

# McWILLIAM'S WINES GROUP

*Six generations of winemaking since 1877*



9 May 2011



MATEUS



The Director  
Food Standards Australia New Zealand  
PO Box 7186  
CANBERRA BC ACT 2610

Dear Sir / Madam

## APPLICATION A1026 MINIMUM ALCOHOL CONTENT FOR WINE

We are advised that Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has invited public comment on the Assessment Report into Application 1026 – Minimum Alcohol Content for Wine which we understand to have been prepared in response to an application from the Winemakers Federation of Australia (WFA) seeking to amend Standard 4.5.1 (Wine Production Requirements) with regard to the minimum alcohol content for wine.

Food Standard 4.5.1 is limited in its application to wines produced in Australia. Clause 5(1) of Standard 4.5.1 presently specifies that Australian produced "wine and sparkling wine must contain no less than 80 mL/L of ethanol at 20°C".

As observed in Table 1 (paragraph 2.4.2) of the FSANZ Assessment Report, the Australian standard is inconsistent with most other comparable wine trading countries.

In Australia and its wine export markets there is growing consumer demand for healthier choices in wine products, including demand for lower alcohol wines. Viticultural, oenological and technological innovations enable the Australian wine industry to produce 'wines' of acceptable quality with alcohol levels below the current 80 mL/L of ethanol at 20°C threshold. Food Standard 4.5.1 presently regards such products as not being wine and accordingly to comply with the existing requirements, producers have no option other than to designate such products as 'wine products'.

Clause 1 of Food Standard 2.7.4 (Wine Products) defines wine products as food containing no less than 700mL/L of wine as defined in the Standard, which has been formulated, processed, modified or mixed with other foods such that it is not wine.

Referring to a wine having less than 80 mL/L of ethanol at 20°C as a 'wine product' is misleading to consumers owing to the invalid inference that the lower level of ethanol in the product has been achieved by dilution with substances other than wine.

As an outcome of Australia being party to international treaties providing mutual acceptance of wine making practices, imported wines and sparkling wines having less than 80 mL/L of ethanol at 20°C may legally be sold in Australia as wines, whereas equivalent Australian produced products may not.

McWilliam's Wines, as a significant manufacturer and exporter of quality Australian wines, submits that the present definition of wine in Food Standard 4.5.1 is contrary to the defined objectives of Food Standards Australia New Zealand as set out in Section 18 of the Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991 on the grounds of:

- facilitating inconsistency between domestic and international food standards;
- being detrimental to an efficient and internationally competitive food industry; and
- inhibiting fair trading in food.

Accordingly, McWilliam's Wines Group Ltd supports the application by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia to amend the Food Standard 4.5.1 to provide that wine and sparkling wine must contain no less than 45 mL/L of ethanol at 20°C.

Yours sincerely  
McWILLIAM'S WINES GROUP LTD



Philip Skinner  
Company Secretary