



## Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria – Annual General Meeting

ISSUE 54



The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria's 2013 AGM was held on Friday the 18th of October at the Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Members re-elected David Wallace as VGA Vic President and endorsed the following 2013-2014 Office Bearers: Senior Vice President, Rocky Lamattina; Junior Vice President, Paul Gazzola; Treasurer, Vince Doria; and Secretary, Tony Imeson.

Craig Arnott, Bill Bulmer, Peter Cochrane, Luis Gazzola, Frank Lamattina and Anthony Mason were returned to the executive committee along with new member Joe Kelly.

VGA Vic congratulates Tom and Peter Schruers, who were awarded Life Membership for their service and dedication to the industry.

VGA Vic Executive Manager, Helena Whitman, provided an overview of the work conducted by VGA Vic over the past 12 months, and David

Minnis, Chairman of the Australian Horticultural Exporters Association, reported on export opportunities for fruit and vegetables.

Teisha Dower and Carolyn Creed presented the Melbourne Market Authority's (MMA) Schools Program, outlining some of the work they do to promote healthy eating not only in schools, but in corporate and retail areas. David Fussell, Marketing Manager MMA, announced that the program would continue and be expanded into regional areas.

Richard Mulcahy, CEO AUSVEG, provided a detailed update on AUSVEG's industry advocacy and representation of grower interests.

The post-AGM Dinner was well attended, with entertainment provided by Victorian potato grower and part-owner of Black Caviar, Pam Hawkes, who spoke about life with the champion horse.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Hi Everyone,

Where has this year gone? And what a year it has been for our fellow growers! Have we stepped up the pace or what?

It seems that all aspects of our businesses have dramatically intensified this year.

Our workload and the daily operations of running a business, including administration, attending meetings, planning for the future and marketing our produce for local, interstate and export markets, have increased significantly. More importantly, we continue to harvest and market the best possible produce, under all types of weather conditions, to maintain consumer satisfaction so that they keep buying fresh produce rather than support the fast food industry.

We need to step-up the promotion of not only the health and nutrition benefits of fresh

produce, but also that it can be fun and enjoyable to prepare vegetables compared to other food alternatives.

Amongst all this activity and work in our lives, our families must come in at equal number one alongside work. Sometimes this is hard to achieve, but if you are like me, we do our best to make that happen especially as Christmas is coming up - a time to enjoy with family and friends. That's what makes me so proud to be in this industry.

The growers, industry associate companies, retailers, wholesalers, brokers and exporters are all a vital part of the drive chain in this dynamic, hardworking, ever changing and evolving industry that continues to reincarnate itself to survive and remain successful.

At our October Annual General Meeting, I was re-elected President of the VGA for the third year running. I am very proud and honoured to represent this exciting and challenging industry for the next 12 months. Firstly, I would like to thank our VGA Executive Committee for their knowledge, passion and hard hitting thoughts raised at each Committee Meeting. We have to stand-up for our rights as vegetable growers in Victoria on a range of issues, which will in turn benefit all growers along the line. Sometimes it's hard to see the results, but we are putting forward your views on what matters to the industry's future.

Thanks to all those growers for your great

support to me personally, and to the VGA Executive Committee, who represent you on important issues affecting our industry's future, and enable us to continue growing high quality vegetables.

November certainly was a challenging month to grow vegetables, but then again that's why we are the best in this industry. As third, fourth and fifth generation vegetable growers, we have seen it all before, and we will see it again in the future - and that's how we survive. It's our money, capital investment and land on the line; we have got the conviction to make it happen, and we do it well. Let's continue to work together as family businesses along with the VGA, supporting and helping your business to grow and survive into the future.

So to everybody within this great industry, have an enjoyable, happy and safe Christmas and New Year with your family and friends.

Thank you for your support.

See you all in 2014.

Sincerely,

*David Wallace*

President



*Merry Christmas to all VGA Members.  
We wish you a happy and healthy New Year.*



For Executive Officer's corner

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## INDUSTRY ACKNOWLEDGES LIFETIME CONTRIBUTIONS

At the recent VGA AGM, Life Memberships were awarded to growers Peter and Tom Schreurs. Though not related, both speak highly of each other.

Peter Schreurs says that being granted a VGA Life Membership means a lot to him, as it represents an acknowledgement from his fellow growers of his contribution, over many years, to the vegetable industry. Since his sons have taken over the business he has been able to attend more industry events and functions and still retains a strong interest in the industry. As Peter states: "I thought that once I retired from the business I could pull out of it but I found that I didn't enjoy this so I am fortunate that the boys let me stay involved."

When you ask Peter about his life he replies with a smile on his face: "I have a blessed life." Peter, along with wife Odilia, has one daughter and three sons - Mark, Darren and Paul - all of whom live with their families on the property. "I live right in the middle so that all the (10) grandchildren can walk over for a visit anytime," said Peter.

Peter came to Australia in 1954 with his parents, holding a Certificate in Pattern Making. As he didn't speak English and therefore couldn't get a job in his trade, Peter decided to learn English by working on a vegetable farm. Within two months he had found his calling, and at the age of 19 purchased 20 acres of land to grow vegetables.

Today the farm encompasses 400 acres on a single block, with Peter's sons running the business while Peter 'helps' out by researching potential sustainability improvements for the farm. Peter and his son Darren have a passion for soil health, something that was inspired many years ago. "Today we farm biologically," said Peter. "We minimise our chemical use, focus on the health of the soil and practice IPM." Peter's family grow leeks, baby cos, radicchio and baby leaf salad lines.



Peter Schreurs receives his VGA Lifetime Membership from VGA President David Wallace.

Peter finds relaxation in his garden, where he surprisingly grows vegetables. His other passion is jigsaw puzzles – the more complex the better. He is also passionate about the education of younger generations, encouraging school visits to the farm whereby Peter and his sons take groups of children through the growing process. Peter really enjoys this aspect of the business and says that his grandchildren participate in these educational visits whenever they can.

Peter served on the VGA Executive for many years with a two-year stint as President. Peter was a driving force in the development and introduction of EnviroVeg to the Victorian industry. He says the industry has changed enormously since his time on the Executive. According to Peter, the industry used to be market focussed, with everyone coming to the market, and the VGA office used to be a meeting place for growers, however, sadly the social aspect of the market is gone.

Peter still visits the Melbourne Market at least two times a year to catch-up with old friends and says that his next visit could be the last due to the market's relocation.

Peter says that the Industry needs to have a united representation across Victoria and he hopes to remain available to assist with industry matters for a long time.



Tom Schreurs was awarded Life Membership.

Tom Schreurs feels that being awarded a VGA Life Membership shows that the industry acknowledges his contribution to the various roles he has held representing Victorian vegetable growers.

Tom served on the VGA Executive on two occasions, for about five years in the early 1990s then, following a two-year break, for a further 10 years. He also served as Chairman on the Leafy Vegetable Group R&D Committee for a period of eight years.

Recently retired from vegetable growing, he is now able to devote his time to his nursery, where he indulges his hobby of celery plant breeding. The business is now run by his son Chris and two nephews Adam and Ben. Although he doesn't participate directly in the business, he says he is on hand to help out or act as a sounding board if needed.

Tom's father started the business on 17.5 acres at Dingley in 1965, subsequently relocating to the present site in 1969. They now have 625 acres under garden over several blocks. It was Tom's father who encouraged him to sit on the VGA Executive.

Tom's favourite memory of his time with the VGA is the Family Picnic Days, which were held near the Melbourne Zoo. Tom says that unfortunately much of the social side of the industry has now disappeared as everyone is just too busy.



## FOURTH GENERATION VEGETABLE GROWER BOLSTERS VGA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Joe Kelly, a fourth generation vegetable grower, has decided that since his five children finished school, it is time to put something back and learn more about what is going on in the vegetable industry. Although Joe feels that he has a bit to learn, he is confident in his ability to contribute to discussion and debate, and wants to contribute to the industry's future, especially if his children show an interest in taking over the business.

Joe and his brother David own Tullamore Gardens on the Western Port Highway. Modestly, Joe says that David is the marketing man and he just grows the produce. Joe's great-grandfather started growing in Cheltenham in the late 1800s, however, in 1982 Joe and David started Tullamore Gardens where it is today. Growing lettuce, cabbage, leeks, silverbeet and parsnips

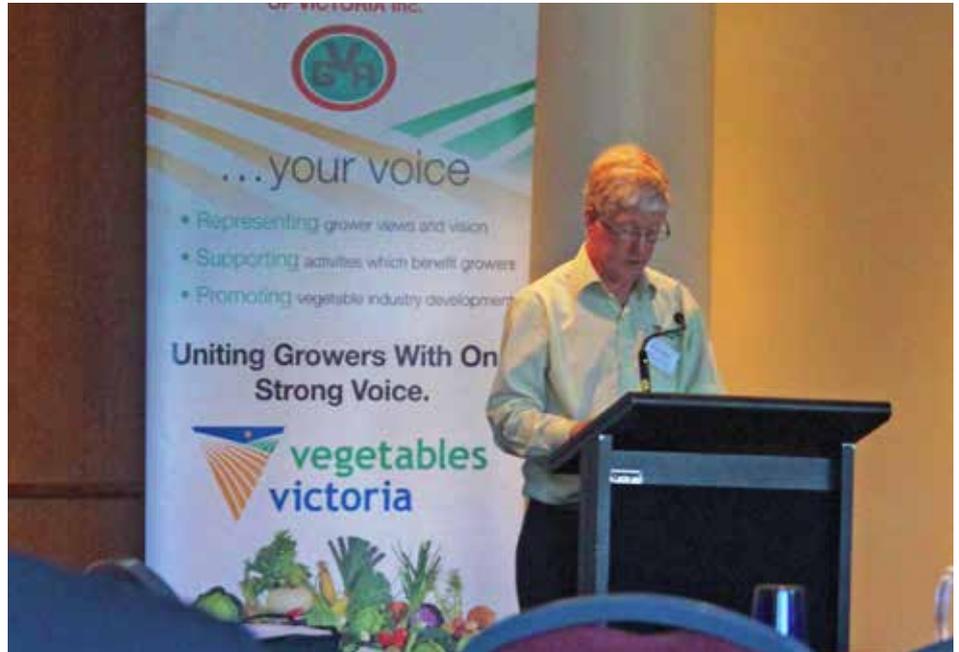
for the Melbourne Market, Joe and David are concerned about their future once the market is relocated to Epping.

Joe has been involved in vegetable growing for 37 years and is pleased to see one of his sons showing an interest in continuing the family business. Joe's son, and his nephew Richard, make up the fifth generation in a continuous line of vegetable growers. However, Joe is concerned that like many of the farms in the area, following recent re-zoning by Casey Council, the farm will be eventually swallowed up by suburbia.

Known in the industry for his powerful hit, Joe relaxes by playing golf and enjoys supporting the industry's golf days when they come around.

The VGA would like to welcome Joe as a member of its Executive Committee.

## Photos from the VGA Annual General Meeting



**Clockwise from top:** David Minnis, Chairman, Australian Horticultural Exporters Association.

David Wallace gives his President's report.

David Wallace presents Pam Hawkes with an Industry Award for Black Caviar.

Richard Mulcahy, CEO, AUSVEG.

Teisha Dower and Carolyn Creed shown appreciation by industry.

## WFI, proud alliance partner of VGA Victoria.

WFI is a proud alliance partner of the Vegetable Growers Association Victoria (VGA). Like the VGA, we have a very broad reach across the state with over 35 Area Managers located throughout Victoria. Unlike a number of our competitors, we prefer to deal direct with our clients face to face. When you deal with WFI, you deal with a person, not just a voice on the other end of the telephone.

### Why not call us for a quote?

To find out more about WFI's products, request a quote, or to contact your local Area Manager, simply visit our website at [wfi.com.au](http://wfi.com.au) or call **1300 934 934**.

Good people to know.



To see if our products are right for you, always consider the PDS from the product issuer, WFI (ABN 24 000 036 279 AFSL 241461). If you take out a policy with WFI, VGA receives a commission from WFI of between 5% and 7.5% of the value of the premium payment (excluding taxes and charges).

## JUNK FOOD BLUES - JUNK AND PROCESSED FOOD LINKED TO DEPRESSION

Could junk food be contributing to an increase in depression around the globe? This is one of the questions being asked by a team of Melbourne scientists who are revolutionising the way medical professionals address mental illness.

“Depression is one of the biggest public health problems of our age,” said Professor Michael Berk, Head of Barwon Psychiatric Research Unit/IMPACT Strategic Research Centre, Deakin University.

Working with Prof. Berk and his research team, Dr Felice Jacka is at the forefront of groundbreaking work looking at the links between mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety, and lifestyle choices such as diet, exercise and smoking.

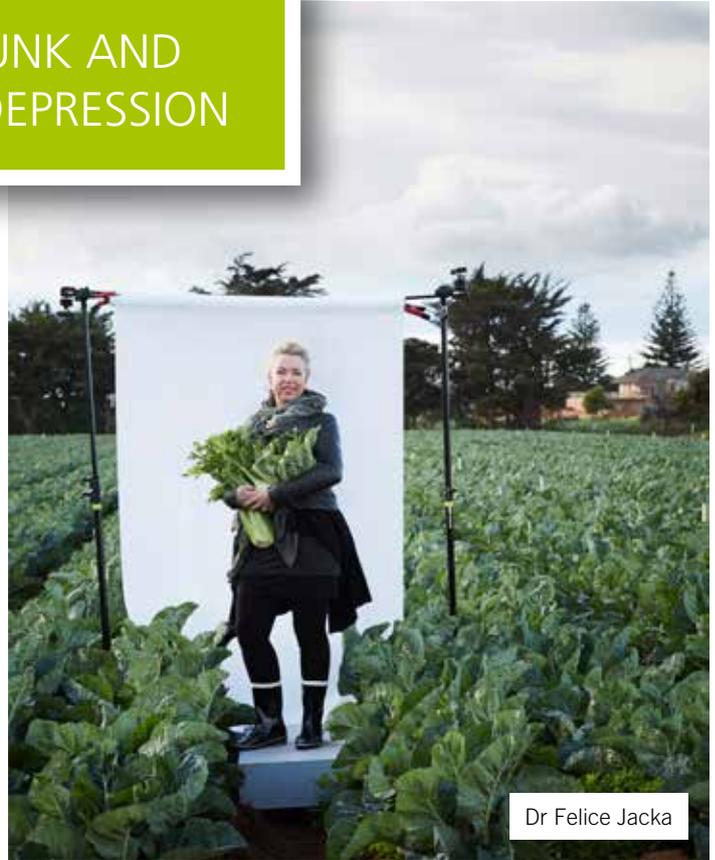
Their research is adding scientific weight to the notion that the increase in global depression is linked to unhealthy lifestyles.

“The link between diet and mental health should come as no surprise, given that food nourishes every part of the body including the brain; diet is consistently predictive of mental health,” said Dr Jacka.

According to Dr Jacka, identifying triggers for mental illness in the young is the key to preventing a lifetime of suffering. “The age of onset for common mental disorders is very young.”

“The average age for onset of anxiety disorder is six and for depression it usually hits around adolescence,” said Dr Jacka.

Dr Jacka is seeking funding to establish a research centre to investigate the influence of lifestyle and behaviour on mental illness.



Dr Felice Jacka

## VEGGYCATION



Workshops on communicating the health benefits of vegetables were recently held around Australia. Presented by Dr Hazel MacTavish-West, Carolyn Lister and Jocelyn Eason (Plant & Food Research New Zealand), the workshops were attended by a cross section of industry, including growers, wholesalers, marketeers and dietitians.

The project, funded by the National Vegetable Levy with matched funds from the Australian Government, aims to highlight the health benefits of vegetable consumption through the Veggycation website and other material.

All of the nine major health benefit claims identified by FSANZ can be claimed by vegetables. Veggycation plans to use symbols, similar to The Heart Foundation's 'tick of approval', to highlight health benefit claims, such as improved sight and stronger bones, or enhanced energy and hydration.

The Veggycation website ([www.veggycation.com.au](http://www.veggycation.com.au)) is live now, with a searchable database and links to downloads including a fun site for children and teachers. The website will also provide a tutorial regarding FSANZ regulation of health claims on-pack and elsewhere for promoting the health benefits of vegetables.



## PERSISTENT PROMOTION OF HEALTHY HABITS



Teisha Dower and Carolyn Creed have been visiting schools in the metropolitan area to promote the Melbourne Market Authority's (MMA) Marketfresh Schools Program for many years. The two ladies not only promote fruit and vegetable consumption to school children, but are often invited by corporations such as Toyota and various Government offices to promote the benefits of healthy eating to employees.

Teisha and Carolyn also provide food tasting and information at events such as the Harvest Day Picnic, where they showcase fresh produce to the public, including tutorials on how to eat, store and prepare it.

The program is designed to educate children about the importance of fruit and vegetables in their diets. Many children don't eat fresh produce at home and are amazed at how good it tastes.

Teisha and Carolyn teach children about how fresh produce is grown, harvested and transported to stores, and the nutritional value of fresh produce. They end the sessions with a tasting of in-season produce.

Each session lasts for about an hour with groups of 100 to 230 students at each session. The cost of the program is \$150 per session and is often sponsored by a local grocer or business. Produce is donated mainly by growers or industry associations. Currently the program covers approximately 35,000 students each year, however, there are plans to extend the program to regional Victoria in the near future.

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria would like to extend its gratitude to those growers who supply produce to this excellent promotional activity, and especially Teisha and Carolyn for their dedication and hard work on our behalf.

## EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S CORNER



### Maintaining Membership Services at the Local Level

Once again we are at the end of another calendar year and 2014 will no doubt create new challenges for the vegetable industry in Victoria.

The Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria (VGA Vic) has been in existence for over 60 years, providing assistance and industry information to its Grower Members, supported by a range of industry suppliers in their role as Industry Associate Members.

Membership plays a vital role in the operation of the Association, not only from representation on the Executive Committee but being recognised at industry meetings and conferences as being an active member of VGA Vic.

We are no different from other associations covering a wide range of industries in Victoria where membership is declining due to a variety of reasons, however, the vegetable industry in Victoria needs your committed support. Should you have not responded to an invitation to renew your membership, or have not yet received an invitation to participate as a grower member then please let me know.

It has been stated on numerous occasions that the value of the vegetable industry begins with growers at the farm gate. Growers themselves should be representing the Victorian vegetable industry at State level.

Victorian vegetable growers must maintain unity and support VGA Vic as their local organisation.

### Protecting your Property

VGA Vic has held a long and proud alliance with Wesfarmers Insurance (WFI) and has been working together to serve the Victorian vegetable industry. It is through this relationship that WFI offers VGA Vic members competitive and flexible quotes on their insurance. In return VGA Vic receives a commission through client referrals which benefits the organisation without impacting on a member's premium. When discussing insurance requirements with your WFI representative please mention that you support VGA Vic.

### Consumer Education

"Concern" is a common expression when discussing the importance of vegetables in the family diet.

It becomes obvious that fresh vegetables are not always a priority on the family shopping list and the question is raised, "Where does one begin to educate the growing population of Victoria on healthy eating?"

The Melbourne Market Authority (MMA) provides a Market Fresh Schools program designed to educate primary school children about the importance of fruit and vegetables in their daily diet. VGA Vic has supported this program and its presenters Teisha Dower and Carolyn Creed by providing fresh vegetables when requested and being in attendance when invited to share vegetable grower knowledge. Should your local school be unaware of this program, please contact David Fussell or Sharyn Dunstan at MMA on (03) 9258 6100.

### Vegetable Industry Training

VGA Vic is on the verge of signing an agreement with GOTAFE for delivery of 'on-farm' training to vegetable growers and their employees. The courses will be tailored for the vegetable industry to be run 'on-farm' with groups of employees, and fit with existing accredited Certificate courses. Once the course material has been customised and trialled, we intend to start booking courses with interested growers for early next year.

### 2013 Annual General Meeting

Another successful AGM was held in October at Crowne Plaza Melbourne with the welcome return of President David Wallace and the existing Executive Committee, plus a warm welcome to Joe Kelly from Cranbourne who was successfully nominated. Your Executive Committee meets for a minimum of eight monthly meetings throughout the year to discuss a range of industry issues. Should you have any items of concern or interest for the Committee to consider, please let me know prior to the second Tuesday of each month so that it can be included on the meeting agenda for the following week.

Keep Smiling,

*Tony Imeson*

**Remember VGA Vic is YOUR voice of the Victorian vegetable industry and needs your support. Should you require more information about vegetable industry services available to you, please contact:**

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