



# Hydroponic Farmers Federation Newsletter

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## **President's Report**

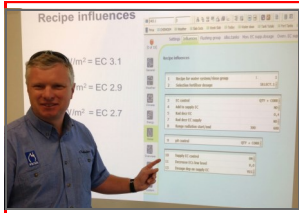


Dear Members,

Welcome to our June edition of the Hydroponic Farmers Federation News Letter. Firstly, I would just like to recap on the outcomes from our AGM which was held at Gateway Hydroponics in April at our grower meeting. Thanks need to go to Tony Spurling and his crew for allowing us to witness and experience their operation. The meeting itself was held in the newly renovated Restaurant, which has great views over the 'pick your own' strawberry operation. The AGM itself saw the election process of the Committee members who have agreed to renominate. Sadly the AGM also saw the retirement of Ryan Brightwell. Ryan has been very much a contributor and will be sadly missed by the Committee, my thanks to you Ryan for the work you have done across the term of your period of office. But as they say, as one door closes, another opens, and this has seen Evan Kakouros from Avia Hydroponics being nominated and elected to the committee unopposed. I am also pleased to report that the remainder of the Committee was re elected for another Year. Business arising from AGM included a progress report on conference from ASN Events. This is very much a priority item for the committee and I am pleased to report that this whole project is proceeding well. There are further details in this newsletter, and if you haven't booked your place at the conference as yet I would suggest that you will need to! During the AGM, the idea was floated for the HFF to support the PCA study Tour of North America in October, by having a raffle that will be linked to the Conference. The HFF have agreed to sponsor the cost of a ticket on the study tour, with the winner being drawn at the Conference Dinner. Tickets are on sale now when you register for the Conference or alternatively you can purchase tickets at the conference. Ticket costs are \$25 for HFF members and \$50 for non members. The Study Tour itself is valued at over \$8,000 and will be a fantastic opportunity for the lucky winner. Given the limited number of tickets that will be sold, the odds on you winning the prize are certainly better than buying a Tatts lotto ticket, so dig deep and get on board! Another note of importance at the AGM was the passing of the motion for:- *"Members who are serving committee members be excused from having to pay subscriptions in lieu of work undertaken"* This was a motion that I was particularly keen to see passed as it gives the committee members a small 'thank you' for the extraordinary amount of work that they do behind the scenes in terms of running the organisation, as well as organising the conference. Whilst this motion was passed, it was typical of the members of the current committee who decided that receiving payment of their subscription will be optional. My thanks go to all of them once again. And of course the big event on the horizon is our bi-annual conference. Looking forward the conference is only a few weeks away and will come and go quicker than we think. The conference itself will be held at a first class venue, and when you add in the list of speakers, trade stands, and the program and farm visits that are planned, it really is something you shouldn't miss. Added to which the show allows you, the members, to network and build better relationships with key industry players, and see new ideas and concepts that can help your business become more efficient and profitable. The theme of Networking for Knowledge isn't there for fun—it's exactly what we hope this conference will give you. I personally hope to see you all there, and once again I need to extend my thanks to the committee for making this all happen.

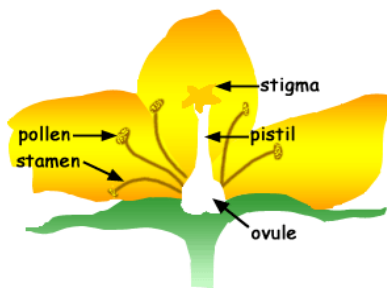
Cheers—**John Elford**

# The Secretary



For those of us that are involved in greenhouse tomato production, one of the most vital labour components in the weekly schedule is the task of pollination. Without

this occurring, we would end up with poor fruit set and reduced yield. So what exactly is pollination process? Botanically speaking it all begins in the flower. Flowering plants have several different parts that are important in pollination. Flowers have male parts called stamens that produce a sticky powder called pollen. Flowers also have a female part called the pistil. The top of the pistil is called the stigma, and is often



sticky. Seeds are made at the base of the pistil, in the ovule. To be pollinated, the pollen must be moved from a stamen to the stigma. So, no great earth shattering facts so far!, but how we move the pollen from the stamen to the stigma is the topic of hot debate. Current pollination practices rely on a fairly high labour input. Hand pollination is most regularly used, and devices such as a twelve volt vibrating rod are commonly used.



More basic methods also sees growers tapping support wires or strings to cause the pollen to migrate from stamen to stigma, and the use of air blowers has also been a method that some growers have adopted. What ever method you use, there is an optimum time to achieve best results. As a general rule, your greenhouse climate should have a minimum temperature of 19C and a humidity deficit (HD) of 4 or greater. A combination of these two base parameters will greatly increase the effectiveness of the pollination operation. The easiest way to track when these

parameters are at the optimum point is to plot them on a graph. In the graph below the red line is



temperature and the blue line humidity deficit. By setting the temperature scale to start at 19, and the HD scale to start at 4, you can instantly see when the lines appear in the graph. If both lines are visible then your climate is both dry and warm enough to facilitate good pollination. All good stuff, but we still have to use labour to make this happen. The real answer to making this task both more efficient and cost effective is to use the same model that is used overseas—namely using bumble bees, or to give them their full names, *Bombus terrestris* to do the task for us. These industrious little creatures busy themselves all day with the task of pollination, and provide growers with a first rate pollination result, plus they work seven days a week, don't



have sick days or holiday and are not worried about pay! The only problem is that they are currently prohibited from being used in Australia. Our colleagues in the PCA put up a substantial case for the introduction of bumble bees in to Australia with the previous Labour Government. The feedback was that the case was won on scientific grounds but lost on political support. However, with a new government in power, the PCA are getting set to take this case back to Canberra. The PCA will be running an open forum at the forthcoming HFF conference at 6:15pm on Wednesday the 16th of July to discuss how to further their submission to the Government. I would urge as many of you as possible to attend this forum to offer support to the proposal. Finally I am looking forward to seeing as many of you at the conference in July—see you there! Tony B.

## Safeguarding your salary

A survey of 4,966 Australians conducted last year by Ernst & Young found that almost a third were living pay cheque to pay cheque and an alarming 17 per cent would struggle to find \$500-\$1,000 to deal with an emergency. It's probably no surprise that many of us are extremely dependant on a regular wage. It's how we pay the mortgage, meet car repayments, fund school fees and day-to-day living costs such as food and utility bills.

So have you taken a moment to think about how you would cope financially if you found out tomorrow you could no longer work due to illness or injury? Could you manage your ongoing expenses or support your family if you needed to take an extended period of time off work?

Although we don't like to think that serious illness or injury will happen to us, the fact is that ordinary people are affected by these issues every day and overnight their ability to support themselves and their family may be removed. Your ability to earn an income is potentially your most important asset. And as an asset – like your home or your car – it can be insured.

For anyone who relies on their salary, income protection insurance is an important consideration. Particularly if you are self-employed, or a business owner whose business depends on your input, it could be vital to keep things ticking along by maintaining a level of financial normality.

Income protection policies will vary in their definition of disability and the range of benefits they offer, but generally cover a percentage of your salary for a defined period of time (for example, 75 per cent of your wages might be paid for two years, or until age 60). There tends to be a waiting period before the payments commence, usually 30, 60 or 90 days. When considering the waiting period that might best suit you, bear in mind the annual leave, sick leave or long service leave you're entitled to and the level of emergency funds you could access.

To explore your income protection insurance options, or to discuss any superannuation, retirement or insurance issues, contact Prime Super's Regional Manager for Victoria and Tasmania, Rod Stewart, on 0428 558 158 or email [rstewart@primesuper.com.au](mailto:rstewart@primesuper.com.au).

## Membership



I am pleased to report that the HFF Membership is currently running at 48 currently financial members, this is made up of 21 growers, 20 industry, 2 life, 4 industry associate, and 1 supporter member. Whilst these figures are good, we need to look at increasing our member base—if we are not going forward we are effectively going backwards in the scheme of things. With our conference coming up in the middle of the year we are expecting an increase in membership numbers. The reason behind this is that delegates who are intending to attend the conference, and are currently not members of the HFF, will soon do the maths and realise that taking out a membership will give them a better deal for the discounted registration at this year's HFF conference!

This isn't an issue for us in that we are more than happy to welcome these individuals to the conference and we can also spend some time with them explaining about the benefits of being an ongoing members of the HFF. Remember that only financial members can take advantage of the benefits conferred by HFF membership, including free grower meetings and discounted registration at both the HFF and PCA conferences to name a few. Finally I look forward to seeing many of you at the HFF conference in Mulwala.

Happy growing, Tony Spurling. Membership secretary.

# Grower Meeting Gateway Estate

Our most recent grower meeting was recently held at Gateway Estate, which is run by Committee member, Tony Spurling. After sampling the delights of the on site coffee shop, we were all treated to a tour of the facility by Tony, who showed us the Pepper production areas, as well as the micro herb and pick your own strawberry facility. One of the great benefits of these visits is the openness and honesty of the growers in showing how they are dealing with everyday issues. Tony's frank discussion gave us all a great insight in to how he deals with operational issues and uses some innovative solutions to solving problems! The event itself was also used to run the AGM. At this meeting four members of the committee were due for re election, who were namely Tony Bundoock, John Elford, David Pearson and Ryan Brightwell. Ryan informed the meeting that he would not be seeking reelection, and Evan Kakouros was nominated in his place while the three other members all accepted re-nomination. The committee would like to thank Ryan for all of his hard work across the past few years. With the AGM out of the way, the grower meeting took place which also included a report from Syngenta Seeds on the recent issues affecting seed quarantine. The grower meetings also allow for some really effective networking which is the lifeblood of any business. If you have never been to a grower meeting before, we would encourage you to come along—I guarantee you will learn something new!



Images of the day including the Pepper production area, electric inter row trolleys which Tony has modified to run on recycled electric wheelchair batteries!, and the micro herb production area.

# The HFF in Hortidaily



Thursday, May 22, 2014

Gautier seeds  
**TOMATO**

DISCOVERY  
**DAYS**  
2014



In Holland  
May - Sept.

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or  
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Central Europe,  
Americas & Pacific  
Area Manager

## Australia: "We have to pay increased attention to the efficiency of production"

On 16-18 July, the Hydroponic Farmers Federation is going to organise its regular biannual conference in New South Wales, Australia. The aim of the conference is to introduce new and developing technologies to Australian hydroponic growers, and help them further improve their production through networking and knowledge transfer.

The Hydroponic Farmers Federation is an Australian organisation for hydroponic growers, suppliers to the industry, and everyone else interested. They are an affiliate of Protected Cropping Australia, and their ultimate function is to develop Australian hydroponic production through supporting each other and through farm visits, newsletters, reduced rates for nutrient and leaf analysis etc.



John Elford

As Mr John Elford, the president of the Federation said, "We started as a small self-help group 20 years ago. Since then we have always tried to follow the development of modern technologies, and we also organise a conference every second year." According to him the hydroponic technology is dynamically improving in Australia, and more and more people invest in this kind of horticultural production. "Generally, we can say that there are many new small companies, and at the same time larger scale farms are expanding as well."

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A recent edition of the International e newsletter—Hortidaily, featured an article on the forthcoming HFF conference, via an interview with the President, John Elford. In the article, John outlined the principles of the HFF and how it has evolved from a self help group in to a recognised and respected industry body for

Victorian growers and industry partners, as well as interstate parties. Full details of the President's interview can be found at: <http://www.hortidaily.com/mail/2014/05/22.html>

For those of you who have not come across Hortidaily before, **Hortidaily.com** aims to be an online meeting place for the international horticulture industry. The website is updated daily with interesting news from around the globe. HortiDaily intends to provide as much information as possible, which can help growers with the management of their horticultural enterprise. If you are not already receiving the e mails, try it out!

**REGISTRATIONS NOW OPEN**  
Hydroponic Farmers Federation  
'Networking for Knowledge' Conference

[www.hffconference2014.org](http://www.hffconference2014.org)  
Club Mulwala, NSW, 16-18 July 2014

Regular Rate		Additional Trade	
Full Conference	\$530	Full Conference	\$450 [PCA Member disc.]
Full Conference member	\$320	Partner	\$160
One day	\$270		
One day member	\$170		

**CONFIRMED SPEAKERS INCLUDE:**  
Mick Keogh (Keynote Speaker) - Aust. Farming Institute  
Sophie Parks & Len Testorero - DEPI, NSW  
Mike Nichols - Retired, NZ  
Ian James & Noel Dunlop - VCSCM, VIC  
Jonathan Eccles - RABA, NSW  
and more...

**Introducing new registration types for our grower members**

	Regular
HFF Grower Member + 1 employee	\$480
HFF Grower Member + 2 employees	\$640
HFF Grower Member + 3 employees	\$800
HFF Grower Member + 4 employees	\$960

**To become a member visit**  
[www.hff.org.au/membership](http://www.hff.org.au/membership)

**To register visit**  
[www.hffconference2014.org/registration](http://www.hffconference2014.org/registration)

**FOR MORE DETAILS CONTACT EMILY GANSELL**  
eg@hffevents.net.au  
Ph 03 59 832 400



# HFF 2014 CONFERENCE MULWALA



## REGISTRATIONS NOW OPEN Hydroponic Farmers Federation

'Networking for Knowledge' Conference July 16-18, 2014

### Confirmed speakers include:

Mick Keogh [Keynote Speaker]  
- Aust. Farming Institute  
Sophie Parks & Len Tesoriero - DEPI, NSW  
Mike Nichols - Retired, NZ  
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HFF Grower Member + 3 employees	<b>\$800</b>
HFF Grower Member + 4 employees	<b>\$960</b>



To become a member visit <http://www.hff.org.au/membership>  
To register visit <http://www.hffconference2014.org/registration>

For further information please contact Emily: [eg@asnevents.net.au](mailto:eg@asnevents.net.au) or Ph 03 59 832 400



# HFF 2014 CONFERENCE MULWALA



As Hydroponic and protected cropping becomes increasingly important in the world's agricultural output, the Hydroponic Farmers Federation (HFF) conference becomes more important and relevant each day.

The conference offers the opportunity to hear the latest practical and technical knowledge in the hydroponics Industry. The greatest resource in HFF conferences is not just in the "program" but the other delegates.

The committee have designed this conference to truly be a chance to "**Network for Knowledge**". Networking with other growers, industry representatives, speakers and other delegates allows you to share know how, experience with others and learn from them.

Key speakers include: Len Tesoriero, Mick Keogh, Sophie Parks, Graeme Smith and Mike Nichols

For speaker profiles and the full program go to the conference web page: [www.hff2014.org](http://www.hff2014.org)

Staged in the Mulwala club, from July 16 – 18 July 2014, there is accommodation on site, meaning you do not have to drive once you arrive! . You will be able to relax and enjoy the conference and the wonderful ambience of the Murray River at your door step, while ensuring you are keeping in touch with the latest developments in hydroponics.

Register now – online at [www.hff2014.org](http://www.hff2014.org)

For all information please contact Emily Gangell at [eg@asnevents.net.au](mailto:eg@asnevents.net.au) or tel 03 5983 2400

## Advertise with Hydroponic Farmers Federation in the HFF newsletter

<p><b>COLOUR</b> <i>(member)</i></p> <p>Full pg - \$175 1/2 pg - \$110 1/4 pg - \$70</p> <p><b>BLACK &amp; WHITE</b> <i>(member)</i></p> <p>Full pg - \$110 1/2 pg - \$70</p> <p><small>All prices are not including GST</small></p>		<p><b>BLACK &amp; WHITE</b> <i>(non member)</i></p> <p>Full pg black &amp; white - \$132 1/2 pg black &amp; white - \$84 1/4 pg black &amp; white - \$54</p> <p><small>All prices are not including GST</small></p>
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**To become a member visit** <http://www.hff.org.au/membership/>  
 For further information please contact Emily: [eg@asnevents.net.au](mailto:eg@asnevents.net.au) or Ph 03 59 832 400

# Accredited training for the Hydroponic Industry



Education for  
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## THE NATIONAL PRECISION GROWING CENTRE

Chisholm's National Precision Growing Centre is proud to offer Hydroponic industry accredited training via blended learning. This allows participants to study via a combination of online learning, workplace assessment and practical workshops at Chisholm's specialist facility. Study from anywhere within Australia, or overseas if required.

The National Centre for Precision Growing is located at the Cranbourne campus, and is the only purpose built glasshouse training facility in the Southern Hemisphere. The centre offers growers the opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge, as well as having existing skills recognised.

### Accredited training (full time and part time)

- Certificate II in Horticulture (Production)
- Certificate III in Horticulture (Production) – apprentice training
- Certificate IV in Horticulture (Production)
- Diploma of Horticulture (Production)
- Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) training
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