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MEDIA STATEMENT

Riverland joins call to stand up for Australian wine

Riverland Wine accounts for over 20% of the nation's grape crush and has joined forces with the Winemakers' Federation of Australia to argue the case for Australian wine's preferential tax rate.

Riverland Wine joins the Wolf Blass Foundation and a growing number of leading winemakers who are standing up to those pushing for wine tax increases such as highly profitable beer and spirits manufacturers and sections of the public health lobby.

Federation Chief Executive Paul Evans said Riverland Wine's support was significant.

"Riverland Wine represents a diverse and important part of the nation's wine industry, with some 1018 grape growers and 16 wineries among its membership," Mr Evans said.

"The region's support will enable us to expand our research and undertake an awareness-raising campaign. It will importantly give us a stronger voice when it comes to explaining to Government that any proposals to increase wine taxes that it might be considering as part of its planned tax review expected later this year will cost jobs and hurt regional economies when the industry is already doing it tough.

"I thank Riverland Wine for standing up and lending its support on this important issue."

Riverland Wine's Chris Byrne said the entire Australian wine industry continued to endure its toughest period in over two decades.

"Any increase in wine taxes would severely damage the wine industry and hurt regional communities, trade and tourism," Mr Byrne said.

The support from Riverland Wine will help pay for the Federation's analysis of wine taxation and its impact on the Australian wine industry ahead of a national review of the tax system expected later this year and the 2015 Federal Budget as well as support a broader community campaign.

Support from the Wolf Blass Foundation has already enabled the Federation to commission expert analysis to strengthen the case to remove eligibility of New Zealand and other producers from overseas from claiming the Wine Equalisation Tax rebate – estimated to potentially free-up in excess of \$25 million per annum which the Federation wants redirected to help promote Australian wine exports to key international markets.

These projects will be detailed at the Federation's upcoming national conference – *Outlook: Taking Charge of our Future* – which takes place in Adelaide on October 1 and 2. Go to www.wfa.org.au for more information.

About Riverland Wine represents SA's Riverland wineries and wine growers and was formed in 2010 with the coming together of the Riverland Wine Industry Development Council (RWIDC) and Riverland Winegrape Growers Association.

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