



Senate Inquiry into Effective approaches to prevention, diagnosis and support for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

28 November 2019



FOR INDUSTRY, BY INDUSTRY

Who we are

Australian Grape and Wine Incorporated (Australian Grape & Wine) is Australia's national association of winegrape and wine producers. Our activities focus on providing leadership, strategy, advocacy and support that serves Australian wine businesses now and into the future.

We represent the interests of the more than 2,500 winemakers and 6,000 winegrape growers working in Australia. Our role is to help forge a political, social and regulatory environment - in Australia and overseas - that enables profitable and sustainable Australian wine and winegrape growing businesses. These businesses make a significant contribution to underpinning regional economies by driving growth in jobs, regional exports and food and wine tourism.

Australian Grape & Wine's voluntary membership represents over 75% of the national winegrape crush. We represent small, medium and large winemakers and winegrape growers from across the country. Policy decisions by the Australian Grape & Wine Board require 80% support, ensuring no single category can dominate the decision-making process and guaranteeing policy is only determined if it provides significant industry benefit. In practice, most decisions are determined by consensus.

Australian Grape & Wine is recognised as a representative organisation for winegrape and wine producers under the *Wine Australia Act 2013*, and is incorporated under the *SA Associations Incorporation Act 1985*. We work in partnership with the Australian Government to develop and implement policy that is in the best interests of winegrape growers and winemakers across Australia.



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Dear Committee members,

Australian Grape & Wine is pleased to provide this submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs inquiry into *Effective approaches to prevention, diagnosis and support for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder* (FASD).

FASD is a serious issue that requires targeted action from governments and alcohol beverage producers. We therefore support the committee's focus on considering how best to prevent, diagnose and support FASD. This inquiry is timely, and we wish to highlight the work being undertaken by Australian Grape & Wine, and wine businesses across Australia, to help prevent FASD.

Australian Grape & Wine firmly believes that it is the obligation of governments to develop policies relating to alcohol and health that are targeted, evidence-based, and effective. Responding to issues relating to FASD, which are unequivocally associated with the consumption of alcohol, presents an opportunity for the government to do just that. However, we also believe that governments should seek to meet health objectives at the lowest possible cost to Australian businesses and consumers, and to consider a range of best-practice alternatives before settling on a way forward. It is also clear that the alcohol beverage industry has a responsibility to work with our customers and the government, to develop solutions to issues related to the misuse of alcohol.

Australian Grape & Wine has encouraged all Australian wine businesses to incorporate voluntary pregnancy warning labels on their products since 2012, and we also support the Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation's decision of October 2018 to mandate pregnancy warning labels on all alcohol beverages. However, as we highlighted in our [submission](#) to the Food Standards Australia New Zealand managed consultation process, we have serious concerns about the potential for regulatory overreach, and the unnecessary imposition of costs on Australian wine businesses.

We are also working closely with DrinkWise Australia to promote messages relating to drinking during pregnancy, and broader messages of safe and responsible drinking, across the hundreds of cellar doors in Australia. These materials are designed to engage cellar door visitors so that they understand the risks associated with drinking during pregnancy, and to allow those who are not pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning a pregnancy to drink responsibly. Australian Grape & Wine is proud to collaborate with DrinkWise Australia on this initiative, and we are confident the materials are gaining traction with those people making up the more than 8 million winery visits occurring across Australia each year.¹

We also wish to highlight the industry's direct investments in combating FASD in Australia. The National Wine Foundation (NWF) was established in 2001 as a joint initiative of the then Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) and the [National Wine Centre](#) of Australia to commemorate the Centenary of Federation. It is funded by proceeds from the production and sale of a red wine blended from the 1999 vintage, comprised of grapes sourced from all of Australia's States and Territories. Australian Grape & Wine manages the fund and invests the interest in innovative and effective programs aimed at promoting moderation and responsible alcohol consumption.

Recognising that FASD is a critical problem in need of targeted action, the NWF has now contributed \$400k to the DrinkWise Australia FASD Awareness Program, which is comprised of a suite of targeted awareness measures, and is supported by the Australian wine sector and the Australian Government through the Department of Health. The program educates consumers about the risks of FASD from drinking while pregnant, including through pregnancy magazine advertising, information on parenting websites and FASD educational videos and resources in medical clinics across Australia. Through these initiatives, the national program is strengthening awareness amongst Australians of FASD and the importance of not drinking while pregnant, planning a pregnancy or

¹ <https://www.wineaustralia.com/market-insights/australian-wine-tourism-snapshot>

breastfeeding. Extended versions of the educational videos can also be seeded into school curriculums, providing the valuable opportunity for early intervention awareness measures, and the opportunity for generational (attitudinal and behavioural) change.

While there is a long way to go until FASD is eradicated in Australia, we are pleased to support the kinds of targeted, evidence-based initiatives being rolled-out by DrinkWise Australia and encourage the Australian Government to invest in similar targeted approaches in the future as it grapples with this problem.

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