



MEDIA RELEASE

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Major step taken towards protecting Australian vineyards

Wine Grape Growers Australia (WGGGA) has today taken a major step towards ensuring the future security of Australia's grapegrowing businesses by increasing the protection of Australian vineyards against biosecurity threats – from both outside of Australia as well as within. This cause has been given a major boost with the appointment of Rachel Barratt to the position of National Winegrape Biosecurity Program Coordinator.

Over the next 12 months Rachel will be responsible for initiating a number of important projects to secure a sound biosecurity management structure in the winegrape growing sector. In particular, she will be setting up the industry's Winegrape Biosecurity Industry Reference Group to drive industry policy and strategy, working with other industries and government through agencies like the National Viticulture Biosecurity Committee and establishing long-term sustainable funding for the function.

WGGGA Chairman and long-time winegrape grower, Mr Vic Patrick, noted that WGGGA was the wine sector signatory to the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed with the Commonwealth government and had now taken a lead role in progressing biosecurity on behalf of all grapegrowers in Australia, including winemakers with their own vineyards. He also noted that WGGGA had made significant progress despite resource constraints. "We need the support of the whole sector to make this work – including from our research organisation, the GWRDC, which has identified biosecurity as a priority area in its latest five year plan", Mr Patrick said.

"It's a difficult time for growers," Mr Patrick added, "and the costs of a potential biosecurity event could be the final blow for many growers. You only have to look at the Papaya Fruit Fly outbreak in Queensland to see just how much a major pest or disease outbreak can cost an industry."

The direct costs to growers from the Papaya Fruit Fly experience in the mid-1990s is estimated to have been \$27-\$46 per hectare for each of up to twelve sprays a season and disinfestation of \$79-\$100 per tonne. The costs of disrupted markets were not calculated. Indirect costs through various agencies were up to \$55 million covering eradication and research to develop control measures. All up, the estimated cost could have been \$160 million.

"We want to make sure we never have an outbreak like that", Mr Patrick said, "through wise investment in prevention, strategy development and awareness activities."

The Executive Director of WGGGA, Mr Lawrie Stanford, noted that "Rachel has a very strong background in program development and strategy, and as such, is well-positioned to establish our industry biosecurity arrangements. Rachel has been working as an independent consultant providing strategic and business development advice. She was previously Director, Strategy for the former South Australian Department for Water and prior to that, a manager of a variety of SA government projects – including Water for Good, Mt Lofty Ranges Watershed Protection Office, and Communications & Community Engagement with the EPA."

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