



SOILLESS

A U S T R A L I A



***PCA Campaigning For
Greenhouse Growers***

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Front Cover

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull learns all about greenhouse growers' need for Bt bumblebees, from PCA Director Marcus Brandsema

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PCA Working For You



PCA informs the PM about the Bt Bumblebee

In October PCA Director Marcus Brandsema made the most of a small window of opportunity to make Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull aware of the significance of the bumblebee issue for greenhouse growers, at an event in Devonport.

Marcus told Malcolm that Bt bees have been in Tasmania for 25 years with negligible impact so their commercial use should not be prohibited under the EPBC Act, which prohibits their use for greenhouse pollination using the benign populations already in Tasmania.

Scientific research supports the PCA project and now we need political support.

A risk assessment for a Tasmanian Bt bumblebee greenhouse trial currently sits on Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt's desk, waiting for approval.

However, legislation needs to be altered before the bee can be used in such a trial at Marcus' property.

And now Malcolm Turnbull knows all about it.

Greenhouse Growers' Workshop



The PCA is above all a greenhouse growers' association providing opportunities to meet and learn from one another and suppliers to improve their growing business.

In May this year PCA hosted 30+ growers in Woolgoolga, NSW. In July we then hosted 499 people at the AIS Greenworks and ICESC Conferences at Jupiters, Gold Coast, QLD. And in October we brought together another 25 growers and industry people, on a Friday afternoon in Virginia, SA (pictured)

Tony Bundock of Powerplants explained about how to make the step up from low-tech greenhouse technology.

Biological Services provided information on the latest integrated pest management (IPM) practices.

While Folco Faber of Apex Greenhouses gave an update on the Australian Greenhouse Construction Code that will make building and certification with councils and insurance companies, much easier.

Beer and pizza from NAB Agribusiness topped it all off. A special thank you to Nam Ly and Folco Faber, PCA Directors representing the Allied Trade, who organised the South Australian event.

The next PCA Growers' Workshop will be back in Coffs Harbour early next year, followed by another in WA.

Please let us know where and what you want as far as workshops ahead.



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Family Fresh Farms of Peats Ridge NSW are rebuilding. We are replacing all our current infrastructure with brand new.

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- 64m x 142m = 9088m²; 5m gutters
- includes full foundation kit
- crop supports (40 sets)
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\$225,000+gst



USED GAS BOILER

- Italian manufactured
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- stainless steel inner
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Family Fresh Farms

PCA welcomes the new dedicated Federal Minister for Horticulture

There was a significant outcome for Australia's horticultural industries following the change of leadership in the Australian Government with the appointment of the sector's own dedicated minister, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Senator Anne Ruston.

Senator Ruston, based in one of Australia's largest horticultural regions (South Australia's Riverland), has extensive experience in the sector. A grower and irrigator herself before entering Parliament, Senator Ruston has been very active in the horticulture space, working closely with industry on issues such as biosecurity, export market access and levies for research and development.

In addition to horticulture, Senator Ruston will also have responsibility for the fisheries and forestry sectors and the wine industry, as well as a share of responsibilities for water reform in the Murray Darling Basin with Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Barnaby Joyce.

"Horticulture in Australia is a diverse, dynamic and innovative industry with a bright future," Senator Ruston said. *"I'm very much looking forward to taking on this portfolio and working with the sector to maximise opportunities for growth, prosperity and sustainability."*

There have also been a number of significant positive developments for Australian horticulture since Minister Joyce addressed the Horticulture Industry Forum in March this year.

First and foremost was the release in July of the Government's Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, a \$4 billion investment in rural Australia meeting the Coalition's commitments to reduce the regulatory burden on farmers, provide better access to agricultural and veterinary chemicals, a stronger biosecurity regime and substantial supportive infrastructure.

Many of the White Paper's measures will support improved access to premium overseas markets for Australian horticultural producers.

Finalisation of the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), represents a massive opportunity for Australian horticulture. When it comes into force, all Chinese tariffs on Australian horticultural products will be eliminated in four years (except for citrus, where tariffs of up to 12% will be eliminated in eight years). Citrus exports to China have already grown strongly, totalling \$31 million in 2014 compared to just \$5 million in 2012.

Under the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement (JAEPA), which came into force in January, Australian horticultural exports such as mangoes, macadamias and Tasmanian cherries now face zero tariffs.

Mango exports to Japan almost doubled in the first quarter of 2015 compared to the same period in 2014.

The reduction in Japanese table grape tariffs has seen exports of this commodity to Japan rise from virtually a zero base in 2014 to almost \$8.5 million in 2015.

Under the Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement (KAFTA), mango exports for the first two months of 2015 were almost triple than for the same period last year on the back of a 20% tariff reduction (Korean tariffs on Australian mangoes will be completely eliminated in 10 years).

Tasmanian cherry exports to Korea have grown from \$69,000 in 2013-14 to \$3.2 million in 2014-15 thanks to the elimination of a 24% tariff.

There have also been significant export gains for Australian table grapes and macadamias in the Korean market thanks to substantial tariff reductions.

The enormous potential benefits and opportunities provided by the North Asia FTAs are already being realised, underlining the critical importance of these agreements for Australia's horticulture sector.

In May this year, Minister Joyce announced \$27.6 million in grants from the first round of the Australian Government's Rural R&D for Profit Program.

These included \$2.35 million for a Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd (HIA Ltd) project to help control Queensland fruit fly, and \$3.43 million to improve tree crop production in the mango, avocado and macadamia industries.

The Australian Government continues its strong support for the nation's horticultural industries and is delivering on significant commitments to the sector.



Senator the Honourable Anne Ruston





BIOLOGICAL SERVICES



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THRIPS



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DALOTIA



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THE FUTURE OF FOOD PRODUCTION

Intensive Berry Production

Using Greenhouses, Substrates and Hydroponics
Is this the way forward?

By NICKY MANN, 2014 Australian Nuffield Farming Scholar



First of all, this whole study topic couldn't have been undertaken without the wonderful and generous support of my investors Horticulture Innovation Australia and Nuffield Australia.

Therefore, I am eternally grateful and indebted. I would also really like to encourage other growers in the Protected Cropping Industry to seriously consider applying for a Nuffield Scholarship as it is a life-changing experience and adds so much value to agriculture here in Australia and across the globe.

Not only do you get to travel to some amazing countries which will force you completely out of your comfort zone but you get to meet truly extraordinary people, learn phenomenal things, see mind-blowing farms / research / businesses, but you get to share and collaborate with other like-minded people around the world which only adds benefit and substance to relationships which are crucial in this fast changing world we live in and will assist humanity to adapt and to progress.

Why did I undertake this study?

As hydroponic rose growers based on the Central Coast, we have managed to cushion ourselves from market pressures by opening our own retail outlets, being vertically integrated and have added agritourism to the mix in order to survive as a small grower in the protected cropping industry.

However, with the continued surge in imported roses from both South America and Africa landing on Australia's shores increasing the squeeze on prices. Wade and I decided to diversify and spread our risk even further from just being rose growers.

We needed to grow a high value crop in our multi-span twin-skin greenhouses and felt we had to consider growing "food/fruit" as opposed to decorative fun-fair as consumers are more concerned about what they eat and where it is grown than where their flowers are grown which will sit on a vase in their home and not be consumed.

Enter the Nuffield Scholarship – which I decided to use to learn / study all the ins-and-outs of intensive production of berries using greenhouses, substrates and hydroponics.

I need to add here it was a case of learning by doing too as we received our first raspberry plants in November 2013 a mere two months after I received my scholarship. The blueberries arrived six months later.

What were my objectives of this study?

- Overview the berry industry in Australia and abroad, looking at;
 - Protected Cropping Structures
 - Containers and Substrates
 - Hydroponic systems
- Compare the pros and cons of protected cropping vs traditional growing methods
- Analyse the major berry crops like strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries
- Formulate a recommendation to growers in the Australian industry considering intensive berry production in greenhouses with substrates and hydroponics

