



Citrep

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Newsletter of the Murray Valley Citrus Board

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Jan Denham

Chairman's Report

Spring has well and truly arrived giving us warmer weather and longer days. With Spring, comes the start of next season's crops, along with planning to ensure that we produce the best crop possible.

Unfortunately, once again, we are starting the season with low water allocations and the price of temporary water is rising, making it difficult for those who need to purchase it.

I am continually amazed at the resilience of our industry. Under the most difficult times we are still able to produce good crops on limited water. If we were told ten years ago we could produce crops on such a low water application we would have laughed and said 'impossible'.

The United States, and generally the export market season has again been a successful one. However, the amount of small fruit on the market has created some difficulties. The US program is winding down due to the expected early start of their domestic Navel season.

The Board met with CAL to look at ways we could work collaboratively in the best interests of our industry. CAL will be looking for support from the Regional Boards as it sets goals for the next 3-5 years. The MVCB has always held the view that the best way we can address the issues of the citrus industry is to work collaboratively with all those who are part of our industry, and we welcome this direction.

CAL has announced some key issues which are:

- Public Affairs and Advocacy
- Domestic Market Promotion

Other issues are currently being developed.

The MVCB has a key role to play in addressing regionally relevant issues such as crop forecasting, industry data, regional promotions, OH&S matters and industry development. The Board is also responsible for communicating the latest technologies, systems and planting data to our growers.

Initial collaborative activity was the MVCB support for CAL's initiative of 'in-store promotion by growers' in Coles supermarkets in Melbourne in the first week of September. The MVCB covered travel and accommodation costs for growers from Sunraysia involved in the promotions. The Board's annual budget presented to levy payers in June included an allocation for this type of hands-on promotion.

The MVCB is also supporting the Melbourne Citrus Committee (MCC) with an amount of \$25,000 for their 2009 Navel Campaign. The total budget for this campaign is \$70,000. The MCC has been supported by the MVCB since its inception.

Their activities include a stand at the Prahran Market, 'in store' demonstrations, the Good Food Show, Athletics Victoria sponsorship and Schools Program. The Board will be receiving regular reports from the MCC and will keep all informed on their successes. Gina Petrascu is the Board's representative on the MCC, and has been integral in the development of the MCC citrus calendar and their promotional activities.

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

Finally, the Board was sorry to farewell John Tesoriero, our Chief Executive of the MVCB, in early September. John gave nearly 6 years of dedicated service to the Board and his professional guidance and management will be sorely missed. We wish him well in his new position as General Manager, Water Supply with Southern Rural Water.

Present and past Board members farewelled John at a dinner and presented him with a painting of the Psyche Pump Station by Mary Briggs, in appreciation of his work and as a memento of the region. On September 4, the Board hosted industry and community members for drinks, giving all the opportunity to say farewell. John appreciated the number of citrus producers and packers who attended or sent a message to wish him well in his new venture.

The Board welcomes Mr Hugh Flett, who will commence as our Chief Executive on the September 17. Many of you may know Hugh from his time as the NAB Regional Agribusiness Manager, for the Riverland and Sunraysia. He brings a strong background in financial management, customer relations, interpersonal skills and management capabilities to the position.

The Board looks forward to working with Hugh to meet its strategic goals and statutory requirements.

Jan Denham
Chairman, MVCB



John Tesoriero

Chief Executive's Report

Chief Executive Says Farewell

As this is my final report for the Murray Valley Citrus Board (MVCB) Citrep magazine, it is opportune that I reflect on the past 6 years since my appointment as Chief Executive in December 2003.

It is fair to say that I have enjoyed the journey; the Board has made some real progress with market access and water, the latter predominately in NSW. We have been able to provide growers with the tools to manage through drought and major frost events. We were able to put a case to government for EC provisions for horticulture and obtained funding for the necessary research into Fullers Rose Weevil, to facilitate access to the important Chinese market.

Working in collaboration with other commodity groups, and speaking with one voice to government over important industry issues, is an area where the Board has taken a lead role. This practice should continue into the future.

The establishment of the Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area was a significant achievement as was gaining a seasonal, pest free status window, into the important Japanese market in 2009.

My role has been made easier by very professional and supportive Boards under the leadership of Chairman, Mr Robert Mansell and now Ms Jan Denham. I am grateful to the Board for giving me the opportunity to serve as its Chief Executive.

To the staff, I have nothing but praise. Mrs Marian Tobin, my PA on a part time basis following her retirement in 2008, has been a great support to me personally and to the Board.

Ms Mary Cannard, Industry Development Officer, has developed into the role extremely well and provides excellent service to growers and stakeholders and certainly has the citrus industry at heart.

Mr Tony Bothroyd, our Field Officer, has done some fantastic work with promotions and in supporting the Nangiloc/Colignan primary school students with their citrus promotions.

Ms Deb Scott and Ms Jill Purich are the friendly 'front of house' staff of the organisation and Ms Sue Chapman manages our finances in a very professional manner.

There are still challenges facing our industry. Drought, water, market access, government policy, international competitiveness and industry viability are but a few. It is my firm belief that the Board is well placed to address these challenges and opportunities. I wish our growers, the Board and new Chief Executive, Mr Hugh Flett, every success in the future.

John Tesoriero
Chief Executive, MVCB

Citrus Production Notes for Spring



Fertiliser

As floral induction and initiation is occurring and the soil warms in early spring, citrus trees need nutrients to support the spring flush, flowering and fruit set. Late August is the time for applying fertiliser to cover the spring flush. Of the major trace elements, Nitrogen (N) is required in the greatest amount. N deficiency is characterised by leaf yellowing, poor shoot growth, poor fruit set and susceptibility to disease. N levels should be maintained at 2.4 to 2.7 % (as per leaf analysis) to achieve high yields of quality fruit. Excess levels may result in thick rinds, rough skins and high acid fruit. Moist soil temperatures of 15°C allow N to be readily released. If banding or broadcasting fertiliser, 60% of the season's nitrogen requirements should be applied in late August/early September.

Phosphorus (P) is important for flowering and fruit development, and to maintain good fruit quality. It is rare for yield to be affected by low soil phosphorus in the orchard, or for deficiency symptoms to be seen in leaves. The best guide for phosphorus applications is leaf analysis. Whilst some orchards may require an annual application, others may only need it every 2 to 3 years. To improve fruit quality, raise leaf phosphorus levels to between 0.14 and 0.18%. This will result in a thinner and smoother textured rind, greater juice content and earlier maturing fruit. When banding, 100% of the season's phosphorus requirements should be applied in late August. In most soils, phosphorus is fixed in the top 5 to 8 cms of soil and

does not move readily to lower soil depths. The limey soils of Sunraysia rapidly convert soluble phosphate in superphosphate to forms which the tree roots cannot absorb. To minimize soil fixation problems, bury the phosphorus in a band 15 to 20 cm deep, just outside the drip ring area of the trees.

Citrus trees remove significant amounts of Potassium (K) with the crop and even a mild deficiency will result in fruit size reduction. Potassium deficiency symptoms can vary in citrus. However, they can include slower tree growth, small leaves and a heavy leaf fall, often preceded by the leaves turning yellow or bronze. Dieback follows in the weakened twigs, and bloom decreases. Fruit are small; the skin is thin and smooth and tends to colour early. Creasing and fruit splitting are more prevalent. Severe potassium deficiency reduces the yield by causing heavy flower and fruit drop.

In general, leaf potassium levels between 0.7 and 1.5% (as per leaf analysis) are satisfactory. However, where small fruit size or rind creasing are problems, leaf potassium levels should be maintained between 1.3 and 1.5%. Where potassium is required, apply both a ground application of 50% in late August and follow up with a foliar spray later in the year. Annual applications of potassium may only be required on sandy soils. With other soil types in inland irrigation areas, naturally available potassium is usually sufficient to maintain yields. Drought can reduce the uptake of potassium from dry surface soil, leading to a temporary shortage.

Weed Control

Although weed control should be done throughout the season, it is particularly important to reduce the competition for water and nutrients from surrounding weeds during the spring flush. Controlling weeds will also reduce the number of snails, which primarily feed on organic matter.

Pruning & Skirting

Annual pruning is one of the most important cultural practices to manipulate crop load and fruit size. Pruning can also improve pest and disease control from enhanced spray penetration and air circulation. It also reduces the incidence of blemish by removing dead wood. A well-pruned tree should have evenly spaced limbs with a thinned-out canopy. Light should penetrate throughout the tree and branches should not be overcrowded.

Skirting trees is a must for fruit intended for export markets to reduce the chance of pests and diseases contaminating fruit. Skirting prevents snails coming into direct contact with the fruit and also prevents limbs weighed down by fruit touching the ground. The best time for pruning and skirting is straight after harvest. However, additional pruning and skirting may need to be done in summer and approaching harvest.

For further information please contact
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Littore Packers Pty Ltd: Pr



At 29 years of age, Mr Michael Littore has already made a significant investment in the citrus industry. Following on with the citrus packing shed his father established 21 years ago, Michael is currently the sole owner of Littore Packers Pty Ltd, Buronga, NSW. In this regard, the history of development of the enterprise also says much about the capacity and the determination of Michael's parents in earlier years.

Mario and Aurora Littore migrated from the Mediterranean Island of Lipari, situated off the north coast of Sicily, in 1953. After many years in Melbourne as a Greengrocer, the couple and their four sons re-settled in Dareton in June 1976 on a 40 acre property which consisted of vines and citrus.

Initially, Mr Mario Littore worked with his future wife's father in Melbourne. He was briefly employed at the Pelaco factory before becoming an employee of a greengrocer in Sandringham. Mario was 17 at the time and he was required to attend the markets 6 days per week (3:00am to 10:00am). Payment was 5 pounds per week for his endeavours.

However, as he states 'I wanted my own business and eventually we opened our own shop in Sandringham and later another in Dandenong.'

Mario and Aurora were married in 1961 and built a home in that suburb of outer Melbourne.

'From the outset, we worked together, and it took some years to make a well-researched lifestyle decision to relocate to Sunraysia in 1966. 'I used to truck oranges from Mildura to Melbourne and following a long weekend visit with Aurora, the decision was made,' Mr Littore said.

During the time Mario was travelling to Mildura to source oranges he met Mr Ken Brennan and advised him that he wanted to buy a block.

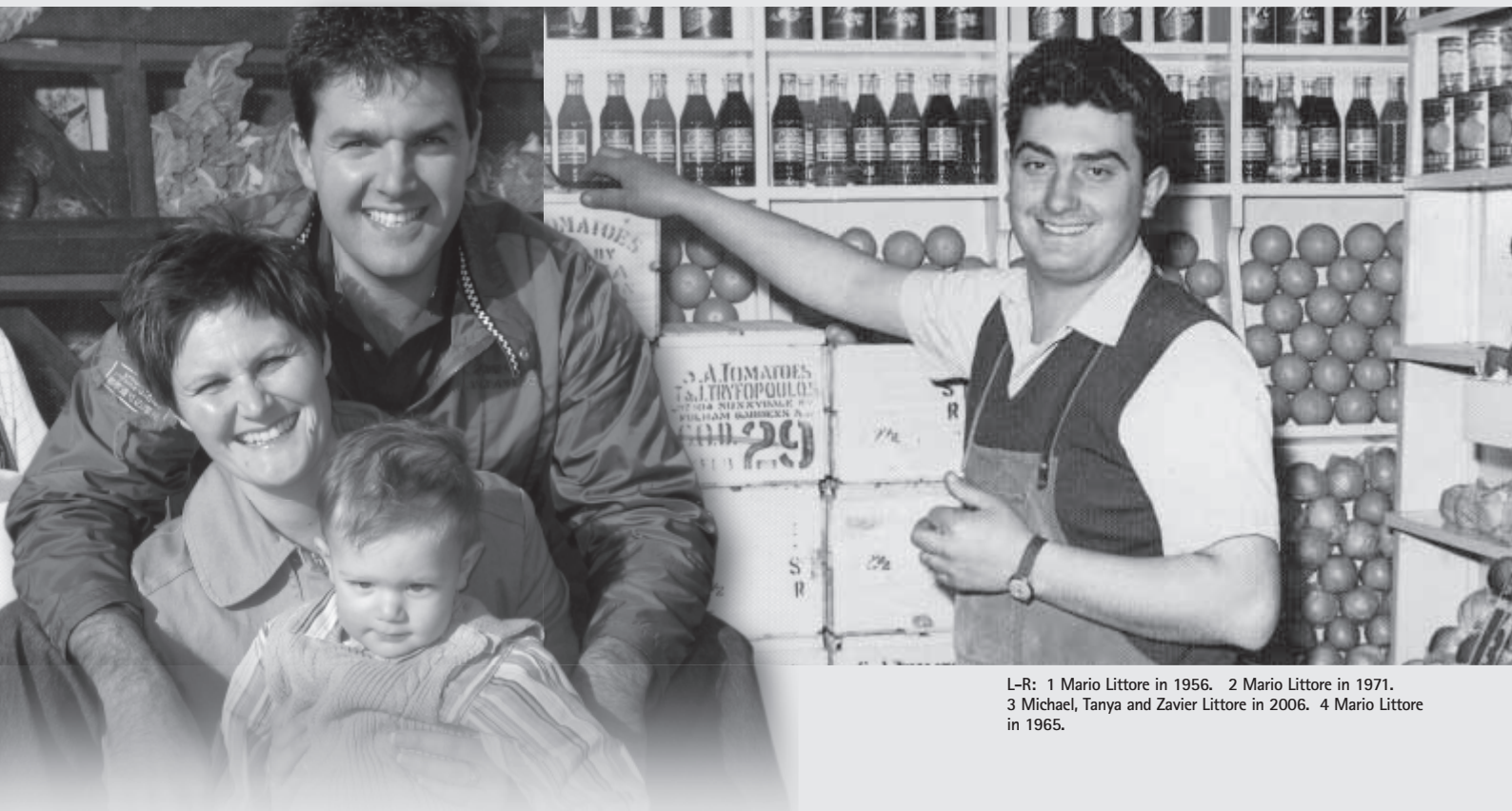
'Ken was more into dried fruit and I gained experience by working for him for six months before buying the 40 acre block. We built our home on the cliff overlooking the River and called it Riverview. The name remains today.'

Mario and Aurora Littore now had their own citrus (Navels, Valencias, Imperial Mandarins and some dried fruit), but they 'wanted to pack their own stuff' and so the packing story begins.

The Littore family's involvement in the citrus packing industry commenced in 1988 with the purchase of the current packing site at Buronga. Littore Packers continued the brand PBE which was used by the previous owners Peter and Barbara Edmondson.

In 1988, the operation consisted of a small packing shed and a 'tourist based' operation in 'Orange World' with the latter being leased to an independent operator. The packing shed consisted of a small belt and roller grader with Harvey rotary bins and a capacity of approximately 10 bins per day. The fruit supplied to the shed was grown on the family property and was packed for the domestic markets. With the operation

Progress Through Consistency



L-R: 1 Mario Littore in 1956. 2 Mario Littore in 1971. 3 Michael, Tanya and Xavier Littore in 2006. 4 Mario Littore in 1965.

not having a forklift, trucks were loaded with a block and tackle system, which hung from the roof of the shed.

Mario and Aurora Littore owned and operated the business solely up until 1997. At this time, Mario and Aurora's youngest son Michael returned home after spending five years working in Melbourne in the family's stand in the wholesale market. He then became actively involved in the business, which eventually led to Michael assuming full management of the operation.

In 2005, Mario Littore was approaching 70 years of age. Both he and Aurora decided to finally retire and spend some time doing what had been 'delayed' for many years.

They travelled overseas, but the family and the grandchildren remain the centre of their lives.

Michael, the youngest of four Littore sons, attended Wentworth Primary School, St Josephs College and Irymple Technical College before entering the building trade as a cabinet-maker, carpenter and joiner.

'However, at the end of 1991 there was no work in the building trade due to an economic downturn. My elder brother Vince owned a stand in the market at that time and I went to work there selling the family produce. That really was my university. I was fortunate enough to learn what the retailer requires and came to understand to pack to the demands of the consumer. At the age of 21, I loved the atmosphere and lifestyle of my market experience,' Michael states.

In 1989, a new shed was built. With support from neighbouring growers, Littore Packers Pty Ltd started packing for export mainly to South East Asia. Several years later new markets opened up for the Australian citrus industry. i.e. USA and Japan.

The business has been restructured with Michael as the sole owner/shareholder of Littore Packers along with his wife Tanya controlling all the administrative duties. Michael and Tanya are now working towards building a future for their three sons Xavier (4), Archie (2) and Oscar (5 months).



The Littore Future – Xavier, Archie and Oscar.

In 2000, a further development to the shed was made to accommodate the increasing volume of fruit. Today, approximately 20,000 bins of all varieties of citrus are packed for both export and domestic markets. Over recent years the volume is now greater domestically due to the relationship developed with the major chain stores.

Littore Packers now employs up to 40 people in the peak season. This includes a core group of six people who act in the capacity of Grower Liaison Officers, Quality Control (QC) and Shed Management.

Littore Packers Pty Ltd: Progress Through Consistency *Cont'd...*



Michael Littore in the packing shed.



Top: GP grader. Bottom: Grading Oranges.

Fruit is currently supplied by 70 growers. The majority of these are located in the Sunraysia area, but some fruit is sourced from the Riverland.

Concerning the significance of packer/grower relationships, Michael makes the following observations:

'The days have gone of growers supplying 20 bins and demanding a bin price to see if the shed down the road is going to pay more. Growers must understand that the packing shed is not the market. Building relationships between the grower, packer and buyer has become an important part of our business. By completing the supply chain this gives all parties a clearer understanding of market needs.'

Currently, he considers that with the greater volume our competitors are now growing, the global market is becoming a price point. Our advantage is that Australian fruit is well known for its quality and flavour.

Michael acknowledges that it is difficult for growers at the moment. 'The last couple of years has been tough with the water situation and the rise of growing costs, but growers must maintain the correct growing practices and continue to grow quality fruit to achieve maximum returns. Witness the recent changes in the way things are done. The days when farming

was something of a lifestyle are gone. Farming has become a business. You have to know what you are doing, watch the market and grow what the market requires.'

Littore Packers' ongoing plan is to work with growers to build stronger relationships with existing and new markets. This involvement will provide growers with information on all market needs. 'Our overall aim is to provide a cost competitive, efficient and rewarding packing and marketing service to our growers. Today's market place, given that it is supplied by so many growers, emphasises that the quality overall has to be consistent. This consistency of quality is part of brand building.'

During the interviews I conducted, Mrs Aurora Littore made some thoughtful comments that seemed to capture the values and strengths of the family that have resulted in such positive outcomes over the years. 'We have always worked together. In doing this, Mario and I gave the boys a sound base. If you want something, you make a commitment, work for it and always stick it out.' At the end of the day, we did the best we knew how,' she stated with firm conviction.

As a group, the Littore family have worked hard and long and they have much to be proud of.

Mario and Aurora are enjoying their retirement, spending time in the privacy of their home with its wonderful surroundings and being actively involved with the Ethnic Community Groups and the Bocce Club. However, as Aurora states, 'Stability creates family' and there is little doubt that this remains the number one priority for a hospitable family that was a pleasure to meet and to hear some of their story.

When asked to summarise his attitude and his overall responses to my questions, Michael made the comment that 'relationships are big, consistency is bigger.' Wise words that could be worth a thought and an aim that should enable Littore Packers Pty Ltd to continue to forge ahead with a clear and commonsense purpose.

E. Warhurst
Compiler

The Nangiloc Colignan Primary School and the MVCB Partnership Expands its Citrus Promotion

The Nangiloc/Colignan Primary School Enterprise Learning Program has been highlighted as a model for the *NAB First Schools Award Program* – which is a partnership developed between the school and the Murray Valley Citrus Board (MVCB).



Left: Gemma, Holly and Aimee Collett with Fifi Box. Right: Eric Wright, Principal of Nangiloc/Colignan school with Peter Crisp and Fifi Box.

On 2 July, 2009, Nangiloc/Colignan Primary School featured in a live weather cross on the Channel 7 breakfast show. Participation in the program was an ideal opportunity to promote the NAB Program and to give due recognition to the widely acknowledged achievements of the school. To date, the Enterprise Learning Program has been featured on *Sunrise*, *ABC National Radio*, *Queensland and Bush Telegraph*, *Victoria* and in *The Age* newspaper.

The SOS Packing shed is a vital link in the school's 'Follow the Orange Program', packing 80% of the local crop and bagging the oranges for the Orange Drive. It proved an ideal location for the Sunrise Program.

'Owners, Frank and Chris Sos were very obliging and supportive in giving up their time and providing their facilities. They also extended very much appreciated hospitality to the Sunrise presenters and crew,' Mr Eric Wright, Principal, Nangiloc/Colignan Primary School said.

'There was a huge community response that enabled the district to celebrate. It provided an opportunity to showcase our region and

the importance and quality of the citrus industry. In all, it was a true community effort. 85% of the pupils attended the 5:45am start during the school holidays with the show's producer insisting that they all be involved in every shot,' Mr Wright added.

Community and industry representatives in attendance included Cr Glenn Milne, Mayor, Mildura Rural City Council, Mr Peter Crisp, MLA, Member for Mildura as well as Mr Keith Richards, Mr John Tesoriero, Ms Mary Cannard and Mr Tony Bothroyd from the MVCB.

Mr Wright set up props/illustrations/ settings that included such processes as picking and packing. Pickerings Transport provided a truck for one such backdrop. A special stand featured the School's Enterprise Learning products that included four flavours of juice, the sectioniser, the slurpelator and the slurpee.

'The entire Channel 7 crew, Fifi Box (presenter), Chelsea (the producer) were absolutely wonderful and caring people.'

Some key outcomes of the occasion were:

- Nangiloc/Colignan Primary School used the cross very effectively to promote their Orange Drive – "The Healthy Alternative."
- Mr Peter Crisp, MLA, purchased the first bag of oranges, personally signed by Fifi Box (presenter).
- 'Mums, Dads, kids and community all felt so proud that this was happening in their back yard – it's still hard to believe it actually happened.'
- It was a fantastic promotion for the citrus industry.
- Red Cliffs Lions Club catered, and the local coffee company provided hot chocolate and lattes.

Appreciation is expressed to all those involved, as the partnership between the school and the MVCB goes from strength to strength.



The Melbourne Citrus

Oranges were first traded through Melbourne's fruit and vegetable market in 1841. Today, the market turns over \$1.6 billion per annum and is used by more than 3,000 grower, wholesaler and retail businesses. Much of the citrus fruit purchased from the local greengrocer is sourced directly from citrus merchants based at the market. There are many links in the supply chain involved in marketing citrus, including growers, packers, wholesalers and retailers.

Therefore, the Melbourne Citrus Committee is a notable player in the marketing of citrus, but with the many stakeholders come issues around effective marketing.

Issues in Marketing Citrus

Now, more than ever, there is a growing need to promote fresh fruit and citrus consumption to consumers. This is due, in part, because fresh fruit consumption is declining.

Reasons for the decline include:

- Increased convenience of fast foods combined with the reduced presence of fresh fruit in marketing campaigns.
- Children not consuming enough fresh fruit or developing the habit of regularly eating fruit. Alarmingly, a lack of fruit consumption is highest amongst children, where up to 40% do not consume fresh fruit daily.
- Parents aren't off the hook either - lacking knowledge of fruit varieties and seasonality.

- Juicing companies increasing use of both concentrate and imported juice, resulting in growers being left with surplus fruit and decreasing prices.
- Lack of long-term planning. With a number of stakeholders marketing citrus, promotions have been developed on an ad hoc basis with short time frames, resulting in an inconsistent consumer message.

There are many issues affecting fresh citrus marketing, but indications are that there is a need to encourage people to see, smell and taste the benefits of fresh Australian fruit and juice with a consistent approach.

This is why the experts in citrus - the merchants - who receive fresh produce from growers and in turn sell to greengrocers



Committee Inc. (MCC)

Background: 1 Melbourne Good Food Show, 2008. 2 Some of the 1000 young football players, their coaches and parents from the ESFL participating on the day.
Foreground: 'Aus Kick's' Almost a Champion sponsored by Channel 9 Football Show. July 1, 2009 at Wantirna South, involving 1000 'Aus Kick' kids from the Eastern Suburbs Football League (ESFL) and many Mums and Dads. Supported by the Melbourne Market Authority and MCC who provided tastings of fresh fruit and vegetables, the emphasis was solely on fresh healthy food. Oranges were a real hit with these two Carlton fans!

and independent retailers - banded together to form the Melbourne Citrus Committee (MCC).

'My experience in the market is that immediately we stop promoting citrus or any of our stock, there is a negative effect on demand and prices.'

This comment was made by Mr Ange Usai who can rightly claim to be referred to as the 'Father' of the MCC. Ange is the citrus manager for Barkers, a major citrus handler in the Melbourne Market. He is a passionate supporter of the citrus industry, who saw the falling sales and prices of citrus, while sales and returns for those varieties of fruit which were promoted were on the increase.

Ange Usai lobbied long and hard among fellow merchants, packers and the then

MVCB member, Mick Hollingworth to find a way to address the marketing trend. Ultimately, his efforts saw the formation of the MCC.

This enabled a group of dedicated citrus merchants to respond to the various issues surrounding the marketing of citrus. Today, it has expanded to include support from regional grower boards and citrus packers, enabling the committee to have a broad perspective on marketing, with input from people with multiple skills and varied experience across different aspects of the citrus industry.

Currently, the Melbourne Citrus Committee Members are:

- Merchants**
 AMV Fresh
 Barkers Melbourne
 John Holman & Co

- Kelly's
 Louis Melbourne
 Mumfords
 Sculli & Co
 Star Fruit
 Verona Fruit

- Boards Supporting**
 Riverina Citrus
 Murray Valley Citrus Board

- Packers/Processors Supporting**
 Border Packers
 Nippys
 Simfresh
 PBE
 Mildura Fruit Company
 Vitor
 Mourquong Citrus Packers
 R & E Taylor

The Melbourne Citrus Committee Inc. (MCC) *Cont'd...*

It is headed by Chairperson Mick Hollingworth, who has an extensive background in citrus, most notably when General Manager of Border Packers in Barham, NSW. The Committee also has working sub-committees, which manage:

- levy collection, pricing collection and analysis from the markets
- finance - including budget setting
- marketing

The committee meets on a regular basis to discuss issues impacting on the supply and marketing of citrus to customers and consumers and decides on the strategy and detailed marketing activities to be undertaken each year.

'We started with a small group of merchants pooling money for a specific promotion,' reflects Mick Hollingworth, 'but we quickly grew as more and more merchants and grower groups jumped on-board, keen to contribute to the promotion of citrus. Today, we focus much of our time on our marketing initiatives.'

Almost all independent greengrocers purchase their oranges through Committee members at the Melbourne Market rather than via direct grower contracts. This is because the members are well versed in citrus varietal knowledge and have sound historical support of citrus promotion. They also have well-established networks with independent retailers.

'My customers buy citrus from me because I always have the latest update from growers and I know what consumers think, by being an active part of the marketing team with the committee,' says Claude Natoli, merchant and member of the MCC.

The Practical Vision of MCC

As stated, the Melbourne Citrus Committee has always given strong historical support to citrus promotion. For example, the many harvest picnics they have attended handing fresh, juicy oranges to thirsty picnic goers; the Royal Melbourne Show stands providing children with orange segments and fresh orange juice; providing the mouthwatering posters of citrus seen in retailers over the years, and the delicious recipes found in supermarkets.

In 2005, the MCC decided to review its marketing planning program so that it could better identify the issues and opportunities it faced. The process outlined three broad areas:

Planning

- To develop a long term, 3 year marketing vision and 12 month marketing activity plans

Customer

- To develop more focused marketing activities with a prioritized channel, eg greengrocers

Consumer

- Identify target markets and apportion the budget appropriately to these targets
- Increase participative sponsorship with children
- Educate adults on the seasonality and varieties of citrus

As a result of the review, a long-term marketing vision and a 12 month marketing plan was developed, with activities that could address some of these issues and opportunities. Importantly, each year's activities focus towards an overall vision: to communicate and reinforce the health benefits and daily consumption of citrus to children and adults.

'Citrus will be consumed daily by all Australian children and return to be an iconic food staple'

The Marketing Plan

To ensure the best and most effective plan, the MCC commissioned *Gingerfrog Strategic* to conduct the review, plan the vision and long-term strategy and develop and help implement the 12-month marketing activity plans.

Gingerfrog Strategic is a firm that specialises in developing and implementing marketing strategies, plans and specific project management for organisations that may require additional expertise and resources. The company was founded by Megan Cracknell who has almost 20 years in marketing, managing some of Australia's and the world's largest household brands. *Gingerfrog Strategic* advises many industries including agribusiness, fresh fruit, food and wine. *'I have had an association with the Melbourne Citrus Committee in developing the strategic and marketing plans as well as implementing many of their specific projects,'* explains Megan Cracknell, Managing Director of *Gingerfrog Strategic*. *'I have also undertaken citrus related marketing projects for Horticulture*

Australia and Citrus Australia Ltd, so I understand in detail the many complex issues surrounding citrus.'

The purpose of developing the plan ensured that:

- Everyone agrees to the one plan
- Objectives and priorities can be set
- Actions can be documented
- Budget and time lines agreed

Once the vision was set, the Melbourne Citrus Committee could:

- Refine its communication message around healthy eating, using a citrus champion series of logos - the same message used for all marketing activities.
- Target the marketing activities towards two target markets:
 - Children: The need to re-establish citrus as part of their routine/healthy eating plan. For example, an orange at breakfast, or oranges at quarter time during sport.
 - Mums: For them to understand and be informed on the seasonal and varietal characteristics of the fruit as well as to educate and remind them of the healthy benefits of citrus. Mums are an important, but secondary target.
- Focus efforts around two areas: customer marketing and consumer marketing.
 - Customer: in-store sampling and other activity based tasting and sampling strategies
 - Consumers: participative sponsorship, smelling, tasting the fruit at various sporting events.
- Develop participative activities with a consistent message aimed at both consumers (children and parents) and customers' increased awareness. Importantly, this type of focus enables the MCC to re-ignite interest and knowledge of citrus. In turn, this leads to action - an increase in purchase by adults and routine consumption by children.

MCC Funding

It is a lot to achieve, so how does the Melbourne Citrus Committee undertake all these activities?

Unlike many grower or merchant committees, the MCC receives its funds voluntarily from members and other merchants at the Melbourne Market. The funds are collected from a 5 cent levy taken from all cases citrus sold through the market. Approximately 75% of the market handlers of citrus, support



Ange Usai organizes a number of "Citrus Days" in the Essendon District Football League during the season with fruit kindly donated by Murray Valley and Riverland Packers. Footy Mums, with the help of MCC members cut up and distribute samples.

promotion funding via voluntary case levies. It also receives funding from Citrus Australia and grower Board donations.

For special marketing campaigns that may require additional funding, the Committee undertakes specific levy collection programs.

The Committee is very appreciative of funds received for its marketing efforts and regularly informs members where funds are being directed and the marketing success that is achieved.

Some of the Successful Marketing Programs Undertaken

These have been extensive and there has always been a focused split between the two target markets – children and adults, as well as between consumers and customers.

Some highlights in recent years are:

Athletics Victoria Sponsorship

- The Melbourne Citrus Committee is a key sponsor of Athletics Victoria, starting its association in 2006 though to the present time.
- It enables exposure to school children, as elite athletes and coaches act as orange ambassadors, teaching school children the benefits of eating oranges during their sport and daily routines.
- Oranges were delivered, quartered and given to athletes and spectators during key Athletics Victoria events.
- Highlights included the State Championships, where TV coverage showed athletes eating oranges and the winners being presented with custom made bags of oranges!
- 30,000 people sampled oranges, with additional audiences through TV, local papers and radio.

In-store Retailer Sampling Campaigns

- In store promotion proved very popular with customers – typically 100 retail stores across Melbourne have sampling staff cut and distribute fresh oranges to consumers, usually conducted during the winter Navel season
- Des McNamara, Promotion Coordinator, summarises the campaign's success. *'Our customers report sales increasing by 30% over the duration of the sampling campaigns, with 50% of consumers who taste oranges in store, buying the oranges then and there.'*

Other Significant Activities

- Ongoing support to the Melbourne Market Authority promotional campaigns, in particular their Melbourne Markets schools campaign which reaches at least 1000 schools throughout Victoria
- Harvest Picnics and The Good Food Show in Melbourne – there are always fresh oranges or fresh orange juice available for thirsty picnic and show goers.
- Local support of Junior football clubs where fresh orange segments are cut up for half time breaks.

Ms Gina Petrascu is a MVCB member and on the Melbourne Market Committee. She makes the following comments:

'The MVCB has regularly contributed to promotions implemented through the MCC marketing plan. We align ourselves with the MVCB and are thankful for their continued support. We can honestly say to growers that part of the levy they pay is promoting their produce in Melbourne and surrounding areas.'

The MVCB has supported Navel promotion this year. Growers are aware of the small fruit and oversupply, so the MCC focused on in-store demonstrations across Melbourne, using independent retailers. The merchants

selected the most popular stores they supply, determined by citrus sales. Our committee is focused on consumer habits and we are continually searching for new and effective ways to promote citrus.

I have been involved with the MCC for 18 months. Being a grower, I am of the belief that consumers love the taste of citrus. However, we need to keep educating our younger generations on the health benefits and minimal use of sprays and chemicals on citrus. We need to keep promoting these benefits to encourage daily consumption.

I have been on the MVCB for only 12 months, and believe there will be more promotional opportunities discovered in the near future.'

The future for the Melbourne Citrus Committee

Working alongside grower Boards which manage state level grower issues is a great opportunity for the MCC to provide expertise from the wholesalers' perspective: an important link in the chain. The wholesalers have direct access to greengrocers and independent retailers who are at the commercial end of the citrus industry – ultimately selling the produce to consumers. With these already established contacts, the MCC has direct access to hearing first hand the issues which impact on retailers, as well as the feedback from consumers – on a weekly basis if needed. As a result, the MCC can have a powerful and knowledgeable voice in national and state forums, providing advice and guidance on consumer and customer needs and marketing opportunities as they unfold. This on-the-ground marketing intelligence can then be used by state and national bodies to help formulate a consistent industry-wide approach to marketing and communication, which means longer term and consistent marketing programs can be implemented. These will increase the overall health of the industry and sales at retail and consumer levels.

The unique voice of the Melbourne Citrus Committee can be strengthened by more merchants becoming involved, sharing their knowledge and contributing to the MCC's marketing efforts. If any merchant wishes to be part of the future of the citrus industry at such an exciting time, memberships are available and the Committee would welcome you on board.

**For enquiries, please contact
Des McNamara on 0419 131 883**



Neil Eagle

Notes

From Neil Eagle

Once again, our Industry is demonstrating its inability to learn from the mistakes of the past.

This situation continues despite our major players being involved in a well attended Marketing Forum, organized by Citrus Australia Limited (CAL) and Woolworths prior to the season, indicating the need for the following:

- Knowledge of the available crop.
- Need to resist supplying the market with immature fruit, particularly early gassed Navels.
- Need to resist glutting the market with unwanted counts and second grade product.
- Planned strategy and forwardings for marketing the crop, both domestic and export; underpinned by a single focused promotional campaign.
- In effect, we need to replicate the planning principles of co-operation and rigour that have produced success in the USA Market; but as yet have been so steadfastly resisted by our exporters and packers for other export markets.

The complete failure to achieve positive results on the above crucial issues has resulted in grower returns, for both

domestic and export, being half or less, than those achieved in recent years, for our early and mid-season Navels.

If anything, the current season demonstrates the need to strengthen and properly fund our National Peak Body, CAL, as there is an urgent need to address the previously mentioned points on a national basis.

Continuing Drought and Water Restrictions

The ongoing refusal of our bureaucrats and politicians of all parties to address the only issue that could have averted the catastrophic destruction of much of our irrigated agriculture in the total Murray Valley is a monumental scandal.

I refer to the construction of the Wellington Weir and in a drought sequence, allowing the Lower Lakes to revert to their naturally estuarine state. The evaporation savings over this drought sequence would have been in excess of the total capacity of the upper storages of Hume and Dartmouth Dams.

The water so saved, after guaranteeing all of SA's essential needs for Adelaide, towns, industry and irrigation, would have provided the upper states with between 25% - 30% additional allocation annually through this trying period.

I am appalled that our farm industry and irrigation leaders have not really addressed the crucial issues in this whole water debate. The Federal Government and Minister are persisting in buying back entitlements to currently non-existent water; to 'save' the River from experiencing the natural effects of drought. The Rivers have survived drought and following floods before, and will do so again, as part of the natural cycle. It is the communities, industry and food security for Australia that is being jeopardized in the present situation.

Neil Eagle

Chairman, Mid-Murray Citrus Growers Inc.

PFA Roadblock Operations



The Calder Highway Roadblock site is now operational.

The compliance roadblock program in operation to support the Greater Sunraysia Pest Free Area (PFA) is the 'public face' of the local fruit fly program.

Operated on a random basis from permanent sites located on the borders of the PFA, road block activities are part of an extensive border monitoring program aimed at keeping the PFA free from the affects of Queensland Fruit Fly (QFF).



Jeremy Giddings

Maintaining An Efficient Irrigation System

With the irrigation season imminent, it is important to ensure that your irrigation system is performing as close to specification, and as efficiently as possible. The start of the season represents a good time to check your system's performance and carry out appropriate maintenance.

Three aspects of irrigation system maintenance and monitoring are:

- Maintenance of emitter / sprinkler operating pressures and discharge
- Flushing of drip systems
- Cleaning of drip systems

Operating Pressures and Discharge

All irrigation systems have well recognised industry performance standards. Pressure variation should not exceed $\pm 10\%$ within a valve unit, and discharge $\pm 5\%$. Recent evaluation programs and workshops available to irrigators have shown that many irrigation systems are not performing to their specifications and that maintenance programs need greater attention.

Flushing of Drip Systems

For Drip Irrigators, flushing the system is something that has been generally neglected until recently. Many local irrigators have gone from flushing the system just once

per year (if at all) to a monthly schedule in some situations. Managers should ensure that their system is able to be adequately flushed. To do this water velocity must be greater than 0.5m/s. Simple rules of thumb are available to determine if adequate flushing velocity exists.

Cleaning of Drip Systems

Likewise, the frequency of chlorine or hydrogen peroxide injection has also increased. Both products are used to kill organic matter in the system, including algae, mussels and protozoa. Injection of these chemicals does not remove the organic matter. Further flushing is required to remove this material. OH & S issues need to be followed and addressed.

Some confusion still exists regarding what to inject into drip systems. You must inject the right chemical for the right job. Chlorine or hydrogen peroxide is used to kill organic matter. Acid injection is usually to dissolve chemical deposits, which are rarely a

problem in Sunraysia, unless an error in fertiliser mixing has occurred. Acid injection may also be used in an attempt to burn-off roots which have penetrated emitters. Clay and silt deposits in drip systems are a result of inadequate system flushing. Chlorine injection may be needed in this situation if algae is encouraging clay build-up in pipes and emitters.

To obtain further details, Drip Irrigators should consider attending a half-day Drip Irrigation workshop. Following attendance at a recent workshop, an irrigator flushed a drip system for the first time in 15 years and dropped the discharge variation from $\pm 30\%$ to $\pm 15\%$. Chlorine injection and further flushing dropped this to $\pm 9\%$. This is still above the recommended $\pm 5\%$, but a lot better than the previous level of performance.

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

Each road block site leading into the PFA, is supported by a series of roadside signs alerting travellers that they are about to enter the PFA and that they are required to dispose of any uncertified fruit in designated amnesty bins prior to entering the zone. Roadblock sites are situated after the signage and amnesty bins and within the PFA boundary.

An extensive roadblock schedule has been endorsed by the Management Committee which oversees operations of the Greater Sunraysia PFA project. Roadblocks operate from sites at Kerang, the most southern entry point into the PFA, as well as newly

commissioned sites on the Calder Highway, south of Red Cliffs and the Sturt Highway between Euston and Balranald.

Whilst the purpose of any roadblock program is to prevent the entry of potentially infested QFF host produce, the activity is a major opportunity to educate the travelling public on the importance of fruit fly to the local fruit industries. Current material explaining the existence of the PFA and travellers' responsibilities prior to entry is continually being distributed through various traveller information sites.

A recent evaluation of the effectiveness of the PFA community awareness program has highlighted the importance of the roadblocks program as a platform for extending the "fruit fly" message.

Members of the public interviewed during the evaluation process readily recalled their interaction with DPI inspectors, and the effectiveness in the messages being delivered during these roadblock operations.

Lyn Jacka
Senior Pest Free Area Co-ordinator
Department of Primary Industries

Farewell Dinner For The Chief Executive

A very pleasant dinner gathering was held to farewell Mr John Tesoriero, Chief Executive, MVCB and his wife Julie at the residence of Mr and Mrs Des and Marian Tobin on Thursday, 13 August, 2009.



Left: John Tesoriero and Robert Mansell. Right: Stuart Holland, Robert Mansell, Colin Nankivell and John Tesoriero.

Current and former Board members, Mr Peter Crisp, MLA, Member for Mildura; members of staff and partners, together with friends of John and Julie thoroughly enjoyed the informal atmosphere, relating past experiences and looking to future opportunities for John, Julie and family. (John recently accepted the position of General Manager, Water Supply with Southern Rural Water Gippsland located in Maffra. He will take up his appointment on 14 September, 2009.)

Ms Jan Denham, Chairman, MVCB introduced the more formal part of the evening stating that John has been an integral part of the citrus industry for the last five years.

This theme was developed by the former Chairman, Mr Robert Mansell and his Deputy, Mr Colin Nankivell.

Robert believed that 'John came to us at the right time, and his knowledge of water issues and the bureaucracy was a significant contribution in addressing such challenging issues.'

Both Robert and Colin highlighted a number of humorous situations, particularly on one overseas visit, and left the audience in no doubt about John's difficulties in addressing the issue of climate change and appropriate attire on the world stage. John Tesoriero's professional, planned and

consultative approach was acknowledged as a strength and confidence was expressed that he would take the same qualities he had shown to the citrus industry to his new position.

In also wishing John well, Colin Nankivell presented him with a water divining stick.

Mr Peter Crisp expressed appreciation for John's contribution on behalf of Sunraysia, particularly for the work he had put into the citrus industry. Mrs Julie Mansell contributed a special gift to assist him in his recreational pursuit of fishing. In a similar humorous vein, Board Member, Mr Stuart Holland presented the outgoing Chief Executive with a fine example of a 'special limited edition bottling.'

In a more serious manner, the Chairman, on behalf of the current Board, commended John for his professionalism, openness and support for all. She then presented him with an original painting of the Psyche Bend Pump Station.

In his response, John said he was humbled by the attendance and the sentiments expressed. He believed it was a privilege working for the MVCB and expressed his gratitude to both the previous and current Board. It was an experience he had thoroughly enjoyed. 'There have been challenges, but we have kicked some important goals.'

John Tesoriero also commended his dedicated staff: Marian Tobin, Mary Cannard, Tony Bothroyd, Sue Chapman, Jill Purich and Deb Scott. As he said, 'Good people get things done and the incoming Chief Executive will inherit a terrific team.'

In concluding, he extended best wishes to the Board in their future endeavours and thanked all for their support. He acknowledged the friendships he was leaving behind, but was ready to respond to new challenges.

E. Warhurst
Compiler

Associates Bid John Farewell

On John's last day with the Board, September 4, a wider gathering was held at Mildura Workingman's Club with MVCB stakeholders and many of John's across industry and community associates. This provided an opportunity for Chairman Jan Denham to publicly acknowledge John's achievements and for farewells and good wishes to be personally expressed. Newly appointed CEO, Hugh Flett, was also present.

Sunraysia Citrus Growers' Report

As you are aware, the organisational structure of the Citrus Industry has undergone significant changes in the last 12 months.

Perhaps the main driver for this change has been to eradicate overlap and improve resource utilisation within the industry. At the last SCG Directors' meeting, it was agreed that in light of these changes the SCG should conduct a review of its own direction and grower expectations. It was resolved to hold a planning forum towards the end of the Navel season (late October) to determine the goals and objectives of SCG in the new environment. It is hoped that this forum will provide the necessary member feedback to set the future direction of SCG. Invitations for the forum will be sent out to all members shortly, and we encourage everybody to attend and have a say. If you are unable to attend, we would welcome any suggestions or comments prior to the forum.

The Directors of SCG would like to thank John Tesoriero for his significant contribution to the Citrus industry during his time at the Murray Valley Citrus Board. We would particularly like to thank John for building and maintaining a strong relationship between the MVCB and SCG. Whilst the two organisations have distinct roles, overlap is inevitable and open doors help to find solutions for the benefit of the citrus industry in our region. We wish John all the best in his new role and look forward to working with the new CEO in the future.

SCG is currently undertaking a member review and has contacted all packing sheds in our region to ensure we receive detailed levy returns. Please ensure that your packing shed or processor is forwarding your details

along with your levy to ensure that your membership is registered.

SCG currently has a board vacancy and would welcome the nomination of any interested members. Please contact any of the current Directors to discuss.

The SCG Directors welcome and rely on direct contact from our growers to discuss ideas and raise concerns. We hope that we see an improvement in the weather outlook by the time of the next Citrep.

Vince DeMaria
Acting Chairman, SCG

Harvest Labour Service Partnership Meeting

On 10th and 11th August, the National Harvest Labour Information Service hosted the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Partnership Meeting at its Mildura, Victoria head office.

The government body, along with the NHLIS and its Harvest Labour Services (HLS) met to discuss national horticultural labour issues as well as to review current and future harvest trends.

Along with reports by the NHLIS and HLS, the group heard presentations on:

- Bio-security from the Department of Agriculture Farming and Fisheries
- Visa work entitlements by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship;
- Award modernization by the Fair Work Ombudsman
- The Pacific seasonal worker pilot scheme by the DEEWR Migration Branch.

The NHLIS operated by MADEC in Mildura supports a network of HLS in Regional areas of Australia to ensure that workers

are referred from areas that have finished harvest to areas that require labour.

Regions with large areas of horticulture production often have a dedicated Harvest Labour Service or "harvest office" to assist employers/growers to find workers. Being locally based, the harvest office works closely with growers to ensure workers meet the requirements of the job and can legally work in Australia. Harvest offices are run by a number of different organisations, but are all funded by DEEWR and hence their services are provided at no cost to growers.

All harvest workers who are legally entitled to work in Australia are eligible for Harvest Labour Services, not only those receiving income support. Workers often include international backpackers and grey nomads

who are looking at funding their travels around the country, as well as regular Australian workers.

There are currently HLS working out of 22 different sites throughout Australia, with the exception of Tasmania. Further information can be obtained by visiting www.harvesttrail.gov.au or calling 1800 062 332 to discuss your harvest labour needs.

Mark Ross
Marketing Manager, MADEC

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Murray Valley Citrus Board Product Price List

Available through the Murray Valley Citrus Board office.

Item Name	Grower Price
PUBLICATIONS	
Citrus Disease and Disorders	\$26.00
Citrus Growing Manual	\$22.00
Drip Irrigation Book	\$10.00
Physiology Notes 04/2003	\$18.00
Good Bug Book	\$44.50
CD Citrus Pests & Their Natural Enemies	\$45.00
PRODUCTS	
Citrus Peelers - Complete	\$1.00
Cranston Gauge	\$46.00
Hand Lens	\$8.50
Sizing Ring America (Yellow)	\$25.00
Penetrometer 011	\$274.00
Phenolphthalein PH Indicator	\$50.00
Refractometer REF103 Brix	\$340.00
TDS Solid Tester pocket (PH WATER TESTER)	\$125.00
NET BAG SALES	
Grapefruit 3 kg net bags - per 1000	\$178.75
Imperial 1.5 kg net bags - per 500	\$89.40
Navel 3 kg net bags - per 1000	\$178.75
Navel 1.5 kg net bags - per 1000	\$139.00
Valencia 3 kg net bags - per 1000	\$178.75
MEETING ROOM FACILITIES	
Half day Board Room hire	\$55.00
Full day Board Room hire	\$110.00
Half day Projector Multimedia hire	\$110.00
Full day Projector Multimedia hire	\$220.00
Coffee Tea Biscuits (per head) - Board Room hire	\$1.50
CITREP NEWSLETTER ADVERTISING	
<i>Black & White</i>	
1/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 85 mm)	\$35.00
2/9 PAGE Landscape (125 mm x 85 mm)	\$70.00
2/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 175 mm)	\$70.00
4/9 PAGE Portrait (125 mm x 175 mm)	\$140.00
1/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 85 mm)	\$110.00
2/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 175 mm)	\$200.00
FULL PAGE (190 mm x 265 mm)	\$275.00
<i>Colour</i>	
1/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 85 mm)	\$80.00
2/9 PAGE Landscape (125 mm x 85 mm)	\$160.00
2/9 PAGE Portrait (60 mm x 175 mm)	\$160.00
4/9 PAGE Portrait (125 mm x 175 mm)	\$310.00
1/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 85 mm)	\$240.00
2/3 PAGE Landscape (190 mm x 175 mm)	\$500.00
FULL PAGE (190 mm x 265 mm)	\$610.00
FLYER - 1 PAGE INSERT	\$300.00

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