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MEDIA RELEASE

Wine sector welcomes Australian Government bushfire support

The Australian grape and wine sector has welcomed the Australian Government's initiatives in dealing with the bushfire crisis and its impacts on agriculture. Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie, met with agriculture industry leaders yesterday to hear about the impact of the recent bushfires and discuss the road to recovery for the many businesses and communities that have been affected.

Minister McKenzie, who was joined by Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Nationals the Hon Michael McCormack MP, and Minister for Water Resources, Drought, Rural Finance, National Disaster and Emergency Management, the Hon David Littleproud MP, led the roundtable meeting at Parliament House with more than 20 agriculture sectors represented.

Tony Battaglone, Chief Executive of Australian Grape and Wine Incorporated said "This roundtable was a great opportunity to bring affected agriculture industries together to enable government to understand the extent of the issue and the responses we can bring".

"There was a great deal of unity between the affected sectors on the future response to the fires. The immediate government relief work has been fantastic. The grape and wine sector is well placed to work with government to ensure both immediate support for the sector and the development of strategies to build resilience and to minimise damage from future bushfires events".

The issues to be considered in these future strategic approaches include:

- Direct support for growers and wineries;
- Technical support and research;
- Support for regions to bring tourist into, and support regional communities; and
- International coordination of standard setting.

"We have taken a hit with these fires and a number of individual growers and winemakers have been devastated. We must support those affected, not just now but through the recovery phase, which will take 3-5 years in some cases. Importantly, we must make sure that in the future we are better prepared to manage significant events and build our resilience. This includes supporting the volunteer firefighters and relief agencies who have done such magnificent work. I would also personally thank Minister McKenzie and the Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, who have both spent time on the ground with Australian Grape & Wine and a number of affected wine businesses to witness first-hand the devastation, and to work with us on the government response".

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