



# Winners!

## Victorians take centre stage at top awards night

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Victoria's three National Award Finalists at the Ausveg Awards Night (from left) Peter Schreurs, Peter Cochrane and Chris Millis. Photograph courtesy of VegetablesWA.

### Three of the Victorian Vegetable Industry's 'best' trumped the recent Ausveg Awards Night at Perth in May.

The awards went to...

- Devon Meadows Grower, **Peter Schreurs** for the Landini Grower of the Year Award.
- Devon Meadows Grower, **Peter Cochrane** for the Ausveg Chairman's Award.
- Warragul Hydroponic Tomato Grower, **Chris Millis** for the Landmark Young Grower of the Year Award.

Vegetable Growers Association (VGA) of Victoria President, Luis Gazzola said the high standard of all the finalists was impressive and only emphasised the talent within our own state.

Mr Gazzola said all three winners are terrific ambassadors for the Victorian industry and had shown strong leadership and capabilities in their sector.

"It demonstrates the bright future ahead for the industry," he said.

The winners were announced at an awards ceremony as part of the VegetablesWA 60th Anniversary Dinner which brought together more than 550 industry members.

Ausveg Chairman, David Anderson was also impressed with the high standard of this year's award finalists and winners who have all achieved outstanding success within the industry.

"Congratulations to every winner and finalist for their commitment to excellence and for setting a benchmark for the Australian vegetable industry," Mr Anderson said. ▼



Solving Industry Issues: (L to R) Ken Cobbleddick SA, Peter Schreurs Vic, Jack Walker Vic and David Wallace Vic.



VGA members attending the Awards Night: (L to R) Peter Schreurs, Tom Schreurs, David Wallace, Peter Cochrane, Frank Lamattina, Tony Imeson, Rick Butler and Jack Walker.

special report from your president

## Challenging times threaten growers at market

Victoria's fruit and vegetable growers were slowly being pushed out of the State's key Central Market because of new restrictions on pre-order deliveries prior to daily trading hours.

The move has caused major unrest for the majority of users at the Melbourne Wholesale Market in Footscray Road, West Melbourne.

In April, the Melbourne Market Authority (MMA) changed "trading hours" to satisfy concerned wholesalers who claimed the night shift schedule was becoming a "lifestyle issue" for their employees.

However, the change caused a major headache for growers and some wholesalers as it subsequently restricted the crucial buying and selling period by two hours as well as prevented the delivery of pre-order sales. Previously the trading period spanned 6 hours and the change has limited this to 4 hours.

Vegetables Growers' Association of Victoria (VGA) President, Luis Gazzola said the industry supported the change in trading hours but, he was furious at the restrictions forced on businesses trying to deliver pre-market orders to customers. "It is a gross restriction of trade for our industry."

Mr Gazzola said when trading commences the floor goes wild as 700 forklifts madly struggle to deliver orders and return to base in anticipation of making more sales. "It is an accident waiting to happen," he said.

**The new hours have made it very hard for country buyers to get home in time for same-day FRESH deliveries, the main advantage of greengrocers over supermarkets. Restriction of trade is the biggest issue here.**

"I believe the MMA board have lots to answer for VGA will be seeking legal advice about these 'new hours' which is at the end of the day, a 'restriction of trade'.

"Wholesale markets around Australia and the world work early hours to suit their customers' needs. If you don't like early hours you should look for a 9am to 5pm job somewhere else.

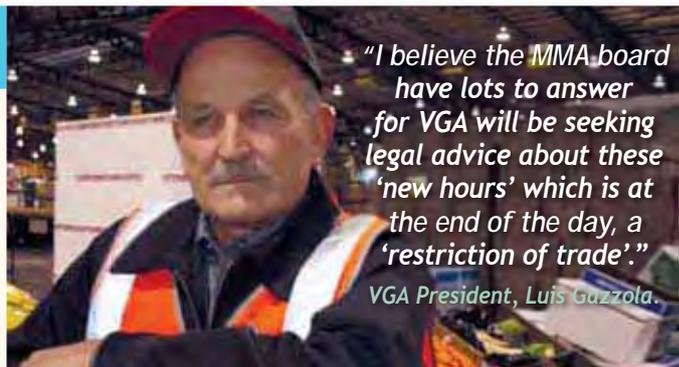
"The MMA board must take full responsibility for the chaos they have created in our marketplace. Our businesses are suffering and it may take a class action to cover our losses."

Koo Wee Rup Grower and Wholesaler, Michael Motta said: "It is not uncommon to see up to 10 forklifts trying to deliver at the same place at the same time."

Mr Motta, who is also a director of Fresh Growers, said, "...at the moment we have been told the current delivery times are in breach of the Fair Trade Practices Act. Our advice is that it is fine to have an open and close time but we need to be given enough time to adequately run our business in an efficient and safe manner."

"We are not asking for a change in trading hours but for common sense to prevail which will allow us to deliver our stock and service our customers in the safest and most economic means possible," he said.

Mr Gazzola said the new ruling, that prevented pre-order deliveries being made to customers' vehicles or parking



*"I believe the MMA board have lots to answer for VGA will be seeking legal advice about these 'new hours' which is at the end of the day, a 'restriction of trade'."*

*VGA President, Luis Gazzola.*

areas prior to opening, was having an horrendous effect on businesses – growers, wholesalers and retailers.

"Now when the market starts trading a single grower/seller has to leave their stand unattended to do pre-ordered deliveries, this reduces opportunities to make sales to other customers on the trading floor," he said.

"Pre-orders must be able to be delivered as soon as a grower arrives on the market floor, it means less congestion and more accessibility for all customers entering the area at opening time."

Last month, more than 100 market users wrote to the Chairman of the Melbourne Market Authority expressing concerns over the imposed restriction.

### Policy Council

The Melbourne Market's self-appointed Policy Council was formed by four wholesalers and retailers for the sole purpose of discussing market hours. It was not until grower's pressured the "new" council that our representatives were invited.

The Policy Council was formed due to MMA's inability to handle the changes in market hours. But why should we have to answer to the Policy Council and not the MMA who take our rent?

If the matter is not sorted out soon, an elected Policy Council may be the only answer. Each association would put forward two of their best representatives to run the everyday affairs of our marketplace. If this was successful, and I'm sure it would work, we can do without the MMA board. The market trading area is our business workplace, decisions should be made by the market users not board appointees that mostly have never worked at the market. No experience and they're telling us how to run our businesses! This is wrong for market users.

### Epping 2011

The new market at Epping is still on-track for business in 2011. If you are interested in going to Epping, you must be prepared to commit your business for the move and for position relocation. Cost of relocation and rental costs will have a large bearing on the future planning.

VGA's Representatives on the New Market Design Committee are David Wallace and Vince Doria. The Epping market communications centre is now open above the Flower Centre where plans and a scale model will be on display. Go and check it out and please make a comment.

*Luis Gazzola*

**See Page 8 for Executive Officer's Corner >**



## Winners!

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### Peter Cochrane

Peter Cochrane has grown vegetables, in partnership with his wife Julie, for more than 30 years at Devon Meadows, on the outer fringe of Melbourne. He has given many years of continued service to the vegetable and horticulture sectors and has been very active in a wide range of issues in order to help maintain a viable industry.

He is the current President of the Victorian Farmers Federation Horticulture Group, a position he has held for three terms, and is also an Executive Member of the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria.

On winning the award, Mr Cochrane said: "It is a real honour to be recognised by my peers and to be acknowledged for my input into industry."



*"All three winners are terrific ambassadors for the Victorian industry and had shown strong leadership and capabilities in their sector."*

*VGA Victoria President, Luis Gazzola.*

### Peter Schreurs

Victorian Grower Peter Schreurs has been in the vegetable industry for more than 20 years and his company, Royston Park Vegetable Farm at Devon Meadows, is one of the largest leek producers in Australia.

Mr Schreurs has adopted an Environmental and Sustainability Policy that includes nature-friendly initiatives through soil biology, water conservation, integrated pest management (IPM), biodiversity and energy conservation.

"I was very surprised to win, all the other applicants were just as deserving. I appreciate very much the industry recognising the efforts on the philosophy of sustainability. It's a very exciting time, I would like other growers to use IPM as it's an initiative that nature has provided us with," Mr Schreurs said on accepting the award.



### Chris Millis

With the protected cropping industry increasingly driven by technology, it pays to be an early adopter. Chris Millis, Project Manager at Flavorite Tomatoes in Victoria, has helped guide the industry through leading by example. Mr Millis' business advances include a carbon dioxide enrichment program, hanging gutters for vine-tomato production, specialist management trolleys for high-wire crops and a commitment to developing an IPM system on-site.

Mr Millis' father, Mark, said Chris would certainly agree that his success was equally attributable to his team members Horst Sjostedt and brother Will, and to the management group supporting them. Mark who is a Flavorite Director said Chris had shown leadership qualities from a young age and it was really pleasing to see this ability recognised by the wider horticultural community.



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# A “clear” path to succession planning the family farm

What would happen to the family farm if you ‘checked-out’ next week? Do you have a succession plan in place or are you relying on your parents’ will (or your own) to do that for you?

Have you sat down with your parents or children and discussed the future of your business?

If you haven’t, you’re not alone. But, like the majority of Victorian farmers, you are leaving an awful lot to chance.

Succession Planning Advisor, Mark Scanlon said many older farmers have been reluctant to embrace succession planning because it involves loosening the reins.

“It’s a lot more emotional for farming families because they live and work on the same property,” he said.

***“Many farmers feel succession planning is about selling the farm. Actually, it’s more about handing it over to the children in a structured manner, so they have a better chance of success.”***

*Succession Planning Advisor, Mark Scanlon.*

“Often it could involve a third, fourth or fifth generation, which is unlikely to occur in other businesses.

“Many farmers feel succession planning is about selling the farm. Actually, it’s more about handing it over to the children in a structured manner, so they have a better chance of success.

“This may involve transferring the management responsibilities first and then transferring ownership at a later date.”

Mr Scanlon, who is Rural Business Development Manager with global accounting and advisory organisation Grant Thornton, has conducted dozens of workshops on the subject for commodity groups and farming organisations across Australia.

He defined succession planning as “a formal process which enables the business owners to evaluate their business and personal circumstances in light of current and possible future exit options so as to develop a preferred course of action from a range of alternatives, whilst they are still in a position of control”.

The workshops highlight the issues of third parties such as: partners; children; remarriage and divorce; selling and buying options; creating a path for management succession; post-succession issues; equity ownership by family members; family members not involved in the business; strategic planning; preserving wealth; communication skills and resolving conflicts.

Mr Scanlon said it was crucial to involve all members of the family in these discussions.

“There’s no point having a strategy in place if no one else is in agreement with it,” he said



*“...it was crucial to involve all members of the family in these discussions. There’s no point having a strategy in place if no one else is in agreement with it...”*

*Succession Planning Advisor, Mark Scanlon.*



With life expectancy now averaging 79 for men and 83 for women, Mr Scanlon said older farmers needed to think about what they would do after retirement.

“Many farmers have spent so much time building up the business that that’s all there is,” he said.

“If you’re 65 and you’ve worked all your life, we need to address the other things you’d like to do.” ▼

For more information, call Mark Scanlon on (02) 8297 2616 or email [mscanlon@gtsw.com.au](mailto:mscanlon@gtsw.com.au)

### The Grant Thornton Succession Planning procedure includes the following stages:

1. **Introductory workshop.**
2. **Family meeting - identification of key family, business and ownership issues.**
3. **Development of business continuance and succession plans.**
4. **Implementation of plan.**
5. **Monitoring progress and updating plans where appropriate.**

#### Stage 1 Introductory Workshop

##### 12 factor framework:

- Succession planning
- Remuneration planning
- Equity ownership by family members
- Family members not involved in the business
- Introducing and rewarding non-family executives
- Retirement and estate planning
- Bringing family members into the business
- Strategic planning
- Financial structure
- Preserving wealth
- Asset protection
- Communication skills and resolving conflicts

#### Stage 2 family meeting:

- History of business
- Performance
- Opportunities
- Family involvement
- Personal financial position
- The future
- Financing
- Business plan

(Source: Grant Thornton)

## CASE STUDY

# Worth the effort

Fourth generation South Gippsland growers Craig and Gavin Arnott are in their 40s and scratching their heads for a way to get the succession process underway.

Father Dave at 70 is fighting fit, has worked hard all his life at the family’s Clyde property and, like so many of his generation, is unwilling to relinquish control of what he worked so hard to attain.

Whenever his sons raise the subject, Dave says “Don’t worry about that, I’m going to be here for a long time”.

*“It was incredibly stressful, but now everyone knows where they stand...”*

*Darren Corrigan*

“Every generation has different ideas,” Craig said.

“But I think there’s too much farming and not enough business being done on farms at the moment. Things like this always get put off until tomorrow because we’re all flat out today.”

By contrast, another Clyde family tackled the issue when Geoff Corrigan decided it was time to semi-retire.

Eldest son Darren recalls it took almost six years and cost a lot of money for financial planning, tax and legal advice.

“It was incredibly stressful, but now everyone knows where they stand,” he said.

“I recommend it, but you need help from specialists and they cost money.” ▼



Mark it in red in your diary, Friday 1 August is the 2008 Golf Day, at Lang Lang in South Gippsland, hosted by the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria and proudly sponsored by EE Muir & Sons.



The event, starting at 9.30am, aims to bring together all growers in a social and relaxed atmosphere. Registration includes a meal and there will be excellent prizes for handicap and non handicap teams. The perpetual Presidents trophy will be presented to the overall winners by VGA Victoria, President Luis Gazzola with presentations starting at 3pm.

The Lang Lang Golf Club is commonly referred to as the “Augusta of Gippsland”. It has 18 classic holes with tight fairways that demand accuracy. There is a special invitation to life members and past senior members of the VGA.

For more details contact VGA Vic (03) 9687 4707 or Lang Lang Golf Club (03) 5659 6284.



An example of Downy Mildew on lettuce.

# National project fight against f

A new national research project is set to help Australian vegetable growers in the fight against fungal diseases. Its ultimate aims are to investigate the economics of managing downy and powdery mildew and white blister with a view to reducing pesticide usage.

The Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) project is being run in collaboration between researchers at the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Horticulture Research Institute Warwick (UK), South Australian Research and Development Institute, University of Queensland, Peracto Tasmania and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries.

“In Victoria, we will be concentrating on benchmarking models for downy mildew and white blister,” DPI Plant Pathologist, Liz Minchinton said.

This will involve a variety of different sub-projects investigating different disease predictive models, irrigation and nutrient practices, as well as trialling an aerial spore sampling detection kit being developed in collaboration with UK growers.

***“Lettuce producers may soon have access to more precise disease management protocols in the local battle against downy mildew.”***

*DPI Pathologist, Liz Minchinton.*

Another significant element of the project involves the lettuce industry. Dr Minchinton said: “Lettuce producers may soon have access to more precise disease management protocols in the local battle against downy mildew.”

“There have been a couple of models produced overseas for downy mildew on lettuce, but we’re looking at taking the best aspects of these two models, and incorporating them into our model, which will work with local weather stations,” she said.

Part of the research will be to identify the conditions at which spores are released, and developing suitable irrigation protocols to reduce the incidence of infection.

“We know from previous research that infection occurs at the same time that the fungus releases its spores.”

Dr Minchinton explained that downy mildews usually sporulate (create spores) between midnight and 4am, and as the temperature warmed up, there was a large spore release about 10am.

She said, based on overseas work and laboratory trials, leaf wetness should be avoided during spore release, so we suggest that growers avoid irrigating late in the morning.

For broccoli, Chinese cabbage and cauliflower growers, Dr Minchinton and her team will trial a new disease predictive

***“Part of the research will be to identify the conditions at which spores are released, and developing suitable irrigation protocols to reduce the incidence of infection.”***



# Act to escalate fungal diseases



White Blister on broccoli.

## CASE STUDY



## Finding “smarter” management techniques to combat diseases

As Operations Manager at Boomaroo Nurseries in Lara (pictured above), Ian Willert is keen to see the outcomes of the new national research project. Like many growers, Mr Willert is hoping to be able to implement some new practices in the management of white blister and downy mildew at the nursery.

“As a nursery, it is critical to our business that our seedlings are free of any disease when they are sent out,” he said.

“As such, the disease pressures that affect growers are a big concern to us also.”

Mr Willert has confidence that, with all industry sectors working together, the research project will produce real outcomes for growers, and refers to his own success in applying watering protocols described by Dr Minchinton at a workshop he attended several years ago.

**“Ian has confidence that, with all industry sectors working together, the research project will produce real outcomes for growers...”**

“We took on board Dr Minchinton’s advice regarding watering at certain times of the day, and as a result we’ve cut our need to spray fungicides on certain crops by at least 50%,” he said.

While Boomaroo already uses some of the management tools being investigated by the Victorian team, there are others that Mr Willert hopes will add to the available repertoire of management techniques.

“One thing is certain - we need to be working smarter when it comes to disease management. And anything that can help us do that is very welcome.” ▼

VegeLink has been facilitated by Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL) in partnership with AUSVEG, and has been funded by the National Vegetable R&D Levy. The Australian Government provides matched funding for all HAL’s R&D activities. This report has been compiled by your VGA Industry Development Officer, Craig Murdoch. For more information on any VegeLink items, or for any general on-farm advice, contact Craig, Tel: (Office) 03 9687 4707 Mob: 0429 990 553 Email: ido@gvavic.org.au



model using weather data to determine the most effective times to spray for White Blister.

“Weather data is collected from weather stations in the field, and inputted into the predictive model, which will indicate the risk of the disease occurring in the field,” she said.

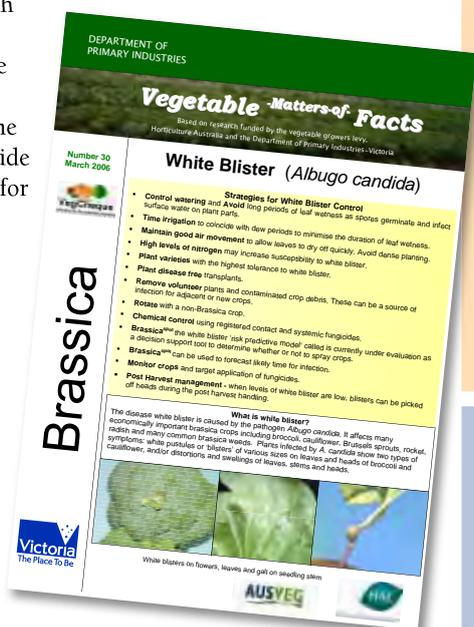
“The aim is to spray when the weather conditions are conducive to increased fungal activity, and when the conditions indicate a low risk of disease activity, then you don’t need to spray.”

Queensland researchers will also be identifying resistant-varieties and alternative non-chemical foliage treatments for white blister, which will be trialed in Victoria in conjunction with the predictive models.

“We’re hoping that these alternative treatments will work successfully within the predictive model, and provide growers with ‘soft’ options for managing white blister,” Dr Minchinton said.

Growers will also get the opportunity to observe the effect of irrigation time on the management of white blister, with a field trial being set up at the Werribee Expo site.

The trials will start in July, and we’re hoping to hold a field day for growers in October. ▼



## executive officer's corner

The Executive Committee recently held meetings at Cranbourne and Werribee and invited local growers to attend as observers.



The topic of 'Market Trading Hours' was a main agenda item at both meetings, at the Cranbourne meeting, local grower Rick Butler reported that the assessment of national vegetable proposed research and development projects was progressing smoothly.

Mr Butler is a member of AUSVEG's Industry Advisory Committee that consults with Horticulture Australia Limited on national R&D project proposals. At the Werribee meeting executive members were receptive to a report on the new HortiSafe Training Program from 'Mentor Training Group' that will assist growers with on-farm training in relation to WorkCover, WorkSafe and OHS issues.

### Epping Market Complex

Growers have the opportunity to view plans of the new market complex at Epping by calling at the upstairs meeting room above the National Flower Centre Café between 7am and 12 noon Monday to Friday. This is an opportunity to ask questions about the growers' trading area, wholesale stores, warehousing, unloading and parking facilities that will be available at the new market complex.

### Just add Fruit and Vegetables

The 'Go for your Life' programme continues to campaign its strong message and the second stage kicked off at Carlton in late May. The latest theme is to "Add fruit and vegetables to your lunch meal". With encouragement to consumers for the continued buying of fruit and vegetables".

Funded by the Victorian Government's 'Go for your life' strategy, the 'Just Add Fruit & Veg' campaign is being coordinated by the Heart Foundation and Melbourne Wholesale Fruit, Vegetable & Flower Market (Melbourne Market Authority) in a unique partnership between the two organisations.

The Victorian Retail Fruiterers Association and Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria also provide support and input to the programme. The project represents an innovative collaboration between the fruit and vegetable industry and the health sector, to promote the consumption of fruit and vegetables by Victorians.

### VGA Victoria Membership

Membership invoices have been distributed to vegetable growers and the President and Executive Committee invite your support by renewing your membership and commitment to the Victorian Vegetable Industry.

The 2008 Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday 10 October 2008 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Spencer Street, Melbourne commencing at 4pm in the Bridge Room followed by a buffet dinner. We welcome the attendance of all vegetable growers and industry supporters.

Tony Imeson



Want to know more about the Victorian vegetable industry? Log on to [www.vgavic.org.au](http://www.vgavic.org.au)

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Vegetables Victoria is written and published by AgriHort Services Pty Ltd (ABN 53 869 534 356) for the Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria Inc (ABN 80 851 723 010)  
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