

# Wine Studies Research Network

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To: Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

From: Professor John Germov, Pro-Vice Chancellor Faculty of Education & Arts  
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## **Submission to the Inquiry into the Australian Grape and Wine Industry**

This submission is for term of reference: **j) any related matters.**

To complement research into the scientific, marketing and tourism elements of the Australian grape and wine industry, there is a need for research into the **social and historical contexts that shape the economic, cultural and environmental sustainability of the Australian grape and wine industry.**

The grape and wine industry in Australia suffers from insufficient understanding of the historic and social meaning of wine production, distribution and consumption. Much of the existing knowledge of the Australian grape and wine industry is derived almost solely from industry marketing efforts, media reports and wine critics. The industry would benefit from partnerships with scholars to undertake industry-focussed social research and build an objective and thorough knowledge base on the impact of the sector.

An existing exemplar of such an approach is our current Australian Research Council Linkage Project – *Vines, Wine & Identity: The Hunter Valley NSW and Changing Australian Taste* – a partnership with the cultural sector and the peak industry and tourism body in the Hunter wine

region. The project seeks to identify the historical and social significance of Hunter wine production and consumption, and document its impact on the rise of Australia as a New World wine nation and a major export industry. Significantly, this research is being conducted *independently of commercial expectations and pressures*. It will produce a major heritage exhibition and several scholarly publications, including a book that will reach out to a general audience about Hunter wine history.

**For details of this project and prior research see: <[www.newcastle.edu.au/research/wine](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research/wine)>.**

The **Wine Studies Research Network** endeavours to ensure an Australian history and sociology of wine remains at the cutting edge of growing international research in these fields. It explores the role of the wine sector in Aboriginal-settler relations, migration, plant transfers and transmissions of knowledge, agricultural and scientific innovation, business and cultural life – all key to understanding the ‘Australian story’.

This research is a part of future proofing the Australian grape and wine industry and the wider communities in which it is embedded, and understanding the role of Australian wine globally.

**Our research informs the future of the Australian grape and wine industry as follows:**

- Provides a framework for communicating the historical and heritage significance of wine.
- Provides a basis for historic vineyards as cultural landscapes worthy of preservation. It should be noted that no New World wine regions are listed on the UNESCO World Heritage register. This register currently includes sites in Austria, Azerbaijan, France, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and Ukraine. Is it time Australia considered the importance of its vineyards and other agricultural landscapes as cultural landscapes worthy of preservation?

- Gives definition to how the depth and breadth of experience among wine producers in Australian regions not only benefits concepts of the authenticity and quality of wine, but makes wine regions economically and socially resilient.
- Provides knowledge about social relationships, social groups and social institutions involved in the production, distribution and consumption of wine which is uniquely complex as an industry that is **simultaneously primary, secondary and tertiary**.
- Provides historical and sociological knowledge to inform wine tourism and other relationships the industry has with consumers and the wider national community.

The Australian grape and wine industry will benefit from research in history and sociology to complement knowledge in viticultural and wine science, wine tourism and marketing.

We are available to appear before the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee if invited to do so.

Sincerely,

Dr Julie McIntyre

Wine Studies Research Network

Network leader: Prof John Germov