Questions and Discussion

**Editor’s note**

This discussion was transcribed from a tape recording. The text has been edited to remove irrelevant details and to remove or revise comments which would only have been understood by participants at the time. Short parts of the discussion were lost on tape changeover and where these sections lost their context and meaning they were removed.

*Questions and Discussion: Peter Høj started the discussion by summarising the presentations and proposing several issues, that speakers had raised, for further consideration.*

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**Halliday**

A strong message from James Halliday’s analysis was that there are both marketing and wine quality issues behind entering wine shows. That was a very, strong message. There are some commercial imperatives that are driving that process. There are probably even salary bonuses for getting medals. On the other hand, there was this very honourable and laudable attempt to use the system to improve the quality of Australian wine.

One of the things we try to do today is to be all things to all people in all shows. I would like to consider that somebody sits down and thinks about totally alternative views. For example, is it appropriate that every major national show runs all classes of wine? And would it be more appropriate that you have feeder regional shows that feed into one capital show—let’s call it Show A—which specialises in white judging, another one in red judging, so that you get through less wine because you actually don’t repeat the judging exercise of the same product across the country? You can give the wines more time. You can get style specialists in, whether they be from Australia or overseas, to address the types and styles of wines that are relevant for that particular show.

These are some of the issues that have to be thrown up in the air, and that’s what I refer to here as “more radical changes”. I’m going to ask the audience whether the wine shows are worth retaining. It’s my conclusion that everybody believes that the concept, with some review and modification, is worth retaining.

Are there further issues to be addressed? I think that will come up in the discussion. And how do we address these issues? I’m going to suggest to you that I see more and more well-meaning people in the industry that really want to do the right thing by the industry. But, increasingly, I also see that these people, because of the apparent pressure-cooker lifestyle that most of you are living, are not always able to deliver the goods, be that writing books for the industry on viticulture or oenology or handing in a paper in time for the technical conference so that we can get the proceedings out. It appears that people are sometimes too busy to apply their mind to something which they are not directly paid to do.

It would be my suggestion, looking at Brian Croser’s back-of-the-envelope calculation, that if the industry invests $5 million per annum into wine shows, maybe the industry should also invest about $100,000 in getting somebody to sit down and think about this, run a lot of models about how you can do it, even with spreadsheets of judging availability. For instance, how could you set up a system where the ‘three strikes, you’re out’ scenario that we have heard about could work?

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I would like to suggest to you that we have to find a way forward from today, but we can discuss that when we come to the last part of the session.

One of the issues that have come up throughout these presentations is that the current pressure on the shows does not allow associates to be appropriately trained. Mention was made many times of people going through the training course at the AWRI and then very few of them make it through to judging. There could be two reasons for that: of the people that go through the AWRI course, only 10 per cent of them are any good, and therefore the system works. Or, if you’re much more cynical about it—and I’m going to give James a hard time here—the view that you can only run three panels means that even if you wanted to take on more new people, because you have so many excellent people in the industry already judging, you do not have a mechanism for allowing new people to come in. It would be my contention that the view that James expresses—that you should have no more than four panels—needs to be discussed in a broader context with different models, maybe in relation to deputy chairs or a chair for the white judging panels and one for the red judging panels.

I think that training issue is absolutely critical. It must be addressed. It’s quite clear that the current system, where one person [ed. Chair] has to handle everything, will not allow us to go to 10 panels. I think we need to think outside that square.

A thing that I thought didn’t come up much was how we actually know that the judges that we say are the best maintain that capability? There are studies published that show, in general, that your sensory capacity goes down with age—no disrespect to any of these people here—but of course that is offset by experience. There are also studies that claim to show that females in many respects can outperform males. Now, we don’t see too many females running the show, so to speak. So there are some issues there that I think the industry has to address.

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**Haselgrove**

We subsequently heard from Richard Haselgrove. Richard outlined the current activities at the Melbourne Show, which of course is quite timely, and he also felt that, yes, the system might need revision but there’s not necessarily a need for new wheels.

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**Walsh**

Brian Walsh tried to put to rest one of the perceptions, that the wine shows make a lot of money from all the entries, and he showed some budget figures, which certainly I have seen, which would cast doubt on whether the Adelaide Wine Show would be in the black at all.

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You might say that's because the committee members walk away with all these cases of wonderful wine. Well, certainly for Adelaide, I can tell you that doesn't occur. If I happen to get a case of wine—I think I've had two over the last three years—I have given it to somebody who can't afford to buy wine, because in general the best wine goes for tastes for the public. It doesn't go to the committee members. Is that a fair reflection?

BRIAN WALSH: I would think so, Peter. In fact, I haven't had a case; it was my choice not to take any. But I haven't actually seen the evidence of all this wine lying around and handed out to the councillors.

PROF HØJ: I just think that it's important to do a reality check on that one.

The other thing that Brian brought up was that it's time to revise whether we should have the 3, 7, 10 scores and, if we're not using them anyway, why not get rid of them and perhaps develop a focus on other things such as texture etc.

Riggs

Iain Riggs outlined that the Hunter Show was fully regional and very strong on training, and I thought that was terrific to hear. I also think that Iain said that unfinished wines only had a place at the regionals.

Coates

Terry Coates outlined what the Cowra Show did, and felt that it served the industry really well. Terry mentioned one interesting thing, which I think is quite clear. He felt that there should be a governing body. In other words, there does not seem to be a lot of interaction between the activities of the show societies. There might well be an opportunity for some synergy and even perhaps division of labour, but certainly proper scheduling of training needs and rostering of already stretched judges. I think that was a terrific idea.

I believe that if the industry really wants to sort this out, then an investment has to be made, but there has to be a governing body that sets the terms of reference for that investigation to be made. Hopefully, out of that one can get some efficiencies, division of labour and training schedules in place which are so vitally important, as we have heard today.

Croser

We heard from Brian Croser via Nick that he felt the system was good. He outlined how expensive it is—and it is relatively expensive—but one would have to assume that it's a business decision that is being made, like any other business decision. Personally, I am a bit dismayed that we spend as much on wine shows as on R&D, but that's a very personal decision. Personally, I am a bit dismayed that we spend as much on wine shows as on R&D, but that's a very personal decision. Personally, I am a bit dismayed that we spend as much on wine shows as on R&D, but that's a very personal decision.

Brian was very strong in saying that, whatever we do, we must recognise style variation. Brian also outlined the fact that, because the industry is putting so much money into this system, in his view WFA (the Winemakers Federation of Australia) should play a role. Whilst I don't necessarily concur with that (because I haven't thought about it) I think it is important that there is an industry body that defines what the objectives are, and whether the objective is improvement of the breed or consumer relevance. Perhaps, instead of having a red show and a white show we could also have a ‘Technical improvement of the breed’ show and a national ‘Look after the consumer’ show. I think they are all the issues that need to be thrown up in the air and analysed very carefully. I think the one thing we're trying to do now is to fit everything into every single show. It's very, very hard if you also want to get home in three and a half days.

Dawson and Murphy

Peter Dawson outlined a large company's perspective—the commercial imperative for medals. That argument was sustained, from a retail point of view, by Philip Murphy. Philip was again very strong on the commercial importance of shows. The Jimmy Watson is claimed to be worth a million dollars; he confirmed that it could probably be worth more for a big producer. There was a suggestion that you need a book describing all show results in Australia, advertisements and so on. The communication message is coming through again. Here we are then, swinging not away from improving the breed but towards addressing the consumer. The consumer is getting increasingly more informed.

Stonier

Then there was Brian Stonier. Brian outlined quite clearly that, whilst in volume terms the large corporates are very significant, in number terms the small producers are just as significant.

Brian, like Tim James later on, was in favour of investigating a system where there is a qualifying round whereby you go from regional to capital to national. An additional thought... One of the problems with that model is: if for some reason you enter into a regional and for some unthinkble reason the judges get it wrong, and an otherwise gold medal wine doesn't even get a medal—and we all know that can happen—that particular exhibitor might have no recourse.

Jones

That brings me on to one of the things that the journalists talked about, and also our venerable researcher, Philip Jones, and that is accountability. It will not take long before the wine show systems will have to be much more accountable and prove to people that they have in place appropriate QA and even good laboratory practices if they become challenged. One can easily foresee, if medals are really that commercially important, that if somebody takes their wine to a regional and gets rejected and can't have a second go, people will want to know why and they will challenge that.

We are living in an increasingly litigious society and the show societies really have to think about that one. There certainly have to be some very, very strong terms and conditions signed upon entry into the shows because otherwise it's going to wrong.

The Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation undoubtedly can tell you what people do if their wines get rejected for export approval. They don't just go away any more and say, “Oh, better make it better next year.”

There was also a suggestion of sliding scales. Perhaps it should cost you x dollars to get your first wine into a show and two-x for the next one.

Philip Jones was very strong on accountability. But he also felt that he actually didn't know what he could use a show result for. There started to be that distinction between wine that sells below $20 and wine that sells above, and perhaps we're again talking about two totally different objectives. In one case, entering into a show can be a liability; in the other, it's an opportunity. Again there was a very strong emphasis on the communication of what shows actually mean. The results need to be slotted into a total communications package.
Gregor
Stuart Gregor. You can probably all remember his colourful presentation, which all of us enjoyed. He again said that consumers are getting much smarter. It’s a sign of things to come, so they are very important. These communications issues and accountability issues have to be part of a review.

Allen
Max Allen addressed many issues. One of them, again, was the accountability issue. You can imagine how you could generate a very good Four Corners story about the show system and, if nothing else, there has to be a risk management strategy in which various scenarios have been run through. (You can always blame it on random bottle oxidation!) Max outlined, a little facetiously, that there should be a boycott until there is a serious change in the wine show system.

Questions and discussion

PROF HØJ: It is time for us to take views from the floor. We must try to resolve whether we can come up with a good model for going forward. It’s very important that the industry finds the mechanisms to define its objectives. If there are two sets of objectives, you need to employ a good consultant to think about this one very closely and to come up with some models. Then, once the industry knows exactly what it wants to do, it needs to articulate those views to the show societies.

It’s quite easy to criticise a show society. Show societies get many mixed messages from the industry, and it’s actually very hard to react unless there is a relatively uniform, authorised view of where to go. How you get to that can be difficult too, but it should be possible to communicate with the show societies and suggest a way to go forward.

What we have done first is recap on what has happened today. We now need to hear questions and direct them to the appropriate speaker. After we have taken all those views, we need to further summarise those views, and capture them for follow-up. Then there is also in the program a recommendation that we elect some people to take this further. We can talk about this when we have the discussion.

Could all the panel members now correct where they think they have been misrepresented. They can also each take an opportunity to say a few words about an issue that they feel is really important.

TIM JAMES: I tried to come at a point of view that was removed from where we might end up, but did that so we’d think about what methods we could use to change the direction we’re going in.

During the break, it was interesting to discuss with people the problems of having a three-tiered system. Brian Walsh and I have sat down on a number of occasions and he’s come up with exactly those same difficulties. But I think the driving force through all of this has been ‘Let’s clearly define exactly what we want the show system to do and use that as the best basis to go forward.’

While there’s a mixture of views, I don’t think the views are all that far apart. The biggest difference seems to be, just what is it there for? Is it there to improve the breed or are we talking about a commercial success? I don’t think that they are mutually exclusive. I think most people could live with it doing both.

SPEAKER: I liked what I heard said about regional shows, and particularly the Hunter Valley, and I think there’s a lot of merit in pursuing some of those principles. It also concerns me that the results of the show judging system, if they’re to be used in the marketing arena, focused on less than $20 or $25 wines as far as purchasers and retailers are concerned. If you exclude bulk or bag-in-the-box wines, what percentage of the total domestic and international production of wine is that addressing? To what extent does the show system hope to deliver into the rest of the market?

SPEAKER: There was (sic) a couple of things that I didn’t mention before that I think are probably worth bringing up and that is, that in the marketplace, perception is reality. The 15 judges at the Melbourne Show are all male. Sally McGill has been on the senior panel before, but even that doesn’t send the right signal.

It is neither representative of the community, the wine industry or the able judges in our industry, and sets shows up for a bad bit of publicity. You know, 15 blokes. It reeks of some sort of Melbourne Club, and we know how much bad publicity they have been getting lately. This is an important perceptual issue.

PETER DAWSON: A couple of things. Certainly I’m very keen on the concept of the improvement of the breed and the evolution of quality in our industry. If we can maintain that as the principal focus and deal with the other side issues, which relate to organisation, credibility, effectiveness of the judging process, then those things should all come together to fulfil the needs of the consumer.

One thing that hasn’t been touched on which is relevant to all exhibitors is the potential for some specialisation in judging—the direction of judges with specific expertise to the appropriate wine classes. There’s always a raffle to see who’s going to judge—the extreme example is who’s going to judge brandy classes—but it’s something that increasingly impinges on fortified wine classes and on sparkling wine classes. You could argue that it even applies, to some extent, to cabernet classes. That’s something that could be brought into the consideration of how we evolve the system.

As Peter Høj pointed out, I did support the continuance of
and am down to five shows a year. So I do apologise to Wine Shows Anonymous! I can highly recommend it, but I am a reformed wine show junkie. I have been on the full judging panel then can go on to other shows. Obviously, we would like to think that those local judges that are influenced by the results at the shows. WALSH: I don’t think we’ve come far enough in the last 150 years. I did a bit of research on the Adelaide Wine Show in the 1880s, and then they had to send in an additional six samples. This wasn’t for the councillors to take home; this was to see how the wine was going to age. It was judged in 1878, and in 1884 the wines were rejudged. So there was a bit of forward-thinking there, saying, “What are we trying to encourage and what are we trying to do with this show?” I’m not suggesting we should do that. It’s a logistical nightmare with two and a half thousand entries. But, as I mentioned in my address, I think we’re not doing enough about our approach to judging to ensure that we can select wines which would encourage entries of those benchmark wines which don’t currently enter the show. This would be for the benefit of the whole industry.

Now, we can’t force them to enter, but we’d like them to think they would get a fair go—that Bass Philip would be happy to enter the show knowing he’s not always going to win a trophy, but knowing that it’s going to get a really good showing. That is a big challenge.

MR RIGGS: Peter, to answer your question about the Hunter Valley: with three trainees, nine associates and three on the judging panel, that’s 15 locals heavily involved in the show. Generally they have a three-year stint and then, obviously, we would like to think that those local judges that have been on the full judging panel then can go on to other shows, as they do currently. We tend to keep this sort of rolling 15 people going through the show.

My other point is for the exhibitors—and we’re all exhibitors. Just ask yourself, “Why do we need to have enough wine shows and have, say, a wine entered 10 times each year to get 10 or 15 points?” It’s like we’re wine show junkies. We get the bit of paper and we fill it out and we send off the money and then we send off the wine, and the next result comes up—another 15 points. Yet we still send it off again and again and again. You know, I don’t like to admit, but I am a reformed wine show junkie. I have been to Wine Shows Anonymous! I can highly recommend it, and am down to five shows a year. So I do apologise to those committees that send the schedules to Brokenwood every year, but most of them, I’m sorry, hit the bin.

MR HALLIDAY: A couple of issues. First to Philip—accountability. I think the Australian show system is more accountable than any other show system in the world. I don’t think; I know. Most of the international shows are judged—and particularly OIV shows—on one wine at a time on the table. You fill in the mark, off it goes into a computer, and that is the absolute start and finish of the judging process. The computer averages the scores. There is no discussion. No one knows what the other person gave to the wine in question. Contrast that with Australia, where the three judges will be expected to justify his or her points. If they’re out of whack with the other one or two judges on the panel, we don’t have acrimonious arguments these days but there is certainly robust discussion, and that’s where the chairman comes in. So I think it is highly accountable—sure, within a peer group—but I don’t really know how you could get greater accountability than that. Yes, you can have whatever it is—AS2002, whatever that stupid international accreditation thing is. You can dress it up in any way that you like. So that’s one comment. The next is directed to Peter. Yes, you can have 10 panels and have three chairs running around the room, but that is only exacerbating the problem that we’ve got at the moment. That is just simply creating more and more judges, more and more functionaries, to deal with ever more entries. And again, on the question of gold at regional and no gold at national—well, we might get sued; that’s an injustice or could be seen to be an injustice. I put to you that it’s an equal injustice if you get a gold at the regional and no gold at the national. In a real world you do not expect the same wine to get the same points when it’s entered multiple times. As to Tim James’s pyramid suggestion, I believe that the qualifying medal can be won in any 12 months prior to the show into which it’s going. You don’t actually need to move all your shows around.

You don’t actually need to have the regional shows in one part of the year and the national shows following them. You could leave the shows exactly where they are, but to get to your state’s qualifying show, it must have won within the previous 12 months, and obviously that does cover every period. The reason I suggest that is because if you try to move the wine shows, the Royal Agricultural Societies are going to scream like stuck pigs, because the wine show would be suddenly divorced from their main show. In Sydney it’s the Royal Easter Show. They always like to have the wine show before the show proper. One of the other questions on the pyramid issue which wasn’t discussed is “What is your volume required for entry?” In the small shows, of course, in the regional shows, typically it’s a very low volume required. Back in 1880, George Wyndham, who was the largest producer in New South Wales, suggested that a dozen bottles is all that should be required for show because it was about excellence. He was turning his back on the commerciality issue. Can I just state on that issue emphatically, there is no incompatibility or mutual exclusivity between improving the breed on the one hand and commercial outcomes on the other. They are not—repeat, not—incompatible.
the wine industry. Really, at the end of the day I think we will be blocked by the agricultural societies, who might lose sovereignty, lose control, see other losses flowing. I’m not saying that if I were in the Agricultural Society I wouldn’t act as I anticipate they will.

I think they will be a very significant bloc for obvious reasons. So I suspect that it will take not a strike by journalists, it will take a strike by the major wine companies, who will just say very politely, “I’m sorry, we can no longer support the show system as it stands at the moment. We are going to now henceforth become involved in an entirely new system, an entirely new structure.”

STONIER: I don’t have any objection with James’s view on new system, an entirely new structure.”

MAX ALLEN: I’ve learnt something today from Tim James. I think they will be a very significant bloc for obvious reasons. So I suspect that it will take not a strike by journalists, it will take a strike by the major wine companies, who will just say very politely, “I’m sorry, we can no longer support the show system as it stands at the moment. We are going to now henceforth become involved in an entirely new system, an entirely new structure.”

STONIER: I don’t have any objection with James’s view on new system, an entirely new structure.”

MAX ALLEN: I’ve learnt something today from Tim James. I thought that, after I’d judged a couple of hundred wines over a wine show, I just had sore teeth, but apparently I have terrorised gingival margins!

I do agree that the industry needs to take more of a grip of the way that the show system is heading.

I think there is a potential danger, in that if it’s a too centralised approach and if it’s too rigid and too restrictive, you can lead to disenfranchising those shows that will, by their very nature, fall out of a more structured system. In that respect, you have the potential to head down the same route as drawing GI boundaries, and we know what kind of fuss that’s made.

Also, I would agree with James absolutely that the power is in your hands. And if, as Brian Stonier suggested, the industry needs to reclaim the show system, then it can only do that by deciding not to enter. As Iain Riggs said, you’re wine show junkies. You don’t have to enter all these shows, and you don’t have to send your winemakers to judge at them. In that respect—and I bet you never thought you’d hear Nancy Reagan invoked—like Nancy Reagan, just say “No”.

MR HASELGROVE: Firstly, I must defend my committee against the attack of sexism, I think it was. We have on our senior panel and on our associates panel, females in about the same proportion that they are in the technical side of the wine industry. I’m sorry that this year one of our senior ladies is just in the process of selling her business and was otherwise occupied, and another one was sick at the last minute and wasn’t there. But we do take seriously trying to reflect what the mix of people out in the industry is, and as females increase in the winemaking field, I would hope that they will increase in the judging panels as well.

The other thing that I want to raise—and if we had had time for questions after the presentations I would have done this with Tim before it all got too fixed in your minds. I’ve spent 40 years trying to convince Australian wine industry people that they are “Australian wine industry” and they don’t have very many state allegiances. The wine industry consists of regions that then form part of Australia. They do not form part of wine regions called states. So please, please, delete immediately any suggestion that in a tiered system you are going from regions to state shows.

It is impossible. Have you thought that through? It cannot work. There are no such things as state wine regions. If you think through this a bit further, currently the capital city shows are national shows held in a number of capital cities. Canberra could perhaps claim to be different because they require a qualification, but all other capital city shows—and it includes Hobart—accept exhibits from all over Australia. So you have to somehow jump from regional. I like the ideas that Tim is putting forward, but you have to go from regional to something. Now, what is that something? That’s going to cause a problem.

Somebody said the wine industry should reclaim the show system. The wine industry has never owned the wine show system. It has been owned by the agricultural societies from the beginning, and the agricultural societies have invested a tremendous amount in these shows, with the cooperation of the industry. What we’ve got to do is address that problem. You can have a strike if you like. We tried to do something about the Jimmy Watson entries, but they have grown and grown, and not encouraged by the RASV. It’s you people, the exhibitors, that are doing that.

So don’t come and claim that our show is a bad show and keep exhibiting.

TERRY COATES: I don’t particularly want to raise any new issues, but I would encourage you not to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

A lot of people here today are involved with shows and they’ll go away and look very closely at their shows, and in some ways that’s a good result. I’d be disappointed if we as a group don’t get together again and talk about the show system amongst ourselves. At the same time, I’d encourage the industry to do that, too. You’ve got plenty of bodies there. You’ve got the ASVO. There’s an opportunity there to go away and look a bit more closely at what’s been happening and work towards improving the system. There have been some emotional things said across this table. I’d caution you against getting too carried away about it.

PROF HØJ: Thank you very much, everybody. I now would like to give you the opportunity to raise issues. If it’s quite clear to whom the question should go, you can address that person directly. If you’re not quite certain, or if it’s a general one, you can direct it to me and I will try to distribute it in the best possible manner. Could you please, when you stand up, state your name and affiliation.

STEVE ROBIN: Steve Robin from the Mornington Peninsula Cool Climate Wine Show. I’ll address my question to Tim James, who came up with the pyramid model. It seemed to me a reasonably restrictive model, in that regional wine shows should stick to entries from their own region. Now, if that were the case, there would be a number of wine shows which wouldn’t be viable because the region is too small, without enough sponsorship. There are also some regions that don’t have wine shows. In our case, a third of our wines come from New Zealand. It’s a great benchmarking opportunity for the vignerons. On the model that you’re proposing, what is the future for those smaller wine shows?
MR JAMES: That’s a good question. I had thought about it in relation, for example, to an area like Fleurieu, where there are smaller subregions in that zone and it would require the McLaren Vale show, to be more inclusive of subregions within that greater zone in a regional zone show. As for New Zealand, I’m not sure I had thought that I’d stretch a model that far in a regional sense. I don’t know how you’d get over that, other than the fact that it doesn’t fit with the pyramid model that I was talking about at all. But it doesn’t preclude you from working out a way, within your own zone, to be able to do that. Those New Zealand wines wouldn’t go on to the next level, that’s all.

MR HALLIDAY: Can I just chip in here? Victoria has come closest to what I would see as the best regional model, because there is a Southern Victorian wine show. It used to be Lilydale; now it’s Southern Victoria. You’ve got Ballarat taking in the centre, and if only Rutherglen would restrict itself to wines from the north, you’ve got the three. You just literally divide the state up into three zones. That’s really not an issue. Then, you’ve got the Victorian Wine Show, which is effectively a state show, and you could go on from that to capital city. The modelling shouldn’t be an objection. It’s just a matter of drawing lines on a map.

PROF HØJ: I think it’s important to recognise that there will be issues that you can’t do in a room with 200 people. You need somebody to sit down and say, “This is what we would attempt to outline,” and then you try to get all the snakes out of that. Sometimes you just can’t and in other cases you can. Any other comments?

MR HASELGROVE: To reiterate: for goodness’ sake, forget states as regions. The Label Integrity Programme and Geographic Indications do not allow for states. If you’re going to set up a system in the shows that has states to qualify, then you are heading for very deliberate trouble.

PROF HØJ: Could I just try to get you to focus on one thing, just for five minutes, and that is the issue of availability of judges. It would be good to get an indication from the floor on whether there are people that genuinely feel that they could judge if they were given the appropriate training opportunities. We are here assuming that the wine industry would be prepared to solve the numbers crisis, either by restricting the entries or where you train more people. I think it would be interesting to see whether there are people that you know of that would be prepared to judge, because if that were not to be the case, that’s an option that you can strike off the list right away.

SPEAKER: Peter, my name is Brad (indistinct) from McLaren Vale Wine Show. In respect to that, how do we get training to become a wine show judge? We have regional winemakers who aspire to become judges. They work as stewards and help with the show set-up. They actually get the chance to be an associate. From then, we go into an exchange with the Riverland Wine Show, but how do you actually progress further? It seems like a real club. There is a broad spectrum of 20 really good top-end head judges out there that basically run through the entire shows, and all the regional shows fight to try and get their hands on some of these people to round out their judging. Are there any answers?

BRIAN STONIER: Could I comment that I think it’s important to make it attractive for all judges and associate judges to go to a show. I am appalled to hear that, at Adelaide, associate judges will pay their own airfares and not be paid. If Adelaide would kindly put their fees up to $100 they would (a) be able to pay all these people, and (b) make a surplus.

RICHARD HASELGROVE: Could I say from the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria’s point of view, yes, we do have a structured system of taking people through from clerks to stewards to associate judges, and then the next step very much relies on the chairman of judges. I suspect it does in the other major shows too. One of the duties of the chairman of judges is to assess his judges, his judging panel, and to write a report on the associates, and out of that we can then move forward. This year we brought one associate in as a full judge and last year we did the same, and that person has continued again this year. There is a structured system, but we also would like to draw more on the Adelaide University/AWRI system if we can. We don’t quite know how to tap into it.

PROF HØJ: Perhaps I can outline that there is a need for a national database between shows, about who is on the books and who has expressed interest and what is their relevant experience. So once you set up your panel and somebody rings in sick two days before, you look at that national data sheet. You can use it for scheduling, saying, “This person is judging both in Hobart and at this regional show, and that’s just too much work. We’ll go for somebody else.” I think we can be smarter. I think, too, as a national institute, the AWRI should make our services available to all shows. Perhaps we have to improve our game. Peter Godden might be able to outline a little in that regard.

HYLTON MCLEAN from the Orlando Wyndham Group. I’d like to ask James Halliday a question. If we go through this whole process of perfecting the Australian wine show system—and that hopefully will be a very positive process—what do you think our chances are of being more influential in international wine judging circles and promoting Australian wines in those forums. And, hopefully, through show success there, follow on the export success we have with our wines? What are your thoughts on that, please?

MR HALLIDAY: One of the more intriguing pieces of propaganda I got last year was from Rosemount, telling me about its success in the Mississippi River Wine Show, which I found absolutely riveting! I decided against writing a full-length article on it. I’m not really sure that you need to try to make the horse drink. What the marketers were saying was that, for Australian wine, right or wrong, success in overseas shows is more important than it is in Australia. I think we’ve got enough on our plate, quite frankly, if we’re going to get the show system sorted out here. I don’t think we should try to sculpt it so that it becomes more relevant to our overseas customers.

TIM KNAPPSTEIN: Tim Knappstein, Lenswood Vineyards, and a judge for some considerable period. It seems that Tim James’s model would have to be somewhere near the preferred one for limiting numbers of entries. If 50% won medals in regional shows and the next tier up—whether you call it state or whatever—knocks it another 50%, you get down to 25% of the potential number of wines rolling up at one show. That’s terrific. But you have to involve the agricultural societies in this, otherwise there’s a big block in
the system. And even though we're not talking states, have you thought that Brisbane Show might go down the gurgler because they will have only three entries?

MR HALLIDAY: I actually pointed that out to Tim. He will bear me out on that, yes.

MR KNAPPSTEIN: I was just hoping the panel might like to comment there.

MR HALLIDAY: But you have no idea what's happening in the Gold Coast hinterland. There are 12 fine wineries in the Gold Coast hinterland.

MR KNAPPSTEIN: Well, that means we have 36 entries. But would the panel like to comment on the role of the agricultural societies, given that they have to be included?

PROF HØJ: Is there anybody who wants to answer?

TIM JAMES: I certainly will have a crack at that, Tim. Following on from Richard's suggestion about not trying to make this a state system at the middle level, I was more concerned initially with trying to get that regional focus sorted out in the model. There are many questions to get worked out at that level—one might be the Victorian Wine Show.

Yes, I had thought about Brisbane. I had thought about a couple of other areas, too, that seemed at risk if the pyramid was followed to the nth degree. We need to work through the regional system first and work that out.

PROF HØJ: Is it fair enough to say this, rather than talk about the specifics of Tim's proposal? Is it relevant to have a pyramid structure rather than starting to subdivide the country by various boundaries?

SPEAKER: (off microphone) Can I put the proposition that the pyramid should be driven from the top and not from the bottom? The concern is that everyone still wants to have a go at the top end, so I think leadership should be shown at the top end, as to where they draw the entries from. Then it can be worked out whether the regional shows have any relevance.

PROF HØJ: Yes, that's a good point. The end result will be the same though, won't it?

SPEAKER: (off microphone) Well, it might make the regional shows less welcome to exhibitors if they can't enter through, say, the Griffith Show to get to Melbourne. They may not even bother entering that show.

PROF HØJ: Yes, okay. Can we take a little bit of discussion on this? I know there are lots of people with comments who are waiting.

PETER GODDEN: Peter Godden, the (Australian ed.) Wine Research Institute. I wanted to make a couple of comments about the wine assessment course. It's great to have it mentioned so many times today. I think there are probably a few misconceptions about what the course is about. I'd like to make the comment that it was set up in 1992 under the auspices of the Adelaide Show, and the Adelaide Show has been very active in using the results and contacting us. I've been in the industry for four years and I've been contacted by only two or three other shows, with some interest in individual people who have contacted them, who have done the course. Or, more rarely, the show has contacted me saying, "Can we use the results?" and the answer always is of course, "Yes." The results are open to any show, and it's a bit disappointing that so few shows have actually actively used the results.

I'd also make the comment I think Peter Dawson raised earlier about specialised judged. It's very difficult for us to be proactive in promoting people from the course; I think both the shows and the participants have to accept that. But we do get people who are very good in either white or red wines, but very few who are good in both. And when you see who those people are, it's not surprising from their winemaking backgrounds that they're probably going to be very good specialist white wine judges and not red wine judges. We've certainly got all that data. If shows are interested in accessing it, we've got it.

But I would also agree with what Brian said: that the participants really have to go out and hassle if they want to be accepted. I get a lot of feedback from participants who have done very well, who are very frustrated that they can't get a go in any of the shows, or that the new associates in one show or another have not done the course. I obviously can't comment on why they have been selected as associates, whereas very good participants in the course apparently have not been given a go, even though they've contacted those same wine shows.

I'd finally say that we don't feel we can train wine show judges and we don't claim to do that. We say that we prepare potential new wine show judges. We try to put together an intensive course, now over four days, and give participants lots of activities that would simulate wine show conditions and stretch them. We also put them under conditions where we can collect data to assess their performance. But we're not training new judges. I think we can do that in conjunction with wine shows, but the wine shows themselves have got to take some responsibility.

SPEAKER: Can we ask the floor a question, because I'd like to know how many people go through that each year.

MR GODDEN: We've run 15 courses now since '92, so that means that 450 people have gone through. We have trouble keeping up with the demand. Peter and I have discussed several times in the last few weeks whether or not we run another one this year in December. We've certainly got more than enough demand to run two a year at the moment.

SPEAKER: How many of the people who go through it do you think are of a standard high enough to become an associate judge?

MR GODDEN: I think Brian mentioned earlier on that, of the people who have gone through so far, there have been up to 50 out of 450 who have been very good in both red and white. I haven't done that analysis but about six have become full-time judges.

BRIAN WALSH: Between six and 10 I think, Peter.

MR GODDEN: Yes. But if you look at all the judges who judged in the major shows in Australia last year, there's a lot more than six who have actually been through the course, but maybe there are only six from those top performers who have gone on to be judges. Zar Brooks is probably one of
them. I think he did the second course back in 1993. It's a long process to train judges. This is just a starting point. We also changed the course because clearly the market had changed. We ask a question on the first morning about how many people are there primarily to be a wine show judge. I think it's fair to say that when the course started, it was everybody, and now it's a far smaller percentage. People are there for other reasons. They really want to tune their palates; they want to get training; they want to be exposed to imported wines; a whole lot of other reasons as well. So the market has changed and perhaps the shows need to recognise that there isn't a massive interest amongst a lot of the people who come to do the course in actually being a wine show judge.

PHILIP RICH: My name is Philip Rich. I write a wine column for the Australian Financial Review magazine. I'm also the wine buyer for The Steakhouse and Prince of Wales in Melbourne. In the interest of complete disclosure, I've also accepted an invitation from Michael Hill Smith to be an associate at Adelaide this year. Peter, you mentioned earlier about a lot of mixed messages today. The one message that clearly—and my question is for Richard—that clearly hasn't been missed is the fact that nobody wants to see gold medals or, in particular, trophies awarded to wines that aren't finished and bottled. So my question to Richard is: when is the Melbourne Show going to bite the bullet and make the Jimmy Watson Trophy an award for a bottled wine, in the interest of consumers and in the interests of the Australian wine industry?

PROF HØJ: I think there is only one person who can answer that.

MR HASELGROVE: Look, the answer to that is: when the exhibitors decide that that's the way to go. If you have a look at the schedule for Melbourne, you will see that some classes have dropped out, some have been restructured. There have been a lot of changes over the last 12 years. Now, that's in response to what the exhibitors are telling us, by not entering. Now, the problem with the Watson classes is that they have trebled in the last three years. We don't do it—you do.

MR RICH: But the producer … I think Stuart summed it up perfectly before. It's like the Best Actor for the Academy Awards of the Australian wine industry. I would like to know how many producers here would still enter their wines if it was for a two-year-old wine that was bottled and was what the consumer was going to taste. I don't think anybody cares that it's not a finished product. You will still get just as many entrants. It will still be just as hallowed an award as it is right now. I don't think anything will change. But I do agree that if the consumers twig on one day that this is an award for an unfinished product, it just looks ridiculous.

MR HASELGROVE: Okay, it's ridiculous, but please let me—you must understand.

PROF HØJ: Can I just say that the title of this is Who's Running This Show?—and I am!

MR HASELGROVE: Peter, this is very important.

PROF HØJ: Well, you have your go, and I'll give you one line in response.

MR HASELGROVE: The Jimmy Watson Trophy is awarded from a trust fund. The conditions of the trust fund are set. Now, if you want to take it to the Supreme Court and get that changed—we're not going to do it. If you as the industry want to do it, then you can try and do it. But it is an award from a trust fund and the conditions of the award were set down at the beginning in the late '60s. So, okay, we can't change them.

PROF HØJ: Okay. Thank you very much, Richard. I think there's probably many reasons why there is still demand for that thing, whether it's right or wrong. It's very hard to actually decide what is the right thing to do here, because you all have so many things you want to say. I'll allow you another five minutes for general commentary and then we will try to focus in on a few outcomes.

PHILIP JOHN: Thanks very much, Peter. Speaking with some brief observations out of Brisbane this year from the chair—first of all, just to counter the arguments about small and large companies, there were four major trophies to small producers this year at Brisbane, including three to Majella and also one to Saddlers Creek, so I guess in terms of communication to particularly people like Max, that hasn't quite got through. Secondly, there were 39 per cent awards out of the total number of 2,800 entries, so that's going down, which is fascinating to say the least. But the most important thing I want to say is about judges.

We organised a list of 15 judges as of December last year, with 12 preferred for a three by four panel system. When we got to the show, we had nine. That's one week before. Now, to run around and find three judges—and I guess that the other shows have got the same problem—is a nightmare to say the least. We say that we're looking for more judges, but I think the responsibility really comes back to those people that are either here or in the industry that want to have a go. They have to put their names forward so that it makes it a bit easier to have a look at the depth of people that are coming through the system.

One more thing that Peter touched on. I'll venture into the murky waters and suggest that, whether I support it or not, there is still a lot of support in the industry for unbottled wine to be put into shows. I have had that communication from many small and large producers. We can sit here and talk about benchmarking. What are we really doing about it? Sauvignon blanc is not happening in this country, merlot is not happening. We need to be doing something proactive about what we are taking out of the show circuit.

Just one final observation on the Brisbane Show—there was not one gold medal to a blended white wine class, so we're almost to the point of saying, “Why do we need to pursue some of these blended white wine classes if they are of little relevance?” We could bring down the total number of entries that are really cluttering up the show.

PROF HØJ: Thank you, Phillip.

TOM NEIL TACKER: Tom Neil Tacker, editor with Tourism and Hospitality Review. I would like to pose a question to the panel—not a comment—about where you think the show system is going in terms of the consumer. Now, we've been addressing this structurally from the winemaker's point of view, but I haven't yet heard much from the consumer's point of view. There have been some very good comments that some of you have made about the consumers.

However, in addition to my role as an editor, I also speak on
the radio quite regularly, on 2BL in Sydney and have done
in Queensland on the ABC for some years now. What I am
beginning to understand from the consumers is their
confusion about the show system in general. Just a simple
example: they buy a bottle which has a bronze medal on it;
nothing is there to explain to them that that bronze was
awarded along with perhaps some others in that class.
Peter, your suggestion about founding a body that will
eventually do a sort of a marketing audit and determine
how the show system is going to continue: if that's going to
happen, how are you going to get this message across to the
consumers, to continue to establish credibility, to make it
easier for the average consumer to understand? At this
point I don't think they do and there is an enormous
amount of confusion out there. That's why marketers have
been able to coerce and, to a certain extent, confuse the
consumers. How are you going to address consumers and
explain the show system in the future?

PROF HØJ: Nobody has mentioned this yet. One of the ways
that this will happen is the Internet. The Internet is
perfectly placed to provide you with as much information—
more information than you could possibly want—about
who won what, where. So we're not too far off a situation
where you buy a bottle of wine and it's got a little chip
embedded in the gold sticker that's attached to the label.
You scan that past your general-purpose scanner that
possibly is held in your mobile phone, and your mobile
phone will download via WAP all the information you
could possibly want about that wine show and its context
etcetera, probably provided by Winepros in a nice
sponsorship tie-up deal with the various Royal Agricultural
Societies, who of course are jumping on the Internet
bandwagon too. I think that's one way that is going to be
very crucial to the future.

SPEAKER: Can I say one thing as well, about consumers? A
couple of weeks ago, a guy from the American Wine
Institute came out and delivered a really interesting paper
at the Marketing Conference. The American Wine
Institute is a body funded by industry, with a total consumer
focus. We as an industry fund plenty of bodies, most of
which are production focused. I think it might be time that
we look at funding a body that's more consumer focused, so
if someone does buy a bottle of wine with a gold medal on
it, there is an Internet site and an info line where they can
ring up and they can say, “Right, Rutherglen class 11. What
is it?” I think a consumer-focused industry body sponsored
by industry is the way to go.

PROF HØJ: Thank you for that view. To Michael now.

MR HILL SMITH: Michael Hill Smith, incoming Adelaide
chairman. Some people were asking about how you get into
the system. Well, it's very simple. You go through—you do
your training, you become an associate and then you hope
that someone dies. And they do die. And then you get
invited to do 10 shows a year, and then you hope that you
die!
I was thinking about the Advanced Wine Assessment
course. I can't believe that you've trained that many
people. I also can't believe that so few of the other shows
have embraced the trainee. I might be wrong, but I think
Victoria still only has Victorian associates, which I'd like
clarified. There's clearly a system there which the shows are
not embracing, and it shows how little conversation
there is between the show committees. It's a sad state of
affairs to my mind.

RICHARD HASELGROVE: The Royal Melbourne Wine
Show accepts a list of recommendations from the VWIA.
We think that they have the best access to the potential
directors in the industry. Yes, I think preference is usually given
to people that are working in Victoria, but it's not a
prohibition if you're outside the state. We do try to think
nationally.

PROF HØJ: Terry Coates—you had an interesting point on
one of your slides about generating an overarching
communication structure of shows in the industry. I think it
relates to what Michael said and it also relates to
communicating the industry's objectives to the show
societies, so they know what to act on.

TERRY COATES: Look, I can only endorse the fact that we
need to talk to each other more and more. As Michael has
just said—it's surprising how little we have spoken to each
as shows. We talk to the industry all the time. I have
had 21 judges in my back pocket for a week a couple of
weeks ago, and I can assure you they were talking to me and
they were telling me what they thought. So we're getting
feedback from the industry fairly strongly.
It's not necessarily the same thing as you read in the paper,
but it's definitely good feedback. If anything came out of me
getting ready for this talk, it was that I was a bit embarrassed
that we hadn't done it ourselves. So I applaud the ASVO for
doing it, but the Agricultural Society systems have tended to
break apart, and we need to talk about things.
When it comes down to the judging, access to judges and
that sort of thing, it's not so much getting associate judges.
We have that many we knock them back every year. It's
embarrassing that we can't give them more chance. Russell
Cody, who actually got to be a judge with us this year, tried
for five years. There was no doubt that he had the ability; it's
just there's not enough positions to go around. Where we
really have a problem is at that panel chair area, and therein
lies the problem within the system. Not enough of the
judges out there are getting an opportunity at the next level.
What you're suggesting about a smaller show system is
probably going to make it worse rather than better, so I can
only agree with Michael.

PROF HØJ: Thank you. And then we go to Gary.

GARY BALDWIN: Gary Baldwin from WineNet. A very
quick comment and then a question. The quick comment is
that I am a little concerned that the more we try and build
a structure—and I go to Brian Croser's sort of model—what's
going to happen is, another structure will pop up somewhere
else anyway. So as soon as you build this beautiful pyramid,
someone else will do something outside the system. I don't
think that's necessarily bad, but I'd be concerned about that.
But I'd like to put a question to you, Mr Chairman, and it's
really probably to some other people sitting in this room.
The ASVO at the start this morning basically said, “This is
a thing we're putting on for you to talk about and we don't
want to have any responsibility for how it's going to happen
or what the outcome is going to be.” As I recall, the ASVO
in fact put a set of ASVO wine show guidelines together
about 12 years ago.
I was a little intrigued that they weren't mentioned. I
thought perhaps some of the issues raised in that might have
been very interesting because a committee of people did a lot of work on that, and I think that the ASVO itself, the professional society of Australian viticulturists and oenologists, should be able to provide the framework either by themselves or as a subcommittee. In other words, I really can't see that anyone else is in a position to do something about this. If we've got to move forward from here, I'd like to suggest that in fact it is the ASVO's responsibility. So, Mr Chairman, perhaps you could elicit a response from an ASVO representative.

PROF HØJ: I don't have the authority, of course, to rule on this one! From what I have heard—and I think there might be differing and unresolved views on the ASVO—I think we should discuss that when we come to The Way Forward. First, I want to give others an opportunity to.

BERNARD HICKIN: Bernard Hickin from Orlando Wyndham. I've got a couple of questions, firstly to Tim James with your pyramid model. One of the issues that I have with that model is, when you have this regional wine show which is your first tier, if a wine actually misses a medal—for example, if the wine has low-level cork taint—what happens on the day if for some reason that wine just doesn't jump up? You often see issues where a wine may be flat or may have this residual low-level taint. The wine judges won't actually pick it up as a major fault. It then misses that round and that's it. Now, if that wine has a short lifecycle in terms of sales, really that's it for the wine. There is no second chance.

The second question I have is to Peter Dawson. The National Wine Show has classes where you have volumes up to 50 or 100 thousand litres. Those volumes have been set for quite a while now. I would ask the question, "Why can't they go higher?", because the industry is growing. Why couldn't we have classes of half a million litres or maybe a million litres, because that is where some of these blends are going. Tim?

MR JAMES: Okay, Bernie. The first question I'd probably put back to you. I think that every wine that's entered, in whatever wine show you're looking at, that has a cork is probably corked in some way anyway. How far do you take it? I know Chris Hatcher and I have had an ongoing discussion over the last 15 years about wines entered into wine shows. Should we ever really look at another corked wine?—for example, if the wine has low-level cork taint—what happens on the day if for some reason that wine just doesn't jump up? You often see issues where a wine may be flat or may have this residual low-level taint. The wine judges won't actually pick it up as a major fault. It then misses that round and that's it. Now, if that wine has a short lifecycle in terms of sales, really that's it for the wine. There is no second chance.

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BERNARD HICKIN: Certainly. I have seen instances where wines that you know are good have just fallen flat on the day, and I guess you just take it as it comes. I guess we call it swings and roundabouts. A wine that has won a silver or gold can get nothing in the next show round. You just accept that. Maybe it's the fault of the judges on the day or maybe that bottle was just a bad bottle, for whatever reason, although you know the wine is better than that.

PROF HØJ: I think the issue is identified, and there are many ways you can cope with it. If you get a medal at a local show, you enter it into a capital show, it costs X dollars. If you don't get a local medal and you still want to get in, it costs 10X, and then you can probably cope with it. You've got to think outside the square.

SPEAKER: Mind you, if the judges are competent and they have awarded a medal on proper points at the beginning, then it can't be cut out from thereon. It's never going to get less than a bronze from thereon, is it?

JAMES HALLIDAY: Absolutely not. Canberra proves that a thousand times over, in the majority of classes. We regularly get poisoned in Canberra by wines which some poor benighted soul has given a bronze medal to somewhere. We'd like to get our hands on the judges who did it, I tell you!

PROF HØJ: There was one more issue I wanted to raise, and this is from a total layperson's view. What I would like to do is to expand on what James said: that our system seems to be much more robust than what we see overseas. That doesn't mean that we're doing it right, and I just wonder whether the people that have had senior judging experience are happy with the way that we conduct our tastings. Do we do them according to best practice? If we have 90 wines in a bracket, do we consistently start from number 1 to go to number 90 or is it statistically better for one person to start at 1, another one at 31 and another one at 61? Do we have some best-practice standards so that there's some objective credibility to implement across the industry? And if not, should we have them? Does anybody want to comment on that?

SPEAKER: Just a comment along those lines, Peter. I had an e-mail from Robert Hesketh a few days ago about the wine show system. He once said to me, “Don’t let ’em ever talk you out of judging lots of wines in Australia in a day, because we do it so well,” and I got him to enlarge on that. What we’re finding now is that, where we might have been able to judge 188 wines 30 years ago, because we had eliminated a lot of faulty wines in that process, now the judging is a lot harder. His argument was in those days that, because you were working under pressure, you didn’t dillydally and sort of say, “Is it a bit sulphity? Is there a bit of VA?” or whatever. If you thought it was, it was out, so it was a really hard, rigorous process of lifting the standards.

Now I’d like to think we’ve moved beyond that and, hopefully, there’s no real elevation in standards, so the judging is a harder task. That’s why I’m sure James and others are suggesting 150 wines is the absolute limit. I’d like to revisit the guidelines Gary mentioned. I think that would be a wonderful starting point. Every show society should have the same set of checklists of saying, “Let’s not forget these issues. Let’s think about the wines in a far more structured way.”

IAN McKENZIE: I’ve been judging in this country for a long time. One of the things I find the most difficult to overcome in this country is judging in Brisbane, say, on a hot spring day, where the temperature can be quite warm, and then judging in Ballarat in the middle of winter when it’s just the opposite. This is something that the ASVO addressed in their exercise, in 1986 it was Gary, where we tried to put a standard forward for consistent judging conditions.

There’s a difference in the way the wines appear on the bench and the way you yourself perform under those different conditions, so it’s not surprising that we do get variability in the results. It would make the judge’s job easier.
IAIN RIGGS: For those of us who remember the infamous Nate Cronan and judging in the LA County Wine Fair—an American experience—it is so far removed from what we do in Australia it is not funny. You have to have a sense of humour and you do actually have to laugh, otherwise you end up crying all day. Part of the judging they instigated was having four per panel. The first part was whether the wine was in or out, and so you get two with it in and two with it out, and you sit and look at each other and then eventually you say, “Oh, okay, we’ll turn it out.” So then you can move on to the next one, and you get two against two again. So, it’s a vastly different experience, and I came away from that thinking, “Well, as long as they keep doing that and we keep our trap shut, we’ll be fine.”

But we can’t do that forever, because eventually the judging system will catch up to us. We do have to acknowledge that the quality of the wine in Australia is largely due to our current system of judging, but we actually have to be prepared to take it to the next step and move on. Whether that is having specialist style judges or specialist shows, we actually have to address it and move on.

LOUISA ROSE: Louisa Rose from Yalumba. Iain, I’d like to concur with what you’re saying. If we’re talking about judge numbers and the number of available judges that are appropriate for judging in Australian wine shows, I think we’re fairly limited in the number of expert judges that we can have come in and judge any class in a show. But I think that there is a huge number of people in the Australian wine industry that would do really good jobs of judging specific styles, and possibly specific regions. If you’ve got a judge or a panel of judges who are confident in judging that particular style, then I think you’re then going to be able to judge more of those wines quite confidently and get really good results.

And you could do a lot of your training of your associates in the process. But if you’ve got a panel of three judges that have been quite comfortable judging their chardonnays in the morning but now come across 150 shiraz in the afternoon and don’t feel as comfortable doing that, then there’s going to be less ability to judge the numbers and to do the associate training. So I think the idea of some style definitions within shows and within judges and within panels has a lot of merit.

JAMES HALLIDAY: Brian Croser did it in Canberra last year, as I understand it, and it was terrific. If you are regarded as a chardonnay specialist or a shiraz specialist, fine, but—as I understand it—Vanya Cullen was regarded as a specialist in all of the odds and sods and dogbody classes, and had a perfectly miserable show. I don’t know what the answer is.

MR HASELGROVE: Peter, I have a further word on the facilities. They’re a limiting factor, with the show system the way it’s going. In Melbourne we can successfully cope with 4,000 entries. As the judges this year. They have done a tremendous job in four and a half days, and I think you’ll find the results tonight are pretty good. But of course, what’s happening at the moment is that we’re having something like a 15 per cent increase each year, mostly from new exhibitors, and we can’t cope with that. One of the things the industry might consider is providing this purpose-built judging facility. Maybe you can convince the ag societies that they have a different role to play in the future. I was hopeful that something in the Wine Centre in Adelaide might be purpose-built, but it hasn’t been. I don’t know where you do it and you’re going to have to put up probably 15 to 20 million dollars to do it. That would solve a lot of our problems, because once you move out of the capital cities, there are very few facilities that can cope with a wine show. You’ve heard Brisbane has its difficulties. Hobart certainly has. Adelaide shifts from barn to barn.

PROF HØJ: Well, I don’t think we need to go into the specifics. Your points are well taken.

RICHARD HAMILTON: In my opening words this morning, the words I used were that the role of ASVO is to stimulate and support industry in viticulture and oenology, and particularly in this issue. We’re very pleased to have Brian Walsh and Tim James work with our committee people to put this process together. I see a lot of issues have come out, and a lot of heat that’s there. We didn’t believe, once we put this together, that it was appropriate that ASVO then offer to be at the helm of it. To be successful, there are key stakeholders in this whole process that need to be together. Perhaps it is ASVO’s role to facilitate it, but then to leave it to run in its future direction.

So, Gary, to answer your comment, certainly it’s a role for ASVO and one that we are not going to step back from. One of the proposals is the organising committee be part of that process, but we’d encourage that others join in. The end result should be something that comes back to a group of key stakeholders for general agreement on an outcome.

MICHAEL HILL SMITH: I was looking up at Brian Croser’s recommendation about using the WFA. Perhaps it’s just a question of picking the most appropriate vehicle, and if that is working with the WFA, fine. But if we could get some agreement today that a group be formed under one of those auspices, I think it would be great.

GARY BALDWIN: I was just going to suggest that we seem to be moving towards ASVO setting up some sort of subcommittee. Perhaps what we should do is go around the panel or around the floor and draw up a list of terms of reference. One term of reference—I’m not necessarily supporting it, but I think it’s something that should be investigated—is Tim’s model. So term of reference number 1: study the pyramid model system and report back. To whom they report is something I’m a little bit worried about, but can I just suggest that we put that as the first term?
RICHARD HAMILTON: Certainly we have had support. I don’t hear a lot of support, but I take that as being silent support, unless people would like to vote on it. I think there are a lot of points to have come out of the discussion. I think you can distil them from the tape. But thanks for that view.

PHILLIP JOHN: To reiterate what was said earlier, a terrific amount of communication goes back through the chairman of judges of the shows, and I can only make reference to Brisbane and the limited number of meetings that are set up. There needs to be some sort of immediate take-out from this meeting that can at least be sent to the existing chairmen in shows, so that when discussions do take place, particularly with regard to future directions, we are all singing off the same hymn sheet. And talking about the RNA in Brisbane, the wine section is one of 21 sections of the show, so unless somebody is going to stand up there and make some significant input for change, it’s got to come from a common forum.

PROF HØJ: Thank you. So I now take it that we have some general consensus that we need to move forward on this day. I assume that the organisers of this symposium would be willing to take it to the next step and articulate what the outcomes have been from today, and also a path forward. This probably will involve somebody applying their brains to the wine show system, to address the issues that have been brought up today. We can try to formulate those further, as Gary suggested, through some terms of reference. One is the pyramid structure. Another will quite clearly be recruitment and training. The third will be optimal judging structures. James has very strong views that you shouldn’t have too many panels. You can’t have more than four ideally. Others will say under a different structure perhaps you can. That would be the way that I read the meeting, without trying to impose myself on it. David raised some issues which have been captured. The communication between the Royal Agricultural Societies needs to improve. So I will first ask, before I impose myself on people like Brian Walsh—Brian, do you think you would be prepared to take this forward?

BRIAN WALSH: I’d be prepared to participate in the process, Peter, yes.

PROF HØJ: Okay. So if I ask the president of the ASVO: are you confident that your organisation can take the first step?

RICHARD HAMILTON: Certainly we have had commitment from the working committee and the ASVO members. I’m very pleased to have Brian indicate that he would participate in that process. I think the answer very definitely is yes. The critical issue though is accountability. As Michael Hill Smith raised, who in the WFA, for example! I think, as you have indicated, we’ve got an opportunity to capture what’s come from here, but I’m a little bemused. I’ve seen similar situations where people sit on their hands in viticulture, particularly the National Vine Health Steering Committee, and I’m hoping that we can get a bit more excitement and commitment to getting this forward. It is a big issue. It’s clearly attracted a lot of interest in the press. It’s something that I think we’ve generally agreed is important to the industry. I’d very much like to see that supported and for ASVO to drive that process, but clearly it needs some accountability and responsibility and that needs to be addressed.

PROF HØJ: Thank you.

TONY ROYAL: Tony Royal from Seguin Moreau. One thing that’s come out of today is just how important this Australian wine show circuit is to the Australian wine industry, and that’s a motherhood statement. But this is not a voluntary process, now that we have all come together to talk about it. We need to put professional money into this, to have somebody dedicate the time, because too often committees are put together and our resources are stretched and we don’t actually come out with an outcome.

The ASVO members, the judges—they are the stakeholders, as are the show societies, as is everybody here. But please make sure that we end up with somebody who is dedicated to this cause, who is funded to come up with and then work the models through.

JAMES HALLIDAY: Seguin Moreau would love to sponsor it, would it not, Tony? It would be a really good sponsorship!

TONY ROYAL: I’m absolutely speechless. Speechless, James!

PROF HØJ: Tony, thank you very much for that. I think that’s the view I have put forward all the time. That is the only way to make it happen. But I wouldn’t rule out that there are other stakeholders that might want to contribute to the process as well at some stage. For instance, the show societies might well say, “Well, we wouldn’t mind improving what we do and we might contribute to that process as well.” I can’t speak on their behalf, but I think they should be asked.

I think we have resolved that we will go forward, as a first step, by writing up the proceedings from this meeting. Then subsequently I am very hopeful that the ASVO will be able to put an interim group together that will try to push the right buttons. I would think that group would have to communicate back to the exhibitors, the exhibition societies in Australia, whatever the mechanism is, and also the judges.

That’s where I want to finish my part, but I would just like the panel to have one last go at putting things on record if they feel that they have to do something.

TERRY COATES: Look, I’d be disappointed if we didn’t talk a bit more about it, and let’s hope that happens. I know I’m going to pursue it. So, yes, I think it will happen.

RICHARD HASELGROVE: Yes. We have a meeting of the patrons of the Winemakers Federation coming up next month, and I can undertake to take it to them, and that’s not a bad way of getting it into the system of the WFA.

MAX ALLEN: I agree with Terry and Tony that it would be a real shame if this wasn’t taken further. I said to a few people before this event that this had the potential to be the real turning point—for things to really change. I would like to hope that it doesn’t just get lost in a committee and nothing actually concrete come of it. I would like to see something concrete come of it, because that would be a good story, as much as anything else!
BRIAN WALSH: I agree. I think it should be well organised, with funding; a small committee—a small, small committee—of efficient button-pushers.

JAMES HALLIDAY: Nothing to add.

IAIN RIGGS: I'd probably give today 17, but I could be talked up!

BRIAN WALSH: Two points. I know Brian Stonier has been worried about the financial viability of the Royal Adelaide Wine Show. We don't need to put up our entry fees to make a profit. That $5,000 per day is an opportunity cost, it's not money we pay out.

That was just an example. If anybody wants to go and run a show, that's the sort of money you will have to spend. You've got to find somewhere to work it. So we're okay, Brian, thank you. And secondly to Max. I think he underestimates the esteem with which he is held in the business and I don't think his invitation to judge at wine shows would be predicated on the hope of getting a story. I think he's regarded as a contemporary palate with a lot of contribution to make, and I think if you wimp out of the show system, we're the worse for it.

PETER DAWSON: I'd just like to say that people have been complaining about the Australian wine show system for probably in excess of 20 years and this is the first time there's been a forum to address the issues, and it would be a terrible shame if we couldn't make a positive change following this seminar today. The ideas that have come up and the contributions that have come from everyone have been tremendously positive and I think everyone does have a good feeling of the way to move forward, so let's try and do that.

STUART GREGOR: I think we'll go away from today with some concepts and, indeed, one model which a lot of thought has been given to, but is still very much in the conceptual stage. I think the next stage is very much for this committee to appoint someone to work through those concepts, to work through the model, so that we come up with the longer-term outcomes, so that people are making informed decisions.

PHILLIP JONES: I'm going to wear my old management consultant's hat, not my peasant winemaker hat. It seems to me, from many of the comments, that some people want change to the system in one way or another, that the system is heading towards—if it's not already in—a form of management crisis. If there is a committee formed, I think one of its tasks has to be to prepare a brief for outside help. I think the industry is going to have to commit about 200 grand to a good management consulting firm to review the whole damn lot. Because there are so many people with so many vested interests, I don't think it will be done properly otherwise.

TIM JAMES: I see a difficulty if we don't walk away with a couple of thoughts from today, being: do we need to look at the same wine 10 times in a year? I would really like to think about putting a model forward that will tell us how many wines we will be going to be judging in two, five, 10 years' time, and how will we cope with that if we don't change what we're currently doing. So I think it a very well worthwhile day.

PROF HØJ: Thank you. I think it's all very positive. I have just been thinking about the $200,000 and I think if we put a levy of $4 per entry to improve the system, for two or three years, we can do it, because I think it is important. We might try to find the money otherwise, but it has to happen. I think that's the consensus.