

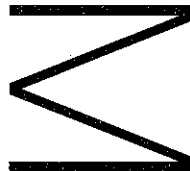
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**The Barossa Vines Limited (BVL) Vineyards  
Summer and Autumn 2011  
Viticultural Status**



**May 31 2011**



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



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. Summer at BVL

During the 2010/11 season at BVL and in the Barossa region it has been much wetter than average. The following table demonstrates that this trend continued in Autumn. The data is from the Bureau of meteorology weather stations at Rosedale and Nuriootpa.

Rainfall mm	Long Term Ave	2010/11
Period	Mar-May	Mar-May
Rosedale	109	174
Nuriootpa	115	196

The temperatures in Autumn continued the mild overall season - not particularly hot or cold. During Autumn average daytime temperatures were cooler than the long-term-average and average nighttime temperatures were about average or a little cooler than the long-term-average.

At the end of May BVL is starting to experience cold nights and the vines have begun losing their leaves as they become dormant for the winter.

This mild wet season was a very late one across south east Australia and very challenging because of the extraordinary incidence of damaging fungus diseases of grapevines and grapes. Many in the local industry in the Barossa believe it was the most difficult season for vine diseases in living memory.

At BVL while rainfall was above average the BVL vineyards were not as wet as some in the region and the generally undulating nature of the vineyards enabled drainage of much of the excess water. Despite such a challenging season and the presence of fungus infections BVL managed to deliver a good crop of high quality grapes – not a common outcome in Australia in 2011.

At BVL the harvest started on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March nearly six weeks later than in 2010. Harvest finished on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April with a total of just under 5200 tonnes.

The late season combined with the ongoing adverse weather made for a short harvest period. This presented logistical challenges at BVL as well as most other local vineyards but the BVL outcome was notable in that a record BVL crop of disease free fruit was delivered in very good condition at the maturities desired by the wineries.

The total crop of 5200 tonnes was well above expectations with regard to tonnage and reflects the wet season during which minimal irrigation was needed in most blocks. In a dry season the tonnage could easily have been 1000 tonnes less. The 2011 crop outcome also

reflects the extra potential of the vineyards if the recommended additional irrigation capacity is put in place that would compensate for the significantly lower rainfall that occurs in most seasons in the Barossa than that of 2010/2011.

There have been pleasing reports from wineries about the quality of the BVL grapes in 2011. Despite the challenging weather the fungus control was effective at BVL and the vineyards clearly withstood late-season rainfall better than many.

The vineyards have been sown or are about to be sown with cover crops unless particular weed problems require an alternative strategy.

Wet weather is also conducive to weed growth. The weed control at BVL for 2010/2011 has been generally excellent as a result of early intervention late last season and ongoing attention this year. There are some areas where further weed control is needed mainly on some of the younger vineyards where weeds are again getting out of hand.

The only area where the good season has not been fully taken advantage of is on the young vineyards where the vines have grown well but in most cases have not been trained as they should be or were trained later than desirable. This has further delayed the establishment of the fruiting canopies and in most cases will mean a further year's delay before cropping starts.

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

At the block known as Boths and also the first stage of the Zerk block in their second year the vines made good growth that would normally have been used to set up the trunk and the first part of the fruiting cordon of the vines.

Training in this regard was behind schedule in the Zerk block.

Despite on-site planning for this in 2009/2010, Boths was not trained at all this season and so the first crop of grapes will not occur before 2013 because there will not be a cropping cordon before then. The other problem may be excessive vigour in 2011/2012 from the large currently sprawled vines that could compromise the establishment of the fruiting cordon; there will be additional work needed because of the size of the sprawled un-trained vines.

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

Weed control has been good considering the season but Boths in particular will need ongoing attention.

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

The second part of the Sturt Highway Block was first planted in 2007. The southern part of this block is now growing well. There are still some parts however that need further

attention to soil work and will not commercially crop before 2013. Other parts should have a commercial crop in 2012. There were harvestable grapes in some parts in 2011 but the wet weather and access issues prevented an economic harvest.

The lower parts of the Sturt Highway block were flooded after heavy rains. These have yet to be fixed after the flood damage and so parts of the vineyard are still inaccessible.

The Eckermann 2007 blocks had some grapes in parts but by harvest time this was judged not to be a commercial crop in 2011.

In both blocks recent detailed soil analyses have identified that some areas are particularly challenging. The suggestion of re-planting with tougher complementary varieties in some areas is a good one.

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 healthier growth of the vines than in previous seasons. Note that the further soil works at both Sturt Highway and Eckermann will take time – at least a few seasons.

The new dam (or dams) at Eckermann/Zerk is a more urgent priority as these vineyards grow on and have to share water with the already under-watered parts of Rosedale.

Training and de-suckering in these blocks was later than desirable in most areas.

Weed control has been very good considering the season but at Sturt Highway weeds are once again getting out of hand in some areas.

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

The 2006 plantings were done to complete Waltons and to plant the first 100 acres or so of Sturt Highway. Both blocks are now cropping but only the Waltons block was harvested in 2011. The Sturt Highway was judged to be uneconomic to be harvested in this challenging season.

This area of Waltons was patchy in the past but is evening up now with some more work still to do to complete the establishment of some parts of the vineyards.

The first stage of Sturt Highway at the northern end of that vineyard is still the most problematic part of that block and needs ongoing intensive management to achieve reasonable production levels as previously recommended and described.

The comprehensive weed control strategy for this part of the Sturt Highway has worked very well in 2010/11 and this combined with the use of vineguards has transformed most of this block. There are still some areas of Couch grass that are problematic.

Vine training in parts of these blocks was behind schedule this season.

## **5. Established Cropping Vineyards**

The established cropping vineyards have had a good season overall and the response to rain clearly indicates the additional potential if additional irrigation capacity is put in place and underlines the risks if this is not put in place.

That additional growth and cropping was achieved in areas that had previously suffered from lack of water presents an opportunity to keep this going if more water can be supplied from 2011/2012 on.

A particularly impressive feature during 2010/11 of the established cropping vineyards at BVL has been the increasingly even nature of the vines - 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 strategic soil management.

The above average rainfall also accelerated the process of evening up of these blocks in response to previous soil treatment – without that work (that should be continued) the vines would not be able to respond as they did.

Vineyards that are even throughout produce predictable and reliable grape outcomes.

Overall the fruiting canopies at BVL have been in very good shape for the whole season with healthy balanced shoot growth and little or no disease despite the adverse conditions. Cabernet Sauvignon canopies were larger than usual and produced high quality grapes.

Trimming, canopy management, management of water availability by timing of slashing of cover crops, mounding soil and limited strategic irrigation were all well done at BVL this season except in a few areas where shallow soils and limited irrigation capacity again caused some problems in January.

In some shallow-soil areas with limited water additional shoot thinning and heavier than usual pruning resulted in lower crops that were of correspondingly higher quality than usual. Conversely in some more vigorous areas machine pruning followed by hand cleanup has allowed bigger but still well balanced canopies and crops.

This targeted approach to the management of the BVL vineyard assets continues to offer different levels of grape style and quality to prospective buyers and will optimize the vineyard's commercial opportunities, given further attention to the water supply and delivery systems.

Weed control has been excellent considering the season.

Pruning is due to start now with pre-pruning by machine followed by detailed hand work.

Given that the previously reported need for additional water supply and irrigation capacity has yet to be addressed, the pruning strategy of detailed work followed by further intervention in spring could reduce the need for water next season in several problematic areas. This would also help to capitalize on the additional growth achieved this season on the cropping vineyards that was in contrast with previous seasons of average rainfall.

## 6. The 2011 Vintage at BVL

The 2011 BVL harvest began on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March and finished on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April. The short harvest period in the face of ongoing adverse weather and disease risks was a challenge that was met remarkably well by on-site staff.

The 2011 harvest outcomes were reported to me as shown below. I have included a comparison with the 2010 yields per ha.

### BVL 2011 Wine Grape Yields

Blocks	Vineyard area Ha	Tonnes harvested	Tonnes per ha 2011	T/ha 2010
Lyndoch (98&99)	49.5	425.1	8.6	5.2
Greenock	20.0	103.6	5.2	3.3
Rosedale (00&01)	67.1	454.1	6.7	4.3
Rosedale (02)	53.0	358.7	6.7	4.3
Rosedale (03)	52.3	354.0	6.7	2.9
Rosedale (04)	124.3	1084.0	8.7	6.6
BVL Land Holding (05)	188.1	1726.2	9.1	5.0
BVL Land Holding (06)	194.5	676.1	3.5	2.6

The total BVL crop of just below 5200 tonnes in 2011 is a very good result in a tough year. That the grapes were sound and receiving some praise from wineries - in a year when many regional vineyards were beset with Botrytis and other fungus problems - should help to establish BVL's reputation for the quality of its production.

The BVL grapes in 2010 were excellent but 2009/2010 was a kind season for quality when many regional vineyards achieved high grape and wine quality. For BVL to back that up with good quality in 2011 is exceptional.

The increase in yield shows the effect of rainfall and the potential for BVL to increase its output if additional irrigation capacity can be put in place. In particular it was good to see the Rosedale vineyards with a good crop – this is where some of the key water issues are.

This 2011 yield outcome would also not have happened had the disease control, careful pruning, canopy management, weed control and other aspects of running the cropping BVL

vineyards not been as good as it was this season. Even, balanced vineyards grow good grapes.

## 7. Summary

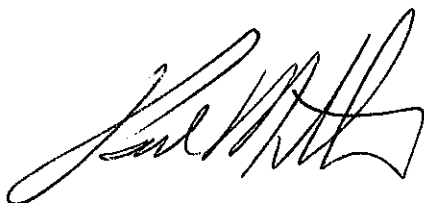
At the end of the 2010/2011 season I maintain my view that the mature cropping BVL vineyards are of a good standard, especially given the scale of operations.

The 2011 crop outcome demonstrates the potential of the vineyards given adequate water. The review of the water supply and irrigation capacity has highlighted significant further works that need to be done to mitigate risk across the BVL vineyards. Some of this has been done with more needed for the immediate future. In particular water storage resources and delivery capacity for the Rosedale vineyards and Eckermanns and Zerk blocks still require improvements as previously reported and are more urgent now than before to maintain the advances that above-average rainfall has conferred in 2010/11.

On the young vineyards, despite the success of the previous intensive work in 2009/2010, the lack of training this season has further delayed their progress to cropping by another year in most cases.

Overall the crop and quality outcomes during this season on the mature vineyards are a credit to the on-site management and demonstrate the potential of these blocks given adequate water supplies. The increasingly even nature of the cropping BVL blocks is a credit to the effective management and is a major factor in their high-quality crop potential.

Maintenance of this potential on the cropping vineyards in future seasons will require additional water resources as will the development of the young vineyards. The young vineyards need urgent attention in particular training and pruning that is overdue to prevent them falling further behind.

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

PAUL MILLER