



## GRAPE AND WINE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

And

THE RIVERINA WINEMAKERS' ASSOCIATION

A copy of the Executive Summary from the GWRDC Final  
Report - RITA Project Number: RT05/04-04-05-R5

### **Develop a Waste Stream Strategy (for solid waste) for the Riverina wine industry as a model for sustainable practices in all regions**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During consultation with the winemakers of the Riverina, it was established the industry wanted to examine ways of improving the day-to-day challenge of managing inorganic solid waste. In a local industry that produces nearly 5,000 tonnes of solid waste (as at November 2005) that can be directly sent to landfill, improved environmental management recommendations were considered essential and achievable goals for the industry. This also complemented the objectives in the Australian Wine Industry's Environment Strategy entitled '*Sustaining Success*' which was published in 2002 and which had come to the attention of the Riverina winemakers through their employment of an Environmental Project Officer in 2005.

The Solid Waste Management project was broken up into a timetable covering 18-months with the ultimate goal of developing group strategies for sustainable environmental practices. Working through the action plan (see Appendix 3a), an audit/survey (see Appendix 3b) of mass balances of inorganic solid waste was completed (see Appendix 3c). The total figures gave us a number of 2130 tonnes, or the equivalent of 106 semi trailers, of solid waste which could be diverted from landfill at a cost of \$150,000. By using these figures alternative solutions for the management of the waste were sought.

It was established during the project that environmental management would be improved if the Riverina wine industry committed to three things:

- *Training and Education and a 'Do the Right Thing' mentality*
- *Consciously aiming to support the national environment strategy 'Sustaining Success' and 'Green the Supply Chain' with improved purchasing policies and service supply*
- *Diverting waste from landfill by working closely with recycling companies*

To that end, the Riverina Winemakers' Association's RITA committee looked at ways of targeting these areas. In consultation with the TAFE NSW Riverina Institute, Food and Wine Technology Centre, Griffith and the TAFE National Environment Centre in Albury, State-funded training courses were developed. In November 2006, these courses were attended by 100 participants from local wineries at the Operation and Supervisory levels. The two levels, II and IV, were designed to give a 'big picture' of the environment with an emphasis on providing specific practical information on managing solid waste. The course, Resource Material (Waste) Management (See Appendix 3d) also formed part of the Food Processing courses undertaken by winery personnel and credits from the courses could be added to a number of diploma courses as well as forming part of the 'induction' program currently in operation at TAFE Griffith. It is hoped that by attending the courses personnel on all levels would be able to implement a '*Do the Right Thing*' ethos among colleagues as well as be able to implement practical waste management systems.

To assist wineries to review their purchasing policies and begin to look at 'greening the supply chain' as an in-house environmental management project, *The Sustainable Procurement Guide* with the message of '*Aim for environmentally preferred purchasing - one that has a reduced impact on human health and the environment*' (See Appendix

3e) was produced. This guide helps purchasing departments establish the environmental credentials of a supplier and enables them to match suppliers with the environmental policies of an individual winery. This guide is cognisant of information supplied in the Winemakers' Federation of Australia's report *'Oiling the Chain', 2006* which details the drivers coming from the European Union and United Kingdom in terms of policy and purchasing. This guide has been distributed among senior personnel at RWA wineries.

A second easy-reference guide, *The Used Packaging and Recycling Guide* with the message *'Waste = Lost Productivity = Lost \$\$\$s, (See Appendix 3f)* was produced to assist wineries and their staff with packaging management and again alert them to results from the *'Oiling the Chain', 2006* report by WFA. By clearly defining the item of packaging, its recommended handling within the Riverina region and offering a list of companies or organisations which may be of assistance, a winery has access to a hands-on resource to immediately establish the preferred handling of a solid waste or packaging item and who to contact. The use of the Waste Hierarchy (see Australian Wine Industry Eco-Efficiency series Fact Sheet 4, 'Cleaner Production') has also been promoted throughout this project and it is intended and highly likely this guide and the courses will ultimately create a reduction in waste to landfill (figures cannot be established until post-vintage 2007). This guide was distributed to all the participants in the Resource Material (Waste) Management course and to senior personnel at the Riverina wineries.

As part of the communication strategy for the project, in January 2006 the first **One Vision** newsletter (see Appendices 3g, 3h and 3i) was distributed to the wineries of the Riverina as well as to related organisations such as the Winemakers' Federation of Australia and have continued quarterly throughout the year. The newsletters contain an update of the RITA project, information on further funding opportunities, a column with practical tips on improving environmental performance, useful websites and updates on the progress being made by RWA members in their environmental performance. Newsletters, press releases, our Environment Policy and environmental updates are also published on the Riverina Winemakers' Association's website, [www.riverina-winemakers.org.au](http://www.riverina-winemakers.org.au).

During the process of the Solid Waste Management project and through consultation with the wineries, the Riverina Winemakers' Association's Environment Policy (See Appendix 3j) was drafted. This policy was put in place in April 2006. RWA members believe the policy demonstrates a clear indication to the wider community that members are committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability and viability of the region's wine industry, again complementing the objectives of the Australian Wine Industry's Environment Strategy.

Another initiative was instigated as a result of research carried out among the wineries during the course of the Solid Waste Management project. This was the formation of the inaugural Environmental Compliance and Awareness Seminar for the NSW Wine Industry which was held on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2006. It is hoped a similar seminar will be held again in 2007 and beyond. Separately funded, the seminar covered topics related to local council and national environmental compliance; a global picture of the wine industry and information on Australia's national environment program; how to complete an environmental health check, a large winery's struggles with becoming environmentally compliant and a demonstration of implementing an environmental management system. An environmental resource manual was given to each participant

with the intention that it would be added to with the RWA's easy reference guides and other resources as they were gathered during the **One Vision** program. These areas were considered as potential 'gaps' in wineries' knowledge and expertise and the seminar was held to address these issues. The seminar's key message was to **"Help wineries to help themselves and ensure a sustainable future for the wine industry and wider community."** The day was also the launchpad for the region's Australian Wine Industry Stewardship program of which RWA members are committed participants.

As a result of these initiatives, it has been acknowledged publicly that the Riverina wine industry is a national leader on environmental stewardship – *"No other wine region in Australia is able to claim such a proactive approach to environmental management,"* WFA, August 2006. It is the partnership between the GWRDC and the RWA joint funded Solid Waste Management program which has been the cornerstone to driving this progress. Our challenge now is to promote and support these changes.

To the future – in late December 2006 five of the RWA's wineries will be participating in a *Sustainability Management Diagnostic* with the Department of Environment and Conservation – it is hoped that a cluster of wineries from this region will participate in the DEC funded *Sustainability Advantage* program during 2007.