



Richard Angove from Angove Family Winemakers, Phil the Phylloxera Guy and Vinehealth Australia CEO Inca Pearce at the RVC launch in February.

## Who's hitchhiking with you?

That's the question wine tourists in South Australia are being asked in the fight against hitchhiker pests that could decimate the wine industry.

The campaign, created by Vinehealth Australia, was launched in February at Angove Family Winemakers in McLaren Vale by Leon Bignell MP, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and Minister for Tourism.

The main character of the campaign is 'Phil the Phylloxera Guy', who hitches a ride from vineyard to vineyard with various groups of tourists. It's intentionally silly to cut through the serious nature of biosecurity. You can view and share the campaign at [www.vinehealth.com.au/tourism](http://www.vinehealth.com.au/tourism).

In reality, phylloxera is a tiny pest that can be picked up and spread by tourists on tyres, shoes, clothes and equipment. 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.

**We're asking tourists not to walk or drive close to vines or down vine rows. Stick to the roads and paths.**

"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 risk

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<sup>1</sup>. 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.

<sup>1</sup>IGAB review, 2017: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/partnerships/nbc/intergovernmental-agreement-on-biosecurity/igabreview#final-report>.

"It's wonderful that tourists are visiting our regions and enjoying our wines. In this campaign, we're encouraging tourists to play an important role in 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. We're encouraging tourists to chat to the staff about tours, experiences and activities available when they arrive at the cellar door."

### Responsible Visitation

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

A 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.

Tourist-friendly signage for cellar doors, to educate visitors about their role in keeping vines healthy. The signs are available for purchase at [www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/resources/hosting-visitors/hosting-wine-tours-signage](http://www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/resources/hosting-visitors/hosting-wine-tours-signage)

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 Skilloogalee 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

According to South Australian Tourism Commission figures<sup>2</sup>, 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.

And international visits to South Australia grew by 2.8 percent in the year to September 2017 to a record high of 442,000.

Research also shows that over the past decade, the number of aircraft passengers into Australia has increased by 80%<sup>3</sup>. Cruise ship numbers visiting Adelaide are also increasing. One ship will have a permanent berth at Outer Harbour. More people from all over the world will be arriving via cruise ships and seeking out experiences.

Added to this, the Australian Government's \$50 million Export and Regional Wine Support Package aims to grow the Australian wine sector by showcasing the nation's wine tourism offering and drawing more tourists to our regions.

<sup>2</sup>SATC: <http://tourism.sa.gov.au/research-and-statistics/south-australia/value-of-tourism>.

<sup>3</sup>IGAB review, 2017: <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/partnerships/nbc/intergovernmental-agreement-on-biosecurity/igabreview#final-report>.



The Charles Melton crew at cellar door training: Krysa Smith, Virginia Weckert, Charlie Melton, Cam Malouf, Lucy Fitzpatrick, Erin Hoklas and Debbie Tregeagle with Vinehealth Australia training manager Rebecca Weatherill.

### Ground force

Cellar door staff are on the wine tourism frontline, and these people are the key to the success of this campaign. With that in mind, Vinehealth Australia created a Wine Tourism Biosecurity training program as a pillar of the Responsible Visitation Campaign.

The free training program is currently being rolled out across South Australian wine regions, with individual site training at larger cellar doors and group training for smaller cellar doors.

The training program includes information, dialogue and tools for cellar door staff to use when sharing the 'healthy vines' message with visitors.

"The response from wineries has been incredibly positive," said Vinehealth Australia training manager Rebecca Weatherill.

"Winery owners and cellar door teams are passionate about the health of their vines. The biggest problem for many wineries is the access tourists have to their vines. Car parking areas and cellar doors are often very close to vines, and these vines are usually unfenced. Cellar doors are often designed without biosecurity in mind, so we're workshopping ideas to help manage the risks posed by this common issue.

"The signage that we've developed to educate tourists about not walking into vine rows certainly helps. And cellar door staff are now considering the use of rubber boots or disposable shoe covers for visitors who are granted access to the vineyard.

"I'm spending time with cellar door staff getting the message right. An important message for tourists is that we have some of the oldest vines in the world here in South Australia, and we want to keep it that way."

### Next steps

Vinehealth Australia is now working with the Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA), to explore opportunities to extend the Responsible Visitation Campaign and the Wine Tourism Biosecurity training program nationally.

"We know this project is relevant to every winery and cellar door in Australia," said Inca Pearce. "We've been lucky in Australia to avoid many of the nasty pests and diseases that other wine regions around the world have to deal with, such as Pierce's Disease. We have phylloxera in Australia, but it is currently confined to regions in Victoria and New South Wales. Containing phylloxera within those regions is vital."



Leon Bignell MP and Phil the Phylloxera Guy.

A lack of available chemical or biological control for phylloxera means there is no treatment for a vineyard infested with phylloxera. The only management option is to pull out the vines and replant with new vines that have been grafted onto phylloxera tolerant or resistant rootstock. Pulling out vines and replanting comes at an approximate cost of \$60,000 per hectare<sup>4</sup>, including vine removal, new grafted vine material and new block

<sup>4</sup>Calculated in 2017 by Vinehealth Australia and benchmarked against industry standards.

infrastructure, notwithstanding the loss of production while plantings mature.

"Best practice biosecurity is about identifying risks, understanding them and then managing those risks. Controlling who enters your vineyards is an important part of managing the risks to the health of your vines."

*For more information about the Responsible Visitation Campaign visit <http://vinehealth.com.au/projects/responsible-visitation-campaign/>*