

South Australian assistance guide for grape growers and winemakers

April 2026



**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

Family and Business (FaB) mentors

W: pir.sa.gov.au/fabs

T: 1800 931 314 (freecall)

E: PIRSA.Recovery@sa.gov.au

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.

Rural Business Support Relief Fund

Wine grape growers across the state who are experiencing challenges due to drought conditions 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 drought 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. From January 2026 Rural Business Support will offer Round 2 grants of a \$1,500 RBS Relief Fund rebate to existing case managed clients.

Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS)

W: ruralbusinesssupport.org.au/rfcs

T: 1800 836 211 (freecall)

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 can 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 (RBS). Its offices are located in:

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

More information can be found on the [Rural Counselling Services website](#)

Additional business assistance and support

Berri Barmera Council Rate Relief for grape growers

Grape growers in the Berri Barmera area are eligible for a rate remission. For the 2025/2026 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 2025/2026 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 can be accessed from Council's website at www.berribarmera.sa.gov.au

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 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 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 1 August 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 risk is a major factor in having a profitable operation. The state government partners with industry organisations to support business, technical and/or wellbeing programs.

For example, Project 250 is delivered by The South Australian Wine Industry Association and funds industry and market development activities within regions, and activities that improve the skills and capabilities of South Australian wine businesses to compete more successfully in the domestic and international market.

AgInsight Portal

[AgInsight South Australia](#) is an interactive information and 3D mapping portal that provides users with comprehensive agricultural, economic and infrastructure data, including vineyard locations across South Australia, cross referenced with the Vinehealth Register. Regional data is updated over a 5-year period.

China Re-Engagement Support Package

The State Government has provided \$1.85 million through a China Re-Engagement Support Package to support the wine sector across five key components:

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

Technical cooperation between South Australia and Shandong Province, led by PIRSA, has included the Australia-China Winemaker Immersion Program delivered by Treasury Wine Estates in partnership with Australian Grape & Wine and the China Alcoholic Drinks Association, supported by academic and industry partners in both countries. In addition, an international wine judge exchange program, Australian Wine Industry Technical Conference scientist delegation and a global Wine Tourism Organisation Summit, have showcased Great Wine Capitals and Sustainable Winegrowing Australia.

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

On 21 July 2025, a further \$3.9 million over two years was announced to run a [Global Wine Growth Program](#), led by the Department of State Development, to support the South Australia Trade and Investment Strategy to 2030. This will expand on the success of the China Re-Engagement Support package and will target export support in China, United States, United Kingdom and Southeast Asia.

Register your interest in [trade missions and events](#) via an expression of interest sent via email.

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. The service provides a range of training, extension, workshops, and forums.

Factsheets are available from the CCW website: www.ccwcoop.com.au

[Converting from grapevines to olives - Fact Sheet - CCW Co-Operative Limited Riverland Wine Grape Growers](#)

[Incorporating Agave into SA Riverland Farms - Fact Sheet - CCW Co-Operative Limited Riverland Wine Grape Growers](#)

For more information contact: sanoop.varughese@ccwcoop.com.au

Domestic Sales Dashboard

W: marketexplorer.wineaustralia.com/domestic-sales

Wine Australia have a Domestic Sales Dashboard that provides high-level statistics on the Australian domestic market, including retail sales, wholesale winery sales, on-premise and consumer insights.

Drought support programs

For information on support programs available from the Australian and South Australian Government, see the pages below.

[Drought, disaster and rural support - DAFF](#)

[Drought support - PIRSA](#)

Emergency services levy drought relief rebate

A rebate of the 2025-26 emergency services levy is available to drought affected farmers who are receiving the Commonwealth Government's Farm Household Allowance (FHA).

To see if you are eligible and to apply visit [Drought relief rebate](#)

Frost management

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

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

Grape Price Indicators Dashboard

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

Wine Australia has an interactive Grape Price Indicators dashboard that provides a summary of the key drivers of inland winegrape prices in Australia, as well as an indication of the forecast for grape prices ahead of the next vintage. It combines 12 unique data sources and displays 21 charts in a user-friendly layout to provide greater price transparency for inland winegrape growers. The data sources are updated either monthly or quarterly.

Grape Growing Cost Calculator

W: [Grape Growing Cost Calculator | Wine Australia](#)

Wine Australia have an online calculator that allows you to estimate the costs of winegrape growing in any of the inland regions of Australia: Riverina, Riverland, and Murray Darling- Swan Hill.

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, followed by Adelaide Hills, McLaren Vale, Clare Valley and the Barossa Valley wine regions in May 2025.

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](#).

Smoke taint management

If vineyards and grapes are exposed to smoke this can result in wines with undesirable sensory characters. The below pages provide information on actions to take if vineyards have been affected by fire or smoke.

[Fire and smoke | Wine Australia](#)
[Smoke taint - The Australian Wine Research Institute](#)

This page contains resources on reducing smoke taint in grapes from stubble and other burning from grain producers.

[Reducing smoke taint in grapes - PIRSA](#)

South Australian Wine Industry Association (SAWIA) support

SAWIA assists financial 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.

Vinehealth Australia Register

[Vinehealth Australia](#) maintain a vineyard register, funded by a levy collected on all South Australian vineyards of 0.5 hectares or more according to [The Phylloxera and Grape Industry Act 1995](#). The Act requires vineyard owners to notify Vinehealth Australia of any changes to plantings within three months

of the change occurring. These changes can be the removal of existing plantings, the addition of new plantings, or the sale or transfer of property.

Vineyard removal

For grape growers wanting to remove vineyards to diversify their crop, or for waste management of abandoned vineyards, AWRI has a factsheet detailing 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 WGCSA and PIRSA. Wine Australia and NSW DPI have also funded a guide that provides information on vineyard reworking, top-grafting and vineyard removal.

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

[Options for vineyards: reworking, top-grafting, replanting or removing NSW DPI Management Guide](#)

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 vintage may wish to consider vineyard resting as a management practice to reduce input costs, that is, maintaining the vineyard asset under reduced management costs until market conditions improve.

One option to support vineyard resting is to remove the inflorescences or bunches from the vines using foliar applications of the plant growth regulator Ethephon. SARDI have produced a Fact Sheet on this technique: [Resting Vineyards using Ethephon: a Cost-Saving Strategy when Grapes are in Oversupply](#)

Further online resources are available:

[Vineyard Resting AWRI webinar- delivered by Paul Petrie SARDI, October 2025](#)

[Vineyard resting - The Australian Wine Research Institute](#)

[Mothballing vineyards – Wine Australia](#)

Vineyard 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.

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 was delivered between 2023-2025 as part of the statewide Business Fundamentals program. Round Two of the Program and will continue to deliver programs until 2027.

SAWIA will deliver 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

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.

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.

Health and wellbeing

In difficult times, people's personal health and wellbeing can 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.

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 Boggled Mate? website – areyouboggedmate.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.

Office for Small and Family Business

The Office for Small and Family Business offers 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](#)

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.