



Australian Government

Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation

## Industry Statement

*Issued: Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009*

The Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation (AWBC) extends its sympathy to all those that have suffered loss as a result of the devastating bushfires that have ravaged the state of Victoria since February 7<sup>th</sup>. This is a profoundly sad episode for the state of Victoria and the country, but equally, it is the confronting reality of Australian rural/agricultural life. The full impact and consequences are not yet known and will take some time to be completely understood.

Impacts range from the tragic loss of human life through to property damage, vineyard damage, smoke taint, and heat stress. However, due to the unpredictable nature of bushfires, the impacts have been highly variable by region and individual enterprises.

The fires have centred on regional Victoria and have directly threatened the wine producing areas of Beechworth, Bendigo, Gippsland, Heathcote, and the Yarra Valley. A full assessment of the impact on the wine sector will not be made for some weeks, but the majority of wineries in Victoria are operating normally with grapes being crushed and visitors welcome. A more extensive assessment has been made for the Yarra Valley, the largest of the affected regions.

From information to hand so far, the Yarra Valley Wine Growers Association estimates that 80 ha (200 acres) of vineyards have been damaged or destroyed. There will be no crops harvested from these vineyards in 2009. Given that the area under vines in the Valley is about 3000 hectares, 80 Ha represents about **3% (three percent)** of the planted vineyard area. The impact on the total grape crop in 2009 will therefore not be large.

Grape intake for the 2009 vintage is proceeding and consumers can still expect good quality wines from the Yarra Valley vintage. In other affected wine regions, reports of direct vineyard loss or damage are not extensive and the situation is still under assessment.

All states and regions join with the AWBC in offering our colleagues across Victoria our collective condolences for those directly affected by this unprecedented disaster. The Australian wine sector's strong reputation for collegiate support has come to the fore and there is a widespread offer of services and support during a harvest that we hope will continue towards as positive a conclusion as possible.

The AWBC is working closely with the Winemakers' Federation of Australia in establishing a website portal that will facilitate offers of support for product, services and consultant advice to those affected by the bushfires. Full details of how people can register will be announced shortly.

A considered, preliminary assessment of the 2009 harvest across all regions in Australia will be released by the AWBC on February 27<sup>th</sup>.

### FURTHER ENQUIRIES:

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