

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Readers,

November is indeed an industrious month on our farm and I suspect is a time when everyone seems to be getting things in order for the coming summer months.

We are still planting at our place, as are many Bundaberg growers, an activity that will hopefully end in the very near future, but one that has been hindered by the big October wet that the Bundaberg region experienced!

At the same time I am aware that this week several North Queensland growers are finishing up their season. How fortunate we are that passionfruit choose different times of year to be abundant in different regions....for the most part!

Sadly 2017 hasn't seen the weather gods working in everyone's favour. Debbie wreaked havoc early in the year and was followed by what was one of the most devastatingly dry periods many of us have experienced in a long time; the warmest, driest winter for decades is how it has been described by the media. Passionfruit are a challenging crop at the best of times, but really unpredictable weather certainly has all growers second-guessing their decisions and their planning.

Fortunately, in the R&D and Marketing space many exciting things have happened for both the passionfruit industry and the association over the past few months!

The **Regional Field Day** and **AGM** in Brisbane in October was an opportunity to showcase these projects, catch up with growers and others along the supply chain and get some insights into what is happening in our industry specifically and in the broader world of horticulture. For full reports from the day see PAGE 17.

Early in the day we were treated to a tour of the markets by Fresh Centre Brisbane Markets. It was a great chance to see the market in operation and, being lead by the crew from Fresh Centre, put a different perspective on the view of the market. Lots of the ins-and-outs and nitty-gritty logistics were explained, described and interpreted for us!

Presentations after breakfast included Andrew Young from Brisbane Markets, a real eye opening view of the world of a retailer from Joe Carbone of **Feast on Fruit** in Morningside Central and finally Trevor Brewer discussing pricing and dispute resolution in the markets.

Brisbane Golf Club offered a really fabulous venue and a change from our usual on-farm or small town hall style. It was a great choice for lunch and the forum which included presentations from Hort Innovation's Brad Mills, our new industry relationship manager and Kelly McGuiness, our Hort Innovation marketing assistant.

Jane Richter ran us through the Communications Project, funded by Hort Innovation and delivered by PAI. This project is a great opportunity for us to connect with all our growers, both purples and panamas and really be sure that information about all aspects of the industry is getting out to the coalface where it needs to be. I am excited about the opportunities it offers us to engage as an industry and to become a cohesive force. The **Regional Field Days** will offer a real opportunity for growers to get together in each growing area. We will be surveying all of you soon to identify the topics to be addressed so we are delivering what you as growers want to learn about at each of the **Regional Field Days** in the next four years. Make sure you check out the new website – this will be built upon continuously and will provide a central place for all your passionfruit needs as it grows.

The national breeding project with SCU is making great strides and we were grateful to Peter Bundock for his presentation at the **Regional Field Day**. Visit the PROJECT HUB on the new website for the latest project news.



We are grateful to our sponsors, Austsafe Super represented by Stacey Watson and Bruce Waltisbuhl, and Perma-Log, represented by John Robinson and Rowan Carnes. Their ongoing support of our industry is much appreciated.

Export options were discussed by Dominic Jenkin of **AHEA** and we are fortunate to now have two export projects occurring. The first is a **Griffith University** Passionfruit Export Plan grant 'Develop an export opportunity analysis and export plan for the Australian Passionfruit industry'. Find more detail on PAGE 22.

The second is a **Hort Innovation** funded project being delivered by **McKINNA et al** who have been engaged by Hort Innovation to develop an Export Strategy for Tropical Fruit (banana, persimmon, papaya, lime, lychee and passionfruit); with a focus on export development opportunities.

These projects may overlap a little in what they deliver, but together they will offer some practical steps a clear strategy for us in the export space, one I believe we have to enter to address some of the shortcomings of our industry.

Growcom's Rachel McKenzie enlightened us with a thorough overview of the **Hort Code of Conduct** and the **Fair Farms Initiative**. It was excellent to receive the two perspectives about the Hort Code from the **Brisbane Markets** and then from **Growcom** from the point of view of a grower.

The **AGM** was held and two new members of the management committee were elected, Anton Stretch, a grower from the Beerwah area, and Aidan Hutton from **JE Tipper** in Sydney. We are very fortunate to have these new talented and experienced committee members who bring energy, skills, direction and enthusiasm to the association. It augurs well for exciting and advancing times ahead in the passionfruit industry.

We are extremely grateful to those who have dedicated their time to the committee over the last few years and we sincerely thank Keith Paxton and Sean Russell for their many years of service to the industry. Fortunately they are not lost to us....they are just a phone call away.

In addition to the breeding and export focus, backed up by a thorough communications project, I believe we have to address two areas in the coming short to medium term. They are the low number of nurseries servicing our industry and the post-harvest handling of our fruit. More to follow on these topics in the coming months.

I firmly believe in the work this organisation does to improve and promote our industry and it's an honour to represent the sector. I am very optimistic about what the future holds for the passionfruit industry and feel we are really well placed, for the first time in a couple of years, to really take advantage of opportunities that are coming our way and to make some big strides forward!

Thank you for your continuing support and be sure to let us know as a management committee what we can do better to serve the industry. Best wishes for a safe and prosperous summer!

Tina