



# Hydroponic Farmers Federation Newsletter

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## **President's Report**



Welcome to our latest News Letter! Firstly I would like to thank the Committee, ASN Events, the Speakers and the Trade for making our Conference another successful event, the feed back I received from delegates was very encouraging. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Graeme Smith again on his most deserving Life Membership to the HFF, which was presented to Graeme at the Conference Dinner. It was a privilege for me to be part of this activity and great to see Graeme with a tear in his eye "in a nice way".

The trade show, was as always an eye opener, with new and interesting products and concepts. While I don't usually highlight specific trade products, items such as a Plant Growth Analysis system that enables the monitoring and analysis of the plant daily weight accumulation processes were of particular interest to me. This is a system that weighs individual stems in the greenhouse using a weighing unit developed especially for this purpose, data is transferred every 20 minutes by radio to the computer and then to a server to process data. The processed data being transferred to the grower via the Internet website on the following day. This truly highlights how far our industry has moved in terms of adopting technology and using it as a real tool for growing. Now while you are probably unlikely to find that sort of technology at my place in the short term, it just goes to show that the sky is really the limit with new developments and technologies as far as growers are concerned. The days of wishing we had technology are long gone, we now have many options open to us in terms of technology solutions.

Having said all that, growing still comes down to the skills of the grower, and how he or she interprets how the plants are growing at any stage. I have yet to find a computer that totally replaces the one vital resource – that of being the grower. The conference was certainly a place where growers could network with other growers and gain more information either via discussion or knowledge at the seminars. And to cap it all off our farm visit to Katunga Fresh certainly gave us some great insights in to how Peter van der Goor approached growing in a news high tech glasshouse.

I consider myself to be very lucky to be part of a great organisation such as the HFF and grateful to have a very motivated Committee, I am not just saying this, have a close read of this Newsletter and you'll be able to see what a great effort they all put in to the organisation. Well done to Tony B for producing what I think is our most informative news letter yet, and he was assisted this time thanks to David Pearson who provided the review on the Conference. But we are always looking for new ideas and reviews on how things are going, so make sure you contribute to Michael Tran's 'Wish List' which is contained in this newsletter!

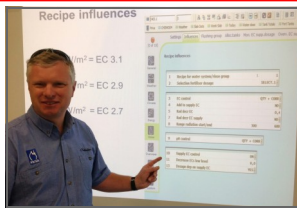
And finally we have one more Grower Meeting planned for this year and that is to be Held at George Bobin's place (B&B Basil). Whilst we have held meetings at Georges before, he is one Grower that is always looking for opportunities to enhance his business and has always been happy to share these opportunity's with us.

We always seem to have a large attendance at George's and according to the list of topics in the Grower Meeting flyer, this meeting should prove to be no exception.

SO SEE YOU THERE!!!!

Regards, John

## The Secretary



The recent HFF conference was once again a great event for me on two levels. Firstly it was good to be part of the HFF team and participate and network at the conference with other members. As an industry we can often lose sight of just what a great group of people make up the HFF. There are not many industries where you can call associates good friends, but that is certainly the case in both the HFF and the wider horticultural industry. I also had the chance to wear my 'trade' hat for Chisholm Institute and join the other members of the trade to promote our services. It is really good to have the chance to meet and chat to growers at these events and to work towards providing solutions for people. In contrast to the HFF event, I also recently travelled to Brisbane to present a paper at the International Horticultural congress. This was certainly a bigger event than the HFF conference with several hundred delegates in attendance. My presentation was only 15 minutes long, but with the breakout rooms housing 200 plus people, it provided a sizeable audience for my limited pearls of wisdom. The event also had a trade show, but I have to say that the HFF event certainly provided a far more comprehensive range of trade displays than the International event—so well done everyone who exhibited at the Mulwala event! Many of you would be aware that the HFF has been trying

assist Turkhoo in Mongolia in setting up hydroponic vegetable growing to assist in providing an extended growing season. Our last request for funding was rejected, but with a new Government comes a change of thinking. David Pearson and Chris Louey from Chisholm's International department have once again submitted an application for funding under the AusAid project. So we are now playing the waiting game again to see how the application is received. I would like to express my thanks to both David and Chris for the hard work they have been putting in to try and make this project a reality. Finally, there are changes ahead for me. After twenty two and a half years of working in the TAFE system, I have decided that it's time for a change, so I am leaving TAFE and returning to private industry. This TAFE journey has seen me being involved in establishing a horticultural training department firstly at Chisholm's old Bonbeach campus and then at Cranbourne. The time I have spent in education has certainly been challenging. It has been an honour to train so many students who have now progressed through the industry and are now employers in their own right. Developing the greenhouse training facility has been one of the highlights of my career and I feel proud in the fact that I have been involved in developing a legacy for the greenhouse industry to continue to utilise. Chisholm is committed to continuing to develop the facility after I leave. My new role will see me working more directly with Priva products, which is a passion of mine, so exciting times ahead for me! TB

## Membership Report



I am pleased to report that the HFF Membership has increased by some 23%. Whilst this is good news, we need to look at continuing to increase our member base—if we are not going forward we are effectively going backwards in the scheme of things. Our conference did give us the expected increase in membership numbers. The reason behind this is that delegates who looked at attending the conference, and were currently not members of the HFF, soon did the maths and realised that taking out a membership gave them a better deal for the discounted registration at this year's HFF conference! This isn't an issue for us in that we were more than happy to welcome these individuals to the conference and were also able to 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. The committee has also looked at the potential of student memberships, and the reality is that an affiliate membership gives the best value for money to the new entrants to our industry

Happy growing, Tony Spurling. Membership secretary.

## Searching for Lost Super

Despite many of seeking an instant fix to our retirement plans by winning the lottery, the reality is that we need to plan for retirement. Sarah Portanier of Prime Super offers the following advice in making sure you account for Super scheme that you may have contributed to in the past

### Over \$18 billion in lost super – could some be yours?

Not taking an active interest in your super is one thing. Completely losing track of it is another. Yet as at the 31st of December 2013, the ATO reported there was a total of over six million lost and ATO-held accounts out there with a total value of just over \$18.2 billion.

### Could it be yours?

The 2014 Westpac Lost Super Report found that only 13 per cent of respondents believed that they might have some lost super, but given the actual number of lost and ATO-held accounts, it seems likely that this is an issue affecting more than 13 per cent of us.

### How much lost super is in your postcode?

Victorian postcode 3030, the region around Werribee, tops the state list with 6,143 accounts amounting to over \$46 million, while over in Launceston some 2,500 accounts hold a total of \$22 million waiting to be retrieved. To see how much lost super is in your postcode, visit [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au).

### How does super get lost?

- If your fund becomes unable to contact you there's a good chance you'll lose track of that super account. Once they receive two pieces of return mail they are obligated to report you to the ATO as lost and transfer your funds.
- On starting a new job many people join their new employer's default fund and eventually forget about their old account. After five years if the account balance is under \$2,000 this amount must be transferred to the ATO.
- Much of the money in the ATO's super coffers belongs to accounts that are eligible to be withdrawn. This is known as unclaimed super and again becomes lost when the fund is unable to contact the member. This can include the super of people over 65, non-member spouses, deceased members (whose funds can be transferred to their beneficiaries), or former temporary residents.

### How do I find it?

The easiest way is to check with your super fund and ask them if they can organise the search on your behalf. Prime Super provides this service to all members. All you need to do is make contact and give your consent for the search to happen.

**For help locating super, or for any general super, insurance or retirement questions, please contact your Prime Super Regional Manager Rod Stewart on 0428 558 158 or email [rstewart@primesuper.com.au](mailto:rstewart@primesuper.com.au).**



Prime Super is an industry super fund  
providing personal support to help you achieve your retirement goals



## The Thin Blue Line



Using hydroponic growing techniques for illegal crops is rarely far away from the news these days as the less than scrupulous members of the community try and produce drugs in a variety of ways. So it is heartening to know that Victoria Police are taking a very proactive line in supporting commercial growers. Detective Senior Constable Luke Billing of the Security and Organised Crime Intelligence Unit recently spent some time with HFF Secretary Tony Bundock looking at how a commercial greenhouse operation functions. Luke was able to see how growing set ups are designed to focus on maximising production as well as being highly efficient in water recycling. One of Luke's roles is to act as a communication point for growers to go to if they have any criminal concerns that relate to growing. Issues such as fertiliser theft are obviously now high on the VicPol agenda with heightened terrorist awareness. If you would like to chat to Luke about any issues down the track he can be contacted initially via email at [luke.billing@police.vic.gov.au](mailto:luke.billing@police.vic.gov.au)

# Sustainable Chemistry and Hydroponic Farming

*At the recent HFF Conference, Ian James—Senior sector specialist of the Victorian Centre for Sustainable Chemical Manufacturing spoke on the topic of Sustainable Framing and Hydroponic Farming. Ian has kindly agreed to further his views in the following article:-*

Numerous businesses around the world have adopted sustainability as a key driver, not just for creating a good public perception, but as a driver for innovation and to grow the company. For example, the sustainability activities of British retailer Marks and Spencers last year generated a net benefit of 145 million pounds. Other companies such as McDonalds, Unilever and Gillette are using it to look at ways of minimising or utilising waste streams, reducing disposal costs and creating new revenue streams.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, chemistry has impact in 109 of the 111 industry segments in Australia. In the protected and hydroponic growing industries, chemistry has impact on the types of fertilisers used, improvements in the pesticides and insecticides available, all the way through to the design of materials used for your greenhouses and irrigation systems. Even in organic farming, improved chemical understanding can help improve yields and identify better uses for your waste streams. Chemical engineering is also key to helping improve your energy and water management systems.

Two years ago, the Victorian State government supported the formation of the Victorian Centre for Sustainable Chemical Manufacturing (VCSCM). This is a consortium of two research organisation with a strong experience in green and sustainable chemistry, Monash University and CSIRO, together with the Victorian EPA and PACIA. The aim of the Centre is to help companies in Victoria, and more broadly in Australia, adopt innovation into products and processes as a tool to help them develop and grow.

The Centre's key program is Sustainable Manufacturing Solutions which has two key activities, Industry Outreach, and Connecting Industry with Innovation.

## Industry outreach

We are running a series of workshops targeting specific issues which are relevant to key industry sectors; a couple of examples are sustainable packaging, and ways to extract value from bio-organic waste streams. These workshops are designed to help educate and train the workforce and to encourage the adoption of innovative techniques.

Our second outreach program starts with working with an industry sector to identify the key issues that impact them through a *Round Table Meeting*. Utilising this feedback from the industry, we organise a *Solutions Forum* in which potential solution providers to meet with a present to the industry. The solution providers come from a range of backgrounds including those with products, processes and engineering solutions already in the marketplace, industry experts and consultants, companies that have found solutions, research experts and federal and state government representatives.

## Connecting Industry with Innovation

We are working with businesses to help them identify areas where innovation, research and / or technical advice may help them overcome key issues. Through our network, we have access to a broad range of chemistry and chemical engineering expertise and will work with the company to identify key research providers who have the expertise and the aptitude to provide solutions to their problem. We will also help the business with any applications for funding support that they seek.

Regardless of the nature of research and development, there is a significant cost involved. This can be an impediment to many businesses embarking on potentially valuable work, so the government, both federal and state, offer a range of programs that can help alleviate these costs.

The Federal Government operates a few relevant programs including: The R&D Tax Incentive, and the ARC

# Sustainable Chemistry and Hydroponic Farming

Linkage grants designed to encourage industry to utilise the Australian research community. It is also recommended that people monitor the federally supported Entrepreneur's Infrastructure Programme, and the Regional Infrastructure Programme at website [www.business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au). At the time of writing, the details of these programmes have yet to be finalised, but they are likely to involve program that will support increased innovation, and / or improved sustainability, in business.

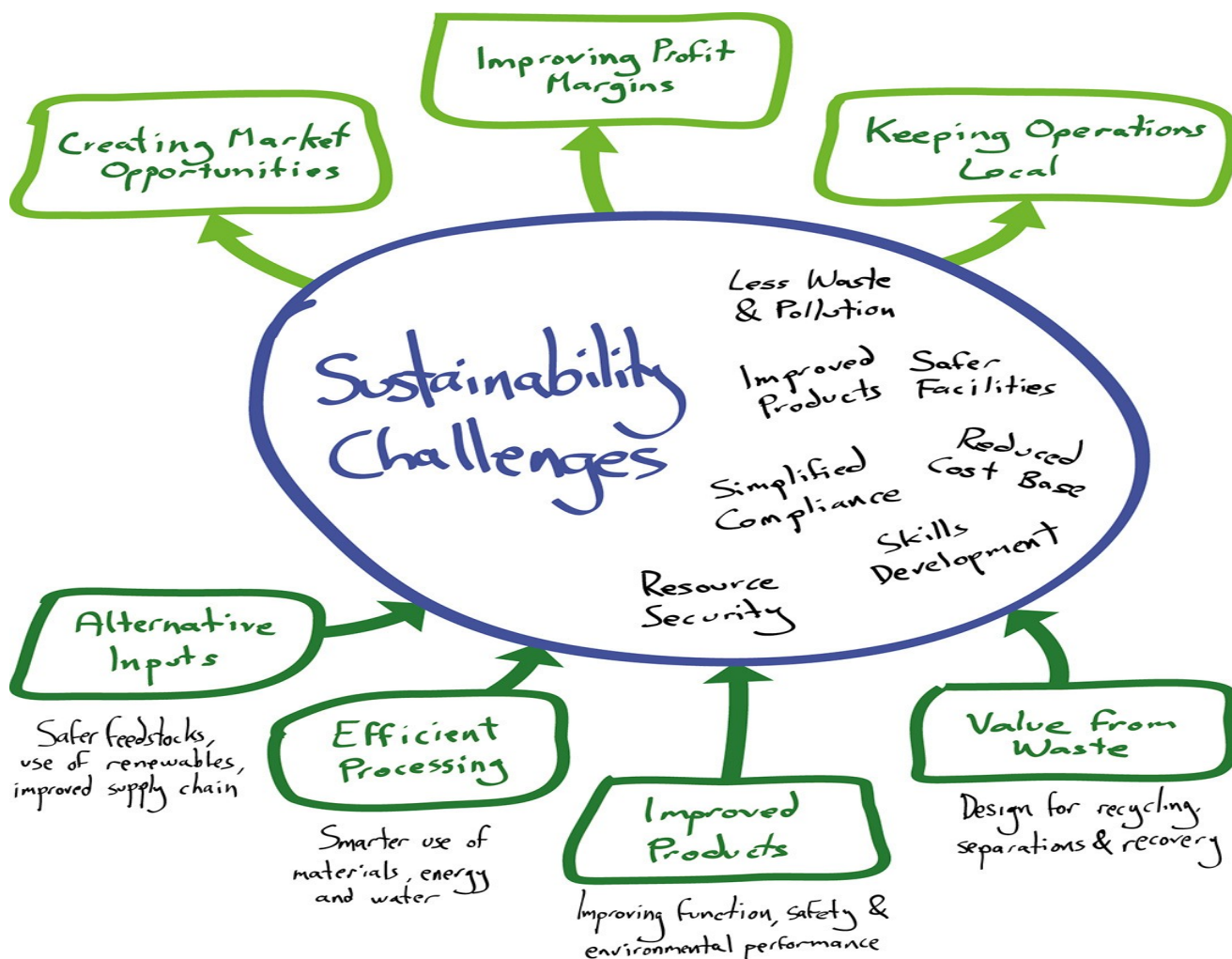
Many states offer support to help innovation and sustainability. For example in Victoria the programs include:

R&D Innovation Voucher which is targeted at companies who have had limited exposure to the research community.

Smarter Resources Smart Business program designed to help improve a business's sustainability.

Another option for support with small innovation programs is to access a university's fourth year engineers program. Monash University, like many of the Australian universities, require their 4<sup>th</sup> year engineering student to participate in an industry related research project. These involve low cost to the business and are a great opportunity to tap in to utilise the keen minds of the students, and their supervisors, to tackle a problem directly relevant to your business.

Innovation, especially in the area of sustainability, is an important tool for improving a business's efficiency and profitability. The VCSCM, combined with the funding programs mentioned above, can provide great opportunities for companies to access some of Australia's leading research capabilities to run programs that will help them drive their business forward.





# HFF 2014 CONFERENCE MULWALA



Our recent conference at Mulwala was hailed by all as a great success although a bit of a grind for those travelling from interstate who had to drive for a few hours after a flight. On determining the venue for this year's conference your committee had a tedious job of deciding firstly what city to hold it and then finding a suitable venue within that city. After a long and laborious inspection of both Shepparton and Mulwala we decided to go with Mulwala. The main reason for our choice was that, although Shepparton was closer to Melbourne the only suitable venue there did not have any accommodation close by whereas at Mulwala everything was self-contained, and after a long day and late night of the compulsory networking / consumption, a taxi wasn't needed to get home to bed. That was apart from those who wished to continue on long into the night wouldn't be inconvenienced by waking in a strange location wondering how they arrived there.

It is always a very difficult choice to select a venue, as wherever it's held, will always be a long travel for someone as we are such a diverse lot in respect of our operational locations.

Behind the scenes we had ASN Events working hard, and Emily and Simon did a great job. As you can see from the pictures below, they were not always hard at work..... However the venue proved to be very successful, particularly for our trade members as they were in a central position and close to the action all the time. The bar in their area also worked a treat for their 'tradies' welcome drinks. All trade members reported a successful conference result and some good orders into the bargain.

Another innovation at this year's conference was to have no concurrent sessions which allowed every delegate the opportunity to attend every presentation and technical session. Our feedback on this subject was that it was far more popular than the alternatives we have had in past years. The raffle was a great incentive to gamble a few extra dollars with the prize being a very enviable trip with Graham Smith's North American/Canadian/Mexican study tour, subsequently won by Tony Bundock and very generously donated by the 'sorcerer' to his young apprentice. The conference also saw the HFF bestow its highest honour on Graeme Smith, by awarding him life membership of the HFF. This also saw Graeme being rendered speechless—something that isn't often seen! But on a serious note, this was a well deserved award. Graeme has been a driving force in the HFF since being the foundation Secretary of the organisation in the early '90's, and has been heavily involved in the development of the organisation, which has seen it grow to being the effective grower self help group that it is today.

Our formal conference dinner proved to be a great night and our thanks to the sponsors and also for the music provided as well. The comedian received mixed reviews but most thought he was a worthwhile addition. The other alternative forms of entertainment we considered were vastly more expensive and actually prohibitively expensive as it turned out. (Apart from Michael Tran that is, who provided most of the entertainment on the dark side.)

We are already working on the plans for the next one in two years time, so if anyone has anything positive or negative by way of suggestions, your committee would love to hear from you.





# HFF 2014 CONFERENCE MULWALA



As part of this year's HFF Conference, a raffle was held for a place on the forthcoming PCA study tour of America. The lucky winner of this prize was Chisholm Institute trainee Michael McLachlan. Initially the raffle was actually won by Chisholm staff member and HFF Secretary, Tony Bundock, who has kindly donated the prize to Michael.



'There is no doubt that the trip would have been a great opportunity to see progressive horticulture in that region, but I strongly believe that the future of our industry lies with the younger members of the horticultural community. Michael will certainly learn a great deal on this tour which will aid him in progressing his career and knowledge' said Tony.

When first told about the trip, Michael was convinced at first that it was all a joke. 'Anyone who knows Tony well will know that he has a very strong sense of humour, so I thought he was winding me up! However, I'm pretty happy to discover it's for real!' said Michael. 'It's going to be a massive high point in my student career and I'm really looking forward to the experience.

However, there's no such thing as a free lunch! So Michael will be presenting an overview of his travels and experiences to HFF members at the grower meeting that follows his return.

'Whilst I am really excited about this trip, I am also very grateful to the HFF for presenting such a great opportunity to me, and I am really keen to repay the favour by presenting my findings to the members' said Michael.

Michael and the rest of the PCA delegation leave for America on the 1st of October and return on the 17th of October.

## Advertise with Hydroponic Farmers Federation in the HFF newsletter

### COLOUR *(member)*

Full pg - \$175  
1/2 pg - \$110  
1/4 pg - \$70

### BLACK & WHITE *(member)*

Full pg - \$110  
1/2 pg - \$70

*All prices are not including GST*



### BLACK & WHITE *(non member)*

Full pg black & white - \$132  
1/2 pg black & white - \$84  
1/4 pg black & white - \$54

*All prices are not including GST*

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



# 2014 CONFERENCE & FARM VISIT IN PICTURES



## Have your say on Michael's 'Wish List'!

Getting feedback from growers can be a tricky thing to do. In general, we are all something of an easy going bunch, and adopt the 'go with the flow' attitude as a standard. However, the committee is really keen to work towards addressing the needs and requests of the members. With this in mind, Michael Tran has taken it upon himself to be the listening ear of the membership and collate a 'Wish List' of ideas. What Michael needs from you is feedback and ideas. We now need to look at where we will hold the 2016 Conference—yes it's time to plan already!, and he is also keen to know what venues would be of real interest to members for the grower meetings. If you have any other ideas or suggestions, then please send them to Michael via his e mail on [mtran@eem.com.au](mailto:mtran@eem.com.au)



Michael Tran in his office.....





# OCTOBER GROWER MEETING



## Victorian Hydroponic Farmers Federation Grower Meeting

**Tuesday 21st October, 2014**

**B and B BASIL—George Bobin**

14 Rowena Street, Bendigo East VIC 3550

**COST:- FREE FOR HFF MEMBER—\$30 NON MEMBER GST inclusive**

- 09.30 AM Registration Tea / Coffee
- 10.00 AM Farm Tour with George Bobbin
- 12.30 PM Proceed to lunch venue—T.B.A.
- 01.00 PM Lunch and Networking
- 02.00PM HFF Meeting including guest speaker, Michael McLachlan—HFF raffle winner reporting on PCA Tour
- 03.30PM Close

**FOR CATERING PURPOSES PLEASE RSVP BY FRIDAY 17TH OCTOBER**

**PLEASE EMAIL RSVP TO John Elford — [johnelford@bigpond.com](mailto:johnelford@bigpond.com) with the following details:-**

- NAME/S.....
- NAME OF BUSINESS/COMPANY.....
- PHONE NUMBER/email address.....
- HFF MEMBER YES/NO.....
- NUMBER PEOPLE ATTENDING.....

# Accredited training for the Hydroponic Industry



Education for  
Precision Growing



## 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
- Chemical User Course -Agricultural Chemical Users Permit (ACUP).

### Specialised short courses

- Crop Technician Course
- Specialist Priva Courses.

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