

New Australian Wine Future Fund to Boost Research and Venture Investment

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The amount of research funding available for the Australian grape and wine sector is set to increase, with the creation of new funding pathways aimed at fast-tracking innovations that address its most critical challenges.

Wine Australia has designed the Australian Wine Future Fund to increase funding opportunities, create additional value, accelerate investments and deliver impactful solutions for the sector through two complementary streams:

Research & Innovation Fund: a target of \$35 million over 5 years through external grants and partner co-investment, funding co-designed projects that deliver practical outcomes for vineyard performance, product innovation, sustainability and production efficiency.

Venture Investments Portfolio: a target of \$15 million over 5 years through attracting private capital that will be strategically invested to address critical innovation gaps.

The creation of the Australian Wine Future Fund is in response to 2024's One Grape & Wine Sector Plan, which identified the urgent need to unlock additional investment for innovation while the sector's levies remain flat.

Wine Australia CEO Dr Martin Cole said the Australian Wine Future Fund builds on existing research and innovation strategies, but leverages changes to the amount of Commonwealth Government matching available to Wine Australia for research and innovation, which recently increased through changes to legislation.

"The grape and wine levy system for research and innovation is tied to the size of our sector's production. It rises and falls with the size of the crush each year. The changes to the available Commonwealth Government matching enable Wine Australia to actively seek non-levy funding opportunities," Dr Cole said.

"For research partners contributing funding, the additional income helps grow the scale and impact of innovation. It also provides a mechanism that allows the sector's levies to go further, in more areas along the value chain. The Australian Wine Future Fund is working to future-proof investments that deliver tangible impact where it is most needed in response to challenges facing grapegrowers, winemakers and wine businesses."

Building on Wine Australia's investment priorities in the Wine Australia Strategic Plan 2025-30, the Research & Innovation Fund's co-investment model works in partnership with research organisations, the private sector, state governments and industry representative associations. These investments will complement – not replace – existing levy-funded research.

“Already this financial year, \$4.77 million of additional co-investment in research has been unlocked through the Research & Innovation Fund mechanism. This is enabling transformational research, commercialisation and capability building through extension and adoption that directly address the sector’s challenges and opportunities,” Dr Cole said.