

21 November 2008

MEDIA RELEASE

WFA receives funding for Australian Wine Environmental Stewardship

The Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) has today welcomed the joint announcement by the Hon Tony Burke MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and the Hon Peter Garrett MP, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, of funding of \$241,982 for the roll out of the Australian Wine Environmental Stewardship (AWES) program.

AWES (formally known as EnviroWine) is the Australian wine industry's voluntary environmental assurance scheme being developed as the next evolutionary step to the Australian Wine Industry Stewardship program (AWIS), which commenced in 2005.

WFA Chief Executive, Stephen Strachan, welcomed the announcement which will see the accelerated roll out of the new AWES scheme by June 2009.

"With increasing demand from consumers, retailers and governments for industry to improve its environmental performance, it is more important than ever that the wine industry is able to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable practices," Mr Strachan said.

Director, Natural Resources at the Winemakers' Federation of Australia, Amy Russell, said the new AWES program is an expanded format of the existing scheme with an added independent certification component. The Freshcare Environment Standard, based on Horticulture Australia Ltd's Guidelines for Environmental Assurance in Australian Horticulture, has been chosen as the default certification scheme under AWES.

"The WFA will use the Freshcare Environment Standard to tailor a wine industry-specific standard for both vineyard and winery production. We will also extract some key criteria against which other certification schemes used in the wine industry can be assessed and recognised as equivalent. In this way, we will cut down on duplication and reporting burdens on producers already using an environmental certification scheme."

"With the continuing drought and ongoing supply imbalances, wine industry commitment to long term environmental sustainability is vital and the new AWES program will provide the necessary tools to demonstrate that commitment," Ms Russell said.

The current program, based on a grower survey included in spray diaries, will continue while the industry finalises the development of the new program.

The funding is provided under the Federal Government's Caring for our Country program aimed at supporting environmental and sustainable farming projects.

More information on the Winemakers' Federation of Australia's environmental activities can be found at www.wfa.org.au.

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