

Submission: Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Reference Committee's Into the adequacy of the voluntary Code of Conduct for Australian Winegrape Purchase

Submission made by; Riverland Winegrape Growers' Association (RWGA)

Written by; Ashley Ratcliff (chairperson)

Due to the recent resignation of the RWGA's Executive Officer and the Independent chair, RWGA's board members have unfortunately had a number of unexpected distractions over the past week.

As the representative body of the largest wine growing region in Australia, we believe it was critical that we contributed our views on the current state of play in which wine companies conduct business with grape growers across the Riverland.

The board members of RWGA have reviewed submissions made by South Australian Wine Industry Association and the Wine Grape Council of South Australia. In addition, the board of RWGA has sought feedback from its member base on the matter of the current voluntary code conduct that wine companies currently operate under when dealing with grape growers.

Despite the best intent of the voluntary code of conduct to establish fair trading conditions between grape growers and winemakers, RWGA believes grape growers are not provided adequate commercial protection and equity.

The current voluntary code of conduct allows wine companies to operate in their best interest at the expense of the financial and mental wellbeing of grape growers. While RWGA acknowledges that many wine companies conduct business with their wine growers in a professional manner, the only approach to ensure all wine companies respect the business of grape growers is to introduce a mandatory code of conduct.

RWGA supports the submission of Wine Grape Council of South Australia, as long as a mandatory code of conduct is the proposed position.

Regards

Ashley Ratcliff
Chair – Riverland Winegrape Growers' Association