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MEDIA RELEASE

Support needed for wine industry code of conduct

Winemakers are being urged to sign their industry's new voluntary Code of Conduct before the next vintage.

"There has been a good response from the larger producers but for the code to have meaning and impact it needs industry-wide support," said the chief executive of the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA), Stephen Strachan.

"There was not a lot of time for companies to sign on for the 2009 vintage but we believe it should be a priority for 2010."

The *Australian Wine Industry Code of Conduct* was released in December and currently has four signatories – Constellation Australia, Foster's, Orlando Wines and Tyrrell's Vineyards.

Developed by WFA and Wine Grape Growers' Australia (WGGA) with Federal Government support, the code establishes a common wine grape supply contract framework and a non-legal dispute resolution system to manage disagreements over price or quality assessments.

"The two national industry bodies believe both of these are important if we are to continue building a genuine culture of cooperation between the two key components of our one industry," said WGGA executive director, Mark McKenzie.

"Strong support for this initiative will also signal the industry's willingness and capacity to set and maintain its own standards for business relationships."

While many wineries have developed contracts that are similar in content to that set out in the code, this is the first attempt to have a single, standardised format for all Australian wineries and growers. It is likely most wine companies have systems in place that are consistent with the code's intent and expectations.

The code is overseen by an independent, three-person Administration Committee, which has just released its first annual report.

"The report makes some good recommendations about fine tuning the system, which we shall take on board," Mr Strachan said. "More importantly it stresses the importance of the code and the benefits of participating."

The annual report will be available on the committee website at www.wineindustrycode.org.

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