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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian wine code change to benefit growers and wineries this vintage

The national Wine Industry Code of Conduct has been revised to improve how winegrape price disputes are resolved.

Developed jointly by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia and Wine Grape Growers Australia (WGGA) in 2008, the updated code comes into force in time for the upcoming 2015 harvest.

Federation Chief Executive Paul Evans said disagreements arose in some transactions between winemakers and winegrape growers from time to time and having dispute procedures in the code was a business safeguard for both parties.

"As the 2015 vintage approaches it is inevitable that some disputes will occur but having a code of practice with a dispute process would help parties resolve differences without necessarily having to seek expensive legal advice," Mr Evans said.

"Where disputes do occur, the code aims to resolve them as quickly and as amicably as possible and for this reason it makes sense for all wine companies to sign on to the code if they haven't already done so."

As part of a wide-ranging review of the code this year, the Federation and WGGA have agreed to extend the time when a dispute over final price can be mutually resolved, from 14 to 60 days, during the harvest period.

WGGA Executive Director Lawrie Stanford said the extension would allow growers during the busy harvest period to effectively mount and resolve a dispute.

"Let's hope that we keep all disputes to a minimum this vintage and both growers and winemakers have a prosperous New Year," Mr Stanford said.

"In the main, disputes tend to occur around winegrape prices or specifications of winegrape maturity, purity or condition," he said.

"This results in either a price adjustment or rejection of the winegrapes which can lead to sometimes lengthy and expensive disputes."

See www.wineindustrycode.org for an up-to-date copy of the code.

Current signatories to the code are estimated to account for around 40% of the Australian winegrape crush.

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