

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## Major climate study for Tasmanian vineyards

Selected Tasmanian vineyard owners have been invited to participate in a major study of how vines respond to climate. The two-year study, funded by the Commonwealth and State governments, is designed to assist investors find suitable sites for planting new vineyards.

The study is being conducted by viticultural scientists Drs Richard Smart, an Honorary Fellow with the Australian Innovation Research Centre, based in the University of Tasmania's Faculty of Business, and Reuben Wells, a PhD graduate from UTAS currently working as an agricultural consultant.

One objective is to improve existing models of temperature for Tasmania by actual temperature measurement in five different regions, each of which has vineyard potential. These are East Coast, North East, Southern Midlands, Derwent and Huon Valleys.

A second and major objective is to relate the temperature conditions in 21 Tasmanian vineyards to vine-growth patterns, and yield and fruit suitability for winemaking. This will involve local growers assisting with some vineyard observations under supervision. The team will then be able to correlate vine response to temperature conditions.

“Provided with improved temperature maps we will be able to better predict new vineyard sites and have an indication of the potential wine quality from their grapes,” Dr Smart said.

“This will be the most comprehensive study made of vineyard climate in Australia, and such studies are particularly important in cool climates such as Tasmania. We are pleased with the response of local vineyard owners to our proposal.”

The study will build on knowledge gained from detailed vineyard studies in the Loire Valley, France, over the last several decades, which showed that differences in vine development rate were correlated with wine quality.

An important related study is into frost conditions in vineyard sites, as this can be a major risk in Tasmania. Drs Smart and Wells have engaged Dr Steve Wilson, a local frost expert, and New Zealand climatologist Stu Powell. They will also make measurements in several landscapes, allowing better definition of frost freedom and frost management.

The investigation will involve cooperation with other programs such as the SenseT data network and Wealth from Water.

The project is being managed by Dr Dugald Close of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, based at UTAS' Sandy Bay campus, on behalf of the Tasmanian Government Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts.

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