

Communique

Introduction

Australian Grape & Wine held a series of meetings in Adelaide, South Australia, in early November 2025, confirming a new Chairperson for the organisation, electing new Board Directors and Committee members and discussing a range of issues critical to grape and wine businesses.

Membership Committee meetings

On Tuesday 11 November 2025, each of the four Membership Committees of Australian Grape & Wine met to confirm the make-up of their Committees, elect new Committee Chairs and Nominate Board Directors. I congratulate the members of the four Committees, whose names can be found [here](#).

In addition to the above, each committee had the opportunity to discuss a range of issues critical to the sector. Where positions are formed, these are taken to the Australian Grape & Wine Board, ensuring the views of different parts of the sector are well represented.

Annual General Meeting

The Australian Grape & Wine Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Tuesday 11 November 2025 in Adelaide South Australia.

The formalities of the AGM were completed, including approval of the Financial Reports and the appointment of the auditor for FY 2025-26. A new Chairperson was formally appointed to lead Australian Grape & Wine for the next two years. Helen Strachan brings a wealth of diverse experience to the role, ranging from her upbringing in the Riverland, where her parents were grape growers, to her senior executive roles at Pernod Ricard Winemakers and her position as a Director on the Australian Grape & Wine Board. I look forward to working with Helen over the course of her term.

The Australian Grape & Wine Board was also formally announced, with a smaller Board enabling a greater efficiency and focus in the year ahead. The Board is comprised of the following Directors:

- Helen Strachan (Chairperson)
- Henry Crawford (Vignerons Committee Chairperson)
- Adrian Hoffman (Vignerons Committee)
- *Jenny Venus (Vignerons Committee - Alternate)*
- Luke Edwards (Large Winemakers' Committee Chairperson)
- Imogen Gardiner (Large Winemakers' Committee)
- *Libby Nutt (Large Winemakers' Committee - Alternate)*
- *Prue Deniz (Large Winemakers' Committee - Alternate)*
- Mitchell Taylor (Medium Winemakers' Committee Chairperson)
- Darren Rathbone (Medium Winemakers' Committee)
- *Andrew Calabria (Medium Winemakers' Committee - Alternate)*
- Anna Fisher (Small Winemakers' Committee Chairperson)
- Mark Bourne (Small Winemakers' Committee)
- *Rory Lane (Small Winemakers' Committee - Alternate)*

Australian Grape & Wine's outgoing Chair, John Hart OAM, delivered an address outlining the achievements in 2024-25 and reflecting on his two terms as Chair of the organisation. John received a vote of thanks for his enormous efforts across his tenure, and on behalf of everybody at Australian Grape & Wine, I wish him well.

I would also like to express my deep thanks to those members who have stepped off the Board and Membership Committees. Your contributions have been enormous and by volunteering your time, each of you have made every effort to deliver benefits for the entire sector.

Industry Forum

Australian Grape & Wine hosted an industry forum on Wednesday 12 November 2025, in Adelaide, South Australia. Attendees included members of Australian Grape & Wine, State and Regional Association representatives, Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Wine Australia.

The Forum examined the sector's risk profile and the measures Australian Grape & Wine is taking to mitigate these risks. Unsurprisingly, the global supply and demand imbalance (and the commercial conditions driven by this imbalance) was highlighted as the most important and urgent risk for the sector, along with issues relating to alcohol and health policy, biosecurity and a range of other matters.

In line with our commitments under the One Grape & Wine Sector Plan, the Forum also sought input from attendees in relation to the three mandatory national levies paid by growers and winemakers. Australian Grape & Wine is reviewing these arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose for today and in the future. To inform this discussion, we heard presentations from:

- The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, with the representative discussing the levy system across Australia's agriculture sector, including the legislative requirements, collection mechanisms and the things industry needs to consider when contemplating any future change to its levy system¹
- Wine Australia, which discussed: the process it must undertake under legislation to invest industry and public funds; the legislative requirements it must comply with; how its budget is allocated across the different functions of the organisation; and efforts to leverage levies, matching Commonwealth funds and other sources of funding, for the benefit of the sector
- Australian Grape & Wine, which discussed: the genesis of the levy review process; the potential areas for reform; and the views raised in early consultations with members, state associations and other groups.

While it is clear more work needs to be done to assess possible models and find a pathway that is broadly acceptable to the sector, the presentations informed a robust discussion regarding current expenditure of levies and about what we need to focus on in this levy review.

The Forum also had the opportunity to hear a range of other presentations on the day, including those relating to trade and market access, traceability, research and innovation, marketing and regulation. I would like to thank all those who attended for participating in a constructive way, along with the excellent presenters and our facilitator, Troy Forrest, from Strategy Road.

Board Meeting

On Thursday 13 November 2025, the Board of Australian Grape & Wine met in Adelaide, South Australia. Key issues discussed during the Board meeting include:

- The focus and approach to advocating for initiatives to address the worsening supply and demand dynamics in the Australian grape and wine sector

¹ Note: Australian Grape & Wine is committed to *reviewing* the levies system, but it is not yet committed to any proposal to *reform* the system. This requires further consultation and modelling.

- The need to continue working with state associations and all tiers of government to seek the optimal outcome in relation to Container Deposit Schemes in Australia
- The views raised by stakeholders in Australian Grape & Wine's initial consultations in relation to the review of levies, and associated issues relating to consultation, expenditure and reporting as they relate to levy investment
- Alcohol and health issues at the global, national and state levels
- Ongoing engagement with the Australian Government and our members in relation to the Hon Dr Craig Emerson's Review of Regulatory Options for the Wine and Grape Sector, and the potential impacts of regulatory interventions along the value chain
- Trade and market access issues, including the need to continue to push for greater technical market access and assistance for winemakers to recapture market share.

End of Communique

Lee McLean, 25 November 2025