

February 2 2018 - 2:10PM


## Vinehealth Australia launches Who's Hitchhik campaign to fight off phylloxera



[Emmalie Balnaves-Gale](#)

If you've never heard of a phylloxera bug before, you're probably not alone but if you've ever visited the McLaren Vale wine region, it's probably time you got to know these undetectable critters.



 STAY AWAY: Chair of Vinehealth Australia Roseanne Healy, Richard Angove of Angove Family Winemakers and Member for Mawson Leon Bignell, with Phil the phylloxera bug. Photo: Emmalie Balnaves-Gale.

The tiny insect has caused destruction in the industry all over the world. In the late 19th century, the phylloxera epidemic destroyed most of Europe's winegrape vineyards.

While phylloxera is present in other parts of Australia, South Australia remains phylloxera free, fruit fly free, and GM free but keeping South Australian vineyards free from phylloxera and other threats has never been more challenging.

As biosecurity risks intensify, there are more opportunities than ever before for pests and diseases to reach the state's vineyards. Phylloxera can be picked up and spread by tourists on tyres, shoes and clothes.

Cue Vinehealth Australia's latest campaign *Who's Hitchhiking With You?*, designed to educate tourists about their role in keeping SA vines healthy. The campaign was launched at Angove Family Wines on February 2 by Member for Mawson Leon Bignell.

Chief executive of Vinehealth Australia Inca Pearce said the campaign called on tourists to not let the phylloxera bug and his nasty pest friends to 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," she said.

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

"We're encouraging tourists to be part of our Australian wine story. We have some of the oldest vines in the world in SA, and we want to keep it that way," Ms Pearce said.

At the launch, Richard Angove said if phylloxera did make its way across the border were extremely apparent, it would be completely devastating for SA winemakers.

Angove Family Winemakers is the first winery in the McLaren Vale to test the effectiveness of the campaign by hosting educational signs around its vineyard.