

Viticulture for Challenging Times

2026 Viti Seminar
Mildura 26-27 May

ASVO 

Viticulture for Challenging Times

ASVO Seminar – Mildura | 26–27 May 2026

The Australian grape and wine sector is navigating a period of sustained pressure, shaped by climate variability, rising input costs, labour constraints, biosecurity challenges, and uncertain market conditions. For many growers, the imperative is no longer growth, but resilience—making disciplined, informed decisions that protect both immediate viability and long-term vineyard performance.

Viticulture for Challenging Times brings together growers, researchers, and industry leaders to focus on practical, evidence-based strategies that deliver real value on the ground. The seminar emphasises prioritisation—of resources, operations, and investment—while exploring how innovation, data, and adaptive thinking can support more resilient vineyard businesses.

Across two days, the program moves from immediate operational decision-making through to longer-term strategic positioning. It highlights cost-effective pest and disease management, realistic applications of technology, and the role of business structure, contracts, and workforce in shaping sustainable outcomes. Importantly, it also creates space for connection—recognising that knowledge-sharing and peer networks are critical tools in challenging times.

Join the Conversation

Normally we'd be reminding you to put your phone away—but for this one, we're actually asking you to take it out.

This seminar is designed to be practical, relevant, and driven by real grower experience, and your input is a key part of that.



We're using **Slido** to make it easy to participate:

- Ask questions during sessions (you can stay anonymous if you prefer)
- Vote on the issues you most want discussed
- Share practical insights from your own vineyard

Just scan the QR code on screen or signage and join in as we go.

The best questions often come from the room—so if you're thinking it, chances are someone else is too.

Let's keep the conversation focused on what matters most: **real decisions, real vineyards, real outcomes.**

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DAY 1 – Tuesday 26 May

Time	Session	Title	Presenters
1:00	Session 1	Endurance and Adaptation – Strategic Pathways for Growers Under Pressure	Chair: Emily White, ASVO
		Sustainable pathways position for profitability	Hayley Purbrick, Wine Victoria
		Weathering the Downturn: Whole-of-Business Strategies	Peter O'Donnell, Southern Cross Farms
	Panel	Essential Operations Only – It's not all or nothing!	Chair: Liz Riley, Vitbit; Peter O'Donnell, Southern Cross Farms; Paul Petrie, SARDI; Hayley Purbrick, Wine Victoria
2:00		Afternoon Tea	
2:30	Session 2	Smart Pest & Disease Management – Cost-Effective Strategies for Vineyards	Chair: Samantha Scarratt, Vinehealth
		More decisions with confidence from your own field trials	Kathy Evans, University of Tasmania
		Solving scale first, Mealybugs next: evidence and experience	David Logan, Adelaide University, SARDI
		Getting Sprays Right: Understanding Type, Timing & Technique	Len Ibbotson, Syngenta
		Getting Biologicals Right: Understanding Type, Timing & Technique	Richard Hall, The Bud Group
	Panel	On-farm reality – Using a mix of approaches	Chair: Samantha Scarratt, Vinehealth; Kathy Evans, UTAS; Richard Hall, The Bud Group; Len Ibbotson, Syngenta; David Logan, Adelaide University
4:15	Feature Session	Disease-Resistant Varieties – From Vineyard to Glass	Chair: Nick Dry, Foundation Viticulture; Tennile Chalmers, Chalmers Wines; Bethany Collins, Hill Smith Family Estate; Justin Kassulke, Kassulke Farms; Pia Merrick, Australian Vintage
6:30		Dinner – Pizza Café, Mildura	

DAY 2 – Wednesday 27 May

Time	Session	Title	Presenters
8:00		Breakfast Networking	
9:00	Session 3	Investing in Technology - Without breaking the bank	Chair: Colin Hinze, Sidewood Estate,
		Data-Driven Investment Decisions	Cam Nicholson, Icon Rural Services,
		Wine Industry Smoke Detectors, WISDs	Matt Partridge, De Bortoli Wines
		Vineyard of the future - What can I use now?	Marty Gransden, Charles Sturt - AgriPark
		Avian Insights: Using Autonomous Recording and Deep Learning in Vineyards	Callan Alexander, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
		Cut the Guesswork in Vineyard Investments	Cam Nicholson, Nicon Rural Services,
10:30		Morning Tea	
11:00	Session 4	Shaping the Future – Building Resilient Vineyard Businesses	Chair: Hayley Purbrick, Wine Victoria,
		Getting a grape deal ,not just a handshake with hope,	Richard Neagle, Veraise
		Unlocking ESG Value	Pia Merrick, Australian Vintage
	Panel	Restructuring the Business & New Revenue Streams	Chair: Hayley Purbrick, Brendan Carter, Unico Zelo; Chris Dent, Gorton Drive Estates; Pia Merrick, Australian Vintage; Simon Robinson, Tumblong Hills
		Understanding Wine as a Regional Economic Engine	Stephanie Duboudin, Wine Victoria
12:30		Wrap and Close	Colin Hinze, Sidewood Estate

Sponsors & Partners

ASVO gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our sponsors and partners for the **V**iticulture for Challenging Times Seminar.

Their commitment enables a program that remains focused on independent, practical, and grower-relevant outcomes, helping strengthen the resilience and future capability of the Australian viticulture sector.

Partner – Wine Australia

This Seminar is supported by Wine Australia, with levies from Australia's grapegrowers and winemakers and matching funds from the Australian Government.

Wine Australia

We acknowledge Wine Australia as a key industry partner whose ongoing investment in research, innovation, and knowledge transfer underpins the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the Australian grape and wine sector. Their support helps ensure industry-driven insights are translated into practical outcomes for growers and producers.

Platinum Sponsors

We sincerely thank our Platinum Sponsors for their significant support of this event.

Affinity Labs

Affinity Labs continues to play a vital role in delivering trusted analytical services and scientific capability that underpin quality, safety, and innovation across the wine sector.

 Affinity Labs

Elders

Elders brings deep national experience in agricultural services and grower support, helping producers navigate seasonal challenges and strengthen long-term farm business performance.



Gold Sponsors

Our Gold Sponsors provide essential leadership in advancing practical solutions for modern viticulture.

Braud supports efficient and effective harvesting innovation, helping growers improve operational performance at critical times of the season.



Lallemand contributes world-leading expertise in fermentation and microbiological solutions that enhance wine quality and vineyard outcomes.



New Zealand Tube Mills (Eco Trellis) delivers durable, high-performance trellis systems designed to support long-term vineyard productivity and resilience.



Pellenc Australia provides advanced mechanisation and precision technology solutions that help growers improve efficiency, reduce labour pressure, and enhance vineyard operations.



We thank each of these organisations for their strong commitment to practical innovation in the vineyard. Their support helps ensure the seminar continues to recognise innovation and encourage practical advancement across the sector.

Tell us ...

what resonated, what didn't, what you'll actually use

Before you head back to the real world of weather forecasts, spray windows, and wondering what the market is doing this week, we'd really appreciate a few minutes of your feedback.

Tell us what was useful, what was a bit too far from the paddock, and what you'd actually use back on-farm. We're especially keen to hear what helped you make clearer decisions, save time, or rethink how things are done in the vineyard.

No long essays required—just honest thoughts from people who are living the same challenges.

Your feedback helps us make sure future ASVO events stay practical, relevant, and worth stepping out of the vineyard for.



An Unashamed Pitch for Membership

If this seminar has been useful, don't let it be a one-off.

ASVO exists to give grape and wine professionals year-round access to practical knowledge, trusted science, and real industry conversations that actually help you make better decisions in the vineyard and business.

This is where the industry's best thinking is shared—and challenged. It's where growers, researchers, and practitioners come together to solve problems, not just talk about them.

Membership keeps you connected well beyond this seminar through events, technical updates, publications, mentoring, and a national network of people who understand what it takes to run a vineyard in the real world.

Join ASVO. If you want more of this—more insight, more connection, more practical support—this is where you get it.



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