

South Australian assistance guide for grape growers and winemakers

May 2025



**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
WINE INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION**



**WINE
GRAPE
COUNCIL
SA**



**Government
of South Australia**

Department of Primary
Industries and Regions

South Australian assistance guide for grape growers and winemakers

A range of services and support options are available to help South Australian grape growers and winemakers navigate the current challenges facing the wine industry. This document brings together key information on financial assistance, business advisory services, mental health support and other relevant resources to assist primary producers in making informed decisions and accessing the help they need.

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Business and financial support services

Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS)

Any primary producers and small rural business owners who are experiencing financial difficulties or who have concerns about the financial impacts of the current market conditions impacting the South Australian wine sector can contact the RFCS, which provides free, confidential and impartial business support and information.

The RFCS is also able to provide support in the application process for Farm Household Allowance and Farm Management Deposits.

The RFCS is working to help primary producers and small rural businesses to prepare cash flow budgets to manage through the next 12 months, prepare for meetings with their banker, or consider other options to become more profitable. Counsellors can provide support over the phone, visit you on-farm or meet you at a mutually agreeable location.

In South Australia, this program is delivered through Rural Business Support. Its offices are located in:

- Berri
- Clare
- Magill
- Murray Bridge
- Port Lincoln
- Wudinna.

These offices are all contactable via 1800 836 211 (freecall). More information can be found on the [Rural Counselling Services website](#)

Family and Business (FaB) mentors

The Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) initiated FaB mentor service can help you during difficult situations as a primary producer or regionally based agricultural business owner. It is a free, confidential triage service in South Australia, connecting you to assistance specific to your needs.

FaB mentors are located across regional South Australia to provide support and a listening ear when things get tough. They are:

- independent
- confidential
- experienced in dealing with emergency situations.

FaB mentors will help you find ways to manage your unique situation. They work closely with service providers and can connect you to services, including:

- financial counselling
- local health networks
- emotional wellbeing and counselling services
- government and non-government assistance
- community organisations.

The service is free for producers and primary production businesses impacted by events such as:

- drought
- bushfire
- severe floods or storms
- fruit fly outbreaks
- fishing and aquaculture industry reforms
- wine industry market change
- pest and disease outbreaks.

To find a FaB mentor visit pir.sa.gov.au/fabs or call the Recovery hotline on 1800 931 314 or email PIRSA.Recovery@sa.gov.au.

Rural Business Support

Wine grape growers across the state who are experiencing challenges due to the current oversupply of red wine grapes can access additional support through a State Government grant to Rural Business Support.

The Rural Business Support Relief Fund will assist by providing financial support for impacted red wine grape growers by making available immediate [grants to those eligible of up to \\$1,500](#) to accommodate routine costs. The financial assistance will be provided in conjunction with business financial planning. A further \$60,000 in funding is also being provided to Rural Business Support to increase Rural Financial Counselling Services for the wine and viticulture industry.

Additional business assistance and support

Farm Household Allowance (FHA)

W: agriculture.gov.au/fha

T: Farmer Assistance Hotline - 13 23 16

The FHA provides eligible producers and their partners who are experiencing financial hardship with assistance and support to improve their long-term financial situation.

The program provides a package of assistance that includes:

- up to four years of fortnightly income support (in every 10-year period)
- ancillary allowances such as Pharmaceutical Allowance, Telephone Allowance, Rent Assistance and Remote Area Allowance
- a professional financial assessment of the farm business (worth up to \$1,500)
- funding to help develop skills, access training and pay for professional advice (up to \$10,000 and can include reasonable travel and accommodation to undertake training)
- regular support of a case manager.

Rural Business Support can help eligible families access their FHA entitlements or provide more information. You can call them on 1800 836 211 (freecall).

Farm Debt Mediation

Office of the Small Business Commissioner

W: sasbc.sa.gov.au

T: 1800 702 722

Farm Debt Mediation provides obligations for creditors and rights for farmers under the *Farm Debt Mediation Act 2018*.

Farm Management Deposits (FMD)

W: ato.gov.au/fmd

T: Australian Taxation Office Business Tax Enquiries - 13 28 66

The FMD Scheme assists primary producers to deal more effectively with varying income. It is designed to increase the self-reliance of Australian primary producers by helping them manage their financial risk and meet their business costs in low-income years by building up cash reserves.

The scheme allows eligible primary producers to set aside pre-tax income from primary production in years of high income, which they can draw on in years of low income. Income deposited into an FMD account is tax deductible in the year the deposit is made. It becomes taxable income in the year in which it is withdrawn.

Low interest loans

W: ric.gov.au

The Australian Government provides low interest loans for primary producers for farm investment, debt restructuring, operating expenses and drought recovery and preparedness activities. These loans are now administered by the Australian Government's central entity, the Regional Investment Corporation.

The loans include:

- variable interest rate, currently 5.18% (as at 5 May 2025)
- loan terms of 10 years, including an interest-only period
- up to \$2 million.

Telecommunication bill assistance

Contact your telecommunication services directly or a Rural Financial Counsellor to assist with negotiations. All telecommunications services have hardship policies to allow people who are doing it tough to negotiate payment arrangements.

Most will provide flexibility with the following:

- long-term payment arrangements
- reviewing and removing administrative fees
- placing customers on more affordable plans
- conversion to pre-paid services
- allowing incoming and emergency calls only to fixed lines.

TradeStart

The South Australian TradeStart network assists small and medium-sized South Australian exporters to achieve long-term success in international markets.

It offers exporters the combined resources of Austrade and partner organisations from export markets, providing local assistance through the [Austrade Go Global Toolkit](#) and a direct link to Austrade's services globally, in conjunction with the South Australian Department for Trade and Investment's network of overseas offices in 15 countries.

To connect with your regional SA TradeStart adviser, visit dti.sa.gov.au/trade-team.

Industry programs and technical advice

Making well-informed decisions in preparing for risks is a major factor in having a profitable operation.

There are several farm management decision tools available on the PIRSA website:

- [Funding and support tools](#)
- [Business and risk management for farmers](#)

Council Rate Relief for grape growers

Grape growers in the Renmark Paringa area are eligible for a rate remission amid the current difficult market conditions. These provisions include a rate remission of \$500 per property and the waiving of fines and interest. These provisions aim to strike a balance between providing genuine relief for grape growers, ensuring sufficient cash flow, and displaying a level of compassion and empathy to those affected. The endorsed recommendations included:

- The waiving of fines and interest for all properties with a land use code containing 'Vines' for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025;
- Waiving of application fees to change land use for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

For all the details on how to apply for the rate remission visit [Rebates and Concessions | Renmark Paringa Council](#).

Grape growers in the Berri Barmera area are also eligible for a rate remission. For the 2024/2025 financial year and taking into account the economic impacts suffered by primary production properties within the Council's area as a result of the economic downturn of wine grapes, the Council will, on application, grant a remission on grounds of financial hardship of primary production properties that are eligible, as follows: \$200 per annum for general rates. To be deemed to cause hardship and for the remission to apply, the assessment must be subject to the following criteria for the 2024/2025 financial year:

- Primary Production Property
- Wine grape grower
- Can provide evidence of hardship.

An example of evidence could be but not limited to:

- Letter from a rural financial counsellor or welfare agency
- Written documentation such as financial statements, or contract cancellation letter.

Applications for a remission must be in writing, addressed to the Chief Executive Officer, Berri Barmera Council, PO Box 229, Berri SA 5343 and include sufficient details to identify the relevant property and support the application. Alternatively, an application form is included with this policy and can be accessed from Council's website at www.berribarmera.sa.gov.au

Diversification assistance

The CCW Cooperative Ltd are assisting the transition of the Riverland irrigated area from winegrapes to alternative crops and supporting improved access to information on alternative crops and revenue streams for all South Australian grape growers. This service also provides training, extension, workshops, and forums.

For more information, please contact: peter.szabo@ccwcoop.com.au

China Re-Engagement Support Package

The State Government will provide \$1.85 million through a China Re-Engagement Support Package for South Australian wine businesses.

The package comprises of five key components:

- two-way market activation and immersion
- promotional marketing and communication campaigns
- wine export adviser
- technical cooperation
- exporter capability building

To support two-way market activation and immersion, the Department for Trade and Investment and its partners will facilitate opportunities for wine exporters to attend key in-market industry events in China in 2024 and 2025, as well as coordinate trade familiarisation visits for leading Chinese wine importers to experience South Australia's wine regions.

Grape Price Indicators Dashboard

W: marketexplorer.wineaustralia.com/grape-price-indicators

Wine Australia has recently released a new tool in its Interactive Insights platform. The Grape Price Indicators dashboard brings together 12 different data sources and displays 21 charts in a user-friendly layout to provide greater price transparency for inland winegrape growers.

Vineyard resting techniques

As a result of the oversupply challenges facing the South Australian wine industry, growers of red wine grapes who do not have a contract for the 2025 vintage may wish to consider vineyard resting as a management practice to reduce input costs.

Ethephon rebate extension

The Ethephon rebate has been opened for a new growing season. Grape growers can save up to \$2,000 per hectare in input, water and management costs in their red wine grape vineyards through a trial being undertaken across South Australia.

[Vineyard Resting Rebate Round 2 \(2024-2025\) guidelines](#)

Vineyard removal

For grape growers wanting to remove vineyards to diversifying to other crops, or for waste management of abandoned vineyards, an AWRI factsheet provides a guide to vineyard removal and waste management options in South Australia. It includes a planning checklist, key steps involved in vineyard removal, estimated costs and recycling options available for vineyard infrastructure such as dripper tube. This work was funded by the Wine Grape Council of South Australia and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia.

[Guide-for-Vineyard-removal-and-waste-management](#)

To address the reuse, recovery, management and safe disposal of Copper Chrome Arsenate (CCA) treated timber, a Treated Timber Product Stewardship Working Group, consisting of members of the wine and forest industries, environment specialists and universities, has been established in 2025 to develop a business model and implement a new national stewardship framework.

Frost management

This page contains resources that outline key factors to consider when deciding what action to take after a frost, and points to some useful resources to learn more about frosts and how to mitigate against them.

[Managing spring frost damage - Australian Society of Viticulture and Oenology](#)

Drought management

The On-Farm Drought Infrastructure Rebate Scheme is for primary producers to implement infrastructure projects that assist with managing current drought conditions and strengthen preparedness for future droughts. Additional funding has been allocated to this scheme as part of the [Drought Support Package](#). Applications will close on 31 January 2026.

Rebates include:

75% rebate - grants of up to \$5,000 (GST exclusive)

50% rebate - grants of up to \$20,000 (GST exclusive)

Eligible activities include and but are not limited to:

- items to construct a new, or upgrade an existing, stock containment area, such as fencing, gates, troughs, piping, tanks and pumps
- irrigation system upgrades (for example: automated systems) that will improve water use efficiency and drought resilience
- purchase or repair of fixed infrastructure (for example: irrigation pumps, repair piping, replace troughs, upgrade tanks) and upgrade of pond liners, upgrading water storage facilities that will improve water use efficiency and drought resilience

To see if you are eligible and to apply, read the guidelines on the [On-farm Drought Infrastructure Rebate Scheme Guidelines](#) and visit [On-farm Drought Infrastructure Rebate Scheme - PIRSA](#)

GrowStrong – Empowering Wine Grape Growers

A part of the Future Drought Fund – Farm Business Resilience Programs, GrowStrong is an immersive training experience packed with practical tools and invaluable knowledge that can equip your viticulture business to meet the demands of grape growing for the immediate and long-term future.

This program delivers a suite of information from industry experts from the University of Adelaide, AWRI, and Rural Business Support.

Pilot programs were run in the Riverland, Langhorne Creek and the Limestone Coast. The GrowStrong training program will be delivered in four additional wine regions across the State in May 2025 including the Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale, Clare Valley and the Barossa Valley wine regions.

This program is supported by the Wine Grape Council of South Australia (WGCSA), through funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Government of South Australia.

For inquiries about future events, email projects@wgcsa.com.au or visit [GrowStrong 2025 - WGCSA](#).

South Australian Wine Industry Association (SAWIA) support

SAWIA is here to assist members with trusted and confidential advice, a second opinion and guidance through challenging times and successes.

SAWIA can help address your workforce's safety, wellbeing, or human resources needs, from restructuring, performance management and workplace conduct, to application of awards and fostering a healthy workplace culture.

They are flexible in their approach to suit members' needs, offering on-site consultations or engaging over the phone, email, or online. Their goal is to ensure that you can make well-informed decisions promptly, complying with the law and respecting the wellbeing of your team, all while minimising risks and considering the long-term benefits.

SAWIA has partnerships with key suppliers for members to reduce costs, improve sustainability, and to amplify access to valuable information and services.

Please contact the SAWIA office on 08 8222 9277 for further information or to request support.

Wine Industry Small Business Growth and Resilience Program

SAWIA will deliver the Wine Industry Small Business Growth and Resilience Program to support the development of key leadership skills in small and family businesses in South Australian wine regions.

The program will help to build the critical skills that wine businesses in South Australia need now and, in the future, to ensure the industry remains vibrant and successful. This program will be delivered across the next two years (2023-2025) as part of the statewide Business Fundamentals program.

SAWIA will be organising four unique initiatives to build capacity through education, tools, and customised support for small and family wine businesses in South Australia. The aim is to strengthen and build improved competitiveness, strategic direction, branding, communication, and resilience.

For more information or to register for this program, visit [Wine Industry Small Business Growth and Resilience Program](#).

Legal

Wine Grape Council of South Australia (WGCSA) – Mellor Olsson Lawyers partnership

W: wgcsa.com.au/legal-services-partnership

As part of WGCSA's partnership with Mellor Olsson Lawyers, WGCSA members receive a free 20 minute telephone consultation on any legal matter and discounted fees on services.

Legal Advice Line

T: 1300 366 424

Free telephone legal advice is available for preliminary information, advice and referrals.

Legal Aid

W: lsc.sa.gov.au

When services beyond simple legal advice are needed, the Legal Services Commission of South Australia can arrange a Legal Aid grant to be paid direct to a lawyer to cover legal costs.

However, if legal aid is granted, you will have to pay a contribution towards your legal costs, depending on what you can afford.

Health and wellbeing

In difficult times such as these, people's personal health and wellbeing can also be impacted. Help and support can come from a range of sources such as friends, neighbours, service clubs and volunteers as well as the more formal agencies, authorities and services.

Small and Family Business Support

The Office for Small and Family Business offer a mental health and wellbeing program to support business owners and their employees to build resilience and cope with mental health challenges and stressors.

From the beginning of 2024 business owners are able to use this program to access mental health support for themselves and their employees at low or no cost.

The program offers a range of support activities including masterclasses, education and training sessions, workshops, one-on-one support, psychologist-led skills sessions, webinars, e-learning, and online tools and resources. Find out more and register for support at [Mental Health and Wellbeing Program | Small and Family Business](#)

Individualised Care for Mental Health and Wellbeing

This program run by Regional Development Australia (RDA) Murraylands and Riverland supports small and family business in the Murraylands and Riverland areas.

Engagement is free to each user with support delivered through workshops and one-on-one sessions.

Contact David Moran, Managing Director, Mental Health Partners on 0402 749 850 or email project@mentalhealthpartners.com.au.

Find out more mentalhealthpartners.com.au/project

Healthy Minds Healthy Vines

Healthy Minds Healthy Vines is a podcast series that aims to support South Australian grape growers' mental wellbeing, with a different focus in each episode and real-life stories of challenges and triumphs.

It is a podcast made by growers for growers, supported by WGCSA, sponsored by PIRSA and hosted by journalist and award-winning mental health podcaster Callum MacPherson and Australian wine judge Nick Ryan. The 10-part series sees growers from all regions around South Australia engaging in a down-to-earth chat.

Health and industry experts share tips and advice, with information about support services like the Are You Bugged Mate? website – areyoubuggedmate.com.au – which helps men in the country talk about their mental health.

R U OK?

W: ruok.org.au

R U OK has a good list of resources on ways to check in on friends and family and information on where to find support. Staying connected and having meaningful conversations is something we can all do. You don't need to be an expert – just a good friend and a great listener. So, if you notice someone who might be struggling – start a conversation.

Helplines

Alcohol and Drug Information Services

T: 1300 131 340

Beyond Blue

T: 1300 22 4636

W: beyondblue.org.au

Advice and support for people with anxiety and depression.

Kids Helpline

T: 1800 551 800 (24-hour service)

W: kidshelpline.com.au

Anonymous and confidential telephone counselling for people aged 5 to 18 years.

Lifeline

T: 13 11 14 (24-hour service)

W: lifeline.org.au

Mensline

T: 1300 78 99 78 (24-hour service)

W: mensline.org.au

Mind Australia

T: 1300 286 463

W: mindaustralia.org.au

Mind Australia offers a range of community services in South Australia.

Rural and Remote Mental Health Services

T: 13 14 65 (24-hour service)

W: sahealth.sa.gov.au/mentalhealth

South Australian Parent Helpline

T: 1300 364 100 (freecall)

Telephone information service for parents in South Australia.