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**The Barossa Vines Limited (BVL) Vineyards  
Spring and Early Summer 2010  
Viticultural Status**

**December 23 2010**

**Report for:  
Barossa Vines Ltd  
266-268 Payneham Road  
Payneham  
South Australia 5070**

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Following recent visits to the Barossa Vines Ltd (BVL) vineyards this report has been prepared for the purposes of commenting on the general viticultural status of the (BVL) vineyards.

### **1. Late Winter, Spring and early Summer at BVL**

So far this season at BVL and in the Barossa region it has been wetter than average. Rainfall in the period July to December 2010 was measured as 62% above average at the Rosedale Turretfield weather station and 37% above average at the Nuriootpa weather station.

Heavy rainfall in August and September resulted in good soil moisture at the beginning of the season. Slightly below or average and well spread rainfall in October and November supported a good start for the vines and heavy rainfall in early December has meant that irrigation has not been necessary to this point in the 2010/2011 season at BVL.

Temperatures have been below or about average so the season is considered later than last season.

These conditions have been good for vine growth. The canopies on mature vines are well developed and this is particularly evident on Cabernet Sauvignon at BVL which are some of the best canopies I have seen on this variety since 2004. Similarly the young vines have grown well.

The weather for fruit set appears to have been favourable. The potential crop for 2011 will now depend on the final grape and bunch size depending on weather over the next two months or so.

The growth of mid-row cover crops was also well supported by the weather and in some more vigorous soils the plants in the mid row have been allowed to grow on to reduce soil moisture and help to control vine vigour.

That irrigation has not been necessary to date at BVL in an exceptionally wet period does not reduce the need for previously reported increased water storage resources and delivery capacity in some parts of the BVL vineyards – in particular parts of Rosedale, Eckermans and Zerk. The mounding of soil around vines in these areas has been effective but there is still the need for greater water storage.

BVL needs greater water storage capacity and increased delivery capacity in these areas to deal with hot weather periods. For example the larger than average vine canopies in these areas in 2010/2011 may be beyond the current water delivery capacity of the irrigation system if the weather from now on is exceptionally hot. On the other hand further rainfall could see a season when little or no irrigation is needed on any of the BVL vineyards.

The above average rainfall across south-eastern Australia has filled water storages and irrigation water is readily available for purchase at competitive prices in the local irrigation systems.

Particularly wet weather in early December 2010 has resulted in some outbreaks of downy mildew at BVL. These appear to be under control at present and do not pose any current threat to the 2011 crop. BVL has some stocks of fungicide to deal with further developments of fungus should more wet weather occur. Downy mildew infection is widespread in vineyards across south-eastern Australia this season and this has placed pressure on stocks of fungicides for the whole industry. By comparison with many other regions the Barossa has had minimal effects from fungus attack.

Wet weather is also conducive to weed growth. The weed control at BVL is generally excellent as a result of early intervention late last season in preparation for this one. There are a few minor areas where further weed control is to be done but overall the result is very good given the wet season.

Good weed control has meant that the vines have been able to use the extra rainfall this year without competition from weeds.

Locusts have started to appear in the Barossa as they fly in from other areas where they have been hatching. So far there appears to be little effect from these insects at BVL other than some minor damage on some young vines. One risk is that if there are significant numbers of locusts on cropping vines at harvest time then they could be harvested with the grapes and then contaminate the grapes in the bins for delivery to wineries.

## **2. The Vineyards Planted in 2008**

At the block known as Boths and also the first stage of the Zerk block the re-planting in 2009 was successful and in their second year the vines are making growth that can be used to set up the trunk and the first part of the fruiting cordon of the vines.

Training in this regard is behind schedule in these blocks and so it is likely that the first crop of grapes will not occur until 2013.

The future of the Zerk block is also dependent on the establishment of additional water storages to service it and Eckermanns.

At Boths there are some issues with rabbits attacking vines on part of the west side of the vineyard.

Weed control has been very good considering the season.

### **3. The Vineyards Planted in 2007**

Replanting of many parts of the Eckermanns block and the second stage of Sturt Highway in 2009 was successful and this, combined with ongoing growth from the vines successfully planted in 2008, means that there will be cropping in 2011 in some parts of these vineyards.

There is an overall need to keep training these vines to establish the fruiting cordons and in most parts of these vineyards this is behind schedule. In addition there needs to be ongoing de-suckering of unwanted growth from the lower parts of the vines. Lack of attention to these matters will slow the further development of the vines.

The future of the Eckermanns block is also dependent on the establishment of additional water storages to service it and the Zerk blocks.

The lower parts of the Sturt Highway block were flooded in December after heavy rain on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2010. This will require work to clean up debris and regain access to some of these areas.

The additional soil works in many parts of these young vineyards – including strategic mounding, ripping and gypsum applications – have been successful and the results are evident in the healthy growth of the vines.

Weed control has been very good considering the season.

### **4. The Vineyards Planted in 2006**

The vines planted during the problematic and dry 2006/2007 are parts of the Sturt Highway block and the second stage of Waltons (where strategic water rationing resulted in some blocks being restricted in their development as previously reported).

At Waltons these vineyards are now developing well and becoming much more even. The potential is there to repeat and increase the good quality grape outcomes of 2010.

The northern end of Sturt Highway continues to be problematic. The additional soil works – including mounding, ripping and gypsum applications – have been successful and the results are evident in the healthy growth of many of the vines but this is still a variable vineyard that will require ongoing work to make it productive. There is a crop in this block but the crop level is variable as are the vines.

There is still a requirement for further vine training in parts of these blocks and this is behind schedule this season.

Weed control has been very good considering the season.

## **5. Established Cropping Vineyards**

The established cropping vineyards responded well to the previously reported winter pruning and have grown well in response to the winter, spring and early summer rainfall and average to cool temperatures. So far they have not required irrigation.

The crop looks to be well set and there is good crop potential across the established BVL vineyards for 2011. The final crop will be determined by berry and bunch sizes depending on rainfall and temperatures between now and harvest.

A particularly impressive feature of the established cropping vineyards at BVL is the increasingly even nature of the vines. By this I mean that within blocks the canopies of each vine are similar. This is the result of ongoing efforts by the manager and staff to control weeds, to replace missing vines, to prune and train the vines and to either enhance or control vine growth and vigour through soil management.

Even vineyards produce predictable and reliable high-quality grape outcomes.

Overall the fruiting canopies at BVL are in very good shape with good shoot growth. Cabernet Sauvignon canopies are larger than usual; this variety can struggle to grow adequate shoots in hotter dryer seasons.

The Shiraz canopies are generally vigorous. Trimming of lower shoots has been done on most of these vineyards. This is useful for reducing the vine contact with soil and thus reducing the transfer of fungal spores from the soil to the vines. It is also useful for improving air movement and drying of vines after rainfall.

Further trimming of Shiraz canopies may be necessary depending on the weather and when the shoots stop growing.

In more vigorous blocks such as S block and part of the Chookshed block additional growth of the mid-row plants is being used to reduce soil moisture and help to control vine vigour. In all other vineyards the mid-row plants have been slashed.

By contrast, on the shallower soils particularly at Rosedale, the additional soils works such as mounding have increased the soil available to the vines and have allowed the vines to take advantage of the good growing conditions this season.

These shallower soils at Rosedale can be inadequate when unusually hot weather occurs even when mounding has been done. These areas need further attention with regard to water delivery capacity in anticipation of more hot weather in the future. It is also likely in areas with shallow soils that additional summer pruning may be needed in the future to eliminate unwanted shoots and reduce the water needs of these vines.

De-suckering of the mature vines needs ongoing attention and is behind schedule in some areas.

Weed control has been excellent considering the season.

## **6. Summary**

The management of the BVL vineyards during the spring and early summer of the 2010/2011 season has been done in response to the seasonal conditions that have been better than most previous years. Early intervention with regard to weed control has been particularly effective given the wet season.

The young vineyards continue to need additional ongoing attention to address their delayed development. This includes training and de-suckering that is behind schedule at this stage.

The cropping vines are generally in good shape in the lead-up to the 2011 harvest. The increasingly even nature of the cropping BVL blocks is a credit to the effective management and underpins their high-quality crop potential.

Water storage resources and delivery capacity for the Rosedale vineyards and Eckermanns and Zerk blocks still require improvements as previously reported.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Miller', with a stylized, cursive script.

PAUL MILLER