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MEDIA RELEASE

Australian wine strengthens its intellectual property protections

The Australian Government's introduction of the Wine Australia Amendment (Label Directory) Bill 2019 to the Australian Parliament yesterday is a step forward in the sector's efforts to protect its reputation as a world-class wine producer.

The Bill will enable the development of an Australian Wine Label Intellectual Property Directory, which will allow Australian wine businesses to identify copy-cat brands and infringements of their intellectual property.

"Australia is a global wine export powerhouse, with a growing number of brands sitting in the upper-echelon of fine wines internationally" said Tony Battaglone, Chief Executive of Australian Grape and Wine Inc (Australian Grape & Wine).

"However, as Australia's fine-wine reputation has grown, so has the risk of fraud through intellectual property theft or passing-off. Australian wine business owners have needed to take additional steps to protect their brands and intellectual property in overseas markets, and increasingly, to invest in protection in Australia as well. This protection is costly and time-consuming for businesses, but the potential for damage to Australia's wine brand overseas means this action is necessary.

"We commend the Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie, for backing Australia's wine businesses. We are delighted the bill has been introduced and expect bi-partisan support for this critical piece of legislation" said Mr Battaglone.

The Directory will require all Australian wine exporters to submit images of their labels prior to gaining export approval, and will allow Australian wine businesses and exporters to search for products which may breach their intellectual property. In cases where a businesses is identified as seeking to imitate a legitimate brand owner's intellectual property, this business could be stripped of their export license by Wine Australia, in addition to the brand owner taking private legal action.

"Protecting intellectual property and the reputation of our sector is a critical focus for Australian Grape & Wine. Strengthening the integrity of our wine exports and providing assurances of their legitimacy before they leave Australian shores is a key step in addressing broader concerns related to fraudulent wine trade. We look forward to working with Wine Australia to ensure the directory is developed as soon as possible" said Mr Battaglone.

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