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Wine industry welcomes plans for new authority

The wine industry's national representative bodies have welcomed Government plans to create a single statutory authority to support winemakers and wine grape growers.

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry, Senator Ludwig, has announced he will introduce a Bill into Parliament to merge the Wine Australia Corporation and the Grape & Wine Research & Development Corporation (GWRDC).

The move was recommended earlier this year by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) and Wine Grape Growers Australia (WGGA).

WFA President Tony D'Aloisio said the merger had wide industry support and he was encouraged that the Government shared this view.

"By creating a single body with a single pathway to industry we believe we will achieve a clearer alignment of strategy across all facets of what is a diverse industry as well as greater efficiency and even better service delivery," he said.

"We have been well served by Wine Australia and the GWRDC over many years, but this new structure will be even more attuned to the industry's future needs in a changing and volatile international environment."

WGGA Chairman Vic Patrick said the aim was to maintain all existing functions and objectives of the current bodies within the merged entities.

"In particular we have stated, on behalf of the industry, that the commitment of research funds to strictly funding research and development, currently overseen by the GWRDC, needs to be maintained," he said.

"R&D is vital if Australia is to retain its pre-eminent role in the international market and its reputation for innovation."

Wine Australia and the GWRDC are both statutory authorities established by and answerable to the Australian Government. Wine Australia's activities are funded through a combination of mandatory levies paid by the winemakers, user pay subscriptions and fees for service, while GWRDC is funded through levies on wine grape growers and winemakers, which are matched by the Government.

Over the past three years GWRDC has invested \$22-25 million annually in research, development and extension services, while Wine Australia invests approximately \$11 million a year in its core activities, which include market development in Australia and overseas, trade and market access advice, export regulation and assistance, and wine sector information and analysis.

WFA and WGGA are the industry's representative bodies and are funded largely through voluntary membership fees.

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