

Mr Elton Humphery
Committee Secretary
Community Affairs Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Sent by email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Humphrey

The Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA) would like to make the following comments in relation to the Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry into Petrol Sniffing and Substance Abuse in Central Australia.

The WFA is the peak national body representing wine enterprises of all sizes across Australia. Along with the Wine Grape Growers' Australia, the joint council of the two organisations present united wine sector policy on behalf of 2,300 wine makers and 7,500 grape growers in Australia.

Unlike other alcohol beverages, wine is a regionally-based, value-added agricultural product. Employing almost 30,000 direct and 30,000 indirect jobs, the wine industry provides a substantial basis for many rural economies.

When consumed in moderation, in a manner consistent with the Australian Alcohol Guidelines, wine is part of a healthy lifestyle. However, the wine sector does recognise that when wine or other alcohol products are consumed to excess, either in the short or long term, they can contribute to a range of social and physical harms.

The Australian wine industry takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure that wine is produced, marketed and consumed in a responsible manner.

Our vision for the industry is:

For wine to be understood as a lifestyle beverage to be enjoyed in moderation and for the industry to promote sustainable and socially responsible consumption of our wines.

The wine sector recognises that adopting a strong position on social responsibility is essential to the industry's long term future. To this end, the wine industry has been proactive in promoting wine as a product to be enjoyed with food, developing a standard drinks logo which has been voluntarily adopted by wine companies representing over 80% of wine sales in Australia and promoting responsible consumption messages on packaging, such as "Enjoy wine in Moderation" or "Drink Responsibly".

In addition, the WFA is a founding partner of DrinkWise Australia, an evidence-based organisation focused on promoting change towards a more responsible drinking culture in Australia. Since its establishment in 2005, DrinkWise has been involved in a number of projects including a major social change campaign, launched in June 2008, aimed at creating a long-term generational change towards a more responsible drinking culture in Australia. The campaign focuses on empowering parents to become positive role models for their children.

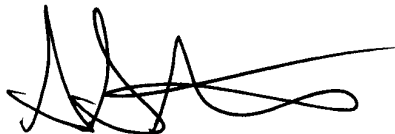
Alcohol abuse is a major problem for many remote indigenous communities, and the WFA acknowledges that wine, particularly cask wine, is part of that problem. There is, unfortunately, no simple solution to this very complex issue.

The wine sector believes that the only way alcohol and substance abuse is going to be addressed in indigenous communities is by locally led initiatives which have the support of the communities, in partnership with governments and other stakeholders, including industry.

The wine sector is prepared to do what we can to provide support for those communities. We are willing to work with local communities and governments to support targeted local solutions for local problems.

To clarify any of the issues raised above or to seek further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Dominic Nolan, General Manager, Policy and Government Affairs, on 02 6239 8300 or dominic@wfa.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Strachan', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

STEPHEN STRACHAN
Chief Executive
Winemakers' Federation of Australia