



Salinity Inquiry
Submission No. 6.....

Australian Government

Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation

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Ms Catherine Cornish
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Science and Innovation
R1 Suite 116
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Cornish,

Thank you for the invitation for the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (GWRDC) to make a submission to the Inquiry into Coordination of Science to Combat the Nation's Salinity Problem.

Without making a detailed submission to your Committee, the GWRDC wishes to express a continuing interest not only in the sharing of scientific knowledge but also in conducting research in partnership with other organisations.

Partnerships which draw together a range of skills will be particularly important in the development of new technologies as outlined in the first of the terms of reference.

An example of a successful partnership that has built our knowledge of water use and provides guidance for irrigators is a group of projects jointly funded by the Murray Darling Basin Commission and GWRDC. Titled *Development and Adoption of Best Management Practices for Improved Water Use Efficiency in Irrigated Vineyards*, the final report is currently being written and it includes reference to salinity issues.

The results will enhance water use efficiency which took a major step forward with greater use of drip irrigation and moisture monitoring devices during the 1990s.

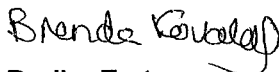
There are reports of growers in inland viticultural areas reducing total applied water from 9 megalitres/hectare/year to 5 megalitres/hectare/year on average since the late 1980s while limiting the amount of water that drains past the rootzone to 15% as opposed to a previous 40%. Cutting back on amount applied normally has meant improved grape quality while reducing the drainage flow.

Projects funded by GWRDC that directly address salinity include rootstock trials and studies of the effects of modern irrigation on soil condition. Of particular interest to your Committee will be a recently-released report commissioned by GWRDC to assess *The Potential Impact of Saline Irrigation Water on the Grape Industry in the Murray Darling Basin*. Authors Fiona Alexander and Anna Heaney of the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics provide a comprehensive picture of the industry's principal water resource and the likely future impacts of salinity.

A special interest of the inquiry is the adequacy of technical and scientific support in applying salinity management options. There appear to be two levels to this. The first covers matters like engineering on a regional scale and innovative uses of saline land and water resources. The other concerns practices by primary producers on their own land, ranging from preservation of native vegetation to remote sensing and use of salinity gauges to detect changes in salinity patterns. It is at the production level that GWRDC has had most involvement in the past, through extension activities as well as research, although the wider vision does encourage partnerships from any quarter that may lead to faster resolution of problems.

Our office will be pleased to provide copies of reports, updates on activities and names of researchers in the network who have expertise in salinity research.

Sincerely,



Dr Jim Fortune
Executive Director

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