Vines?
Please let us know
so we can update your maps.
02 69623944 or 0427 759 094**

91st Riverina Winegrape Growers AGM

On the 25th of June Riverina Winegrape Growers held its 91st Annual General meeting, 108 people were in attendance to have a meal and hear the latest news on the state of the wine industry. This is the largest meeting we have held in recent times, due to growers wanting to hear from industry leaders who were special guests at the event. The special guests on the evening were the board and senior management from Wine Australia, senior management from Australian Grape and Wine, as well as the president, executive officer and a board member from NSW Wine. Presentations were made by Mark Borne president of

NSW Wine on the new weather service for growers see page 7, and by Sandy Hathaway Senior Annalist from Wine Australia on the new Grape Growing Cost Calculator see page 8. Martin Cole CEO of Wine Australia, and Lee McLean CEO of Australian Grape and Wine Joined RWG CEO Jeremy Cass and Chairman Bruno Brombal to try to answer growers concerns in a Q & A Session. The passion in the room was evident as growers asked the hard questions that were sorely lacking in answers, the most disappointing part was the complete disregard of the wine industry by government.



Lee McLean, Jeremy Cass, Bruno Brombal and Martin Cole address growers at the Riverina Winegrape Growers 91st AGM

Introducing Thomas Lefebvre RWG Sustainability and Extension Officer

Originally from France, I began my career in the wine industry as a grape picker in 1989 in Languedoc. I moved to Australia in 1999 and progressed through various roles, including vineyard/wineries assistant and operator, assistant vineyard manager, and vineyard manager/viticulturist. I worked with many renowned wineries and vineyards in NSW, VIC and SA.

In 2011, I expanded my expertise by teaching wine production at TAFE College in Orange. I then took on

vineyard manager/viticulturist roles in the Canberra District, successfully converting vineyards to certified organic production and implementing sustainable practices. Lately, I have been working as a consultant viticulturist, providing advice and training on sustainable and regenerative viticulture. With over 30 years of experience, I possess a deep understanding of winegrape production and a passion for sustainability.

Wine Australia

Australian winegrape crush up in 2025 after two record low vintages, but still below long-term average

The 2025 Australian winegrape crush is estimated to be 1.57 million tonnes, 160,000

tonnes (11 per cent) more than the 2024 crush but still 140,000 tonnes below the 10-year average of 1.71 million tonnes, according to the *National Vintage Report 2025*, released today by Wine Australia.

The smaller crush relative to the long-term average is likely to have been a result of both seasonal and strategic factors, with a decline in demand for wine globally driving adjustment in the Australian wine sector, according to Peter Bailey, Manager, Market Insights at Wine Australia.

“The 2025 crush equates to around 1.1 billion litres of wine, which is in line with current sales of Australian wine on domestic and export markets,” Mr Bailey said.

The year-on-year increase in the crush was driven by red varieties, which were up by 20 per cent, while the crush of white varieties was 2 per cent higher than in 2024.

Despite the year-on-year increases, the crush of both red and white varieties was below the 10-year average (Figure 1).

“The crush of red grapes is still estimated to be the third-smallest in more than a decade (the past two years being the smallest) and was 9 per cent below its 10-year average, while the crush of white grapes was 8 per cent below the 10-year average,” Mr Bailey said.

However, he noted that the mix of red versus white was problematic.

“The significant increase in red varieties this year could exacerbate the challenges facing the sector in terms of excess stocks of red wine, and might further reduce demand for these varieties next vintage.”

Value of the crush

The total value of the Australian winegrape crush in 2025 is estimated to be \$1.13 billion, an additional \$136 million (14 per cent) compared with 2024.

The average purchase value for red and white grapes from cool / temperate regions both decreased, while there were increases in the average purchase value for both red and white grapes from warm inland regions.

Mr Bailey said that despite the increases, the average purchase values for warm inland reds in the past two years were the lowest in over a decade, and for many growers would not be sufficient for production to be economically viable.

“Conditions are not likely to improve for red grapes until there is a significant reduction in the supply base,” Mr Bailey said.

“The wine sector needs to continue to work together to bring supply and demand back into balance at a profitable price point for growers and winemakers.”

Top 10 varieties

Shiraz regained its position as the number one variety, increasing by 23 per cent, while Chardonnay dropped back to second place, after significant frosts across many regions caused it to decrease by 13 per cent. Most other major varieties increased, with Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris/Grigio and Sauvignon Blanc all seeing double-digit growth year-on-year. Pinot Gris/Grigio overtook Merlot for the first time, to take fifth position and give whites three of the top five positions for the first time.

Despite these increases, out of the top 10 varieties only Pinot Gris/Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir crushed more in 2025 than they did 10 years ago.

Crush by state

South Australia (SA) accounted for the largest share of the national crush by size, with 48 per cent. This was 8 per cent higher than its very low 2024 crush, but still 13 per cent below its 10-year average.

New South Wales (NSW) was the next largest, with a 33 per cent share of the crush, and had the largest year-on-year increase — 24 per cent larger than the 2024 crush to be in line with its 10-year average.

The third-largest state by crush size was Victoria. The estimated crush from Victorian vineyards was down 1 per cent year-on-year and 13 per cent below its 10-year average.

Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland all increased their crush year-on-year. For the second year in a row, Tasmania is estimated to have had a record crush.

The Third Annual Rootling's Network Conference held in Griffith

The third annual Rootling's Network Conference kicked off on Sunday 15 June in Griffith, with 50 young wine professional travelling from across the state to explore the powerhouse Riverina region.

This year, seven interstate Rootling's members also joined as part of the newly established National Rootling's network, experiencing firsthand what the program is all about.

These participants came from South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. We also had 20 Riverina Rootling's attend. A diverse mix of winemakers, viticulturists, marketers, cellar door staff and product developers attended. The conference began with a visit to Casella Family Brands for an inside look at its impressive wine production and export operations, followed by stops at Yarran

Wines, a Noble One tasting at De Bortoli, a viticulture workshop at NSW DPIRD, a marketing session with Andrew Calabria, and finishes with a vineyard tour and lunch at Piccolo Family Wines on Tuesday the 17th June. If you are under 35



Rootling's enjoying dinner at Calabria Family Wines—photo courtesy of NSW DPIRD

and part of the Wine industry, please join the newly established [Rootling Network](#) funded by Wine Australia.



Dr Meena Thakur entomologist with the NSW DPIRD presents to the Rootling's at the Viticulture workshop

Murray Valley Growers Water Study Tour



Murray Valley winegrape growers enjoying dinner at Little Italy with some board members and staff from RWG

Murray Valley growers embarked on a water study tour with the first stop being Griffith, where they met with MI and the members of the One Basin CRC Griffith hub staff. Staff and board members of Riverina

Winegrape Growers were invited to dinner with them at Little Italy. The tour continued the next 2 days with visits to the Hume and Dartmouth Dams, followed by a cruise through the Barmah Choke.

Riverina Wine Grape Growers Post Vintage Grower BBQ

Riverina Winegrape Growers held a BBQ for growers on the 21st of May, these BBQs have become great events for growers to catch up for a yarn and have a

steak or sausage sandwich cooked by our resident chef Tonny Baggio. While we do have some regulars we always get a few new faces which is great to see.



New Riverina Winegrape Growers Extension and Sustainability Officer Thomas Lefebvre talking with John Bissetto

New Weather Service to be Operational for the 2025 Growing Season

A collaboration between the NSW Wine Industry that can be scaled over time, and which adds value in Association, Riverina Winegrape Growers and Wine 3-day forecasting and pest and disease alerts for Australia has developed a suite of new online tools for Botrytis, Downy Mildew and Powdery Mildew. NSW grape growers to better manage their future productivity and profitability.

While stage one of the Wine Industry Productivity and Profitability (WIPP) project focused on underlying research and industry engagement, stage two is about delivering lasting and impactful initiatives for the wine industry and this week we announced the launch of Weather as a Service (WaaS) and the Grape Growing Cost Calculator in Griffith.

WaaS is a major investment in a digital weather and disease management solution developed specifically for the wine industry. As the state's physical weather infrastructure deteriorated, a digital solution utilising public data sources provides a more flexible solution, quick and accessible way to develop a better

NSW Wine President Mark Bourne said "the WIPP's focus was clear, addressing growers' challenges with practical solutions that are easy to use. We see this as the first step, and a strong platform to improve productivity and profitability long term."

Also launched was the Grape Growing Cost Calculator, a simple online calculator that allows you to estimate the costs of winegrape growing in any of the inland regions of Australia: Riverina, Riverland, and Murray Darling-Swan Hill.

Wine Australia Chief Operating Officer Dr Liz Waters said that the calculator was intended to provide a

understanding of the fixed and variable costs that are associated with grape growing. "The Calculator lets growers easily see the contribution of different components to the overall cost of growing grapes, the impact of things like an increase in the cost of water or changes to yield and what income is required to break even or make a profit" Dr Waters said. "This helps to empower growers to make more informed business decisions."

YENDA

	20-06-2025	21-06-2025	22-06-2025	23-06-2025	24-06-2025	25-06-2025	26-06-2025
	Observed History			Today	Forecast		
Delta T (Preferred; Margin; Coarse Only; Unsuitable)	Preferred	Preferred	Preferred	Unsuitable	Coarse Only	Marginal	Preferred
Downy Mildew Infection 1st Infection (Nil; Possible; or Likely)	Nil	Nil	Likely	Possible	Nil	Nil	Nil
Downy Mildew Infection 2nd Infection (Nil; Possible; or Likely)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
Botrytis Infection (Nil; Possible; Likely)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Possible	Possible	Likely
Powdery Mildew Infection (Index: 0-100; 0-30 Low; 30-60 Moderate; 60+ High)	Low	Low	Low	High	High	Moderate	Low
Observed (mm) Rain	0.0	0.0	0.0				
Chance (%) of any Rain /				95.1%	96.0%	86.4%	13.0%
25% chance of more than than x mm of Rain				6.9	13.7	4.8	0.0
50% chance of more than than x mm of Rain				3.7	8.1	2.3	0.0
Avg Wind Speed (km/h)				9.5	7.8	4.7	5.8
Max Gust Speed (km/h)				17.9	15.3	10.7	12.3
Min Temperature (°C)	-1.7	-1.8	3.7	8.9	11.9	6.2	3.0
Max Temperature (°C)	13.6	16.5	18.0	21.5	17.4	12.6	13.2
Humidity @ Max Temp	56.6%	42.2%	49.7%	47.1%	35.4%	54.0%	47.6%
Humidity @ Min Temp	97.7%	98.6%	88.6%	96.6%	92.6%	90.6%	91.5%

The Dashboard of the new weather Service that will be hosted on the NSW Wine Website

Wine Australia—Grape Growing Cost Calculator

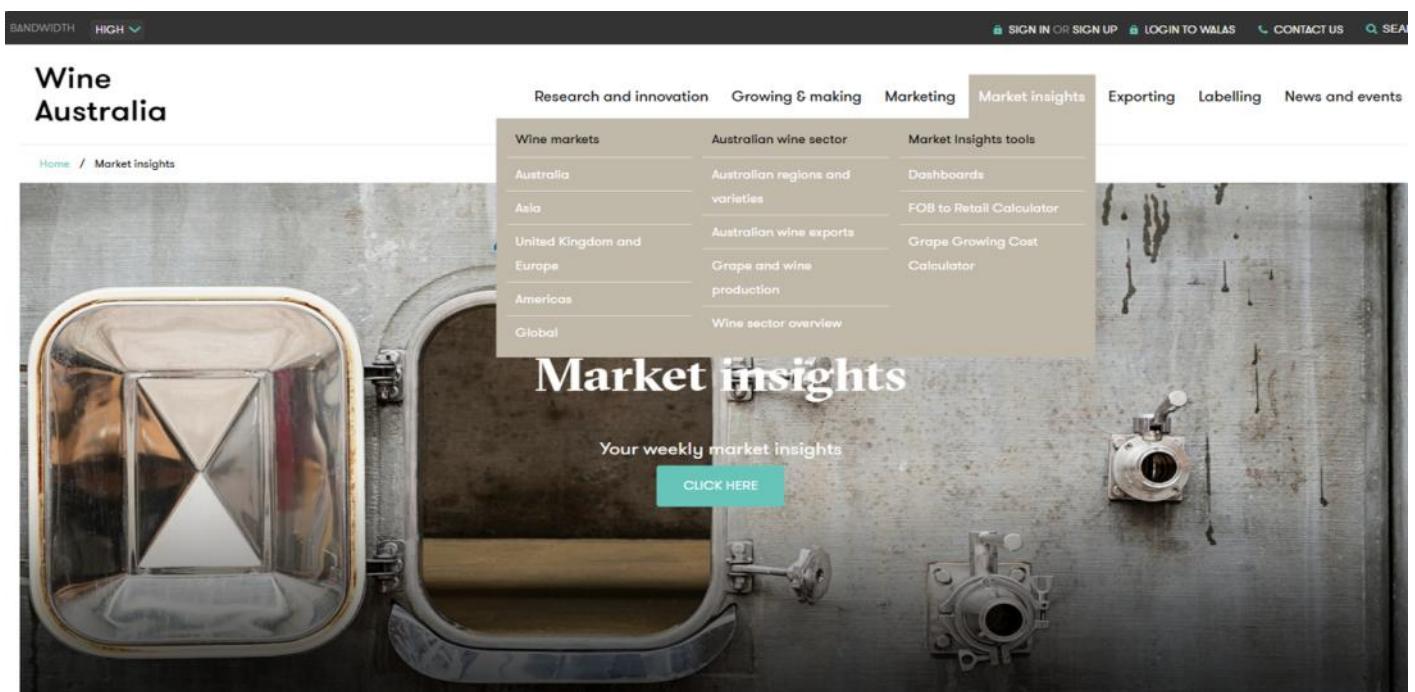
A simple online calculator that allows you to estimate the costs of winegrape growing in any of the inland regions of Australia: Riverina, Riverland, and Murray Darling-Swan Hill.

Why should I use the Grape Growing Cost Calculator?

- Work out your approximate costs for growing grapes based on last season or an average season.
- Understand the contribution of different cost components, and how a change in one impacts the overall cost.
- Estimate your likely income in the next season

- based on your expected price, yield and inputs.
- Compare the effects of different scenarios such as increased yield, higher water costs or more sprays.

The National Vintage Report is available from www.wineaustralia.com/market-insights/national-vintage-report. Vintage survey statistics, including regional winegrape pricing, are available on Wine Australia's Vintage Survey dashboard <https://marketexplorer.wineaustralia.com/vintage-survey>. The Grape Price Indicators dashboard <https://marketexplorer.wineaustralia.com/grape-price-indicators> for inland regions has also been updated with the latest data.



The website from Wine Australia showing where to access the Grape Growing Cost Calculator

Wine Australia Board Meeting held in Griffith

Wine Australia held its board meeting in the Board room of Riverina Winegrape Growers on the morning of the 26th of June, where Riverina Winegrape

Growers Chairman Bruno Brombal and CEO Jeremy Cass got the chance to address the board for half an hour on the state of the industry in the Riverina.



The board and CEO of Wine Australia Meeting with Bruno Brombal & Jeremy Cass

NSW farmers hit with 8.3% rise in water bills in 2025-26

IPART has added to the cost squeeze on NSW farmers with its final determination today to increase rural water bills by up to 8.3% in most valleys for 2025-26.

NSW Irrigators' Council CEO Claire Miller said it was disappointing that IPART had shifted from the affordable 1.9% plus CPI price rise proposed in its information paper last month.

"This is disheartening for farmers across NSW whose hopes were raised that their bills would remain manageable for the next 12 months while they are under pressure with surging input costs, high interest and the impact of flooding and looming drought," Ms Miller said.

"The determination underlines the need for the NSW Government to urgently reform the flawed pricing model and corporate structure driving unaffordable hikes in rural water bills over the last 10 years."

According to IPART, the typical farmer with a 500 ML general security licence in the Namoi Valley will pay \$1390 more on WaterNSW bills next year. The additional amount paid by the same farmer in other valleys includes:

- Lachlan Valley: \$1086
- Murrumbidgee Valley: \$227
- NSW Murray Valley: \$217

The IPART determination includes inflation of 2.4%. Ms Miller said while the price increases were disappointing, IPART had at least gone part of the way highlighting the need to address government inefficiencies to avoid exorbitant price proposals in future.

"WaterNSW's pricing proposal was for an annual average hike of 25% plus CPI each year for the next three years, to cover costs to deliver water to customers and other licence obligations," said Ms Miller.

"Clearly price increases of that magnitude would price our farmers out of business and local NSW food off supermarket shelves. The cost drivers must be addressed."

Ms Miller warned the NSW Government must ensure WaterNSW can continue to deliver essential services and infrastructure works while the Government and IPART review the pricing model and corporate structures.

"If WaterNSW is right about its long-term cost needs because there are business sustainability issues, that is a problem. If they are wrong, this is also a problem. IPART needs to get to the heart of the truth to ensure reasonable and affordable water charges for farmers."

DeBortoli Wines New Official Melbourne Cup Partner

Debortoli wines have taken over the Penfolds as the new partner with the Victorian Racing club for the next 3 years, the highlight of the VRC calendar is the Melbourne Cup Carnival. The iconic Melbourne Cup visited Griffith with a stop over at DeBortoli Wines, where guests were regaled with facts about the cup and racing stories from Joe Agresta former track rider for the legendary Bart Cummings.

Some Fun Facts about the Melbourne Cup.

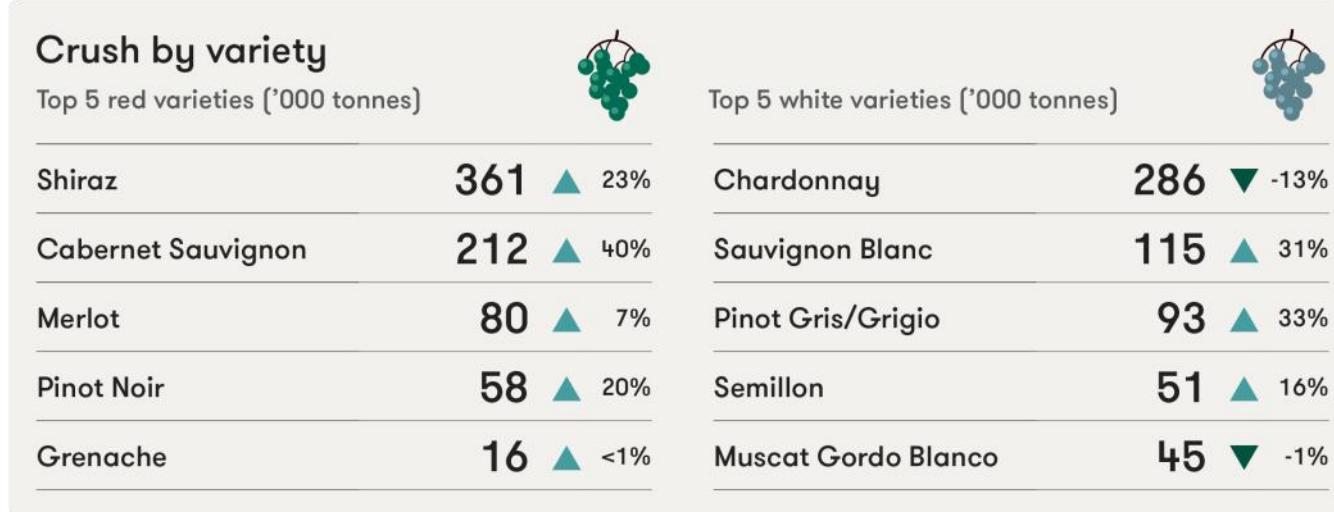
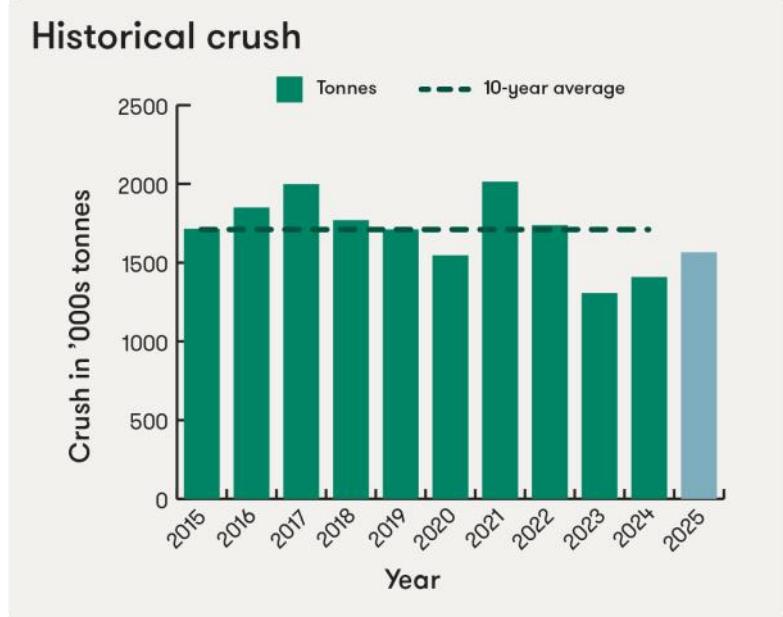
- A new cup is made each year.
- They are always identical.
- Its made from 1.8kgs of 18 Carat Gold.
- The gold alone is worth \$850,000.00.
- The gold comes from a different Australian Gold Mine each year.
- Even the rod and nut that hold it together are gold.

- The Base is made from West Australian Jarra.
- Its Unique 3 handles are so it can be held by the owner, the trainer and the jockey simultaneously



The Melbourne Cup Visit to DeBortoli Wines in Bilbul

National Vintage Report 2025



Introducing Ellie Worthington—Farm Community Counsellor

G'day my name is Ellie, I work for Murrumbidgee Local Health as your farming community counsellor, and have been in this role for the last 2 years, my aim is to provide consistent mental health supports to you via our program "How are ewe doing?" Our service provides on farm counselling, giving you the option to be seen in a space you feel comfortable whether that be in the paddock, a local café or your own kitchen table. We understand the difficulties of reaching out for supports which is why we want to make the process as easy as possible for you, you can self-refer by calling the contact number below via text or call. The "How are ewe doing?" program is a free service with no wrong door policy, aiming to find you the most appro-

priate supports for what is happening for you. Our office is located in Yambil st Griffith with 4 farming Counsellors supporting the NSW region.

If you notice that things are becoming difficult for you, that your general day to day activities are now more of a chore and require too much effort lately, if you've noticed your drinking more or withdrawing from friends or family, if the weight of the farm is all becoming to much and you think you need a chat, someone to unload your feelings and emotions— we are here to support you.

Please contact Ellie or the Griffith Community Mental Health office.

Ph Mobile – 0428254783; Office – 6961 0100



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

Riverina Winegrape Growers

Cost of Removing a Vineyard



Option 1: The prices below are only a guide to what is available, if you are going to hire a machine please contact our local hiring business for more information.

5½ ton Excavator Hire	\$2,000 per week \$520 per day	Remove: 1½ / 2 Ha per day <i>approx.</i>
Skid Steer Bobcat Hire	\$1,900 per week \$500 per day	Remove: 1½ / 2 Ha per day <i>approx.</i>

NOT INCLUDE VINE GRABBER

To purchase a vine grabber to suit Bobcat is \$4000 *approx.*

Not Includes: fuel, cutting wire, pickup treated post, roll up drip tube & remove wire.

Option 2: Local contractors are reasonably priced, contact them for a quote.



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