

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

TINA MCPHERSON, BUNDABERG

Dear Readers,

I asked Bruce for a run-down of our summer season for this report as mine will always be a little tinted with rose coloured glasses... a blessing to be the optimist in this relationship but not always the realist! According to Bruce the summer of 2018/2019 was the highlight of the passionfruit year... the rest of last year being described as abysmal! We were fortunate to have heavy production pre-Christmas, albeit with fruit size being an ongoing issue. Bundaberg, in fact, essentially had the market pretty much to themselves at a period of high demand and we went into Christmas with a smile on our faces.

Fast-forward to today and the weather conditions are once again dry, the young plants are really sitting still with slowed growth and very little flower set. By the time you read this you will all know the outcome of the cyclone I am currently watching track towards the coast!

Over the summer whilst the plants sat still for some, the association and industry didn't, and this issue of **The Passion Vine** should keep you up to date with all that has occurred. For members, there is a new tool in the **Farm Biosecurity Planner** to help you work out what changes you need to make at your farm to ensure your own biosecurity. There is also the new online **Grower Forum** which will provide members with an easy way to share ideas, seek diagnosis advice or similar have a good debate on a topic of interest. Membership is just \$198 per year and with the other special offers that we have been offering, like free crop testing, it really is excellent value.

The Passionfruit SIAP has read and discussed the **Technical Review of the National Breeding Programme**. The review was a thorough assessment of the programme, which acknowledged where the breeding programme had made considerable strides and areas for improvement. We thank Kate Light for her excellent review and the growers and industry associates who contributed. Kate was able to discuss the breeding programme with 27 growers which was an excellent result in an industry where grower engagement can often be time consuming and problematic. Thanks so much to everyone who contributed, both in person and over the phone. The industry only stands to move forward when all our views are taken into consideration.



In addition, a Passionfruit post-harvest best practice review will be contracted in the very near future using levy funds and we thank industry and SIAP members for their contribution to this process. It is important that while we deal with the big issues at hand (breeding for example) we don't lose sight of the other factors that affect our production and profitability.

We are extremely grateful to have the wholesale agent **Samsons** step forward to sponsor not one but two of **Passionfruit Australia's Noel Day scholarship** opportunities. In the first instance, **Samsons** will be sponsoring Bruce McPherson to attend the week long **Certificate in Nutrition Farming** in March this year. Following the course Bruce will be writing an article that may encourage others to take up one of PAI's scholarship opportunities later in the year. The second beneficiary is Angela Olsen who will be undertaking an **ACS Distance Education** course in a relevant Horticulture speciality. Angela and Brad Olsen are new growers to the industry and this learning opportunity will give her some really great skills to help get them started on the right track.

PAI continue to pursue other funding activities for research and development and details will always be found in articles within **The Passion Vine**.

And finally today, on what I consider to be a very serious and important note, please take the time to look after yourselves and your families; believe in what you are doing and hold your heads high, despite the trying times, the weather and the markets, and all that seems to conspire against us in turn.

Currently rural producers are getting a hard time from the noisy masses, the politicians and mother nature, in particular our cattle grazing counterparts! As part of rural and regional Australia it is vital that we stand together and stay strong.

To those who work in acres not hours we thank you.

May you all have a wonderful Autumn.

Tina

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