

# WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD

For the City of Griffith and the local government areas of  
Leeton, Carrathool and Murrumbidgee



*Riverina*  
WINE GRAPES  
MARKETING BOARD

## MEDIA RELEASE

13 August 2008

### NSW Roads and Traffic Authority Fatigue Reforms Concern Wine Industry

**Changes that are being introduced to truck movements across the state are likely to have negative impacts on wine quality growers' fear. New regulations requiring drivers of vehicles with a gross vehicle mass greater than 12 tonnes maintain daily work diaries could see winegrape harvest delays across the Riverina. The Wine Grapes Marketing Board has been fielding calls from concerned growers that the proposed changes will be another cost burden on the industry, one that is not desired.**

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) are introducing national reforms to restrict the hours of work drivers of heavy transport vehicles can undertake. The reforms prescribe the amount of work hours and rest periods that can be undertaken and are being scheduled for introduction at the end of September 2008. Gone will be the exemptions that applied to operators transporting primary produce within a restricted distance for their home base that enabled them not to keep a log book. In its place will be a newly developed "work diary" in which drivers will need to record all activities in relation to transport.

The RTA embarked on a state wide rollout of the reforms in July this year but industry fears that these information sessions are not being widely promoted and do not allow for input. One grower reported to the Board that the local Griffith office of the RTA government department had no material in relation to the reforms available from its offices.

Growers have voiced their concerns that the introduction of these reforms into the wine industry will limit its competitiveness claiming that this is potentially a restriction of trade. Other major winegrape producing states of South Australia and Victoria road departments have shown restraint and the local travel exemptions for keeping records will still apply.

Brian Simpson, Chief Executive Officer of the Wine Grapes Marketing Board representing 460 winegrape producers in the Riverina region advised, "Many existing growers and transport operators within the winegrape industry are already required to keep records of loads being delivered to processing facilities through their food safety program. What these reforms do is load these people up with more time spent completing paperwork."

The industry understands that to even drive a truck into town for registration purposes or to collect a load of supplies for the vineyard will require the driver to make an entry in their "work diary".

The Board is also concerned about the possible negative impacts on wine quality.

"A grower must be able to harvest their winegrapes at the optimal maturity for the resulting wine to be made properly. These reforms may see grapes being left on vines for longer than desirable as growers and harvesting contractors deal with staff fatigue issues," Mr Simpson stated.

The Board has written to the NSW Minister for Roads and is looking to discuss growers' concerns directly with him. In the meantime growers are being encouraged to attend the RTA conducted information sessions that are scheduled in the region, Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August (Leeton Soldiers Club – Stan Axtill Centre) and Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August (Griffith Ex-servicemen's Club). Both events will be conducted from 1pm until 3pm. Growers are advised to contact the RTA to book a place on 6937 1020.

END

#### ENQUIRIES:

Brian Simpson Chief Executive Officer 0438 388 828 or 69 62 3944 (during office hours)