

Western Australian Vine Improvement Association Incorporated

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Chairman's Report: Jan 2025 to Jan 2026

Jim Campbell-Clause

WAVIA relies on volunteers to operate and to exist. I want to thank those industry people on the committee who have worked hard to keep the committee functioning up to now and laying the foundation for the future. I especially would like to reflect on the work that Chris Harding and Colleen Gillespie have done for WAVIA. Chris and Colleen have been members of the committee for many years with Chris as secretary and Colleen as Treasurer. Chris, a details man, has kept brilliant, detailed records of maps, imports, sales, disease status, pretty well everything that requires a record. He has ensured minutes are done, funds are managed, built and managed websites and been an amazing advocate of vine improvement. Thank you, Chris. Colleen, the fastest clippers in the west, has been the go-to person for cutting and collecting cuttings for clients, for testing and for propagating. Colleen has also ensured that money is collected, bills paid and accounts settled and balanced. Amazing work, thank you, Colleen. Thank you also to Steve Partridge, who keeps us informed of national issues and VINA updates. Thanks to Jock Riddel and Matt Trent for contributing to the management committee. It is fantastic to see new members on the Committee, including Evan Miller, Dan Stocker, Leah Clearwater, Mark Cumbers, and welcome to Rohan Breytenbach. It is great to see the industry well represented with members for most regions.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank DPIRD, particularly Richard Fennesy, who has taken a very important lead in vine improvement matters. DPIRD has worked to resolve the Pest Control Notice (PCN) for the declared pest *Diaporthe ampelina* (Phomopsis cane and leaf spot), classified as Prohibited - s12 (C1 Prohibited). This is in action and started with cuttings collected from prioritised vines in accordance with the approved negotiated protocol, hot water treatment, propagation, inspection, and continuing confirmation by a DPIRD pathologist that they are free from pathogens of quarantine concern. Sadly, this resulted in the removal of all vines at the Manjimup Research Station, meeting the requirement of the PCN and marks the conclusion of the long-standing arrangement between the Western Australian Vine Improvement Association and DPIRD. I understand that DPIRD remains committed to supporting the wine industry in Western Australia, and I hope that it continues its R&D role in vine improvement. There is still much to learn about variety and clone selection, and the use of rootstock for WA conditions with a changing climate.

The most significant activity for WAVIA and the committee this year has been the preparation of propagation material for the move of the WA Grapevine Germplasm Collection to the UWA Shenton Park Research Station. In summary, the WA Grapevine Germplasm Collection has undergone screening for disease. A few positives came up, and these have been removed (Verdelho Kosovich Clone 2, Sauvignon Blanc F4V6, Merlot D3V5, Muscat Museum). Biancone was also removed due to the detection of *Diaporthe ampelina* symptoms during the cutting selection process in August. The Collection is now free of Leaf Roll Virus of any description. We believe that this is the only non-private collection in Australia that is free of LRV. To maintain the collection, WAVIA, WoWA, and Wine Australia have agreed on a funding arrangement to facilitate the moving of the collection. WAVIA, DPIRD and Nick Dry have been busy preparing procedures and protocols to facilitate the move of the collection whilst managing the Plant Pest Notice. This is in train and started with cutting collection and labelling, bundling and storing. Chris Harding, Colleen Gillespie, Nick Dry and DPIRD carried out the activity in early August. In October, Chris, Nick and I, with DPIRD, hot water dipped (under the supervision of an Inspector with the Department of Primary Industries under the BAM Act) and then prepared the cuttings for callusing. Callusing was extremely successful, and after 21 days, all varieties except for Schwarzmänn were ready for potting up. The callused cuttings were then potted up in November, with Schwarzmänn potted up a few weeks later. The take has been exceptional, and we expect almost all varieties to have at least three vines successfully grown and ready to move after 6 months of growth, pending they remain free of *Diaporthe ampelina*. Nick Dry of Foundation Viticulture, through his role as National Grapevine Collections Co-ordinator for Wine Australia has done an amazing job championing this project and providing much of the technical advice. WAVIA, Wine Australia and WoWA are in the process of preparing an agreement for the establishment and maintenance of the grapevine collection at Shenton Park. I hope that the new partnership with UWA proves to be successful.

Propagation material will not be able to be sourced from the WA Grapevine and Rootstock Collection material until at least the 2030 or 2031 seasons. WAVIA is keen to continue to supply "A Class" propagation material that it can use in the industry. The WAVIA order form will be updated with a list of varieties that can be sourced through WAVIA's Source Blocks.

WAVIA looks ahead to new beginnings with new people on the committee and a new collection to be planted at the UWA Shenton Park Research Station this spring. We look forward to working with the University of Western Australia, Wines Of Western Australia, Wine Australia and continuing to build our long-term relationship with DPIRD. We look forward to fresh ideas and renewed vitality for Western Australia's Vine Improvement.