

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the last edition of The Passion Vine to be delivered under the current Passionfruit Industry Communication Program. The timeline for this project, funded through levy payments from passionfruit growers and matching Commonwealth contributions, extends from September 2017 until August 2021.

This project has been widely embraced by passionfruit growers as the primary source of industry information, from chemical permits to current market conditions. Feedback from levy payers and PAI members is that they have found the peer-to-peer meetings at our regional field days particularly valuable in developing sustainable horticultural practices.

The value of this face-to-face contact was brought out at the recent series of industry workshops and dinners held in North and South Queensland and Northern NSW. After 18 months of COVID-19 enforced lockdowns, growers and industry stakeholders attended these events in record numbers. Each event extended well beyond the programmed schedules as participants took the opportunity to renew contacts and exchange information and views on the wide range of topics that are relevant to the success of our businesses.

Each of these workshops was also an opportunity to introduce growers to newly appointed extension managers from Hort Innovation. Dr Olive Hood, Regional Extension Manager for Northern Australia attended the Mareeba workshop and Head of Extension, Jane Wightman, attended the Murwillumbah and Palmwoods events.

These workshops gave the Hort Innovation representatives a timely opportunity to engage with industry levy payers and to outline the consultation process for the next Passionfruit Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). This plan, for the period from July 2021 until June 2025, will guide investment decisions for the industry funded marketing program and the co-funded research program. The research program is already heavily committed to the industry's priority Plant Breeding Project. In addition to these workshops Hort Innovation has consulted directly with levy payers with a draft SIP together with PAI publicising the process.

Feedback from the workshops reinforced the value levy payers placed on regular and reliable industry communications in maintaining important up to date information on industry and regulatory matters. There is strong support evident to continue to facilitate industry communications initiatives under the new SIP.

Others matters raised by growers during the recent workshops included the growing prevalence of fungal diseases such as *Fusarium Solanii* and *Phytophthora* (refer to useful article the AUTUMN 2021 edition of The Passion Vine), availability of funding for key projects and the increasing impost on growers in complying with ever more prescriptive food safety standards. Your Committee will discuss funding issues at its next meeting and on the food standards issue PAI has supported Freshcare's initiative to reduce the growing training and auditing imposts on growers.

I would like to recognise the time and effort of all attendees that made the recent workshops so successful and, in particular, the organising efforts of our Industry Services Manager, Sacha Harty, at all three events and those of our North Queensland Committee Member, Cynthia Barbagallo for the record setting North Queensland event.

In closing, it is important that we recognise the key people who have ensured that the delivery of the current Communication Program has achieved the desired project outcomes. Former PAI Vice-President and project leader, Jane Richter, was the driving force behind the success of the project and she was ably assisted by our Industry Services Managers, initially Margie Milgate, then Amanda Roy and more recently Sacha Harty.

Please enjoy this edition of The Passion Vine, and as always, we encourage and appreciate your feedback on any matters related to the sustainable growth of the passionfruit industry and the wellbeing of our growers.

All the best,
Dennis Chant