

## Australian Grape and Wine Incorporated Board Meeting Communique Wednesday 22 February 2023

The Board of Australian Grape & Wine met virtually on Wednesday 22 February 2023. Directors noted the work undertaken by the new Chief Executive, Lee McLean, and his team to bolster Australian Grape & Wine's political engagement and advocacy, including through the formation of the Parliamentary Friends of Viticulture Group and the recruitment of a soon to be announced Director, Government Relations. Strengthening the organisation's capacity to effectively represent the sector to Government is the core mission and will remain a top priority in the coming months.

With a range of critical and emerging issues facing the Australian wine industry, the Director's also committed to working as collaboratively as possible with other stakeholders, including Wine Australia, to ensure we are not duplicating effort or wasting finite resources. The commitment to work together to develop a 'One Sector Plan' for the industry by the end of 2023 is a key illustration of this focus on collaboration. Of course, this does not constrain Australian Grape & Wine from providing robust advice to Wine Australia, as the industry's representative organisation, as listed in the Wine Australia Act. Australian Grape & Wine will ensure that industry views put forward constructively in relation to a range of issues, including the ESG business plan under development, the marketing agenda, and other issues.

The Board also committed to reviewing the levies system for Australian grape growers and winemakers, with a report to be provided to the Board at the end of 2023. This is not necessarily a precursor to reform, but will inform discussion about the industry's levy structure, methods of collection and administration, and levy expenditure in the future.

Water policy is likely to re-emerge as a critical policy area for Government and industry in the coming months, particularly in light of the Albanese Government's announcement in February 2023 that it would purchase water in six catchments across Queensland and New South Wales. A water policy has been developed, which will help Australian Grape & Wine to engage with Government and state and regional bodies discuss water and irrigation issues in a principled and constructive manner.

On the trade and market access front, the Board noted the improving bilateral relationship between Australia and China and its desire to see this result in the removal of import duties on Australian bottled wines. However, this is likely to take time, and even if there is a return to the market, China should not be viewed as a panacea for the challenges grape growers and winemakers are facing. Given this, the Board agreed that we need to continue our focus on growing demand and improving market access conditions across broad range of markets. The Australian Government's Agribusiness Expansion Initiative, and in particular the Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation (ATMAC) Grants program is enabling Australian Grape & Wine to undertake activities beyond the business as usual, in collaboration with Wine Australia, Austrade and others, to help support this diversification agenda.

The Board's next meeting will be held in Canberra in June 2023.

**Lee McLean**  
**Chief Executive Officer**