

Citrep

Issue #61 • June 2010

Newsletter of the Murray Valley Citrus Board

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Jan Denham

Chairman's Report

Grower annual consultations and approval of the 2010/11 budget have been the main focus of the MVCB for the past two months.

This process commenced with drafting and refining the budget in relation to the crop forecast and its finalisation after preliminary consultation with levy payers on the proposed budget.

This year, the consultation process was changed whereby levy payers were sent a draft of the proposed budget a few weeks before finalisation requesting grower input. This was instigated due to comments from levy payers in the past that the first time they saw the proposed budget was when they needed to vote on it. Although the process this year was not perfect, especially with the time given for comment, it will be fine-tuned next year to allow for a reasonable period for comment.

The Board appreciated those levy payers who took the time to give feedback on the proposed budget. Not all who put forward suggestions will be happy with the Board's final decisions, but all comments were given deep consideration in arriving at the final 2010/11 budget.

Ballot Results

From the voting papers received there was overwhelming support for the proposed budget. Considerable effort was put into reminding levy payers about the need to vote which resulted in increased participation this year; we hope for even better. We will continue with this push in 2011.

The consultation meetings held at Barham and Mildura raised some of the following issues that the Board will further address.

- The crop forecast to separate yellow and pink grapefruit predictions and actual as has occurred with Mandarins and Afourer Mandarins.
- Valencia final actuals for 09/10 should highlight the late picked Valencias that are held for juice contracts.
- Concern was expressed in regard to the reduction in funding to the Melbourne Citrus Committee (MCC). There needs to be consistent funding for this Committee and the Board will further communicate with the MCC as to the effect of this reduction for 2010/11.
- Market reports. Some growers see these as valuable for making decisions. Another perspective is that the selling figures in these reports do not reflect the reality of the market and are based on what the merchant quotes. Unless we can get some validation into the figures quoted, the market reports will be of questionable value. The Board will investigate other options for reporting to growers on market trends.
- The early marketing of fruit and its impact on domestic sales was raised. The MVCB will forward these issues on to Citrus Australia, as it is an area they have been investigating in their work on supply chain and connections.

Cont'd on page 3...



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Hugh Flett

Chief Executive's Report

As another citrus season gears up, the industry continues to face significant changes to its structures and operations.

Update on Sustainable Diversion Limits

As reported in the March edition of Citrep, the MVCB in conjunction with other horticulture industry groups throughout Sunraysia and the Riverland responded to the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) paper on Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL).

As a result of this and other responses, the MDBA appointed a group of consultants to conduct economic and social impact studies on various regions within the Murray Darling Basin (MDB). Rendell McGuckian Consulting Group (RMCG) were appointed to conduct the study of the Sunraysia area and met with the MVCB and other horticulture industry groups to discuss their initial findings, before editing and submitting the final report to the MDBA. The Board was pleased to see that the findings and data in the RMCG report supported the Board's view of the impact the SDL would have on horticulture and citrus in particular.

The MDBA is due to release its Draft Basin Plan in June, at which time industry and other interest groups will have 16 weeks to provide comment and feedback on the proposal. A 'Water for the Future' meeting was held in Wentworth on 9th April. Representatives from the MDBA and Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) in attendance, were still not able to answer many questions put to them about the construction of SDL and the likely outcomes. Considering that the draft report is due for release in a few short weeks, it is confounding to think that key representatives can not answer critical questions such as:

'What climate change model is being used as the underlying assumption in calculations for SDL?'

'Is the MDBA Draft Basin Plan going to address compensation for irrigators if there is a reduced availability of existing water entitlement?'

There has been much said about what the likely reductions to irrigators entitlements may be under the new SDL, with some views ranging from a 20% reduction to a 50% reduction in entitlement. Needless to say, irrigators will be bearing the brunt of any proposed change and the MVCB has a strong resolve to continue to represent the interests of citrus growers throughout the Murray Valley.

Queensland Fruit Fly

The QFF outbreak period was officially declared closed on Tuesday, 27th April concluding a challenging period for producers and resellers of fresh fruit. The absence of additional detections of QFF would suggest that the gravid female detected in the township of Mildura was a 'visitor' transported into the area by a traveller and further proof that the public awareness campaign must continue into the future. The benefit of being recognised as a Pest Free Area for market access can not be overstated.

During the outbreak period, the Board facilitated several meetings with DPI Victoria, AQIS and various packers, to ascertain whether there may have been a way for the protocols to be flexible enough to allow for fruit outside the 15km outbreak zone to be exported to the US, without the need for cold treatment at the conclusion of the outbreak. Despite the best efforts from all parties concerned, it became apparent that it would not be possible to achieve this outcome to the satisfaction of some of our export destinations.

The Japanese Department of MAFF commenced a weeklong visit on 26th May. This involved inspections of some packing sheds sending fruit to Japan this season, along with a review of the outbreak site, traps and meetings with both AQIS and the DPI. Fruit consigned to Japan does not require cold treatment under agreed protocols. The inspector also travelled with Board representatives to Barham and

Koondrook to inspect the outbreak site and traps in the area. Barham-Koondrook is still a declared outbreak area.

Horticulture Award 2010

In March, the Board facilitated a presentation by Safework SA on the new horticulture award which came into effect on 1st January, 2010. In attendance were growers and packers who gained an appreciation of some of the changes to the award, both from 1st January and some which have staged introductions commencing 1st July, 2010.

It became apparent during the meeting that there is still a great deal of confusion within industry as to what the changes will mean to individual employers and their employees. The importance of the need to document flexible working arrangements with employees was clearly emphasised, whether it was desired by either the employer or employee.

Comprehensive information is available at:

www.fairwork.gov.au/horticulture	131394
www.aigroup.com.au	1300 783 844
www.hac.org.au	02 6273 9600
www.nff.org.au	02 6273 3855

Hugh Flett
Chief Executive, MVCB



Neil Eagle

Notes from Neil Eagle

The two major issues confronting our industry into the future remain unaddressed.

1 Effective measures to enable the profitable marketing of our crop.

I speak of an industry-wide, planned, coordinated marketing program. The shining example of one such program over almost the last two decades has been 'Riversun'. Lamentably, this is now under challenge. Another positive, recent initiative is the grouping together of 30 growers in SA, as a marketing organisation.

However in this, a light crop year, we have growers and packers continuing to gas early Navels and swamping the market with unpalatable immature fruit, collapsing the price and switching off future demand.

This shortsighted action is fostered by some agents and retailers looking for a short-term advantage at the expense of the long-term market. Our industry must put in place measures to stop this self-destructive madness. Perhaps publicly exposing the offenders should be considered?

2 The on-going sorry saga of the mismanagement of our water resource continues.

- i Firstly, the lack of political will to show the strength to address the major loss in our system. That is, to build a weir at Wellington SA to be utilized in drought sequences, and in drought periods to return the Lower Lakes to their natural estuarine state. The evaporation savings would have prevented the devastating losses in our citrus plantings and all other Murray Valley irrigation industries during these past years.
- ii The total failure of all Governments to construct new dams, on sites already evaluated, for the future growth of Australia. The last two dams of Dartmouth and Thompson were constructed over 30 years ago!

iii The failure of our local government, rural and irrigation representative bodies to really challenge the basis of the 'new' Basin Plan, underpinned by the Water Act 2007; which nominates that the environment needs to take precedence over economic and social needs. This should be a concern for all! It is in direct conflict with the COAG National Water Initiative, which states - that equal weighting must be given to each of the three needs (environment, economic and social).

Also, the failure to challenge the CSIRO modeling, which has become the basis for establishing the Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL's) for each valley, prior to identifying what environmental problems need to be addressed and what flow regimes, if any, would be beneficial.

iv Governments frantically purchasing water from productive land, with no clear stated objective, but as a result threatening this nation's future food security.

The series of Basin Plan 'information meetings' being held in the Valley Regions by Minister Wong's Department, MDBA and ACCC, are not seeking true community input, as the 'consultation' is a charade. Consultation is where decision makers meet with those who will be affected by their proposals, to debate the issues at hand and arrive at agreed solutions.

Neil Eagle
Chairman, Mid Murray Citrus Growers Inc.

Chairman's Report *Cont'd...*

Thanks were expressed for the Crop Forecast data provided by the Board, as it is regarded as a valuable tool for growers. The Board invests a large amount of resources and time into compiling the Crop Forecasts. These figures are then supplied to Citrus Australia for the National Crop Forecast figures. Our specific thanks go to Mary Cannard (IDO) and Tony Bothroyd (Field Officer) who are committed to giving this detailed and predictive data.

Citrus Australia Affiliate Membership

The Board is disappointed that it's application for affiliate membership of Citrus Australia has once again been declined. The MVCB Board's position is that if Citrus Australia is to be a true peak industry body, it will need to encompass all sectors of the industry. Acceptance of MVCB and other industry bodies such as the Sunraysia Citrus Growers and the Mid Murray Citrus Growers will only strengthen Citrus Australia when making representations to government, as well as enhancing their image to growers in the region.

The MVCB will continue to work with Citrus Australia to achieve both our organizations' goals and over the next few months the MVCB will be working towards an MOU as proposed by Citrus Australia.

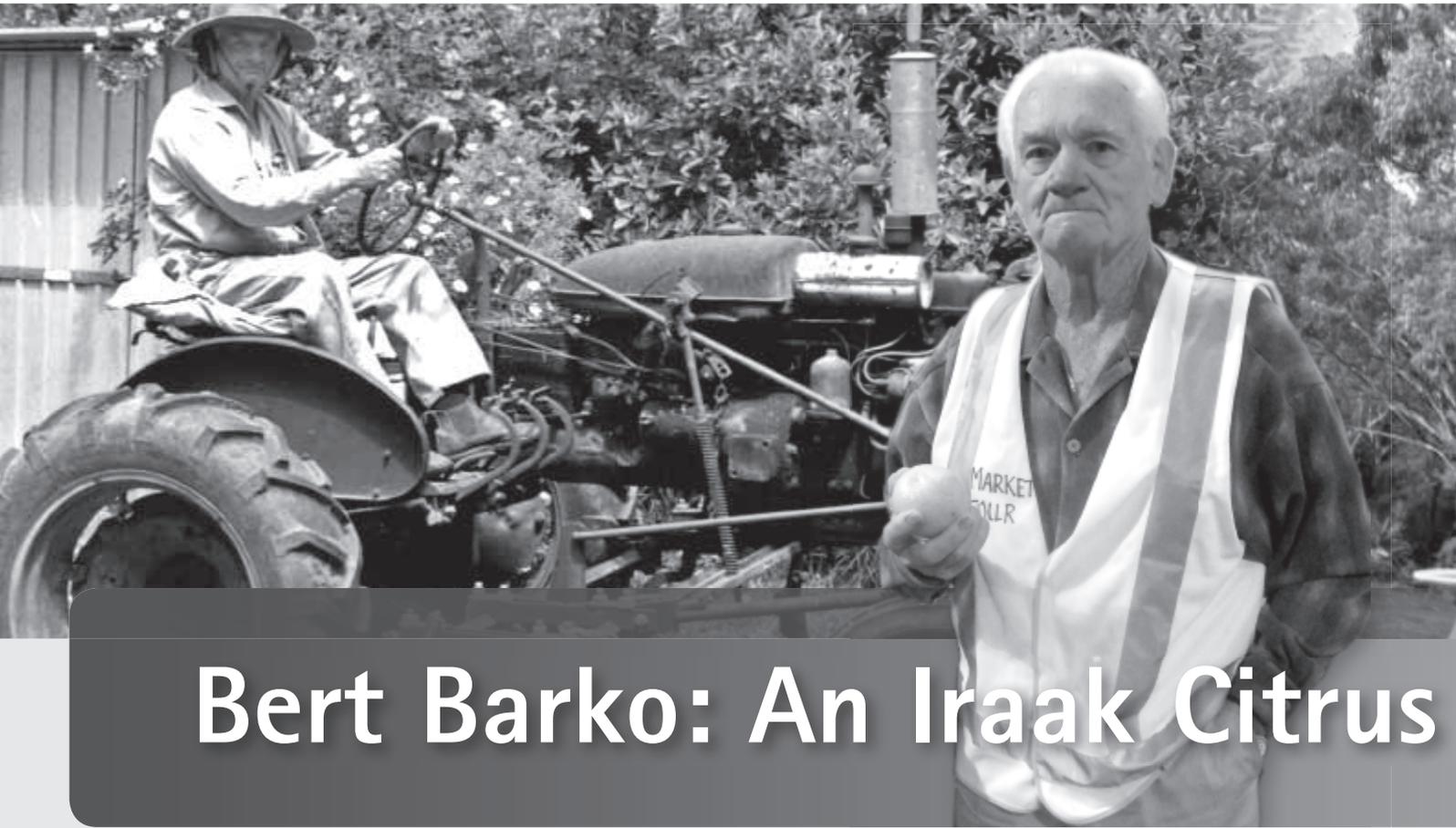
Board Resignations

Gina Petrascu (producer member from Barham) has resigned due to the purchase of a business, which is consuming most of her time. Gina is passionate about the promotion of citrus and represented the Board on the Melbourne Citrus Committee.

Stuart Holland, after 10 years as the Victorian DPI representative on the MVCB, is leaving due to his change in roles within DPI. He has stated that he will be back from time to time but in another role. Many past as well as current Board members will remember Stuart for the debates that took place, but will also remember his assistance in understanding the regulatory and compliance world.

The Board thanks both Gina and Stuart for their support and input to the MVCB.

Jan Denham
Chairman, MVCB



Bert Barko: An Iraak Citrus

Mr Bert Barko is a long time, well-respected citrus grower in the Nangiloc district. He and his family have been part of the evolving history of the area, having lived there since around 1940. At eighty years of age, Bert is still farming and remains actively involved in the citrus industry.

Like other pioneers of the industry, his story is worth telling, particularly from the viewpoint of his beginnings and the events that impacted on the development of his property. Given this, it is important that Bert be provided the opportunity to relate his experiences in his own words, as his comments and style are a true reflection of the man.

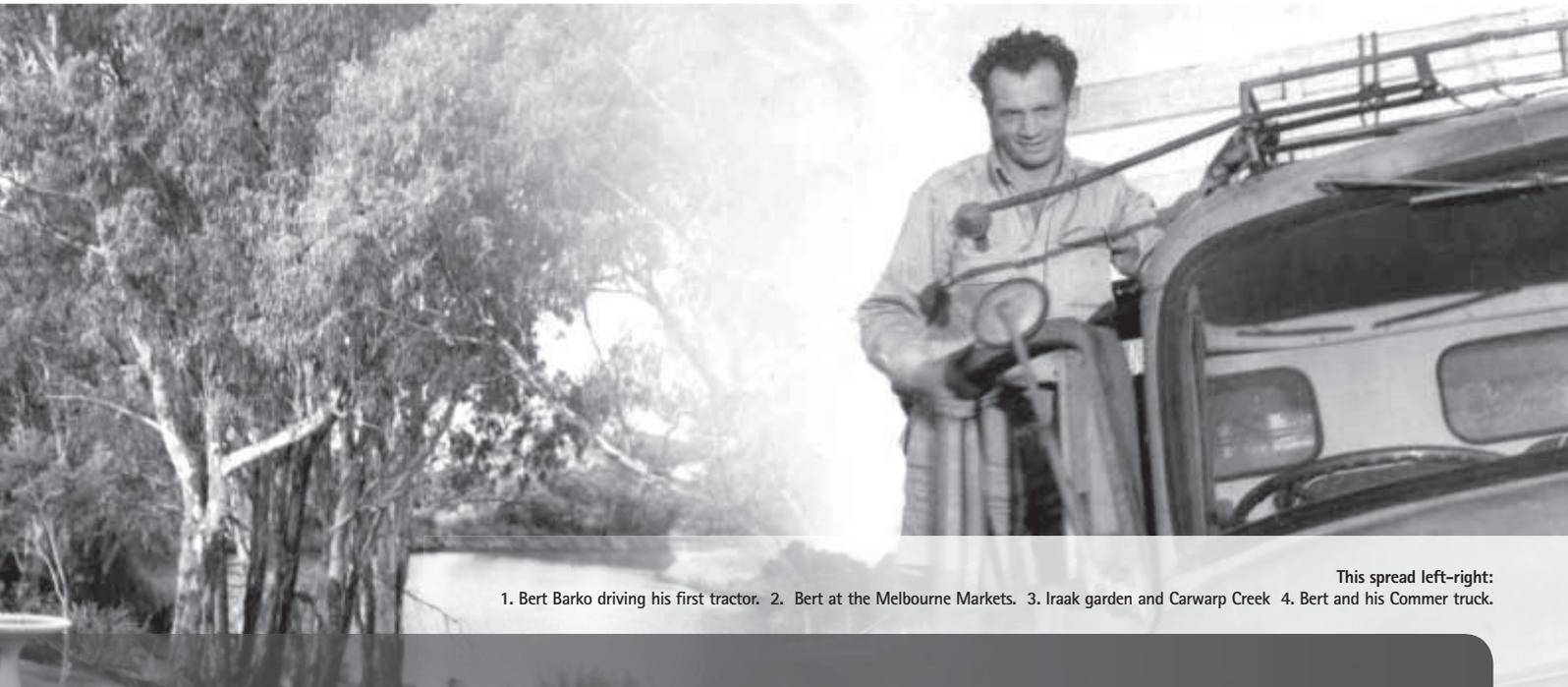
As an insight into just how different life was when he was born, Bert begins his story. 'In 1930, at the time of my birth my mother was alone in our family home on 11th street on the outskirts of Mildura, down near the river. Fortunately, the Water Ganger was going past the house, and he went to get the midwife who lived up the road. Luckily so, because the cord was wrapped around my neck and I was blue. I was the sixth child, in a family of eight. I went to school at Mildura West then to Nangiloc and eventually to Karadoc, where I achieved the Merit Certificate. At fourteen I left school and went to work full time on the family farm.

My father, Jim Barko, was a nurseryman (as was his father) in London. He migrated from England on his 21st birthday, choosing Australia on advice from doctors because of its hotter climate, as he suffered from rheumatic fever. He had organised a job as a specialist carnation grower for the Melbourne City Council, but the boat was late arriving and the position given to someone else. His search for work took him to Mildura, grape picking, where he met my mother, Ethel Bounds, while he was staying at a boarding house in 8th street, run by her parents.

In 1935 my parents purchased 50 acres of land at Iraak from Johnno Woods. My father used his horticultural knowledge to grow vegetables to be sold in Mildura and Melbourne. During World War 2, we grew pumpkins under contract for the Australian Forces. My two older brothers enlisted in the AIF and went away to war. At the end of the war, Jim returned from service in New Guinea to work on the farm, but our oldest brother Laurie did not return. He was killed in service in New Britton.

With Jim's return, the family first planted citrus on the property. In 1946, 200 Leng Navel trees were purchased from Ivan Wiffen's Nursery in Nursery Ridge, Red Cliffs. These were watered with portable sprays, and we grew vegetables amongst them. The water was pumped from the river with a single cylinder Southern Cross diesel into a channel and then pumped by a 4 cylinder Dodge with a gas producer into a pipeline and portable sprays.

Around 1950, my brother Jim left the farm for a solid settler block at Hamilton. I started driving a truck overloaded with our vegetables to sell at the Queen Victoria Market in Melbourne. At that time, we also planted 7 acres of Imperial Mandarins and purchased the next-door property of 18 acres from Ken Murrell. Along with my parents and my younger brother Alan and sister Avis, we continued to grow vegetables and citrus together until Alan and Avis moved away.'



This spread left-right:
1. Bert Barko driving his first tractor. 2. Bert at the Melbourne Markets. 3. Iraak garden and Carwarp Creek 4. Bert and his Commer truck.

Grower and Local Historian

When I asked Bert if he had any stories about the Melbourne markets he replied, 'I have been going there for forty years and could tell you a thousand stories.'

'I carted vegetables down to Melbourne a long time before I took citrus. My first trip was with Rex Collet in 1946, just to get experience. In 1948, my father and I bought a 5 tonne Commer truck and did the trip to sell our lettuces and carrots. In those days the speed limit was 30mph and one way to Melbourne took about 14 hours. We would leave around lunchtime and arrive about 3 o'clock in the morning. To set up, we would just take the tarp off the truck; sometimes having a sleep before the buyers arrived. The market would open at 5 or 6 am depending on what market day it was. If we didn't sell all the produce we would stay overnight for the next day's market. In that case we would sleep in the truck, sort out the load and eat at the cafés around the market area. On the journey home, a favourite stopping place was a café at an apple orchard at Harcourt, operated by an elderly couple. We would usually stop and fill up with petrol at Charlton.

Some Queen Vic market memories include a buyer named Bob Hope who used to gamble with the Jewish buyers, throwing two-shilling pieces to a line. (The one whose coin was closest to the line, won the lot.) They would then start over again with much excitement. Bob was reported to have the

first self-service green grocery at the time, where customers helped themselves to produce as today. I remember he was always dressed very roughly for a prosperous fellow.

I also remember the Chinese market gardeners and greengrocers in the 1940's. They grew things that took a lot of handling, like spring onions, bringing their produce to the market with Clydesdale horses and covered wagons. They would back their wagons into their stands in A and B sheds close to Victoria Street, unharness the horses and tether them on Victoria Street with a nosebag of chaff. They would munch away quite happily. The greengrocers would back their wagons into the footpath, unharness their horses and tether them alongside their wagons with nosebags of chaff as well.

Later on, I had a stand in the K&L shed, when the Victoria market expanded. It was supposed to have been built over an old cemetery. The headstones had been moved somewhere else!

The buyers pushed trolleys to collect produce: no forklifts in those days. In later years the market became very busy and crowded. Traffic controllers were needed to keep the trolley congestion down. The Footscray Market was developed at this time because of congestion issues.

Bill Cooper, a grower from Glen Waverley became a friend. Sometimes I would stay with his family between markets. Years later, he retired and sold his farm of just over 20 acres for housing development. They kept a block for themselves, built a house and watched the suburb grow around them. Over the years I knew of a number of local Melbourne growers who sold their land for suburban development and bought farms further out, only to sell the new farms at a later stage for new developments again.

Other local Iraak and Nangiloc growers who were selling their produce at the markets were Rex Collet, Jimmy Gibbs, the Briggs brothers, Bill Johnson, Pop and Boy Baker and Alan Blake.

There wasn't any security at the Vic Market. Vagrants would just come to sleep there under cover. One day, we found a young bloke asleep on the back of the truck amongst the boxes. Luckily, we happened to check the load because we were ready to head home.

There weren't the supermarkets around then, but there were lots of buyers of different nationalities buying small amounts.

Cont'd...

Bert Barko: An Iraak Citrus Grower and Local Historian *Cont'd...*

When my parents passed away, I farmed alone. I decided to plant more citrus, which included Navels, Grapefruit, Lemons and Ellendale Mandarins. The citrus was packed at Nangiloc and sent to Melbourne and Sydney Markets. I also continued to drive the truck with my produce to the Victoria and later Footscray Markets.

I finished growing vegetables in the 90's to concentrate on citrus. I had bulldozed the lemons out in the 80's because they were too spiky! Around 8 years ago, I replanted the original Leng Navels with Navelenas, Washingtons and Lengs. Then about 4 years ago I planted some Carra Carras.

Two years ago with the onset of water restrictions and poor prices, I decided to turn the water off the Ellendales and Sunset Mandarins.



Bert fishing on the Murray River at his Iraak property.

At one time we had the largest patch of Imperial Mandarins in the area. They were usually only grown around the boundaries of properties. We grew the stock and budded it ourselves over to Imperial Mandarins. We found that because we had them in a patch they were not getting cross pollinated with other seeding varieties of citrus and were relatively seedless. We chose to keep planting citrus on the high ground and vegetables on the low ground. We had a number of acres of river flats that was suitable for vegetables. After I commenced farming on my own, I just followed this pattern of development for the property. I put in a wind machine a couple of

decades ago to keep the frost off the Mandarins. This was a successful innovation that helped save a few crops over the years. I am currently having it converted to automatic start up in the frost so I don't have to get up to do it!

Irrigation systems on my property have evolved from overhead sprays to low level sprays. I did this to prevent the over-use of water and salinity problems associated with Murray irrigation. I dig down in the soil to gauge how much water the trees need.

Iraak itself has an interesting history. It consists of an Island that is formed in flood time or high river by the Murray River, by a creek formally known as Carwarp washout (now Iraak Creek) and Callander's billabong. My property is not on the island but runs along the opposite side of Iraak creek. Iraak district has grown now to include properties north-west of my own through to Kulkyn way. When we first lived there, however, only the island and properties along the creek were developed. In the decades since, particularly the sixties, vast areas have been cleared and developed as horticultural properties defining the new Iraak boundaries.

I believe that my property was originally part of Karadoc Station. Arthur Carol originally owned Iraak Island. It was then subdivided and sections sold to Bluey Munn, Dave Major, Cal Callander, Len Murrell, Henry Wager and Ernie Johnson. These men, some recently emigrated from England, had cleared the island for horticulture and were already farming at Iraak when my family arrived.

It was a dirt track into Red Cliffs when I first arrived there. We were self sufficient, baking our own bread, killing our own meat and running dairy cows. We didn't start out with tractors but had two draught horses for ploughing. We only went into Red Cliffs once every six weeks and mail would arrive by truck once a week. As a child my siblings and I were entertained by ferreting for rabbits, fishing, swimming and exploring the bush. Paddlesteamers were still a regular sight on the river dragging mill logs on barges.

I was a bachelor until my partner Betty McGlashan joined me in 1976. She was a widow with four children, two of whom were still quite young and living at home. We raised her son John and daughter Jackie, and were together for 31 years before she passed away three years ago.



Bert with his partner, Betty.

I was a keen shooter and fisherman for many years. I started boxing in Red Cliffs when I was 22, introduced to the sport by Reverend Garth Cracknel. I enjoyed this sport immensely, a hobby that I shared with my brother Alan and neighbour Bill Johnson. I played football for Carwarp, and later on was a goal umpire. Often my sport and social life suffered because of the time devoted to preparing loads, driving to and selling at the wholesale market in Melbourne. These days I enjoy playing lawn bowls and bingo.

I was a director of Sunraysia Growers Cooperative for a few years.

Key issues faced by growers in the past:

The big issue for me was when they stopped growers selling their own citrus in the wholesale market. We had no alternative but to send produce to agents. Thankfully, this decision was overturned as it was found to be unlawful and anti-competitive.

Personally, an issue that I see as important is the degradation of bush around my property. Large areas have salted-up and died back. This coincided with the huge clearing of land and horticultural development in the area. In my lifetime I have seen thriving natural bush change to *no man's land*.

Key issues facing citrus growers now:

It is hard to make a profit with water expenses, increased chemical and labour expenses and poor returns. Off farm

investments are far more profitable than investing on farm.

Over the years I took pride in the produce that I grew. I avoided using pesticides and encouraged worms in the soil under my trees. The lifestyle as a citrus grower is good. I'm my own boss. My office is the open air and I live in a beautiful, peaceful place next to Iraak Creek and the Murray River. I have been able to stay active on the property into now my 80th year and would do it all again.

However, I think there is too much citrus being grown. Oversupply will keep prices down and unprofitable. Am I optimistic about the future? Yes things can't get any worse!

Eddie Warhurst
Compiler



Jeremy Giddings

Flushing Drip Irrigation Systems

Drip irrigation is becoming the most common method of irrigation for citrus growers in the Murray Valley. Managers who adopt drip irrigation also need to begin implementing the appropriate management practices that are required for it to function correctly.



Remove flush valves (shown above) at least once per season to ensure a good flush along the length of the laterals.

The most important of these is the need to flush the irrigation system regularly. Filtration is also important with drip irrigation, however, the filter system is not designed to remove all particles from the water source.

Good drip filtration should remove particles at least 130 micron and above. Clay particles are typically less than 2 micron so they are allowed to pass through the filters and emitters. However, not all of this material passes through the system, and if algae and other organic material exist, coagulation can occur. The only way to remove this from the system is by flushing.

Important points to remember when flushing are:

- 1 Flush in the correct order - main, submain, laterals.
- 2 When flushing the laterals, wait for the second slug of sediment to be removed before closing the end of the lateral.
- 3 If flush valves exist on laterals, these should be removed at least once per season to ensure a good flush occurs.
- 4 A flushing velocity of greater than 0.5m/sec is required to obtain a good flush. To determine if this is the case run the water from a lateral into a bucket and time for one minute. A good rule of thumb is a discharge of no less than 5 l/min for 17mm diameter laterals, and greater than 7 l/min for 20mm diameter laterals.
- 5 Take note of the sediment being flushed. If it is thick and dark in colour, more frequent flushing is required.
- 6 Departments in both Victoria and NSW regularly run drip irrigation workshops, where more detail on flushing, as well as chlorination, is available.

Jeremy Giddings
Irrigation Officer, Industry & Investment NSW, Primary Industries



Gate to P

I was fortunate to be a participant in the *Gate to Plate* bus tour to Melbourne for growers and packers, held from Tuesday, 9 March to Friday, 12 March 2010. Organised by Ms Mary Cannard, Industry Development Officer, MVCB, the initiative proved to be very worthwhile.

The tour was aimed at encouraging growers to become practical participants in activities, which introduce them to new ventures and networks that will increase their information base.

As the compiler of Citrep, I certainly gained from the opportunity and am determined to write some follow-up articles, particularly on the Melbourne Market as it prepares for its anticipated move to Epping in 2012.

The *Gate to Plate* tour concentrated on four main venues:

Tour of the Melbourne Markets, Footscray

October, 2009 marked the 40th anniversary since the Melbourne Market commenced trading on its current Footscray site. The Markets have been conveniently located only three kilometres from the centre of the City of Melbourne at 542 Footscray Road, since October 1969, having formerly traded at the Queen Victoria Market, from 1878, the Eastern Market from 1847 and the Western Market from 1841. The latter dates back to just six years after Victoria's original settlement at Port Phillip Bay.

Managed by the Melbourne Market Authority, the current market comprises the Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market, the National Flower Centre and an extensive range of associated businesses and industries.

It is a significant part of the State's economy. More than 7,000 people currently work or do business at the site and the annual turnover of produce exceeds \$1.5 billion.

Many are family businesses that have been involved in the industry for generations. Some of these now operate interstate and overseas and include some of Australia's most prominent fresh produce operators.

Ms Jan Claire, who runs *Wholesale Market Tours* organised our market excursion that visited the trading floor of fruit, vegetable and flower growers. Her comprehensive narrative highlighted that the Port of Melbourne has acquired the existing site and that the planned move for the Melbourne Market to Epping would go



This spread left-right:
 1. Bert Barko, Glenn Goldup and a Melbourne Citrus Committee member. 2. Glenn Goldup.
 3. Mary Cannard and Tony Bothroyd. 4. Eddie Warhurst (Citrep Compiler), Aldy Chin (Melbourne Market fourth generation Agent), Glenn Goldup, David Keens, Bert Barko and John Lace (Murray Valley Citrus Growers).

Plate Tour

ahead in 2012. (Epping was selected because of its proximity to Tullamarine Airport.) Ms Claire also drew attention to the importance of safety factors and the fumigation stations. (There is a lot of on-site security with security personnel walking the floors.)

'Quite a few businesses operate on site and the role of the DPI in the market is seen as extremely important, given that they have the power to confiscate.'

On the trading floor itself the market is effectively split into wholesaler and grower areas. Many operators trade five days per week starting around 1:00 am. By 8:30 am they are beginning to pack up. Supplying growers are mainly located within a two-hour drive from Melbourne.

Clearly, there are a lot of different and related businesses in operation as the Footscray Market is the one where everyone buys. This includes such entities

as the Victoria Market, Independent Grocery stores and across the hospitality industry. It was interesting to note that an Organic Growers Group has recently been established.

Throughout the escorted tour there was ample opportunity to talk directly to the wholesalers and this factor was greatly appreciated by the Murray Valley participants. Discussions were also held with the Secretary of the Melbourne Citrus Committee Inc, Mr Ange Usai and Mr David Castle, Marketing Manager, Melbourne Markets.

Warehouse space within the market is at a premium and is expensive to lease. Apparently, Epping will have enough warehousing on site when it comes into operation.

One trader commended the initiative taken by the MVCB in organising the *Gate to Plate* tour. 'It is important that growers obtain a different perspective. Often there are

differences in expectations, particularly around the definition of value. There is a need for a common trust that could develop along the lines of *You come and work with me for a day; I'll come and work with you for a day in return*. That may more clearly resolve what the stuff is worth to me and what it is worth to you.'

Three other observations were of interest:

- There were some associated businesses on-site such as signage operators, plastic bags sellers etc which assisted the traders in conducting their business.
- There appeared to be few buyers in attendance. The explanation being that electronic communications have now replaced to a large extent, direct sales from the floor.

Cont'd...

Gate to Plate Tour *Cont'd...*

- The pack-up was quick. Fork lifts and trolley carts dominated as unsold stock was efficiently moved back into the coolstores.

In all, Jan Claire did a first class job of introducing the tour participants to the market across a four-hour period. Much goodwill was achieved and a lot of information obtained. The brunch that followed with Greengrocers Victoria was relaxed and informative with Mary Stewart, Executive Officer and a number of her members in attendance.

Mary Cannard acknowledged the co-operation and support of the Melbourne Citrus Committee in the organization of this part of the program through Mr Des McNamara, who played a significant role to ensure that the visit through the market was informal and highly successful.

Tour of Costalogistics, Derrimut (located near Altona)

It was clear from the outset that this was a very impressive and efficient business that was specifically geared to Coles' produce.

Mr Tavita Sao, Manager National Operations, gave a clear power point presentation around the operation of the organisation. He outlined the main site components and what it does for the Coles distribution chain. The Costa Group is one of Australia's largest, diversified, family companies with operations in grains, fresh produce and third party logistics with four operations around Australia. (The Group has growing, packing, marketing and logistic activities in all states.)

The Costa Logistics capabilities were outlined and the growth strategy explained in terms of building new facilities, supply chain engineering, transport specification and inventory management.

The Group employs 1,167 people and services one major customer and twelve others.

It manages ~124,000 m² of distribution space, has revenues circa AUD \$100 million and volumes p.a. equate to >100 million cartons moved per year.

The technology used is the Manhattan Warehouse Management System that guides the supply chain intelligence.

Each year Costalogistics receives and delivers over 100 million units of product.

Some specific details of the Derrimut Distribution Centre are as follows:

18,000m²

28 million units p.a. / 700,000 pallets / 275,000 tonnes p.a.

Super Ripening Centre (Bananas)

Temperature controlled 2°C - 16°C

HACCP/SQF Accreditation

CCTV / WMS / RF

220 stores receive one delivery per day, every day!

The centre employs, allowing for seasonal variations, up to 250 team members. The shed operates seven days per week, 24 hours per day.



Following the power point presentation, excursion members were given a comprehensive viewing and discussion tour of the warehouse highlighting the control process from receipt to distribution. It was emphasised that this process was driven by Coles' buying philosophy where the product is sourced from the market and individual growers. The product must meet Coles' specifications.

The issue of wastage was discussed as well as time slotting for drivers in-bound and out, and the need to balance the commercial reality of product received and distribution to be made on time. Safety factors are also paramount.

The walk through began at the inbound end of the huge facility. It covered the receiving officer area - what stock is in, what is coming in and the identification of immediate needs.

The overwhelming impression was that the shed was highly mechanised and computerised.

The banana ripening rooms were in the final stages of construction. Bananas are the highest volume / most popular fresh produce in Australia. 22 rooms are being built to cater for the seven-day banana cycle from green to ripe where ethylene gas is pumped into the bananas.

The extensive fridge chambers that housed lettuce, grapes and some fruits etc were well worth experiencing and the Dispatch Centre was described as the engine room of the entire operation. (The liaison and co-ordination with Costalogistics transport partner, Linfox, occurred in this area.)

The NaanDan Jain Factory Tour

Mr Chris Lloyd SA/ Sunraysia State Manager, NaanDan Jain Australia, made the following comments:

'I was fortunate enough to join a small group of growers and dedicated staff from the MVCB on their tour to Melbourne to track the path of some of their produce.

The standout impression was the enthusiasm of the group for the Tour and what it could yield for the individual. For those growers who were unable to participate, from my perspective (that is as a person outside of the production of citrus growing) they truly missed an informative and eye-opening experience.

The opportunity to meet with agents in the Melbourne Market who were clear on branding and product requirements for premium price, provided very useful advice. The ability to also meet face to face and build relationships with the agents was for me the highlight of the tour.

My major contribution to the *Gate to Plate* tour was the morning spent in the NaanDan Jain factory in Dandenong.

NaanDan Jain Australia Pty Ltd opened its head office in Dandenong, Victoria in September 2004.

As a subsidiary of the global company NaanDan Jain Irrigation Ltd., the Australian company brings to the region advanced irrigation technologies. NaanDan Jain Australia has a comprehensive product range resulting from the merger of Naan & Dan in 2001 and Jain in 2007. Today, the company specialises in quality agricultural sprinklers, micro sprinklers, driptube and recently, driptape.

NaanDan Jain Australia has become increasingly active in providing the total solution for irrigation including design, filtration, control valves and importantly, high quality subsurface drip for orchard and field applications.

In 2006, driptube manufacturing was installed at the Dandenong site.

The company has an established dealer network and a presence in all Australian states and territories. This, together with a solid distribution framework and technical support, means NDJA is positioned to serve the Australian and Australasian market for many years to come.

During the tour, all attendees had the opportunity to see dripline manufacturing and have it explained. Personal attention was also given during the presentation to a range of product from under tree micro sprinklers to dripline.

The presentation was given by the Managing Director, Erez Cohen. With his previous experience in citrus growing in Israel, Erez had a special interest for this group. With his background and agronomy knowledge, some extra time was spent talking to growers in relation to their specific questions about drip tube installation and use.

Growers seemed most interested in the ELIMINATOR, a unique pop up micro sprinkler that has the ability to be bug proof during operation, as well as when not in operation. Dripline was also of interest, as many growers are looking to convert for greater on-farm efficiencies.

In closing, I wish to thank the MVCB for having the enthusiasm to conduct the tour and to the growers who attended. I feel all found benefit, inspiration and/or information that would help them better understand just what *Gate to Plate* means when it comes to their produce!

Tour of the Port of Melbourne

Again, this aspect of the visit was informative. Mr Don Forsdyke, Business Development Manager, Port of Melbourne Authority, outlined the future expansion of Melbourne Ports. Terminal Manager, Damien Ryan also provided the opportunity to have a discussion on the percentage basis of what goes in and out of the Port. This discussion was thorough and it was an added advantage to look out the

Boardroom window and appreciate the overall scale of operation.

Mr Glen Goldup stated that although initially sceptical he found the tour very worthwhile.

'I was quite surprised by what I saw. Once I got amongst it, my eyes were opened to how the market process operates, given the fact that the tour had free range of the floor. We send product there all the time, and being able to observe and compare its' quality and how it is displayed made me feel good about what we grow.



Agents do identify good growers and a lot of produce sold doesn't hit the floor.

I was disappointed that more growers did not participate. The MVCB tried hard in this regard and I hope they will continue to provide such opportunities!

Mr David Keens, Marketing Manager, Manna Farms offered the following response after a request for comment.

'I found that the tour throughout the Melbourne Markets was a fantastic exercise not only to see how the markets are run, but to have the potential to meet your wholesaler, see how your produce is presented by them and how it compares with the hundreds of others you are competing against in this industry. It is also a thrill to see your produce on the stands being sold, something all farmers should take a great deal of pride in.

I feel that these tour group opportunities are a fantastic way of understanding where and what happens to our produce once it leaves the farm, and how it may change during the process from farm to plate. I think that some farmers do not fully understand, or take pride in following their product from the orchard to the plate (or at least to wholesale) and by understanding this process would more fully appreciate our product, its value in the market and any possible areas of

increased value or opportunities we may be missing.

A great job by Mary, and something that we should continue with in the future. I know now I will be a regular at hopefully, Melbourne, Sydney and other markets, building and growing my relationships with the wholesalers to get the best deal for my products and to better our farms!

Some overall observations of the tour:

- *The excursion was well organized*
- *There was a pleasing cross-section of younger and older growers and key MVCB staff members in attendance*
- *The fact that ample opportunity was provided for growers to talk to agents at the Melbourne Market was acknowledged by the participants for the definite advantage on offer*
- *It was not the usual guided tour*

Clearly, all responses regarding the value of the trip were positive and participants openly encouraged more of the same. There are markets in Sydney and Adelaide and suitable opportunities exist in investigating packaging and processing outlets and actually observing how produce is presented when it gets to market.

As the organizer of the tour, the last word in this report rightly belongs to Mary Cannard.

'When I came to Mildura, I quickly realised that many growers were good at what they do, but had real concerns with regard to marketing their product. As a result, this is what this tour was all about. Growers need to be encouraged to visit their agents and co-ordinated opportunities are required to enable them to do this.

It is important for growers to find agents who suit their business so they can maximize their profits!

As an observer, I would gladly participate in any future activity of this kind. It was time and money well spent as the information gained was delivered in the actual work environments. Full credit to the MVCB for the practical initiative.

**E. Warhurst
Compiler**

Possible Problems with Plague Locust Hatchings in Spring

A recent incursion of locusts in the Sunraysia area may cause problems for citrus growers in Spring.



Young citrus tree defoliated after locust feeding.

The Australian Plague Locust, (*Chortoicetes terminifera*), is a native Australian insect that occurs naturally in the channel country, ie south-west Queensland and adjacent areas of South Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. Locust plagues develop following rainfall in this area. When locusts are present in small numbers they behave as a solitary insect and cause little damage, usually feeding on summer grasses. In large numbers they have been known to defoliate hectares of grasslands and horticultural crops.

Plague locust adults are easily identified by a characteristic black spot on the tip of each hind wing. Hoppers are more difficult to identify, however, if a large mass (band) of hoppers is found, it is most likely to be the plague locust.

Eggs

The adult female usually selects the barest and hardest ground available for egg laying, ie roadsides, tracks, fence lines etc. Eggs are laid 20 to 50mm beneath the soil surface in masses referred to as pods. Each pod can contain up to 50 pale yellow, banana shaped eggs, 5 to 6 mm long. Adult females can lay up to four pods before dying. Eggs laid in autumn remain dormant through winter and hatch in spring as soil temperature increases.

Hoppers

After hatching, hoppers grow through five stages, over four to six weeks, with the wing buds becoming more prominent in each stage. Hoppers often concentrate into dense moving bands which can vary in size from a few square metres to several hectares.

Adults

After the final moult, winged adults emerge and concentrate into swarms which make low drifting flights during the day. Locusts normally settle and do not feed at night.

Control

In Victoria, the control of locusts and the cost, is the responsibility of landholders. Deep cultivation of egg beds will destroy the eggs, while hoppers and adults can be controlled by using insecticides such as Carbaryl, Fipronil, Diazinon, Fenitrothion, Maldison and Chlorpyrifos – none of these chemicals are registered for use on locusts in citrus. It is best to direct insecticide sprays to hopper bands before they enter a crop.

However there is a biological control option that is registered for use in all crops. Green Guard® is based on *Metharizium*, a naturally occurring, insect specific fungus

that has been formulated for use as an insecticide to target locusts. Locusts are infected when *Metarhizium* spores attach to the insect. The spores germinate and penetrate the cuticle, growing into the body and internal organs of the insect. Mortality usually occurs 8-21 days after treatment, therefore it is advisable to treat when locusts are in the early hopper stages.

Other Options

Citrus is not a preferred food for locusts, but they will feed on citrus if their preferred diet (summer grasses) is not available. Young trees and new leaf flushes are more likely to be affected by locust feeding. However, large citrus trees have been targeted by locusts in the Longreach area in Queensland. One Sunraysia grower has reported young citrus trees being defoliated by locusts feeding on leaf petioles (see photo). Growing a cover crop between small trees may help keep locusts off young trees.

Spraying kaolin clay products also seems to interrupt feeding behaviour whether this is due to the change in colour of the foliage or the unpalatability of feeding on these leaves, is uncertain.

Growers should be aware that the recent incursion of plague locusts in the Sunraysia area has resulted in large egg beds being laid. A consequence of this is that large bands of plague locust hoppers may emerge in spring and, therefore, control options will need to be instigated before the emerging adults move into citrus orchards to feed. For more information please contact your local agronomist or reseller.

Mary Cannard

IDO, Murray Valley Citrus Board

Eradication of the 2010 Mildura QFF Outbreak

The 2010 outbreak of Queensland Fruit Fly (QFF) resulted from a detection of a single fertile female fly in a permanent trap site in the urban area of Mildura. A further outbreak was also detected at Barham (NSW) in February following the detection of several fruit flies in permanent traps within the town.

Due to the impact that QFF outbreaks have on the trade of locally produced fruit to both domestic and international markets, these outbreaks were classified as a priority 1 emergency response by the Department of Primary Industries Victoria (DPI). Priority 1 emergency response differs from other fruit fly outbreaks in that significant additional resources are made available to respond to the situation.

Ministerial Orders declaring both outbreaks were gazetted in January and February, 2010 respectively, allowing for pest eradication activities to commence and restrictions to be applied on the movement of QFF host produce sourced from or moving through the suspension zone. Similar arrangements were enacted for both outbreaks under the New South Wales Plant Diseases Act 1928, for the NSW component of the suspension zones.

Whilst the Mildura outbreak was eradicated for domestic and international markets accepting one generation and a 28-day suspension period, the Barham outbreak is still under active control following the detection of more flies within the suspension zone during February and March.

Some markets, including the USA, require longer suspension before reinstatement to area freedom can occur, which is having direct implications for the citrus industry. Information for each of these outbreaks and maps of the restricted zone can be accessed by visiting www.dpi.vic.gov.au/psb or by calling **136186**.

Growers within the restricted zone who wish to export, can access further information by contacting AQIS or by visiting www.aqis.gov.au/phyto/asp/ex_DocumentList.asp.

As a routine activity, post any DPI emergency response, the Executive Director of Biosecurity Victoria has commissioned an internal review into the response. The objectives of the internal review are:

- to describe the performance story of DPI's response to the detection of QFF;
- to evaluate the effectiveness of the plans, processes, management structures and systems used in the response;
- to identify key learnings and develop recommendations to improve DPI's emergency response preparedness; and
- to provide an opportunity for key industry personnel and DPI staff, directly or indirectly involved in the response to provide input into the review.

Industry has had input into this review by participating in an externally facilitated workshop which was held in Mildura in April. Representatives from the citrus, wine and table grape industries contributed along with the transport, export, packing and processing sectors.

DPI and industry preparedness to deal with a fruit fly outbreak was discussed at length, culminating with the major recommendation that DPI and industry should develop a QFF Outbreak Manual for each commodity (citrus, table grape, wine grape and stone fruit) which would be required to be reviewed by all agencies at the beginning of each season. This manual would clarify responsibilities and provide clear direction and procedures from declaration to reinstatement.

The Review Report, which will be given to the Executive Director of Biosecurity Victoria in early June, will summarise issues and present recommendations for consideration and action.

Further information may be obtained from:

Lyn Jacka,
Senior Pest Free Area Co-ordinator
DPI Mildura
Telephone 03 5051 4500

Mildura Development Corporation

Creating our region's future



Mildura Development Corporation (MDC) commenced official operations in April 2009. However, it had been working in transition from the Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board since December, 2008.

This independent, economic development organisation was formed from a decision taken by Mildura Rural City Council in June, 2008 to develop a new entity responsible for the growth of the regional economy.

MDC is responsible for encouraging regional development across the 22,500 square kilometres of the Mildura Rural City Council municipality. They also work closely with Wentworth Shire Council taking into account the common economic drivers of the overall region. Core funding is provided through the special rate that is levied across all businesses in the Mildura Rural City Council. This income is divided equally between Mildura Tourism and MDC. Other funds for projects are applied for through normal competitive processes.

MDC comprises nine Board members, each selected for their skills and business expertise:

Chair
Dane Huxley CEO Mildura Base Hospital

Deputy Chair
Mark Wilson Partner, Laser Electrical Ouyen

Public Officer

Marian Leuhman CEO, Sunraysia Residential Services

David Stevenson CEO, Sunraysia Murray Group Training

Chris Ellis General Manager Fruit Supply, Sunbeam Foods

Jenny Grigg Director Business Development, Sunraysia Institute of TAFE

Pam Strange Horticulture Facilitator, DPI

John Irwin Senior Consultant, Martin, Irwin & Richards

Eileen Pica Community Representative

Cr Nick Cavallo Mildura Rural City Council observer

With the commencement of the new organisation, a strategic planning process was undertaken and the Board members decided on a proactive vision statement – *'Creating our region's future.'*

There are five key goal areas that MDC is working to achieve:

- 1 Work with industry and business in facilitating growth in the Mildura region
- 2 Attract and develop new investment opportunities

3 Assist in building a vibrant and sustainable community

4 Develop productive strategic alliances with relevant funding partners

5 Consistently engage with stakeholders

Since its inception, Board members and staff have worked diligently in engaging with our key stakeholders and industry sectors as we work toward encouraging diversification opportunities and new industry attraction.

Our new economic profile was released in December, 2009. It details a range of data across all industry sectors and is a comprehensive document that will assist business and community groups. The document was produced with great assistance from the commodity sectors that provided their latest data.

MDC works closely with Mildura Wines and Mildura Region Transport & Logistics Cluster, both of which are industry groups that comprise representatives from across their sectors.

Dane Huxley



Anne Mansell



Helena Howe



Kathy Violi



Left-Right:
1 & 2. The Nevada Solar One project at Boulder City, Nevada.
3. This photo was taken of a display at the Solar Power International Conference in Anaheim and shows how solar pv can be integrated with horticulture.

Securing funding of \$75,000 from the Victorian State Government for the Wine, Beverage and Olive sectors enabled an Industry Workforce Development Strategy to be completed which will set directions and strategies over the next few years to encourage training, attraction and retention of skilled staff in these sectors.

Funding of \$200,000 was also secured for the Transport & Logistics Cluster to assist with the training and employment of a further 20 people into an industry that continues to grow.

More recently, funding of \$25,000 has been allocated from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under the AusProduce grant funding, to assist industry to investigate successful, vertically integrated marketing models within Australia and overseas. The Zespri model is one that continues to grow market share, particularly in China. This very successful grower owned international marketing company is one that works on supplier and customer relationships. It will be of great benefit to examine marketing models such as this in planning for new and innovative ways to gain market share.

One of the major areas of interest for MDC has been the renewable energy sector, particularly large-scale solar power developments. With funding opportunities available from the Federal Government under Solar Flagships and from the Victorian State Government, with their Large Scale Solar Project, MDC quickly

acted to promote the Mildura region as the best in Victoria for locating these developments. Marketing documents were well researched and designed to provide information to large-scale solar investors, both domestically and internationally. A great deal of interest has been maintained within the Mildura region with the acknowledgement of the three major criteria available for solar development:

- Flat land
- Sunlight
- Power grid

Our region is fortunate to have the 220kV lines linking into the Red Cliffs Terminal station and also an underground link to South Australia, providing excellent capacity for large-scale solar power developments.

MDC is also keen to explore the opportunities that may present themselves in smaller scale solar, particularly in areas of recently cleared horticultural land. To this end, we continue to work with solar developers as well as continuing to advocate to Government for a national gross Feed in Tariff (FiT), which would assist solar power development in regional areas with suitable climatic conditions.

Water is the lifeblood of our region and MDC continues to work with the commodity groups in ensuring the ongoing viability of our irrigated communities. There are certainly a range of challenges that our region is facing in terms of water availability and commodity pricing. However, there are also a number of opportunities that

are important to pursue, particularly in terms of marketing our quality produce domestically and internationally.

Infrastructure development is also a very important consideration and big picture issues such as the Transcontinental Rail Link to Menindee continue to play a very important part in our future vision.

Overall, the Mildura Development Corporation is committed to creating a long-term attractive investment environment to support the region's economic success. This can only be achieved by working in partnership with our local industries and commodity sectors.

Further details can be obtained by contacting:

Anne Mansell
CEO, Mildura Development Corporation
Telephone 03 5022 0722

Sunraysia Citrus Growers' Report

Earlier this year, a planning session was held to review the operations of, and to set the future direction of Sunraysia Citrus Growers Inc.

This session was attended by a number of invited guests with various experience in the citrus industry. It was facilitated by Leonie Burrows and aimed to highlight issues with SCG, as well as generate ideas to breathe new life into the organisation. The participants all made a significant contribution to the session and the SCG Directors would like to thank them for their input and their time.

The session involved a SWOT analysis of the current SCG operation, followed by a review of member expectations and a listing of recommended actions. A full outline of the session is available from the SCG Office. However, some key points were:

Strengths

- Financial position
- Existing structure
- Training ground for emerging leaders

Weaknesses

- Keeping the member register current
- Communication to members

Opportunities

- Build networks with organisations
- Build co-ordination capacity to address key issues

Threats

- Declining interest from growers/directors
- Lack of Board profile
- Competition for levies
- Fewer growers

Expectations

- Agri-political role on local/regional issues
- Good governance and financial management
- Work with MVCB and CA
- Timely communication to members
- Maintain capacity to address issues that arise
- Increase profile

Recommendations

- Review asset strategy
- Formalize relationships with other bodies
- Strategic plan to attack local issues that arise
- Develop communication plan and website
- Develop a membership strategy and accurate register

- Lift profile
- Review constitution
- Address feasibility of independent Chair

The Board is currently in discussions with an experienced person to work on an as needs project basis. Initially, this will involve the development of a communication strategy and to improve the accuracy of our members' register.

The Directors have also been looking at the long-term asset management of SCG, in particular the return on asset of the building at 58 Pine Avenue. To aid this review, an independent valuation of the building was recently commissioned. There has been some discussion of a long-term move to co-locate the various commodity groups, with the aim of sharing administrative and office resources. This is something that the SCG would review in conjunction with the MVCB if a suitable opportunity presents that maximizes our return on asset.

The SCG Directors welcome and rely on direct contact from our growers to discuss ideas and raise concerns. The SCG email address is scg@mvcitrus.org.au

The Directors wish you all the best for the coming season.

Vince DeMaria

Chairman, Sunraysia Citrus Growers

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information about
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please contact the

MVCB office on

03 5051 0500.

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