



Hydroponic Farmers Federation Newsletter

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HFF CONFERENCE 2022

Hydroponics Tomorrow • 12-14 July

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The Secretary



Welcome to our first newsletter of the year - yes it is a little later than usual but all for good reason as we report all the latest and greatest. The PCA held

their conference at the end of March which we have covered in this edition, and it was great to get back to face to face conferences. Of course we also had the first ever 'Launch' of the HFF conference at the Atura which was also a fantastic event. Just getting back to seeing everyone 'in the flesh' was so good and reassuring that we are all still here and not on mute! The HFF conference launch was certainly a huge success and full details are in this edition. But while Covid-19 has not disappeared from our world, the relaxation of a number of regulations have certainly made life a bit easier, only to be countered by increased fuel and fertiliser prices and a generally elevated cost of living - When will it all end? What never ceases to amaze me is that an industry, we all tend to look on the bright side of life rather than adopting what we know

as the 'Doom and gloom' approach! As an industry we are a pretty resilient lot, and thank goodness we are! So what has 2022 got in store for the HFF? Obviously as previously mentioned, the conference is on the horizon and with this we will see the re-commencement of our 'Grower Day / Farm Visit' program. We have locked in the sites for the conference but we are now looking for further sites that will be willing to host an HFF visit. If you would be keen to host one of these days please get in touch with any of the committee members. Getting on site and doing what the HFF is all about - 'Growers helping growers' is the absolute key to HFF success and we are determined to return to these core values. We also keen to look at getting some new members involved at committee level. New faces bring fresh ideas, so if you feel that you would like to contribute at this level we would love to hear from you. The organisation is only as strong as its membership so we need to keep moving forward. So finally, make sure you have the conference dates in the old diary - 12th to the 14th of July at the Atura Hotel, - and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible very soon! **Tony B**

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The President



Hi everyone, and hopefully the New Year has kicked off well for you all. As many of you know I have had some issues with storm damage which has taken up plenty of my time but pleased to say we are making headway in that direction, and there is an update on the Yendon Storm Damage issue in this newsletter. But on to brighter things, and it was fantastic to welcome the trade and growers to our first ever Gala Conference Launch event at the Atura Hotel on the 17th of March. This was all new ground for the HFF in that we had never held such an event before so there were plenty of nerves as

the day approached. But we need not have worried. Simon Monk was at the helm and his event organisational skills meant that everything ran smoothly. Having TV personality Brian Nankervis onboard was a great asset for us and he certainly got the evening off to a great start. Sheree Maris provided a different perspective on life with her 'Secrets of sex and the sea' and despite the title this wasn't an X rated event! But it was a great networking night and my heartfelt thanks to all those that attended and set the scene for our forthcoming conference. But before then the National peak body - PCA - have just held their conference in Coffs Harbour. Our very own Michael Tran made the trek North and not only represented the HFF but also secured a number of trade stand sponsorships for the HFF event - Well done Michael! So all this talk about our conference, so when is it? The 12th to the 14th of July at the Atura Hotel - Hallam, and just so you don't forget, it's printed in huge letters below! Obviously Covid has continued to play havoc with all our 'normal' events but we are looking to recommence farm visits as part of the conference. The farm visits are at the very heart of what we do as an organisation where growers can help growers by showing others how they approach issues etc so it will be fantastic to get out and about again. So it will be great to once again be able to see everyone on a face to face basis again. **Regards, John**



Membership

As we approach our conference we traditionally see our numbers climb up again as individuals seek to gain the benefits that an HFF membership can give with conference registrations. Currently we have a total of 43 members, which like my old school report relates to 'could do better'! Members are the lifeblood of any organisation and we do need to look at re-establishing a larger membership base. Covid has certainly given all of us some enormous headaches but as we are now moving towards the notion of 'living with covid' we need to focus on gaining more members. So if you know of friends or neighbours that are potentially interested, give them a nudge, or even better, get them to register as a member and get the conference benefits! As John has mentioned, it will be great to be able to meet up again on a face to face basis, and I would encourage you all to register for the conference. See you there! **Ian Mortlock - Membership Secretary**



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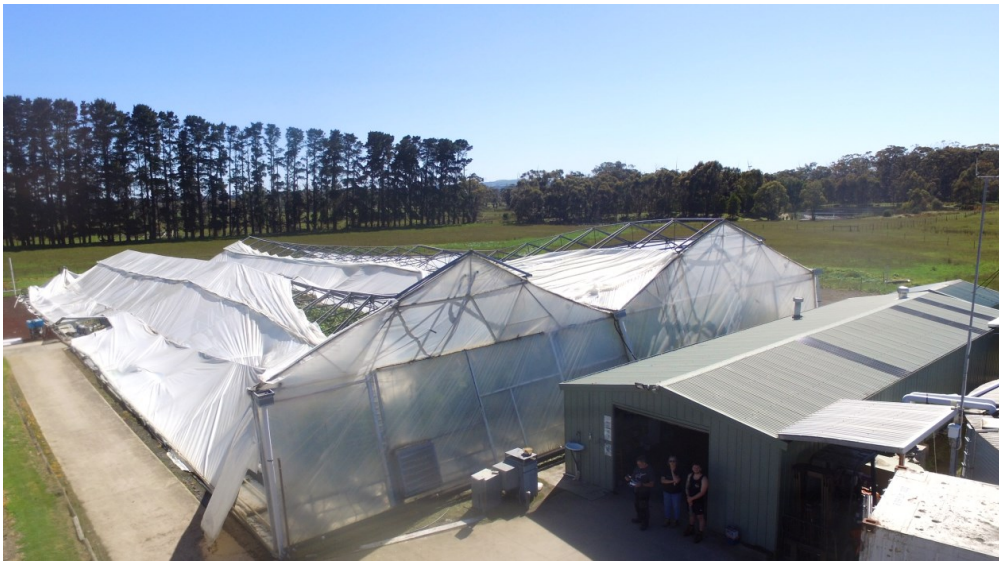
Celebrating a 40 year partnership

An industry partnership that has been operating for 40 years in Victoria was celebrated recently. Renowned flower growers Grandiflora and Brinkman Australia have been working in a partnership that has been built on trust and ongoing support. The occasion was marked by the presentation of a specially commissioned Royal Delft plate, that was gifted to Grandiflora Director Harry Schreuders by Royal Brinkman's Christiaan Rolandus Boers. 'Royal Brinkman has been instrumental in our nurseries development since the early 1980's, then with further additional expansion phases, and in more recent times the replacement of our environmental climate control computer, fertigation stations and crop protection equipment' said Grandiflora Director, Harry Schreuders. 'We thank Royal Brinkman for being a contributing factor in our success as the producer of Australia's finest roses', said Harry.



*Pictured Left – Right. Brendan Anderson - Nursery & Project Manager - Grandiflora
Mr Harry Schreuders - Director - Grandiflora
Christiaan Rolandus Boers - Supervisor and Project Engineer – Royal Brinkman Technical Projects
David Sobevski - Managing Director – Brinkman Australia*

Picking up the pieces



Cast your minds back a few months and the State was experiencing some violent storms causing havoc across the land. Part of the damage on that night was one of John Elford's sheds which was physically toppled over in the gale. A really challenging time for John and he wasn't sure what to do in terms of moving forwards or even just giving the game away. But those that know John well will not be

surprised to learn that he wasn't going to give in. Our John had never been one to shy away from a challenge so it was time to literally pick up the pieces and get things happening again. 'When the shed first blew over I was really in disbelief - I honestly could not believe my eyes but obviously that all became a reality far too quickly', said John. 'However, the support I got from my friends and the industry was amazing. There were a number of people that were willing to drop everything and come over to help dismantle the structure, which I was really stunned about. However we decided to work slowly through the steel frames and gently retrieve what we could. Almost every day I received phone calls from a wide range of people checking on me to see if they could help, and also to check on my mental health. It was just amazing and probably helped me to make the decision to rebuild. The reality is that we will only be able to salvage about half of the existing structure for re use but I've got another shed in component form that I'm planning to use as well.' The rebuild has taken a number of months to get to the current stage but John now has his sights set on completing the project and getting a crop re-established. 'This certainly wasn't how I saw the year starting but whilst there was a lot of structural damage, at least no one was injured which we have to be thankful for!' commented John.



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Nicky Mann

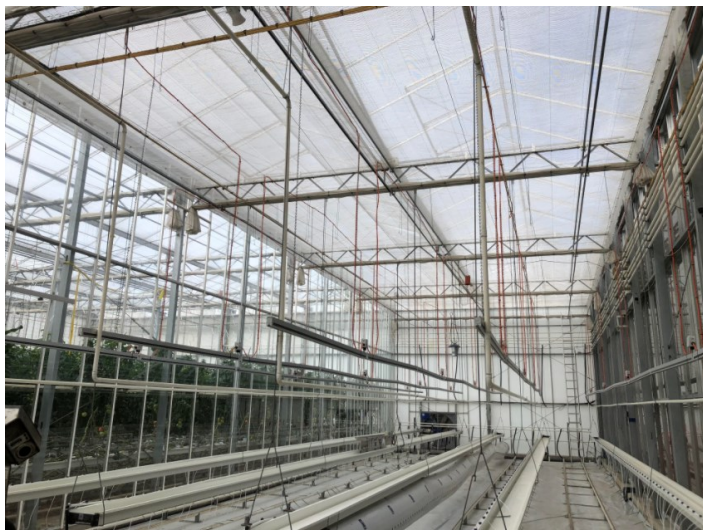
At the recent PCA Conference Nicky Mann was presented with no less than two distinguished awards in recognition of her tireless contribution to both the PCA and the wider horticultural industry. These being:-



PCA's Emily Rigby and Matt Plunkett with Nicky Mann

1. Outstanding contribution to the Horticultural Industry, and 2. Life Membership of PCA. Both these awards are well deserved and reflect Nicky's great contribution to horticulture in general. Nicky has been a close friend and supporter of the HFF and I feel that these awards truly acknowledge the outstanding contribution that Nicky has made to the industry. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with Nicky and the HFF looks forward to seeing her at the forthcoming conference and future events to come. So well done Nicky and we look forward to welcoming you to Victoria very soon! **John Elford**

Chisholm Revitalisation Program



Chisholm Institute of TAFE has been home to a high tech training centre for a number of years since the initial construction of the training greenhouse. However, Covid 19 had a dramatic effect on the ability of Chisholm to maintain the facility due to staff shortages, and following this, De Ruiter seeds withdrew from their sponsorship arrangements as well. Since then the facility had been unoccupied for a long period of time. Protected Cropping Australia and the HFF have been in initial discussions with Chisholm as to what it will take to get the facility back up and running. A consultative committee is being formed to work on this project, and participants to this working group would be very

welcome. At this stage the initial thoughts are to retrofit the smaller compartment with a variety of production methods (NFT, Vine crops and soft fruit) to give students the opportunity to see these systems working first hand. The larger compartment may potentially be available for rent. This may well suit a company wishing to showcase high vine crops or could well be attractive to a new grower wishing to enter the industry. At this stage no options are being dismissed, and both PCA and HFF are looking for potential funding sources to assist in the revitalisation of the facility. If you would like to be involved in these discussion or have an interest in renting the facility, please feel free to call our secretary, Tony Bundock—or alternatively he can be emailed. Contact details are at the front of this newsletter.

Flooding hits local firm employee



The name Powerplants Australia is known to many in the industry, and you would all be aware that the company has a presence across Australia as a whole. Recently Powerplants employee Michael (Macca) McLachlan moved to Lismore in NSW with his wife Chantelle, as part of a lifestyle and business change. The plan being for the move was to allow Michael the opportunity to provide service and contact to growers in the region on behalf of Powerplants. However, fate has dealt these young people a savage blow in that their house was engulfed in the recent flooding in the region. The flooding was so severe and swift that Michael and Chantelle had to be rescued from the roof of their new house, and all of their belongings have been lost to the flood waters.

Powerplant's founder and Director Carl van Loon said 'This has been a catastrophic time for Michael and Chantelle in what should have been a start to a new and exciting point in their lives. Obviously as a company we have been assisting Michael as an employee, but there is a long way to go to enable any sort of normality to return to their lives.'

In order to raise some financial resources to help both Michael and Chantelle, Carl has been instrumental in setting up a 'Go Fund Me' page to raise funds to assist in getting financial help to the couple.

The page is located at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-macca-and-chantelle-rebuild-their-life>

Originally a target was set for \$10,000 and this was reached in four days—a truly great effort.

'We were delighted with the initial response but obviously we would love to be able to raise more funds' said Carl. 'The devastation that flooding causes impacts not only on material things but also on structures, so at this stage we are not sure how much repair work, and of course additional funds will be required to rectify the property' added Carl.



Response from The Prime Minister's Office re Seasonal Workers



PRIME MINISTER

Reference: MC21-083111

11 March 2022

Mr John Elford
johnelford@bigpond.com

Dear Mr Elford

Thank you for your writing to me regarding the new Australian Agriculture visa.

The Government is establishing a new Australian Agriculture visa to support the long-term future of our agriculture and primary industries.

As announced on 23 August 2021, the new visa will be available to skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers across the agriculture, meat processing, fisheries and forestry sectors. It will contribute to the ongoing growth of Australia's primary industries as they strive to reach \$100 billion in value by 2030.

To understand the needs across benefiting sectors, targeted consultation with industry stakeholders has been ongoing since the visa's announcement. Discussions with a small number of countries in Southeast Asia are also advanced, and the Government is seeking to finalise details as a priority so the first group of workers can arrive.

In addition to the visa, the Government continues to deliver other measures to help the agriculture sector access the workforce it needs. These include AgMove, which provides financial assistance to encourage Australians to take up seasonal agricultural work, and the highly successful Pacific labour mobility programs.

More than 20,000 Pacific and Timorese workers are currently in Australia, the highest number ever, with over 16,000 workers arriving since August 2020. This has significantly contributed to filling labour shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 14 September 2021, the Government announced a first stage of reforms to make Pacific labour mobility programs easier to access and more flexible in meeting workforce needs, and bring programs together under a single name: the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme.

The Government is committed to continue working with our Pacific family, state and territory governments, and industry to bring more Pacific workers to Australia, drawing from a Pacific work-ready pool of 55,000.

Response from The Prime Minister's Office re Seasonal Workers

While Pacific workers will continue helping to address workforce needs for the agriculture sector, I look forward to workers under the Australian Agriculture visa making a substantial contribution in the near future.

I appreciate you sharing your insights on labour force issues facing the agriculture sector.

Yours sincerely



SCOTT MORRISON

If you cast your minds back to July 2021—the HFF supported an initiative led by Perfection Fresh to lead changes to the 'Seasonal Agriculture Worker Visa. At that stage the Department of Home Affairs was advising Government that they could not implement a new agriculture visa that year and were wanting to delay it until next year. The general feeling was that our industry could not wait until next year, and as such government needed to be advised so. A letter was sent directly to the Prime Minister and other associated Ministers on behalf of the HFF and members. Similar letters of support were sent from other industry peak bodies including PCA. Following on from this work an Australian Agriculture visa was introduced which address the immediate workforce shortage facing Australia's farmers, and supported the ongoing structural change in the agriculture workforce. The response above was received by the HFF in the last week of March—proving that the wheels in Canberra may turn slowly but they do turn!

Farm tours / Grower Days 2022



As we move towards our new 'norm' of living with Covid, the removal of restrictions on the number of people that can meet together means that we can restart our popular grower days and farm tours. The forthcoming conference will see us all 'back on the road' as we visit farms as part of the conference program, but we are really keen to keep the program rolling post conference. So if you would be willing to host a grower day at your property we would love to hear from you! The HFF

basically meet all the costs in terms of catering and the provision of PPE if required, all we need is your permission to showcase your facility. And the HFF is open to visiting a wide range of facilities that does not necessarily need to include greenhouses. In the past we have had some fantastic visits to allied trade sites which provide a unique insight into where some of our essential supplies and services come from. So if you are interested in hosting a Farm tour/grower day, please get in touch with either the President, John Elford, or Secretary, Tony Bundock via the numbers or emails shown on page 2 of this newsletter.

HFF Conference Launch

Thursday the 17th of March saw the HFF taking a new direction in pre conference events with the official launch and gala dinner event being held at the Atura Hotel. The event itself was held in almost perfect conditions with the warm night allowing all of the activity to occur outside. Master Of Ceremonies for the night was TV personality and entertainer - Brian Nankervis - who is famed for the ABC TV show - Rockwiz. So what else would we start the night with but the HFF's very own version of Rockwiz! However, before this could commence we were all invited to join in something alike to a welcome to country ceremony - which was more like a welcome to the Atura if the truth be known. Plenty of arm linking and ridiculous chanting! Next up was an invitation to say which band you had first seen. Garden City Plastic's very own Elliot Olumuyiwa nearly stole the show with his claim to fame involving seeing some obscure band overseas which by coincidence was also one of Brian's favourite bands as well, and this certainly struck a chord with the MC! So on with the show, and with Elliot now appointed official score keeper the competition became a boys verses the girls showdown. Vice President Tony Spurling proved to be something of a dark horse (well a grey one at least) in that he had plenty of the answers and helped the boys to a fair victory - a rematch is certainly on the cards at the conference! Marine biologist - Sheree Maris - was our next speaker and she gave us a great insight into how the world under the oceans can help us deal with the adversity of life. It seems that some of our little aquatic friends lead quite an exciting night life, so an eye opener on this account for sure! But there was a serious side to the evening and President John welcomed everyone and reinforced how important it was for the trade to get growers to the conference to make the event a success. So with the formalities over it was time for some serious networking (that's HFF code for eating and drinking) and to catch up



with friends. This was probably the first real face to face event that members had enjoyed for a long while and the opportunity was certainly not wasted! Special thanks must go to Simon Monk who put in a huge effort behind the scenes to make the event come together.

President John Elford commented 'It was a great night and this will now hopefully become a regular event prior to our conferences going forward'.

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PCA Conference Report



The 2022 PCA Conference was held at the Pacific Bay Resort in what would have been traditional a sunny, sub tropical climate. However, the conference coincided with one of the wettest periods of weather ever known, providing the PCA and ASN events with a unique set of challenges. Prior to the event itself commencing, Local Land Services NSW hosted a stand alone training event for local growers on the Monday. The sessions covered an 'Introduction to Irrigation' which was presented by industry consultants Tony Bundock and Levi Nupponen, followed by "IPM for the berry industry' delivered by Stuart Doyle. Both of these sessions were well supported by growers and LLS are planning to roll out these training sessions more widely across NSW. The PCA event started to swing into action in the evening with a welcome function kindly sponsored by Haifa fertilisers. This was probably one of the first face to face events that the industry had attended 'en masse' and it was great to see everyone on that basis. The weather had by now started to get even worse with biblical amounts of rain falling. Flights from Sydney had experienced trouble landing at Coffs Harbour - one flight had three attempts at landing before touching down! And Graeme Smith arrived at Coffs in person, but his bag decided to remain in Sydney so he was literally left standing in the clothes he arrived in! The event itself commenced on the Tuesday with a welcome to country and opening ceremony, followed by Tristan Kitchener providing an in depth viewpoint on retailing and opportunities for producers. Also in the opening session, student R and D projects from Western Sydney University were presented in person by the students giving a great insight into their work. The trade displays were all housed in a huge purpose built marquee structure some 50 metres from the main venue where meals were also served. Our very own Michael Tran was on hand to represent the HFF and to promote our



PCA Conference Report

forthcoming conference, However the unrelenting rain was now heavier than ever, the humble umbrella now become a highly valued commodity in the dash from the trade area to the main building! As with all conferences, there was a huge range of speakers that allowed delegates to pick and choose areas of interest. The official conference dinner was held on the Tuesday evening complete with awards. Of note was Nicky Mann being awarded awards for outstanding industry contribution as well as life membership of PCA - a great effort. By now the rain Gods had gone into overdrive, and to add to this, there was a severe storm warning at the start of the Wednesday session. The wind was so strong that the organisers had to temporarily close access to the trade area as the actual structure was under threat, but luckily the wind receded by lunch time. However, the relentless rain had done it's damage and the proposed farm tours on Thursday had to be cancelled as road access to the farms was now under water and sites were also being flooded. But growers are a resilient bunch and there was general acceptance that these weather events were out of the control of the organisers and these were the facts that had to be faced. So another bar session on the Wednesday night seemed to resolve all problems! The general feeling was that the conference as a whole was a huge success and it was so good to be back to face to face conversations and meetings. A huge round of applause needs to go to the ASN team for handling an ever changing situation, as well as to PCA Chair Matt Plunkett and his team for running another fantastic event for our industry.



PCA Conference Report



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Brad Johnson
AgNova Area Sales
Manager

Powdery mildew is the most common and widespread disease in Australian cucurbits. Powdery mildew infection occurs when spores are blown onto leaves, with symptoms appearing 3 – 7 days later. The disease infects green tissue and appears as white fluffy growth on either side of the leaf. Heavy disease infection leads to leaves becoming fragile and yellow to brown in colour. Any stresses to the crop will favour the development of powdery mildew, which includes the stress associated with fruiting. Flute and Kusabi are protectant fungicides which control powdery mildew. They perform best when applied to a clean crop and used alternately. Kusabi is ideally suited to follow Flute in a fungicide spray program from flowering until harvest (as shown in the table below). Flute and Kusabi offer strong vapour action when applied with optimal spray coverage. The performance of powdery mildew fungicides can be improved with Du-Wett, especially when lower spray volumes are used. Flute (Group U6) and Kusabi (Group 50) are compatible with a wide range of commonly used insecticides and fungicides. They offer strong vapour action when applied with optimal spray coverage and have 1 and nil day WHPs respectively, which provides great flexibility around picking time. Both products have a proven track record of successful use in crops where IPM is practiced. For further details, please visit the AgNova Technologies website - agnova.com.au

DOMINANT DISEASE	CROP STAGE					
	ESTABLISHMENT	FLOWERING	FRUIT SET		FRUIT MATURITY	
Powdery mildew	Group 3, 7, (7+11), 11 or 13	Group 3, 7, (7+11), 11 or 13	Flute ⁵⁰ EW FUNGICIDE (U6)	Kusabi ⁵⁰ FUNGICIDE (50)	Flute ⁵⁰ EW FUNGICIDE (U6)	Kusabi ⁵⁰ FUNGICIDE (50)



Growers suffer flood damage in NSW

The recent deluge in New South Wales has had a direct impact in a number of growers and their production facilities. The pictures below give you a snapshot of some of the damage, and we wish the growers all the best as they work through these challenging and very difficult times for their businesses.



You don't have to be mad.....

There is a saying that 'You don't have to be mad to join the fire brigade - but it helps!' So our secretary has now been a volunteer Firefighter for the past 31 years so surely he should be taking life a bit easier? - well apparently not! TB has always participated in the Herald Sun 'Run for the kids' event which aims to raise funds for the Royal Children's hospital by way of a sponsored 14.8km run, which in itself is enough of a challenge, so we are detecting a bit of the madness streak when Tony and fellow firefighters from the Narre Warren Fire Brigade entered the event in a 'Running Fire Engine'! 'We've run the event for a number of years as a team, but competing as individuals, so this year we thought why not do something different - and the running fire engine concept was born' said Tony. The team originally saw a similar design in the UK which was built by St Mary's Fire Brigade. 'We approached the UK guys and they were really helpful with the initial design and specs which allowed us to come up with our version,' added Tony. Made primarily from irrigation pipe, the fire engine was constructed at the Brigade's Top Secret Research Facility -well TB's garage to be exact - over a few nights. Bunnings were kind enough to donate most of the materials and sponsorship was also received from Snedz Fit Studio and The Printed Screen Company. The fire engine itself has four harnesses mounted in it which goes over the shoulders of the runners and all up weighs about 20kg. The team received plenty of media coverage with Tony having an on air interview with Diana Dunlevy of 3AW, as well as the Herald Sun promoting the cause. So come the big day, the fire engine was transported to the City in a truck where the team of firefighters comprising of Tony Bundock, Karen Bundock, Robert Beard, Peter Green, Adrian Jones, Cory Green and Samantha Anderson duly slogged their way around the track. 'We were worried about crossing the Bolte Bridge in case it was windy, as we had a vision of being the first team to parachute off the bridge!' said Tony. And after a fair effort the team crossed the finishing line for a well earned drink. The aim of the event was to raise \$10,000 for the RCH, and you can still donate to support the team at:-

<https://runforthekids2021-2022.gofundraise.com.au/page/NarreWarrenFB>



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