



THE WINTER RHYTHM NEWSLETTER



Now that we are in the midst of winter and over the hectic pace of vintage it is a good time to reflect on what is happening around us before the growing season arrives. I won't talk about the state of the wine industry because we hear so much of it especially in the negative sense and I would rather think about the more positive aspects of what we enjoy –the love of wine, food and a lifestyle which is naturally easier in our corner of the world.

Rainfall to date has been good due largely thanks to early falls around ANZAC Day enabling all of our vineyard pastures to get a head start while the soil was still warm.

It is heartening to see some changing vineyard management approaches around the region especially now since the focus is on both environmental and carbon issues. I hope that enough growers will embrace the opportunity to discover and develop new ways and ideas that were generally considered to be too radical and expensive in the past. There is a regional growing movement towards the adoption of Organics and Bio-dynamics (or low chemical input systems). These both focus on soil health and diversity.

Vineyards that have been managed for up to 5 years with methods utilising organic and Bio-dynamic principles show that the practices can be very effective. Soil vitality is noticeably improved in vineyards that have reduced chemical inputs and the level of activity both above and below ground is significantly better. Improvements are seen visually but can be measured by increased microbial and fungal populations in the soils.



Pridham Viticulture has chosen to incorporate some organic and Bio-dynamic procedures into our vineyard management strategies and has some pleasing outcomes on vineyards in McLaren Vale, Kangarilla and Kuitpo. If you are thinking about changing some of your vineyard management practices and would like to incorporate organic values on your property, or just would like to have a look at some successes as well as the occasional failures please call me.

Fresh Care- The new wine industry EMS program

The Australian Winemakers Federation are about to roll out a new EMS program (Fresh Care) which will comply with the Federal Government carbon emission trading scheme, sometime in the future. Some wine companies have started to gather information from grape growers to begin the process. The first step is to record energy, water and nitrogen use. It is anticipated that the program will develop over the next few years to a point where grape growers and allied industries will be audited to ensure compliance.



The program might seem a bit militant but it is anticipated that it will be difficult to sell wine globally if Australian producers are not responsible in relation to carbon emissions. The McLaren Vale Growers Group is currently working with the draft document and will keep growers updated on developments in this area.

McLaren Vale Grape Growers Development Group

I have attained great personal satisfaction by being involved with McLaren Vale Wine Grape Tourism Association and am currently a committee member of the Grape Growers Group and a member of the EMS sub group. This association performs an enormous amount of work developing plans, functions, research and networks to improve and maintain the McLaren Vale brand. Countless hours of valuable time continues to be volunteered by people on a number of progressive committees, all working to achieve tangible outcomes for our region. Any perceived lack of progress is by no means through lack of effort on behalf of members.

The association receives funds from the McLaren Vale wine industry grape levy to develop regional plans but in recent times due to a reduction in crop volume around McLaren Vale income has significantly fallen and therefore many programs have been pruned back hard. Some structural changes have occurred over the past few months to cope with the fall in income but the association is still progressing and you will still see new approaches and program deliveries to benefit McLaren Vale regularly. If anyone feels they can contribute we are always keen to have fresh faces on board to help with the wide variety of tasks. Please maintain your support for this important organisation whenever you can so that we can all prosper in the future.



Enjoy the rest of your winter activities.

Kind Regards

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