

New Executive Officer for VGA



We are pleased to announce the appointment of Ken Orr as our new Executive Officer. Ken has extensive experience in the horticultural industry, working with government, industry and corporate entities over 35 years. Ken's experience in agronomy, sales, marketing and product development in annual and perennial horticultural crop production (vegetable, fruit and vine crops), will be of great benefit to VGA and its members.

Ken has previously worked for the Victorian Department of Agriculture, based at Robinvale, Wodonga and Ballarat, in extension, biosecurity and research. In recent years he has been involved in the horticulture fertiliser industry in agronomy, product development and marketing with Incitec Pivot and BASF.

Ken is no stranger to the VGA; many of you will remember Ken

from his time as our Industry Development Officer in 2009-10, and his past experience will serve him well as Executive Officer with the VGA.

Ken is tasked with managing our Association's funded projects, as well as representing the Association at industry meetings, conferences and similar functions. Ken will also maintain a high level of communication with VGA Members, State Government agencies, AUSVEG, industry associates and key stakeholders on issues affecting the viability and operation of the vegetable industry.

Ken's appointment follows the resignation of Helena Whitman. The VGA Executive Committee and membership recognises Helena's valued counsel and involvement in our industry, firstly as Industry Development Officer and then Executive Manager of VGA Victoria.



**National Horticulture Convention,
Trade Show and Awards for Excellence**
.....
25-27 June, Jupiters Gold Coast

AUSVEG

apal

To register for the 2015 National Horticulture Convention go to www.ausveg.com.au/convention

Jointly funded by the VGA and DPI Victoria

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Hello everyone,

I trust you and your families had an enjoyable Easter, as I did with my family; autumn is just a fantastic time of the year.

You can never say this industry is dull – there's always something new to learn, whether it's on the farm, marketing new varieties, new machinery, new work practices, new ideas to improve your business for the next year, or your next crop. If you are like me, you never stop thinking of new ideas and ways to improve your business and grow the best product for your customers and consumers to buy and eat.

Maybe that's why there's always too much product on the market floor to sell. That's why returns for our vegetables are always too low.

1. Is it overproduction?
2. Is it marketing that needs to change?
3. Is it that we have become too efficient at what we do?
4. Is it that we are not growing the right vegetables for the next generation of consumers?

I think the answer to this dilemma lies in considering all of the above.

Only you as growers can answer these questions, however, the way forward will be found through family businesses, state organisations like the VGA, and national bodies like AUSVEG, all working to provide the industry with a sustainable and profitable outcome.

As President of the Victorian vegetable industry, I am proud and very privileged to be representing fellow growers in all aspects of this great industry, which I think the VGA does really well. The VGA Committee, member growers and our new Executive Officer, Ken Orr, are changing things within the Association to deliver better outcomes and services for you, the members.

I would like to thank my fellow growers, who ring me and talk about issues regarding their farms and our industry.

In other industry news, the opening of the Epping Market has changed again. Scheduled to open on 15 June 2015,

the market is now expected to open around 3 August 2015. Is it final? Who knows?

It has been 11 years since the first announcement of the move from Footscray Road, only three years over the original date scheduled. So we wait in anticipation for this state-of-the-art market to open.

I would also like to welcome Ken Orr on-board as the VGA Executive Officer. Many of you would recognise Ken from his past positions in the horticulture industry.

We are still working with AUSVEG and VFF on different topics and issues that affect vegetable growers at the farm gate level.

In May, VGA will have a stand at the PMA Fresh Connections Trade Show in Melbourne, and we will be inviting young Association growers to attend. It's a good opportunity to enhance and promote the VGA and the Victorian vegetable industry by connecting with key decision makers, buyers and suppliers from across the fresh produce value chain from paddock to plate.

Remember also to register for the early bird rate for the 2015 National Horticulture Convention on the Gold Coast, from 25-27 June 2015. It's shaping up to be a very informative conference.

Sincerely,

David Wallace

President

For the Executive Officer's corner

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Vegetable Growers'
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INTEGRATED CROP PROTECTION: AN EXTENSION PROJECT TO HELP VEGETABLE GROWERS PROTECT CROPS

Protecting crops in a sustainable way is vital for Australian vegetable producers seeking to improve productivity and profitability.

Crop protection practices, capabilities and attitudes differ in the levy-paying vegetable industry. Markets and consumers expect pesticide use to be minimised. Pesticides may have detrimental effects on the people who use them and the environment. As such, a reduction in the use of pesticides (especially class S6 and S7 wide spectrum products) is desirable and may decrease crop protection costs.

Integrated Crop Protection (ICP), and progressing along the

continuum towards increasingly advanced levels of implementation and adoption on-farm, is one way of achieving sustainable and cost effective crop protection.

There is currently an extensive amount of ICP information from levy-funded projects that can be built upon. It is important that this information is made accessible, practical and relevant to individual commercial farming operations, rather than generating more information.

This project, being delivered by RMCG, AHR and IPM Technologies, aims to work with growers, advisors and other industry service providers to achieve the following.

- Improve awareness, knowledge, capacity and decision-making regarding pests, weeds and diseases.
- Improve management of chemicals (Good Plant Protection Practice [GPPP]).
- Apply Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
- Improve management of pests, weeds and diseases as appropriate within the farming system (ICP).
- Master classes/think tanks/champion networking.
- Advisor engagement and training.
- Benchmarking activities.

These activities will be adjusted and refined on an annual basis to ensure the needs of growers and the industry continue to be met. This will enable the Australian vegetable industry to respond to current and future crop protection challenges and opportunities.

It is envisaged that the Integrated Crop Protection (ICP) program will be run in southern Victoria in the coming months, so watch out for details of activities in your district.

The project will establish and deliver the following activities from 2014 to 2017:

- Regional demonstration sites.
- Grower groups.



NUFFIELD SCHOLARSHIP

Nuffield Australia farming scholarship applications will open on 1 April 2015 and close on 30 June 2015. Nuffield Scholarships are for people between 28-40 years of age, who are engaged in farming or fishing as an owner or active member of a farming business, and are intending to remain involved in primary production in Australia.

In 2013, Emma Germano, Business Development and Operations Manager for Germano Produce, a family business supplying cauliflowers and cabbage crops to eastern seaboard fresh markets, was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship.

Emma researched new technologies in growing and managing vegetables, and explored the export opportunities and government programs available to growers in Europe, India, Israel and China.

Emma is now a member of the VGA Executive, and is using the knowledge and experience gained from her scholarship in the family business, as well as promoting the Victorian vegetable

industry through the VGA.

The benefits of a Nuffield Scholarship are:

- You can research a primary production topic overseas.
- You can enhance your knowledge, skills and techniques.
- You can join the Nuffield network (1,400 Scholars worldwide).

If you are actively engaged in the vegetable industry, have ideas or want to enhance your skills, both for your business and the industry you work in, then have a go at this great opportunity.

The Nuffield Scholarship is supported by HIA using funds from the National Vegetable R&D levy and matched funds from the Australian Government.

More information is available from the website at: <http://nuffield.com.au>.



GOVERNMENT GRANTS AVAILABLE TO HELP IMPROVE MARKET ACCESS FOR SMALL EXPORTERS

The Minister for Agriculture, Barnaby Joyce MP, recently announced that applications are being sought for more than \$11 million in grants to improve market access for small exporters of dairy, meat, egg, fish and horticulture and grain products.

Some of the projects that this program could fund include information workshops for exporters seeking to meet importing country requirements, which can provide greater commercial opportunity for the sale of their products. Alternatively, grants may be used to develop strategies or niche products to meet the demands of overseas markets, or to fund research to develop new treatments or processing methods that reduce the cost of meeting importing country requirements.

Applications close at 5pm AEST, 30 April 2015.

Program guidelines, including selection criteria and application details, can be found on the Department of Agriculture website at: www.agriculture.gov.au/package-assisting-small-exporters.

Or call 1800 900 090.

AGRO CHEMICALS

Dimethoate & Fenthion

The finalisation of the fenthion review is expected soon, with the current permits expiring in October. Further extensions are considered unlikely. Also, the finalisation of the review of dimethoate is also anticipated to occur within the next few months. So by year's end, these products will no longer be under permit.

CALENDAR

7 May	VFF - Women's Health Workshop, Warragul, VIC
12-14 May	PMA Fresh Connections, Melbourne, VIC
27 May	VFF Horticulture Annual Meeting 2015, Tatura, VIC
8-11 June	VIII International Symposium on Irrigation of Horticultural Crops, Lleida, Spain
25-27 June	2015 National Horticulture Convention, Jupiters Hotel & Casino, Gold Coast, QLD
5-8 July	Protected Cropping Conference, Jupiters, Gold Coast, QLD
13-15 July	4th International Conference on Agriculture & Horticulture (Agri-2015), Beijing, China
16-17 July	Agriworld Australia 2015, Olympic Park, Sydney, NSW
11-12 August	2015 Fresh Produce Safety Conference, Sydney, NSW
27 August	AUSVEG EnviroVeg / Biosecurity, Minor Use and Export seminar, Cranbourne, VIC
14-15 October	2015 Onions Australia Conference, Griffith, NSW

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 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).

COMPOST FIELD WALK AT CLYDE

It is envisaged that within the next five years over 200,000t of pasteurised compost will be produced from green waste collected from the suburbs of Melbourne. The compost will be used in land rehabilitation, earthwork/construction, land protection, public places, roadside plantings and, most importantly, agricultural and horticultural production.

Compost is used to maintain and improve nutrient holding capacity, soil structure, soil biology and moisture retention.

The Western Port Catchment Landcare Network (WPCLN) has received funding to trial application methods, incorporating composts and organic manures, on five enterprises in the catchment region over a 15 month period.

One of the farming enterprises to trial these composts was Arnott's Vegetable Farms, located in Clyde. A field walk was held recently to demonstrate and discuss the trial results with interested producers.

Arnott's Vegetable Farms is a 4th generation family-owned and operated market garden.

The trial consisted of the following three treatments and a control:

- Treatment 1 – a single application consisting of 10t/ha of compost.
- Treatment 2 – four applications consisting of 2.5t/ha.
- Treatment 3 – four applications consisting of 5t/ha.
- Control – no compost applied beyond the normal grower inputs.

After examining the different application rates, no treatment stood out, as it was difficult to identify the yield and the quality effects of the treatments due to the use of commercial fertilisers and other management inputs.

Some observations from the compost treatments were:

- The heaviest compost application tended to reduce root growth in coriander.
- Slight changes (increase) in cation exchange capacity.
- Substantial increases in nitrate levels.
- Slightly increased soil temperatures.

Craig Arnott believed trialing the use of compost was beneficial, and suggested it would be more economical to apply compost once per year due to cartage and application costs.

"Compost has its place in our production system. By using compost we will increase soil organic matter and soil health," Mr Arnott said.

"Soil is our most important asset and we want to look after it properly."

**For further information on the composting application trials contact:
Slobodan Vujovic, Compost Victoria
0422 583 784 or slobodan@wmaa.asn.au**



Craig Arnott addressing participants at the Clyde field walk.



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S CORNER

Hello there,

Since taking up my role in mid-January, I have been most impressed by the amount of time and effort put in by members of the Executive Committee on behalf of our Association outside their own business and leisure hours.

They represent the VGA and the industry in a number of forums, which cover issues from the paddock to the consumer. Likewise, I have been amazed by the passion and commitment of our grower members, and other affiliated organisations that I have met in my short time as Executive Officer. It gives me great confidence in undertaking this role. Farmers are great people to work with.

The Association is presently conducting a review into its future structure, and how best to meet its members' needs. A consultant, Scott Williams, has been engaged to seek growers' views on what they would like to see the Association doing in the future. A summary document will be circulated to all members, and will be followed up with forums in major growing districts to discuss our members' views mid-year. We will then be able to develop a new strategic plan encompassing the issues such as markets, information, consumers, competitiveness and leadership.

In the meantime, if you have any issues or suggestions relating to how we can improve our service to you, the member, please don't hesitate to phone, email or see a member of the Executive, or myself personally, as we welcome the input enthusiastically.

Presently, I am developing a communication strategy to minimise duplication and get the best bang for our buck when keeping you all

up-to-date with the issues, outcomes and technology that the industry provides so readily. We are looking at our website, newsletter, in-the-field communications and multimedia technologies like Twitter and Facebook, to identify the best communication channels.

We are also looking at providing more input and exposure for our valued industry Associate Members, who have supported the VGA so well over a long period of time.

I would like to remind you again of the opportunity available for our Association's young growers to register for the PMA Trade Show on 13 May. This opportunity is open to growers between the ages of 18-35, who are members of the VGA and are actively involved in the vegetable industry and want to be exposed to wholesale, retail and consumer service providers at the PMA Trade Show. There are only 10 places available, so first in best dressed.

Cheers,

Ken

The VGA Vic is your voice of the Victorian vegetable industry and needs your support.

Should you require more information about vegetable services available to you please contact Executive Officer Ken Orr.

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VGA Vic. proudly recognises our industry supporters:

