



SOILLESS AUSTRALIA

Official Newsletter of the Protected Cropping Australia Industry Vol 4 / 12 Summer
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A Tribute to Graeme Smith
Pathways to
Sustainable Horticulture

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Front Cover:
 Graeme Smith on site
 in project management role at
 Cobbitty, Western Sydney,
 with Brinkman representatives. Oct 2012

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A Tribute To Graeme Smith

Pathways to Sustainable Horticulture

Making PCA the successful organisation it is today



It is now three months since Graeme Smith stepped down from his role as Chairman of PCA, a position he held for 13 years.

Again we thank him for tirelessly steering the industry through rapid growth and constantly evolving research and technology. PCA is now a much bigger, stronger and well established organisation of great benefit to members, and with a wide reach into similar associations globally.

Fear not: Graeme is remaining on the PCA Board and he will Chair the 2013 PCA conference at the Albert Park Sebel Hotel in Melbourne next July.

Graeme has represented your interests on many issues, with the support of the PCA Board, and his efforts will advance the Australian industry for years to come.

In 1999, when Graeme joined the national association it was called the Australian Hydroponic Association or AHA Inc. Within six months he was President and began dramatically increasing membership. Our subscription levels jumped and we reached a wider, yet still targeted audience.



Graeme also quickly instigated restructuring the association into more professional organisation, representing all industry sectors. He wanted government and other authorities to recognise how both soilless culture and greenhouse growing was the way of the future to sustainably produce food for an ever increasing global population with declining resources.



TOP: Graeme received PCA Life Membership at the 2012 Hydroponic Farmer's Federation Conference in Ballarat.
 BOTTOM: Graeme leads PCA Euro Greenhouse study tour 2009 through Penning Fresias at Honselersdijk, near Amsterdam. Marcus Brandsema (far left) Graeme's long term deputy is following in his foot steps.

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PCA EuroTour 2009 visits Metazet Research Centre in Honselersdijk The Netherlands

Graeme was also quick off the mark to take over Chairmanship of the conference in Melbourne in 2003. That conference greatly enhanced our organisation and its finances.

Graeme has been involved in every conference since. He submits the time consuming and crucial applications for HAL funding, and is known for his highly articulate, professional manner.

At this point, we must mention that neither Graeme, nor any of the Board members get ANY remuneration. Graeme's term is that it is a "Love Job" and his justification for a desk piled high with work is "Messy desk = a busy person. Clean desk = too idle."

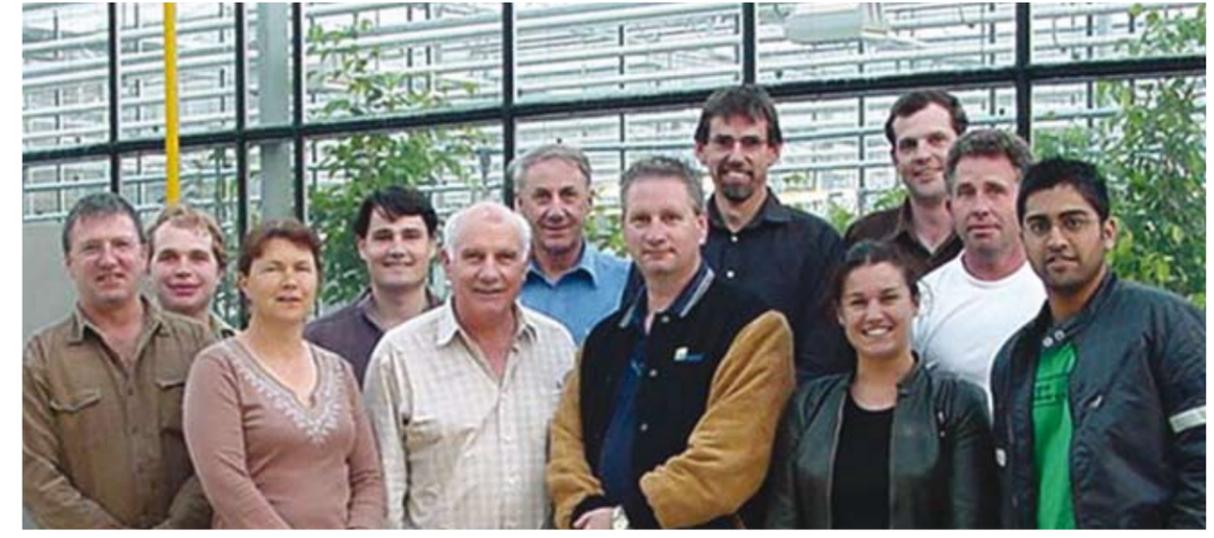
Graeme has always had an ability to see the Australian industry in an international context. He effortlessly

thinks ahead to the far-reaching consequences for the environment, government planning and membership benefits including education.

From his beginnings as a tomato grower in Victoria, Graeme's community conscience was apparent in his volunteer role for 15 years with the Victorian Country Fire Authority.

With ease he took the step from his private farm to being the only greenhouse consultant with (CPAg) qualifications. His thesis for which was 'Humidity Deficit in Controlled Environment Horticulture'

As Graeme Smith Consulting P/L he visited many crops and growing systems, in many climates across Australia. And he witnessed the skills gap between Australian growers and their counterparts in greenhouse growing in The Netherlands.



One of the many benefits for PCA Eurotour participants is a graduation photo and certificate in "Advanced Horticultural Course in Greenhouse Management", from PTC+ in Ede, The Netherlands (2007)

Graeme noticed (and began rectifying) the fact that many growers were required to travel to overseas training institutions (most notably in the Netherlands) for tuition in our specialised area.

We operate in a global economy and therefore compete against imported horticultural produce, but we do not enjoy equal access to training opportunities. Without education support Australian growers do not have the capacity to significantly lift their productivity and quality.

In the short term Graeme led annual overseas greenhouse study tours. And in the long term he took on all the ground work for a National Training Center for Controlled Environment Horticulture (CEH). This included writing a tertiary level curriculum for greenhouse grower managers. It includes every aspect of education in our industry and is called Pathways to Production (P2P)

National Training Center for Controlled Environment Horticulture (NTC CEH)

Now that the P2P curriculum is written, Graeme and the PCA continue in-depth discussions with suppliers and education institutions such as the University of Western Sydney and Chisholm Institute of TAFE to realise the dream of a NTC for CEH.

Overseas Study Tours

In the meantime Graeme regularly takes a dozen growers and allied trade overseas to visit state of the art glasshouse operations. He introduces them to seed breeders, manufacturers, new and used greenhouse equipment suppliers and research facilities. Participants also spend two days at a major horticultural event such as Horti Fair or the Canadian Greenhouse Conference.

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