



Wine Industry Newsletter

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New regional program activities planned for 2026-27

With approval secured for the 2026-27 Western Australian Regional Program, Wines of Western Australia, together with DPIRD and Wine Australia, is implementing a coordinated program of activities designed to strengthen the sustainability, resilience and competitiveness of the Western Australian wine industry.

A total of four activities will be undertaken across the coming year, addressing key priorities identified through the Strategic Plan for the WA Wine Industry 2024-34, including business sustainability, research adoption, biosecurity and environmental stewardship.

Key activities planned

Wastewater management workshops

Building on previous work investigating winery wastewater management, two regional workshops will be delivered in Margaret River and the Great Southern.

The workshops will showcase findings from the Sustainable Wastewater Management Initiative, including practical case studies covering wastewater reuse, regulatory approval pathways, waste management options and passive treatment systems. Participants will gain access to self-assessment tools to help improve licence compliance, nutrient management and water reuse practices, while contributing to the development of a WA Wine Industry Wastewater Guidelines and Code of Best Practice.

Garden weevil survey and forum

Garden weevil continues to be a challenging vineyard pest in several Western Australian wine regions. This activity will combine grower surveys with a dedicated industry forum designed to capture current management practices, identify knowledge gaps and explore future research opportunities. The forum will feature presentations from local experts and New Zealand entomologist Dr Samuel Brown, providing insights into weevil biology, monitoring and management options. Findings will be shared to help growers refine pest management strategies for garden weevil in WA vineyards.

Chardonnay rootstock demonstration trial – Year 2

The second season of work will be undertaken on a unique Chardonnay rootstock trial established in Pemberton nearly 30 years ago. Researchers will evaluate the performance of mature Chardonnay vines grafted onto 10 different rootstocks, comparing vineyard performance, fruit composition and wine quality.

Small-lot wines will be produced from each rootstock treatment and presented at industry workshops, providing Western Australian growers with locally relevant information on how rootstock selection can improve vineyard resilience, drought tolerance and preparedness for biosecurity risks such as phylloxera.



Photo: DPIRD technical officer Alan Jacob harvesting Chardonnay rootstock trial in 2026

Low-cost approaches to moderate alcohol in aromatic white wines

Consumer demand for lighter alcohol wine styles continues to grow, creating opportunities for innovation in Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon blends. This project will investigate practical vineyard and winemaking techniques that can reduce alcohol content while maintaining varietal character and wine quality. Vineyard treatments such as canopy management, irrigation strategies and foliar applications will be combined with targeted winemaking practices to produce trial wines of approximately 10% alcohol content.

Results will be shared through regional tasting workshops and industry publications, demonstrating to producers practical tools to respond to evolving market preferences and a warming climate.



Photo: Strategic defoliation of the canopy is a technique that can contribute to moderating alcohol levels in wine

These activities align with the Western Australian wine industry's continued commitment to adopting new knowledge, improving sustainability and responding proactively to future challenges and opportunities.

For further information on any of these activities, contact [Richard Fennessy, DPIRD](#).

Vineyard garden weevil forum and survey

Forum

Funded via the Wine Australia Regional Program, a peer-to-peer forum is being held in Margaret River on 21 October to facilitate discussion between industry and researchers on the topic of garden weevils in vineyards.

This forum features a keynote speaker, taxonomist and biosecurity scientist Dr Samuel Brown from New Zealand, who has extensive research experience in weevils. DPIRD entomologist Dr Kiran Horrock will be on hand to present past DPIRD research activities to provide a Western Australian context followed by a panel discussion involving growers and researchers to identify gaps and future research opportunities. Further details for the event will be released in coming days via regional association communication channels.

Survey

An important component of this forum will be a presentation of survey data that provides a snapshot of how producers are currently managing garden weevils, lessons learnt and key observations of emergence and impact.

The surveys are being organised by DPIRD technical officer Yu-Yi Liao, information collected will be presented anonymously and summarised at the forum.



Photo: Garden weevils

Producers and consultants are encouraged to participate in this survey, as your input will be of great value not only to this event but also to further research and extension opportunities.

Please follow the links below to complete the survey:

- [Garden weevil survey – Growers](#)
- [Garden weevil survey – Consultants](#)

Contact [Yu-Yi Liao](#) for further information.

Pause, preserve or remove? Vineyard management in transition

For more than 90 growers, viticulturists and wine producers from across Western Australia, the question on 13 August wasn't simply whether to keep or remove a vineyard, it was a more difficult question: where is the future value in the vineyard, and what needs to happen to protect it?

That was the conversation at 'Pause, Preserve or Remove? Vineyard Management in Transition', a half-day workshop held in Margaret River and streamed live to attendees across the state.

With rising costs, changing market conditions and increasing pressure on vineyard profitability, growers are being asked to make decisions that can have consequences for years to come. The workshop brought together practical expertise, commercial thinking and grower experience to help make those decisions more deliberate and less about instinct, habit or simply putting off the hard call.

Wines of WA Sustainability and Industry Development Program Manager Eloise Jarvis said that the decision to pause, preserve or remove a vineyard is complex, and for many, emotional.

"Being a responsible neighbour is central (to decision making) – biosecurity, fire risk and pest and disease-load all factor in, not just the numbers," she said.

One of the strongest themes to emerge was that the vineyard shouldn't necessarily be the unit of decision-making, the block should be.

Colin Bell of AHA Viticulture explained that a vineyard could be a collection of very different businesses sitting alongside one another.

"One block may be earning its keep while another is quietly losing value. Looking at the vineyard as an average can hide both," he said.

That idea shifted the conversation from 'What should I do with my vineyard?' to much more useful questions: 'Who wants the fruit?', 'Can the block deliver consistently?', 'What does it take to operate?', 'What does it really cost?', and is it worth continuing to invest there?'

Cam Nicholson of Nikon Rural Services provided a framework for working through those questions, highlighting the importance of identifying the critical factors, understanding where the tipping points sit and making a considered decision with the best information available, rather than waiting for hindsight to tell you whether it was the right one.

The practical realities were equally important. Discussions led by Colin Bell, Scott Paton of Nutrien Ag and Ben Naude of Teams Work explored what different pathways actually mean on the ground, from reduced management and maintaining a block through to vine removal, site remediation, labour, machinery and cost.

One important distinction was that pausing isn't the same as walking away. A block placed into care and maintenance still needs a deliberate management program if it is to remain healthy, compliant and potentially recoverable.

Matt Credaro then brought the discussion back to the reality of running a wine business, sharing how Credaro Family Estate assesses vineyard feasibility on a site-by-site basis.

His case study demonstrated that two blocks within the same business can arrive at very different conclusions, reinforcing the value of looking beyond averages and understanding the individual role and future potential of each site.

The final piece of the conversation looked further ahead.

Through Wine Forward, Isidora Bianchi of ClimAdapt explored how climate, soils and terrain can add another layer of information to block-level decisions, helping growers consider not just whether a block works today, but whether its location and characteristics will continue to support its intended variety and business role into the future.

Perhaps the most useful takeaway from the morning was that there is no single answer to the question of pause, preserve or remove. The answer depends on the block, the business, the market, the resources available and what the vineyard needs to deliver in the years ahead.

And sometimes, the best decision isn't about saving every hectare. It's about knowing where the future value sits and having the confidence to act on it.

The conversation also reinforced that these decisions extend beyond individual businesses. Neglected or poorly managed vineyards can create biosecurity risks for neighbouring properties and the broader industry, making responsible vineyard management an important part of being a good industry neighbour.

With 91 attendees across the in-person and online formats, the strong response demonstrated that vineyard transition is a conversation the WA wine industry is ready to have. These conversations matter because no one should have to make these calls alone. Staying connected to your neighbours, your region and your industry isn't separate from good vineyard management – it's part of it.

Eloise Jarvis said that what stood out most from the workshop was the generosity of our wine community.

“Cam Nicholson's decision-making framework set the foundation, but it was Colin Bell, Scott Paton, Ben Naude and Matt Credaro's candid breakdown of their own process that added the real value.

“The key message was clear - knowing your vineyard's average isn't enough. For long-term resilience, you need to know it block by block, which is exactly what Wines of WA's Wine Forward pilot offers. I hope everyone who attended found the day helpful and meaningful,” Eloise said.

To listen to the recorded presentations, visit the [Wines of Western Australia website](#).

This workshop was coordinated and funded by Wines of Western Australia through the Western Australian Wine Industry Partnership, an industry-led initiative supported by the Western Australian Government, with support from the Margaret River Wine Association.

Wine industry leaders announced for Next Crop 2026

Wines of Western Australia (WoWA), together with industry partners Margaret River Wine Association (MRWA), the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), and Rootlings: Australian Wine Youth Network, is proud to announce Next Crop 2026 | Cultivating Leadership Margaret River.

The Next Crop 2026 is an industry-led initiative enabled by the Western Australian Wine Industry Partnership, a \$6 million commitment by the WA Government. The partnership plays a key role in developing the next generation of leadership for the Western Australian Wine Industry and the regional communities these leader's support.

The program brings together 15 emerging leaders from across WA's wine regions for an intensive professional development journey.

Running from July to November 2026 across six sessions, including one residential workshop, the program builds participants' capability progressively – from foundation and self-awareness through to strategic application and future leadership – covering contemporary leadership essentials, confident communication, resilient leadership, governance, and strategic planning for sustainable business growth.

Graduates will be well positioned to step into leadership roles within regional associations, industry committees and collaborative projects, helping shape the future of WA wine at both regional and state levels.

The program builds on the foundations established by the Margaret River Wine Association, which hosted the first Next Crop program in 2024 as a regional emerging leaders initiative for the Margaret River wine industry, supported by Wine Australia.

Recognising its value as a model for regional industry leadership development, WoWA adopted and expanded the program to a state level under the Western Australian Wine Industry Sustainability Strategy 2025-29, with secured funding to deliver regional cohorts across WA's wine regions through to 2029.

While anchored in Margaret River, the 2026 cohort reflects the program's reach across the state, with participants also drawn from the Great Southern, Southern Forests and Swan Districts

Table 1: Next Crop 2026 emerging leaders

Cohort 2026 participants	Company	Region
Tracey Whooley	Great Southern Sip	Great Southern
Henry Xu	Ferngrove Wines	Great Southern
Melissa Aisbett	Willespie Estate	Margaret River
Lucy Anderson	Cherubino Wines	Margaret River
Annabel Angland	Cape Mentelle	Margaret River

Cohort 2026 participants	Company	Region
Richard Bateman	FABAL Vineyards	Margaret River
Maddy Lyons	Overstory	Margaret River
Jessica Collins	Juniper Estate	Margaret River
Rory Parks	Byron and Harold	Margaret River
Larissa Peck	AHA Viticulture	Margaret River
Feleasha Prendergast-Seymour	Fogarty Hall Wine Estates	Margaret River
Gerome Vaughan	Burch Family Wines	Margaret River
Travis Wray	House of Cards	Margaret River
Lisa Radomiljac	Pemberley of Pemberton	Southern Forests
Sam Jorgensen	G5S Viticulture	Swan Districts

CEO of Wines of Western Australia Larry Jorgensen said that Next Crop 2026 is a direct investment in the long-term resilience of the WA wine industry.

“The 15 participants joining this cohort are exactly the kind of people our industry needs stepping into leadership roles, and we are proud to be delivering this program in partnership with MRWA and DPIRD to make that possible,” Larry said.

Selected participants reflect the breadth of roles across the WA wine supply chain, from viticulture and winemaking to marketing, sales, cellar door and administration.

This year's cohort also includes two scholarship recipients, broadening access to the program for emerging leaders who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to participate.

Melissa Aisbett, of Willespie Estate, has been awarded the Margaret River Wine Association Scholarship, which supports the development of an emerging leader from an MRWA member business.

“This is an exciting opportunity at this point in my career. The program will connect me with others working across the WA wine industry and help me further build the skills and networks I'll need to contribute over the long term. For someone newer to the region, that combination is hard to come by,” Melissa said.

Lisa Radomiljac, of Pemberley of Pemberton, Southern Forests, has been awarded the Rootlings WA Scholarship, supporting an emerging leader within the Rootlings Wine Youth Network to take part in the program.

“As I prepare to take on the next generation of our family wine business and continue my work raising the profile of the Southern Forests wine region, I see this as an opportunity to invest in my own growth while contributing to the future of our industry.

“I’m looking forward to connecting with peers from across the state, broadening my perspective and bringing fresh ideas back to our region.

“Most of all, I hope to build lasting relationships and strengthen my ability to support a resilient and collaborative future for Western Australian wine,” Lisa said.

By investing in leadership development close to home, Next Crop 2026 | Cultivating Leadership strengthens the long-term resilience of the WA wine industry while keeping emerging talent connected to their regions.

The program is proudly delivered in partnership with:

- Wines of Western Australia
- Margaret River Wine Association (Host and Scholarship Partner)
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Rootlings: Australian Wine Youth Network with ASVO and Wine Australia (Scholarship Partner)

Next Crop 2026 | Cultivating Leadership Margaret River is proudly funded through the Western Australian Wine Industry Partnership, an industry-led initiative supported by the State Government.

Leadership transition at WAVIA and progress of WA germplasm collection relocation

Jim Campbell-Clause passes the baton to Leah Clearwater as new WAVIA Chair

Jim Campbell-Clause founded the WA Vine Improvement Association (WAVIA) after setting up the first Vine Improvement Association in Western Australia in 1990 while he was with the Department of Agriculture. When Jim left the department in 1998, he continued on the WAVIA Committee and has held the role of Chairperson since 2008. Jim's dedication to vine improvement and the supply of high-quality propagation material to the state represents an impressive body of work which is now a benchmark across the nation.

With Jim hanging up his hat as Chair this August, Leah Clearwater will be taking on the role to continue the critical objectives of the association. Leah offers 30 years of wine industry experience across a range of sectors, including many years in viticulture.

"I'm very excited to be taking on this important role in helping to expand grapevine diversity, safeguard propagation material, and support nurseries and growers with trusted planting stock, ensuring resilient vineyards and a sustainable future for generations to come.

I have big boots to fill and am grateful for the support of the new Secretary, Dan Stocker of Juniper Estate," Leah said.

WAVIA plays a critical role in maintaining and improving the quality of grapevine planting material available to the state's wine industry, supporting vineyard productivity and biosecurity outcomes for growers.

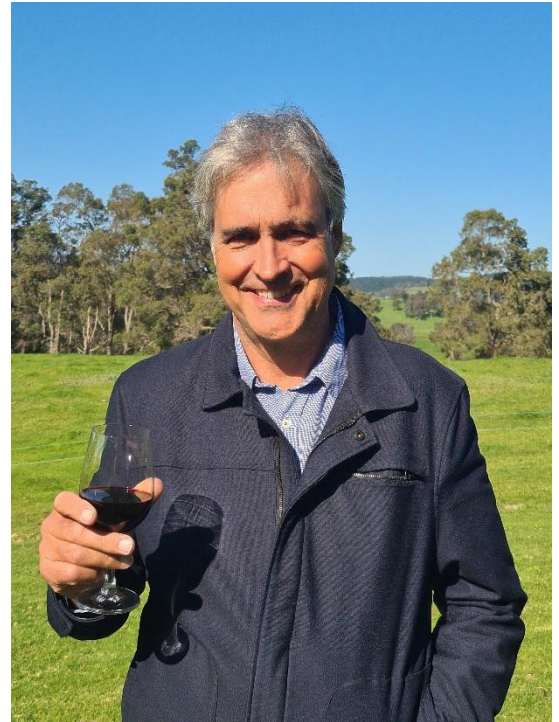


Photo: Jim Campbell-Clause



Photo: Leah Clearwater

Update on relocation of the WA grapevine germplasm collection to UWA

Following the detection of *Diaporthe ampelina* at the DPIRD Manjimup vineyard in 2023, a major project is underway to transfer management of the WA Grapevine Germplasm Collection and relocate the germplasm vineyard from DPIRD to the University of Western Australia.

Grapevine varieties and rootstocks at the Manjimup site have undergone hot-water treatment and rigorous health screening before propagation. Following disease testing and selection, cuttings were successfully calloused and are being grown under controlled conditions, with vines required to pass strict biosecurity measures to receive final clearance before relocation.

The material is being transferred to a new planting site at UWA's Shenton Park facility in October this year. Wines of Western Australia (WoWA) will oversee ongoing management under a new governance model with funding support from WoWA and Wine Australia as well as in-kind support from UWA.

This relocation secures the long-term future of WA's planting bank, with the new site providing purpose-built facilities for maintaining high-health vines and expanding the state's grapevine diversity, ensuring continued access to trusted propagation material for industry. It is anticipated that the new vineyard at UWA will be cleared to become a source block for industry material from 2030 onwards.

AWRI advanced viticulture course heads west

Viticulture professionals seeking practical insights, industry connections and exposure to some of Australia's most innovative vineyard businesses are encouraged to secure their place in the Australian Wine Research Institute's (AWRI) Advanced Viticulture Course (AVC) 2026.

Running from 27 to 30 October 2026, AVC #8 will deliver an immersive four-day learning experience across Western Australia's leading wine regions, offering participants a unique opportunity to learn directly from growers, vineyard managers and technical specialists at the forefront of premium wine grape production.

Designed for viticulturists, vineyard managers, consultants and technical professionals, the course combines vineyard visits, expert-led presentations, interactive discussions and networking opportunities to explore the challenges and opportunities shaping modern vineyard businesses.

Participants will gain behind-the-scenes access to successful winegrowing enterprises and hear firsthand how industry leaders are addressing key issues including vineyard redevelopment, biosecurity, sustainability, technology adoption and water management in a drying climate.

Throughout the course, attendees will explore a broad range of practical and strategic topics, including:

- Vineyard redevelopment and long-term planning
- Planting material and variety selection
- Biosecurity and vineyard resilience
- Managing relationships with multiple grape buyers and meeting diverse quality specifications
- Water management in premium wine regions
- Technology and innovation for improved vineyard efficiency
- Sustainable production systems and biodiversity
- Canopy management for premium wine grape production
- Vineyard business models and strategies for premium production
- Learnings from innovative agricultural businesses outside the wine industry



Photo: Professionals at a previous AWRI course

The program also provides valuable opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and professional networking, allowing participants to share experiences and build connections with industry experts from across Australia.

What's included?

The \$5,005 AUD (inc GST) course fee includes:

- 3 nights' accommodation
- Transport throughout the course
- All course activities
- Meals covered during the course

Participants are responsible for arranging and funding their travel to and from the designated meeting point in Perth CBD.

Course details

AWRI Advanced Viticulture Course (AVC #8)

Date: Tuesday 27 October to Friday 30 October 2026

Cost: \$5,005 AUD (including GST)

Places are limited, secure your place now and join viticulture professionals from across Australia for four days of learning, collaboration and innovation in Western Australia's dynamic wine regions.

Register before 9 October via [AVC 2026](#).

Rebates for vineyard connectivity and technology adoption

Applications close 15 October 2026

Western Australian wine producers may be eligible to benefit from the Australian Government's On Farm Connectivity Program Round 3, which is designed to improve digital connectivity and support the adoption of advanced farm technologies.

The program provides rebates of up to \$20,000 (excluding GST), covering up to 50% of the cost of eligible on-farm connectivity equipment and technologies.

For vineyard businesses, improved connectivity can support a range of applications including remote monitoring, weather stations, irrigation management, sensors, security systems and other digital tools that enhance productivity, efficiency and decision-making. The program aims to help primary producers take advantage of digital technologies while improving safety and business resilience.

The rebate is accessed through approved suppliers, who manage the application process on behalf of eligible primary producers.

Applications for Round 3 close on 15 October 2026, although funding is demand-driven and may be oversubscribed. Priority will be given to producers who have not previously received support through earlier rounds of the program.

Wine producers interested in participating are encouraged to review the program guidelines and speak with an approved supplier to determine eligibility and suitable technology options for their vineyard business.

Further information is available via the Australian Government's On Farm Connectivity Program Round 3 [webpage](#).

Future events

Garden weevil forum

Save the date – 21 October

DPIRD are finalising the planning for an industry forum focusing on garden weevil biology, monitoring and management options. The event will feature New Zealand entomologist Dr Samuel Brown from the Bioeconomy Science Institute as the expert speaker. The format will encourage peer-to-peer learning with outcomes aimed to improve knowledge of management options and direct future research activities.

Date: Wednesday 21 October 2026

Time: 9:30am – 2pm

Location: Margaret River

Further details for the event will be released in coming days via regional association communication channels.

Australasian Plant Virology workshop

Western Australia is hosting the 16th Australasian Plant Virology Workshop (APVW) in Scarborough. The workshop series provides a forum for scientists from Australia, New Zealand and the rest of the world to meet and provide updates on their recent research relating to plant viruses, viroids, phytoplasmas and other obligate pathogens.

The program will feature an exciting range of themes, from plant-virus interactions and ecology to new tools and technologies as well as presentations on biosecurity in plant virology. Several of the sessions will feature presentations on grapevine viruses.

Date: 27 to 29 October 2026

Time: 1:45pm – 6pm

Location: Rendezvous, Scarborough, Perth WA.

Further details can be found at the [event website](#).

Cost-Smart winery workshop

A practical pathway to lower winery energy costs.

Energy is one of the most significant operating costs for a winery. The challenge is knowing where to start and when a larger investment will genuinely deliver value. This event is a practical half-day workshop designed to help wineries reduce energy use and operating costs through a clear, staged investment pathway.

Rather than starting with major capital expenditure, the workshop will show participants how to measure energy use, improve maintenance and plant efficiency, optimise existing assets, introduce smarter controls and load management, and then assess higher-investment options where the business case supports them.

The program will focus on two major areas of winery energy use: refrigeration, cooling and thermal efficiency; and solar, batteries and energy management. Independent technical guidance, practical winery examples and commercial case studies will help participants compare options and identify the most logical next step for their own business.

Key learning outcomes:

- How to establish an energy baseline and identify where improvements should begin
- Ways to improve refrigeration, cooling and thermal efficiency through maintenance, controls, operating changes and modest retrofits
- How metering, energy audits, load scheduling, demand management and tariff review can reduce costs before major capital investment
- How to make better use of existing solar generation and shift flexible loads
- When thermal storage, additional solar or batteries may become commercially viable
- What to consider when comparing capital costs, energy and cost savings, payback periods and implementation requirements
- What grants, co-funding, technical support and collaborative trial opportunities may be available

Date: Thursday 12 November 2026
Time: 12:30pm – 5pm
Location: Margaret River Men's Shed, Margaret River
Format: Hybrid event – attend in person or join live via Zoom
Cost: In person \$35 per person | Zoom – Free

Further details can be found at the [event website](#).

Finlayson Wine Roadshow 34: How to manage a wine business in challenging economic times

Date: Monday 30 November 2026
Time: 1:45pm – 6pm
Location: Howard Park Wines, Cowaramup

Finlaysons Wine Roadshow 34, shows you practical steps to tackle oversupply and softer export demand that are squeezing wine businesses across Australia.

With experts from Wine Australia, AGW and KPMG, Finlaysons share cost-cutting strategies to improve financial performance, understand your legal obligations, and explore collaboration opportunities.

Tickets can be purchased on [eventbrite](#).

Important Disclaimer

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