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WGGA membership drive success

Australia's winegrape growers have responded positively to a nation-wide membership drive launched by the industry's national body.

Wine Grape Growers Australia Executive Director Lawrie Stanford said the campaign – launched in July under the theme “Now is the time to join WGGA!” – had resulted in an “above expectations” rise in membership enquiries given the current tough market conditions.

“Australia has nearly 7,000 winegrape growers – ranging from major, dedicated independent growers to smaller growers with diverse incomes as well as combined winemaker/grower businesses – but only half are associated with WGGA,” Mr Stanford said.

“Increasing our membership in places like New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania and Queensland will significantly strengthen our mission to be an effective national voice for winegrape growers.

“South Australia is already well represented – along with major warm inland regions such as Riverina and the Murray Valley – through both direct membership and funding arrangements managed by regional and State grapegrower organisations.

“We are also keen to see more regional associations and suppliers becoming members of WGGA so that representation becomes broader, the load more shared, and representation more effective,” Mr Stanford said.

He said major priorities for WGGA over the coming 12 months include:

- Implementing industry-wide goals, structures and funding for managing biosecurity and vine health to improve the long term sustainability of vine and wine and, of course, winegrape growers.
- Improving market access for winegrape growers through initiatives such as negotiating maximum residue limits for chemicals in wines, linking better prices with desirable winegrape characteristics, and encouraging more winemakers to sign up to a code of conduct to ensure a fairer treatment for growers in grape transactions.
- Establishing a national vineyard database to accurately record the location and varietal spread of winegrape growing in Australia to achieve better industry planning and biosecurity.
- Ensuring the sector has an effective “voice” in national policy development on such critical issues as biosecurity; harmonising government regulations, standards and protocols between States; tax; the environment and industrial relations.

"Our stated mission is to ensure a profitable and viable national Australian winegrape industry that is respected along the value chain," Mr Stanford said.

"At the same time, we want to further lift the overall performance of the industry to deliver responsible production practices, quality produce and innovation – all underpinned by sharper business acumen."

Mr Stanford said that while new WGGGA members were always welcome, membership applications received by September 30 would attract the bonus of special industry publication offers as listed on the WGGGA website. He said that WGGGA would provide an update on membership growth later in the year.

Affordable membership categories are available for growers, associations, suppliers and students with more information on membership benefits available online at www.wgga.com.au or by telephoning WGGGA on (08) 8133 4400.

For further information and media interviews, please contact WGGGA Executive Director Lawrie Stanford on 0417 859 282.

ABOUT WGGGA

Wine Grape Growers Australia (WGGGA) is the peak national organisation representing Australia's winegrape growers, providing a range of services including:

- A national voice in all key industry forums and at all levels of government.
- A range of vineyard business development programs to build industry capacity such as *VineBiz Financial Ready Reckoner*.
- Facilitating national vineyard biosecurity.

Australia has about 6,750 winegrape growers, with a significant segment of about a third in the warm inland districts of South Australia's Riverland, NSW Riverina and in the NSW/Victoria Murray Darling-Swan Hill regions. Winegrape growers are an integral part of Australia's multi-billion-dollar wine sector, delivering a high quality product for an export-oriented industry that enhances Australia's international reputation while supporting regional jobs and communities.

WGGGA's mission to improve grower profitability and sustainability by delivering programs that:

- Ensure grower ability to innovate is improved through the sector's RD&E research agenda and delivery.
- Identify and develop opportunities for winegrape growers including through improved skills and business acumen.
- Protect the interests of growers in a highly competitive and challenging marketplace including regulating the sector through its national management of vineyard biosecurity.

WGGGA's website is www.wgga.com.au.