This paper is presented on behalf of the wine committee of the Royal Agricultural & Horticultural Society of South Australia Inc. (RAHS, the Society). Wine shows, in particular the Adelaide Wine Show, are currently facing the following issues:

- How the Adelaide Wine Show sees its role.
- To whom is the Adelaide Wine Show responsible?
- How the ‘agricultural exhibition’ role reconciles with the ‘consumer awareness’ role.
- Growth—should it be curtailed and, if so, how?
- Does the RAHS of SA have a role in judge training?
- Is the RAHS of SA in it for the money?

Reference is given within this discussion to:

- Aspects of the history and evolution of the Society, including how it came to be running a wine show.
- The financial aspects of running a major agricultural show.
- Some of the major challenges facing the system and the Society’s response.
- Possible future developments.

The proposition is put that the show system is in fair shape, albeit bulging at the seams, but it needs active support and involvement from industry to maintain and enhance its effectiveness. The current major task is to appropriately address the issue of industry growth. A larger ongoing challenge is to ensure that the wines that are the major recipients of accolades reflect styles that the industry collectively wish to encourage.

The history

The RAHS of SA was founded in 1839. A non-profit organisation, its major activity is the staging of the annual agricultural show, which attracts about 600,000 people in an average year. Additionally the grounds are used for 340 days per year, with 180 individual events.

The RAHS manages a 28 ha site close to the Adelaide CBD. The property is leased from the State Government on a 60-year lease, although all infrastructure and improvements (book value approximately $25 million, insurance value approximately $100 million) are owned by the Society. Annual maintenance costs are around $1 million and the Society typically invests more than $2 million in capital projects on the site annually. Revenue from entries to the wine show represents about 1% of the Society’s annual income stream.

The first Adelaide Wine Show was held in 1845 and through until 1871 the show was held in conjunction with the other ‘produce’ of the agricultural show. The show was part of a raft of programs including lectures and tastings of interstate and overseas wines, and despatch of local wine to international competitions—all aimed at improving the wines and growing the wine industry.

The agricultural societies performed the role that some 60–80 years later was partly taken up by the various state government departments of agriculture. The Society was the first exporter of wine from the colony and for more than 50 years played an agricultural support role similar to that subsequently assumed by the State Government Department of Agriculture.

The RAHS of SA was also the principal lobbyist for the establishment of Roseworthy Agricultural College.

In recent times the question ‘Who is the show system there to benefit?’ is often posed, particularly through the wine media. The roles and responsibilities of the RAHS of SA Inc. are embodied in the mission and action plans of its wine committee.

The mission

- To encourage and reward the pursuit of excellence in Australian winemaking by the staging of an annual wine competition.
- To support the sales and marketing of Australian wines by the promotion of the Royal Adelaide Wine Show and associated activities.
- To utilise the show as an educational resource, most particularly in sensory evaluation for Australian wine practitioners.
- To ensure the Wine Show has relevance to the wine consuming market.

In summary, competition, exhibition, promotion and education.

The wine committee is accountable to the council of the RAHS of SA, but its stakeholders include Australian wine companies and their employees, wine consumers, current and aspiring judges and wine-related educational institutions.

The actions to fulfil the committee’s mission are:

- The use of highly skilled and suitably qualified judges, under the guidance of an experienced and visionary chairman of judges.
- The provision of a high quality tasting environment and a judging structure that minimises judging fatigue and maximises the reliability of the results.
- The annual review of the prize schedule to maximise its relevance to exhibitors and consumers.
- The annual review of a marketing plan to promote and publicise the event to exhibitors, media and consumers, both national and international.
- The liaison with major, appropriate wine-affiliated educational institutions to explore ways of assisting with sensory evaluation training.

The financials

It has become common to suggest that show societies are interested in expanding entry numbers (principally) because of the money-making potential.
The following 'dummy' Income and Expenditure table provides some realistic numbers on the costs of running a capital city wine show.

**Income**
- 2,500 entries @ $47.50 = $118,750
- Sponsorship = $x?

**Expenditure**
- Judges expenses (16 judges @ 4 days @ $300/day) = $19,200
- Judges travel (1 international, 5 interstate, 10 local) = $10,000
- Facility rental* (15 days @ $5,000/day) = $75,000
- Salaries – admin & marketing, setup & management = $33,000
- Printing, publications, promotions, postage = $22,250

Total Expenditure = $159,450

* Typically facility usage is longer, say 21–25 days.

To break even the show would need approximately $40,000 in sponsorship. No provision has been made for up to 2,500 tasting glasses, tasting benches and other equipment and infrastructure.

Clearly the Society is not in it for the money, but it necessarily would seek to recover costs and hopefully show a modest return.

**The challenges**

Too many wines!

‘...judges should be limited to tasting 150 wines per day.’

‘We consider it unfair that we are expected to judge 188 entries in 5–7 hours.’

Both comments are from the Royal Adelaide Wine Show—the former from James Halliday, immediate past chairman of judges, following the 2000 wine show and the latter from the judges’ comments following the 1867 wine show.

The committee takes the view that an appropriate balance must be found between catering to the needs of an expanding industry, while not compromising the quality or integrity of the judging process. It has accepted the past chairman’s advice to attempt to limit judging to 150 wines per day, and to not extend the judging duration beyond a half day, but not at this stage his recommendation on limiting the number of panels. Five panels will be introduced at the Adelaide Wine Show in 2001. This has been done in consultation with the new chairman and only after taking additional precautionary measures. To relieve as much as possible any undue strain on the chairman, a deputy chairman has been appointed and panel chairs have been asked to take extra responsibility.

This can only be done safely with high calibre panel chairs, and at Adelaide each of the panel chairs will have had chairman experience at a major show. The five panels have been introduced in advance of an absolute need to test the effectiveness of the system in a less pressured environment.

**Enough judges?**

In Adelaide at the 1871 show, there were four teams of five judges, with numbers increasing in 1872 to 27 judges. In Adelaide in 2001 there will be 16 judges plus 10 associates. It could be argued that judging has not kept pace with industry growth.

The committee agrees a larger pool of judges from which to draw panels is needed. It is suggested that it could be appropriate for the ASVO to be the custodian of a database of current and aspiring judges. In addition to listing their qualifications and experience, preferences for shows and availability by calendar could also be listed.

In 1992 the Australian Wine Research Institute commenced its Advanced Wine Assessment course and the Adelaide Wine Show has used this as a method for selecting associate judges. Since the commencement of the program some 50 people have entered the system through this method with less than 10 proceeding to full judge status at Adelaide.

In continuing to seek a balance of backgrounds in judging panels, there is a move to source more associates from the retail and restaurant sectors of the wine trade as well as from the media. The recently announced Len Evans Wine Tutorial is another positive move towards investing in the moulding of future judges. Programs such as Negotiants Australia’s Working With Wine Scholarship are further examples of areas for seeking future judges and associates.

It is critical that a way is found to identify these future judges and that:

- Show societies are prepared to take a few calculated risks on new entrants, and
- Established judges are prepared to step aside from time to time to create the space for the new entrants.

**Associate training**

This is a critical area of focus. It is indeed a valid criticism that the increase in exhibitor numbers can impact on the amount of time available. At Adelaide this year the panels are also being instructed by the Chairman to devote a specific amount of time to associate training, by way of suitable discussion time. The additional panel will assist in this process.

The Chairman has sought and received funding from the Society to invest in wines for a masterclass to be conducted by the international judge on one of the evenings during the judging. This initiative will serve to reinforce in a more focussed manner the palate training that continues after the wines have been judged.

**Remuneration for judges**

The Society takes the view that this is not a situation that can be looked at in isolation from the other activities of the Society. As they have constituencies far beyond the wine industry and as judges of no other class of exhibit are paid, it is reluctant to introduce payment for wine judges.

Until recently, remuneration was generally not an issue as many judges’ salaries are willingly covered by their employer. However more and more judges are sought who may be self-employed, and it is acknowledged that the four days of unpaid leave may impose a financial impediment. This burden would be less significant if there were more judges in the pool, which would limit the amount of time any single judge was used. The Society will continue to monitor this situation. In the interim, the Society is moving further to ensure that it appropriately reimburses out of pocket expenses incurred by judges.

**Exhibitor judges**

It could be argued that if the sole purpose of the competition were to achieve commercial success through awards, then the use of exhibitor judges could be inappropriate. Given however that the show system has other aims, including ‘improving the breed’ and education through stakeholders, then the argument for not using exhibitor judges is less profound. The main task therefore is to ensure that no single judge can unduly influence the results in favour of his or her...
company. At Adelaide this scenario has been addressed by limiting the number of judges from any one company, and by ensuring that no more than one judge from any company can be on a single panel.

**Who IS running this show?**
The wine industry has tended to be critical of the show societies, claiming that they are only interested in bigger and bigger shows, making money and having plenty of leftover wines to take home. However this is not the situation. Shows are generally volunteer organisations (with paid employees) which are interested in the active participation in, and promotion of, primary and secondary industries. Although not begrudging volunteer councillors having access to the leftovers, work must still be done in exploring a more sensible use of some of the excess wines, particularly in education.

For the wine industry to build on the existing platform, a good starting point would be more people offering their services to the show societies via wine committee membership. The societies have experience, facilities, resources and the desire to run wine shows for the benefit of, and in partnership with, the wine industry. Perhaps the partnership needs strengthening and the ASVO could be a conduit for a more aligned future.

**Uniformity of structure between the majors**
This issue was raised in 1872 by the Adelaide Society with a view to establishing judging uniformity at all the ‘colonial’ shows. The quality of the judging should be of the highest possible uniform standard across the country, and again the ASVO may be able to take a lead role here. Beyond that, it is appropriate that each show develops its own point of difference.

At Adelaide, the decision was taken in 1992 to make the show more oriented to the consumer, with approximately two thirds of all classes being dedicated to wines that are commercially available at the time of showing. To some this is seen as contrary to the ‘improvement of the breed’ ethos of shows. However the committee does not understand this argument.

**Judging in the future?**
Over the years there has often been criticism of the types of wines that appeal to both wine show judges and other wine critics.

‘Thus influenced, even in their local exhibitions, the vigneron who organise them, forgetful of past lessons and indulging in self-glory, instead of favouring clean, dry wines, as light as their climate can produce, adjudicate the greatest number of prizes to what their list of awards calls … full-bodied red, … – abomination of desolation.’

Hubert de Castella, 1886, from John Bull’s Vineyard.

Those who have been active in the judging system will acknowledge that successful show wines are not always thought of as great wines. Wine show organisers will continue to be challenged to address this paradox.

At Adelaide, while retaining the 20 point score system, the 3, 7, 10 point scale for colour, nose and palate has been abandoned. It is possible that to ensure the judges’ scores reflect the attributes that the industry is seeking, a new scoring system will need to be provided where balance, length, structure, texture, concentration (as examples) are more formally assessed.

This point has been raised to reflect on how much more robust and educational the system would be if those companies who do not enter because their wines are ‘not suited to the system’ could be encouraged to do so, knowing they were going to get a fair review.

The Sydney International Top 100, where wine is judged with food, has presented another variation to the previously accepted method of wine assessment.

**Conclusion**
The Royal Adelaide Wine Show is keen to play a pivotal role in staging an annual wine show. It recognises that the current growth in the industry is putting strain on the available resources, but commits to liaising with stakeholders to meet their collective needs in the interests of enhancing the industry.

Although not ‘in it for the money,’ the industry is likely to have to face ever-increasing entry fees (or royalties on medal use?) as demands for higher performance outcomes from the show organisers necessarily ensue.

The committee encourages criticism of the existing system, particularly when improvements are recommended.

The author, on behalf of the Wine Committee of the Royal Adelaide Show, would like to thank the ASVO for the opportunity to participate in this forum. The committee believes that the ASVO could have an ongoing role to play in judge development, establishment of common judging standards and liaison with the major show organisers.