



Media release

The Place To Be

From the Department of Primary Industries

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GRAPE HARVESTER PROSECUTION SENDS STRONG MESSAGE

A warning to people tempted to illegally move grapevine material or equipment was sounded in Wangaratta Magistrates Court last week.

A viticultural contractor was fined \$7000 after pleading guilty to failing to obtain a permit from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI) before moving his used grape harvester out of a Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ).

The charges, laid by DPI under the Plant Health and Plant Products Act 1995, involved the movement of a grape harvester from a PIZ in Victoria's north-east to vineyards in the south of the state in March 2006.

Grape phylloxera is an aphid that lives on the roots of grapevines. It causes a gradual decline in vine health which may not be detected for several years, during which time it can be inadvertently spread between properties.

To minimise the spread of the pest, there are strict controls on the movement of grapevine materials and viticultural equipment from the state's PIZs.

The contractor admitted to Magistrate Reg Marron that he was aware of these laws and accepted that he should have obtained a DPI permit and ensured that the harvester was heat treated and inspected prior to leaving the PIZ.

He also indicated that he was aware of the significant impact that phylloxera can have.

DPI Prosecutor Gavan Knight told the court that, although the contractor's future in the industry was most likely finished as a result of this case, it was important to send a strong message of deterrence to those in the industry.

The man and his company were found guilty on three charges and fined a total of \$7000 without conviction. In addition, costs of \$960 were awarded to DPI.

DPI Senior Plant Standards Compliance Officer Geoff Jackson said the case showed that DPI will pursue and prosecute people who illegally move grapevine materials or equipment out of declared PIZs or into Phylloxera Exclusion Zones.

He added that it was clear the wine industry will not protect those who do the wrong thing.

"Industry witnesses from several regions co-operated fully with Plant Standards compliance officers in this case," he said.

"This type of commitment gives us a much better chance of minimising the impacts of pests such as phylloxera."

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