

25 October, 2013

Wine industry consultation closes

A two-month industry consultation period ended today on 33 recommended Actions aimed at restoring the profitability of wine businesses.

The Board of the Winemakers' Federation of Australia will now consider the feedback generated by the consultation period, finalise the Actions, and implement them as soon as possible in partnership with industry and government.

The last of 11 regional consultation forums across four states was held in the Riverland this morning. Feedback has also been received through written submissions from individuals and regional, state and national wine organisations.

"The forums were important because they gave people the opportunity to directly ask questions and to engage with each other as well as with us," said WFA Chief Executive Paul Evans.

"The sessions were lively and it was pleasing to see many of the industry's thought leaders and emerging talent attending and contributing. Numbers varied from approximately 15 to 60 across the regions. All provided valuable feedback that will help shape what we finally move forward to implement."

Forums also were held in Margaret River, Hunter Valley, Rutherglen, Melbourne, Adelaide Hills, Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, Coonawarra, Yarra Valley and the Riverina. Each was chaired by a local industry representative, with presentations by WFA President Tony D'Aloisio and Mr Evans, followed by questions and discussion.

WFA released its 33 proposed Actions in late August following a six-month Expert Review of the wine industry by independent economists Centaurus Partners, which included detailed analysis of demand, supply and market distortions.

The Actions were grouped under seven headings:

- Growing demand for Australian wine both domestically and internationally
- Hastening the correction to the supply base
- Working with national wine retailers and the competition regulator on fairness, transparency and equity in the domestic wine market
- Reforming the wine equalisation tax rebate to support regional communities
- Monitoring the future of wine tax policy
- Promoting responsible consumption and an appropriate regulatory framework
- Securing the funding to support the recommended Actions.

"We said at the time that the Expert Review was the most significant body of work the industry had undertaken in many years and it provided an ideal platform for a comprehensive discussion on the main issues that affect us as an industry," Mr Evans said.

There was discussion around such issues as retail consolidation, continuing oversupply of grapes and wine, the way to capture market opportunities at home and abroad, potential reform to the WET rebate and the ongoing debate about alcohol and health."

A summary of the feedback received, and all related documents, can be found on the WFA website at www.wfa.org.au. This material will be updated over the coming days with the feedback from the most recent regional forums.

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