

# Victorian Wine Strategy

## Public consultation report

September 2025

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA



# Introduction

### Purpose of this report

This report summarises the results of the public consultation on the Victorian Wine Strategy from December 2024 to February 2025. This consultation followed on from extensive industry engagement in 2024.

### Overview of the Victorian Wine Strategy engagement

The development of the Victorian Wine Strategy has been informed by a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, ensuring a broad spectrum of industry, government, First Peoples and community stakeholders contributed to shaping its final direction. The engagement process was designed to be meaningful, inclusive, transparent, informed, accountable, and valuable, in line with the [Victorian Government’s Public Engagement Principles](#).

### Phase 1: Industry engagement

Industry engagement was undertaken between June and September 2024, including:

- An Engagement Paper released in June 2024 which provided an overview and analysis of key industry issues.
- Interviews with key industry stakeholders
- Eight industry forums across Melbourne, regional Victoria, and online
- One First Nations roundtable with 6 participants
- A Co-design Workshop with industry and government representatives outlined in the previous [Engagement Report](#)

### Phase 2: Public consultation

Public consultation launch in December 2024 for 6 weeks. This included:

- A *Victorian Wine Strategy – preliminary design* document outlining key findings from industry engagement and the proposed strategy structure and content.
- Two public online workshops providing an opportunity for stakeholders to review and refine the strategy content.
- An online survey and submission form to capture feedback from a broader group of stakeholders.

Total stakeholders engaged across both phases	
Total unique stakeholders *	226
In-person forums	144
Online workshops	78
Interviews	45
Surveys	25
Written submissions	9

\* Some individuals participated through multiple engagement channels; this figure accounts for these duplicates

# Engagement phases

## Phase 1: Industry engagement (June 2024 – September 2025)

### Industry forums

There were a total of 8 industry forums held with a total of 160 attendees, these included:

- Central Victoria (in person)
- Melbourne (in person)
- North East Victoria (in person)
- North West Victoria (online)
- Western Victoria (in person)
- Yarra Valley and surrounding regions (in person)
- Two Victoria-wide online forums

### Interviews

A total of 45 interviews were held with industry stakeholders including 8 interviews with First Peoples stakeholders.

### First Nations roundtable

An online roundtable was held with 6 key First Peoples stakeholders

### Co-design workshop

The full day co-design workshop was attended by 26 stakeholders, which included stakeholders from industry and government.

**The Engagement Paper** was downloaded 453 times.

## Phase 2: Public consultation (December 2024 - January 2025)



**63** stakeholders in total participated in the **public consultation process**



**30** stakeholders attended the **two online workshops**



**26 survey responses** were received by **14 organisations** and **11 individuals**



**9 written submissions** were received from **7 organisations** and **1 individual**

Noting that these numbers reflect stakeholders who contributed through the public consultation channels, which included through written submissions, the survey and the two online workshops (held in January 2025).

# Public consultation findings

# PRIORITY 1: TRADE

## Key Themes



### **Building Victorian wine's market share domestically & internationally**

Addressing poor brand visibility and the dominance of large retailers in distribution.



### **Balancing domestic & export focus**

Finding the right mix between growing local consumption and expanding into international markets.



### **Enhancing marketing & promotion**

Leveraging initiatives like Drink Victorian while reconsidering the Five Pillars framework.

## Areas of consensus



### **Strong support for the Drink Victorian program as the primary domestic initiative**

Stakeholders widely back the Drink Victorian program to increase local consumption and ensure more Victorian wines are listed in restaurants, bars, and at events.

However, some suggest it should be expanded beyond Victoria to increase visibility in key markets like New South Wales and Queensland, where South Australian and New Zealand wines are dominant



### **Investment in export programs is necessary**

Despite recent geopolitical headwinds, many see exports as critical.

Wine to the World, a \$4.5 million investment over two years, was widely praised but needs extending and more tailored support for smaller wineries that struggle with barriers like freight costs, regulatory compliance, and branding in competitive overseas markets.



### **Need for better branding and marketing**

Victorian wine lacks the strong brand recognition of South Australian counterparts.

Stakeholders suggest a refined and consistent brand message, potentially positioning Victoria as "Australia's Cool Climate Capital", given its strengths in Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and lighter styles.

# PRIORITY 1: TRADE

## Areas of contention



### Role of the Five Pillars framework

While intended as a tool to highlight Victoria's wine regions, many feel it is poorly understood, excludes smaller regions, and does not effectively reach consumers.

Some propose replacing it with a more inclusive and flexible branding approach.



### Focus on domestic vs. export markets

Many stakeholders recognise that while domestic sales are important, exporting remains critical for long-term industry viability.

However, there is a concern that smaller wineries struggle to access export markets. Some advocated for more government support for export promotion and trade delegations.



### Retail market concentration

Large retailers like Coles and Endeavour Group dominate the distribution market, making it difficult for independent wineries to secure profitable placements.

While some stakeholders want state government intervention, others view this as a national competition policy issue beyond the scope of a state strategy.



# PRIORITY 2: INNOVATION

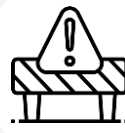
## Key Themes



**Positioning innovation at the core of the strategy**  
Enabling industry-wide improvements in productivity, sustainability, and financial resilience.



**Strengthening research, development, and extension**  
Ensuring Victoria’s wine industry has access to cutting-edge technology and data-driven insights



**Overcoming barriers to adopting new technologies and practices**  
Addressing high costs, technical expertise gaps, and risk aversion among producers.

## Areas of consensus



**Innovation must be central to the strategy**

The strategy should prioritise productivity growth, climate adaptation, and efficiency across viticulture, winemaking, and distribution. Stakeholders highlighted AgTech opportunities such as precision viticulture to improve efficiency and reduce input costs.



**Creation of an Innovation Lead**

A dedicated role within Wine Victoria should be established to support R&D adoption, extend new technologies, and connect wineries with funding opportunities.



**Financial benchmarking and better data insights**

Many wineries lack access to comprehensive business intelligence, leading to uninformed decision-making. Stakeholders support the development of real-time data platforms tracking market demand, financial performance, and consumer preferences.



**Member Support Lead role**

Some argue that this role should be integrated into the Innovation Lead to streamline functions and reduce administrative overhead.



**Investment in no/low alcohol wine**

This is a polarising issue, with some viewing it as a key growth area, particularly in health-conscious and Asian markets, and others arguing that low-alcohol wines lack consumer demand and are too costly to produce without compromising taste.

## PRIORITY 3: VISITOR ECONOMY

### Areas of consensus



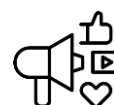
#### **Collaboration with Visitor Economy Partnerships**

Stakeholders agree that wine tourism should be integrated with broader regional tourism efforts.



#### **Developing wine tourism experiences**

There is broad support for moving beyond traditional cellar door tastings to include food pairings, immersive vineyard experiences, and cultural tourism.



#### **Marketing Victoria's wine tourism to interstate and international visitors**

Stakeholders see an opportunity to better position Victorian wine as a premium visitor experience.



#### **Leveraging major events to showcase Victorian wines**

Expanding promotional opportunities through food and wine festivals and major sporting events.

### Areas of contention



#### **Who should take the lead on visitor economy initiatives**

Some believe regional wine associations should drive visitor economy efforts, while others argue Visitor Economy Partnerships are better equipped.



#### **Partnerships with First Peoples in wine tourism**

While some see opportunities for collaboration, there were questions about capacity and interest.



## PRIORITY 4: PEOPLE

### Key Themes



#### Addressing workforce shortages across all skill levels

From vineyard workers to senior winemakers.



#### Attracting and retaining talent

Enhancing education, career pathways, and visa policies to build a sustainable workforce.



#### Encouraging First Peoples participation in the industry

Creating economic opportunities and employment pathways.

### Areas of consensus



#### Advocacy for better visa policies

There is strong support for improving migration pathways to address labor shortages (including Working Holiday Visas).



#### Education and training initiatives are needed

Programs should focus on building a pipeline of skilled workers, particularly in viticulture, winemaking, and wine tourism.



#### Expanding workforce diversity

Stakeholders acknowledge the need for greater gender and cultural diversity within the industry.



#### Tertiary education investment

Some argue for a dedicated Victorian wine education institution, while others feel online and existing national programs suffice.



#### Reliance on overseas labor vs. local recruitment

Some stakeholders believe wages and working conditions should improve to attract local workers, rather than increasing visa availability.

## PRIORITY 5: SUSTAINABILITY

### Areas of consensus



**Sustainability should be integrated into innovation efforts**

Rather than being treated as a standalone pillar.



**Biosecurity measures, especially for phylloxera, must be strengthened**

Many stakeholders emphasise the importance of rigorous testing and communication.



**SWA certification should be more accessible**

Some producers see current requirements as too complex and costly.

### Areas of contention



**The scope of sustainability efforts**

Some advocate for regenerative agriculture and circular economy models, while others prefer a focus on compliance-based sustainability practices.



**Mandatory vs. voluntary sustainability initiatives**

There are differing views on whether sustainability programs should be required for all producers.

# PRIORITY 6: LEADERSHIP

## Key Themes



**Ensuring Wine Victoria has the resources to implement the strategy effectively**



**Improving government and industry collaboration**



**Developing a sustainable funding model**

## Areas of consensus



**Broad support for a well- resourced Wine Victoria**

Stakeholders agree on the need for a stronger industry body to drive strategy implementation.



**Clarity in governance structures is essential**

Improving coordination between Wine Victoria, regional associations, and Visitor Economy Partnerships is a priority.

## Areas of contention



**How Wine Victoria should be funded**

Some stakeholders prefer full government funding, while others support industry levies or a hybrid model with matched contributions. Many see the current voluntary system as unsustainable.



**Degree of government involvement**

Some advocate for reduced government reliance, while others see it as necessary for industry-wide initiatives.