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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Australian Grape & Wine welcomes action on harmful drinking**

Australian Grape and Wine Incorporated (Australian Grape & Wine) today welcomed the commitment by the Australian government to invest in support for frontline services for Australians battling alcohol and drug issues, following the release of the National Alcohol Strategy (NAS).

"The release of the National Alcohol Strategy provides Australian wine businesses with some certainty about the likely shape of alcohol and health policy in the years ahead" said Tony Battaglène, Chief Executive of Australian Grape & Wine.

As the strategy makes clear, the Australian Government's statistics indicate that rates of harmful drinking have decreased in recent years, while rates of abstinence and moderate consumption have increased. However, there is more work to do.

"Addressing the problems associated with harmful drinking is a priority for Australian Grape & Wine. Australia's winemakers want to see their products consumed responsibly and in moderation by those people who enjoy a glass of wine" said Mr. Battaglène.

"Given the vast majority of people enjoy wine responsibly, governments across Australia should strive to work with industry, public health professionals and community groups to address harmful drinking behavior as a priority. Evidence-based, targeted and practical approaches to dealing with dangerous drinking can lead to meaningful change, but no single group can do it alone. A problem like this requires a holistic and collaborative response."

On balance, Australian Grape & Wine believes the National Alcohol Strategy presents a reasonable framework for future action. However, we believe the suggestion that Minimum Unit Pricing as a policy option for states and territories is premature at this point in time, given it has only just been introduced in the Northern Territory.

"Before rushing into broad-brush policies like Minimum Unit Pricing, we should wait and see how the Northern Territory's Minimum Unit Pricing arrangements have played out in practice, and if they have had the desired effect" said Mr. Battaglène.

"We welcome Minister Hunt's statement that the Morrison Government considers Australia's current alcohol taxation setting are appropriate and note there are no plans to make any changes."

"We also strongly support the option of standardising Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) requirements across Australia. This would serve the dual purpose of improving the consistency of RSA arrangements, while also reducing unnecessary costs and red-tape for Australian wine businesses" said Mr. Battaglène.

"We look forward to working with governments and other groups across Australia to realise the objective of reducing harmful alcohol consumption by 10 per cent over the life of this strategy".

- Ends -

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