

MEDIA RELEASE

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Who's hitchhiking with you?

Major new campaign launched to protect SA vines

Summary: Vinehealth Australia is today launching a new campaign – Who's Hitchhiking With You? – to educate tourists about their role in keeping South Australian vines healthy.

Who's hitchhiking with you? That's the question wine tourists in South Australia are being asked, as part of a new Vinehealth Australia campaign launched today at Angove Family Winemakers in McLaren Vale, by Leon Bignell MP.

The campaign sees Phil, a human-sized yellow phylloxera bug, hitching a ride from vineyard to vineyard with various groups of tourists.

In reality, phylloxera is a tiny pest that can be picked up and spread by tourists on tyres, shoes and clothes. And while phylloxera is present in other parts of Australia, South Australia is proudly phylloxera free.

"Tourists could walk through a phylloxera-infested vineyard in Australia or overseas, and unknowingly, pick up the tiny insect on their shoes or clothing, then be in a phylloxera-free vineyard later that day or weeks later and spread phylloxera there," said Inca Pearce, CEO of Vinehealth Australia.

"Our campaign asks tourists not to let Phil the phylloxera bug and his nasty pest friends hitchhike with them. We're asking tourists not to walk or drive close to vines or down vine rows. Stick to the roads and paths."

The vines underpinning South Australia's \$2.11 billion wine industry are free of phylloxera and many of the other pests and diseases that have decimated wine regions around the world. But increased global and national trade and tourism means increased pest and disease risk.

There has been a doubling in the number of exotic plant pest incursions in Australia in the past seven years. And phylloxera is being detected in more vineyards in Victoria.

Research commissioned by Vinehealth Australia in 2017 showed that 44% of female visitors and 28% of male visitors to wine regions expect to be able to take photos amongst the vines as part of their wine tourism experience.

"It's wonderful that tourists are visiting our regions and enjoying our wines. In this campaign, we're encouraging tourists to be part of our Australian wine story. We have some

of the oldest vines in the world in South Australia, and we want to keep it that way,” Inca said.

“There are many ways tourists can enjoy all that our wine regions have to offer without risking the health of our vines. When you arrive at a cellar door, chat to the staff about tours, experiences and activities available.”

Leon Bignell MP, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and Minister for Tourism, officially launched the campaign this morning.

“South Australia has a proud tradition of producing premium food and wine from our clean environment, which is why this message about vine health is so important,” Minister Bignell said.

“We are the only mainland State in Australia which is phylloxera free, fruit fly free and has a ban on growing GM food crops – which gives our primary producers and food and beverage businesses a huge marketing advantage when exporting products around the world.

“During the past year, South Australia welcomed 2.8 million international and interstate visitors and we know more than 17 percent visit a winery during their stay.

“This campaign will educate visitors about simple ways they can help us protect our precious vines, while they’re out enjoying our beautiful wine regions and sampling South Australia’s world-renowned wines.”

Who’s Hitchhiking With You? is part of a broader Responsible Visitation Campaign, developed by Vinehealth Australia, which also includes:

1. A new Wine Tourism Biosecurity Training Program for South Australian cellar door, marketing and tourism staff in wine regions, to arm them with knowledge and tools for keeping vines healthy.
2. Tourist-friendly signage for cellar doors, to educate visitors about their role in keeping vines healthy.
3. The creation of six ‘best practice’ cellar door sites in South Australian wine regions featuring the new tourist signage, and Cellar Door Kits with footwear disinfection equipment, sturdy disposable shoe covers, rubber boots and educational materials. The cellar doors are Skillogalee Wines in the Clare Valley, Charles Melton in the Barossa Valley, Golding Wines in the Adelaide Hills, Angove Family Winemakers in McLaren Vale, Bremerton in Langhorne Creek and Zema Estate in Coonawarra.

The campaign is funded by Vinehealth Australia and Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA), with additional support from the South Australian Wine Industry Association (SAWIA).

“We’re proud to be a supporter of this important campaign for South Australian growers and wineries,” said Brian Smedley, Chief Executive of SAWIA.

"South Australian wine businesses welcome tourists to our regions to enjoy the increasing diversity of experiences while enjoying a glass or two of wine. However, given the increasing number of wine tourists, the wine industry needs to ensure there is clear guidance provided to protect our most valuable assets – our vines."

The growing tourism market

In the 12 months to September 2017:

- Total tourism expenditure in SA grew to a record high \$6.3 billion up 2.0 percent for the year. This was led by international expenditure, up 13 percent.
- International visits to South Australia grew by 2.8 percent in the year to September 2017 to a record high of 442,000.

(Source: SATC: <http://tourism.sa.gov.au/research-and-statistics/south-australia/value-of-tourism>)

And over the past decade, the number of aircraft passengers into Australia has increased by 80%. (Source: IGAB review, 2017:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/partnerships/nbc/intergovernmental-agreement-on-biosecurity/igabreview/igab-final-report>).

For more information about the Who's Hitchhiking With You? or the Responsible Visitation Campaign, contact campaign manager Cindie Smart on 0418 826 480 or email cindie@cindiesmart.com.au

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ABOUT VINEHEALTH AUSTRALIA

Vinehealth Australia is a statutory body funded by South Australian vineyard owners to protect South Australian vineyards from diseases, pests and other conditions that may affect vine health. Its role is to develop and advocate policy, as well as provide current research and best practice measures to help ensure that farm-gate hygiene practices are integrated into daily vineyard operations in South Australia.

For more information, visit www.vinehealth.com.au

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