



## A message from our Chair

Greetings fellow PCA members and subscribers, I hope this newsletter finds you well and rugged up with all this cold weather about. It is interesting to see the huge snow fall around the country and that the Sydney region recorded it's coldest day in 25 years. Here at Family Fresh Farms, our wood-chip boiler is working overtime and our glasshouses are an absolute pleasure to work in – lucky us!

The majority of the Board gathered in Brisbane for Hort Connections 2021 where PCA had a stand in the large exhibition hall amongst loads of other horticultural suppliers, producers, researchers and educators including lots of our PCA corporates. Unfortunately, due the Victorian lockdown – a couple of our directors couldn't make it and it affected quite a few delegates and exhibitors too. This was particularly sad as it was like having a family gathering with family members missing. However, for those that were able to attend and meet – it was extremely exciting and energizing to say the least. It has been an exceptionally long time since we have been able to connect with our industry in person and it was delightful.

It was a busy couple of days and the PCA Board managed to have some very insightful meetings with peak industry bodies and representative groups like AusVeg, National Farmers Federation, Plant Health Australia, Growcom, Hort Innovation and others. We are working together for the benefit of our mutual members to ensure we are making doing business easier and more profitable. We were also ramping up business for our upcoming conference in Coffs Harbour at Pacific Resort between 25th-28th October, 2021. The speaker program is coming together nicely and once this is finalised it will be published and distributed widely.



**Nicky Mann** • PCA Chair

I attended the speaker talks and networking event on labour and it was very insightful as the team from EY shared their initial results from their surveys and research for phase I and II. With our international borders remaining closed for some time to come – the holiday working visa holders (aka. backpackers) are not likely to be returning anytime soon. This will put more emphasis on the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Program which is definitely gaining momentum. There are great stories of farmers working together to solve their labour issues together, buying motels, buses and employing seasonal workers in groups to facilitate all their labour needs. I know here at Family Fresh Farms – we are collaborating with 2 other farms – sharing 16 of our Vanuatu workers over winter. It's a win for our team – as they remain working full-time, gain different skills and get to see some of the Australian countryside; it's a win for our farm as we keep the teams busy and happy and they come back refreshed and energized, plus, it's a win for other farmers – as they get the benefit of teams we brought into the country and paid quarantine for. By the way, we have sent some of our top performers to these other farms too as we know it is critical, they get great workers and have a positive experience with using seasonal workers – thus, hoping this may be a solution going forwards and into the future. It's a really good feeling working and collaborating with other like-minded farmers.

Until, next month – happy growing! Keep safe and look after yourselves, your teams and your crops.

Click here to download copy of newsletter



**Hort Connections 2021 Conference**

**A great success!!**

The PCA team held meetings with AUSVEG, National Farmers Federation Hort Council, Plant Health Australia and the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment to strengthen our ties with these organisations.

All going well, the Australian Government will launch the Protected Cropping Research, Development and Extension Strategy at the PCA Conference in October.

It is hoped that funding will be announced together with the plan to help the industry implement the strategy.



**PCA Directors meeting with AUSVEG and NFF**

Left to Right: Andrew Potter, Shané Steffan, Nicky Mann, Belinda Adams, Emily Rigby, Michelle Mak, Tyson Cattle, Matthew Plunkett



**PCA Directors at our booth**

Left to Right: Andrew Potter, Matthew Plunkett, Shané Steffan, Michelle Mak, Emily Rigby, Nicky Mann



**Nicky Mann with Family Fresh Farms' mini Quakes at the Perfection Fresh Breakfast**

## Are you a Grower/Levy Payer?

PCA have the ability to financially subsidise up to half the cost of a Full Registration for Grower/Levy Payers attending the PCA 2021 Conference. If you consider yourself a grower/levy payer, complete your Full Registration today and follow the prompts during the registration system to apply for the subsidy.

REGISTRATIONS ARE NOW OPEN		
	Earlybird	Regular
PCA Member	\$750	\$825
HFF Member	\$875	\$950
Non-Member	\$975	\$1050
Student	\$500	\$600

**EARLYBIRD REGISTRATIONS  
CLOSE FRIDAY 23 JULY 2021**  
Register now to secure these great savings!

Sign up to become a PCA member here

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER



The PCA Board would like to extend our warmest welcome and good wishes to our new members.

### Individual Member

Liz Preece, Extractas Bioscience  
Chris Vella

### Student Member

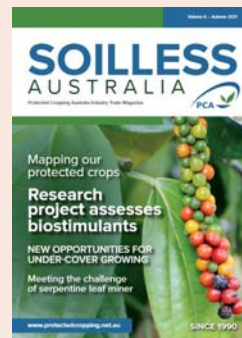
Justin Holt

We look forward to many successful years together!

## Soilless Australia Hard Copy Opt-Out

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## WE'RE HIRING Greenhouse Lead



Take ownership and drive growth of Netafim's new greenhouse business and be an integral part of our long-term success.

View the job ad: [netafim.com.au/career/greenhouse-leaderchampion/](https://netafim.com.au/career/greenhouse-leaderchampion/)  
Call **0429 166 593** or email your CV to [au.recruitment@netafim.com](mailto:au.recruitment@netafim.com)

## PCA Advocacy Update

Welcome to the June edition of Growing Undercover and hope everyone is well despite the ongoing challenges with COVID restrictions, labour shortages and supply chain issues.

Our thoughts are with our friends and colleagues in Victoria as they overcome the latest challenge with lockdowns.

It was interesting to discuss the growth of the protected cropping sector at the Hort Connections conference with a wide range of growers and industry personnel recently. Many highlighted the expansion of our industry, particularly on the Northern Adelaide Plains in South Australia, the Sydney Basin, Mid North Coast of NSW and in Southeast Queensland.

There is also emerging interest in several fruit and tree crops such as Avocadoes and Citrus moving to some form of protection, and interest in the table grape industry.

### **National Mapping Project funded**

In exciting news for our industry and organisation, Hort Innovation informed the University of New England in early June that the tender for the development of a National Protected Cropping Map has been funded.

As part of this project, the PCA will join the Cooperative Research Centre for Future Food Systems (CRCFFS) as a supporting participant. This will enable the PCA to share innovative research findings with our members across several projects in the next generation protected cropping space.

Further information on the CRCFFS can be found here at:

<https://www.futurefoodsystems.com.au/future-food-hubs/#high-tech-indoor-farming>

The team at the University of New England have submitted a paper to present this project at the PCA Conference in October.

### **Greenhouse Construction Code Advocacy**

Despite a targeted advocacy campaign over the last five years, unfortunately the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) has again de-prioritised works for inclusion in the 2022 National Construction Code scheduled workplan.

This is disappointing; however, a decision will be made in late June with regards to whether the works will be included in the 2025 workplan.



**Matthew Plunkett** • PCA Deputy Chair

Feedback has highlighted the need for further work to be undertaken around fire safety, subject to a review by the ABCB.

The PCA will continue to advocate for this issue to ensure unnecessary duplication and red tape is not being imposed on growers. It is good to see various state government entities writing to the PCA raising their concerns and thank you to Hydroponic Farmers Federation (HFF), Berries Australia and AUSVEG for also advocating on this critical issue.

### **Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries (QDAF) Investment in Protected Cropping**

In addition to developing the national research, development and extension strategy for protected cropping that will be completed in the next few months, QDAF are investing heavily in protected cropping.

The Gatton Research Station in the Lockyer Valley is being developed as a hub for all things protected cropping. There is also considerable research being undertaken at Ayr in North Queensland and it is hoped that PCA Regional Tours can be undertaken in the future to network and communicate research findings.

### **Costa's 2020 Sustainability report**

One of the interesting articles I came across recently was in Costa's Sustainability report for 2020. It highlighted the significant investment Costa are undertaking trialling and commercialising the growing of avocadoes under netting in substrate.

Research since 2017 suggests that the high-density plantings (of greater than 1,000 trees per hectare) are more than 4 times greater than conventional plantings. Noted in the report was the benefits of growing under cover included faster tree maturity, higher yields, and better fruit quality.

Further information can be found here at:

<https://costagroup.com.au/2021/04/06/sustainability-report-2020/>

As always, stay safe and have a great month.

## Did you know PCA offers a range of Membership options?

Financial Individual Members are usually individual grower or smaller allied trade organisations. Corporate Memberships are usually for larger grower or allied trade organisations.

See our corporate members at <https://protectedcropping.net.au/our-partners/>

A Corporate Membership 'bundle' includes five Individual Memberships and up to 10 Subscriber Memberships. Subscribers are non-financial members who are encouraged to upgrade to financial membership status to access PCA's full range of benefits and opportunities.

Details of Membership options are available at: <https://protectedcropping.net.au/become-a-member/> or by contacting:

Michelle Harris - Spencer: +61 (0) 3 8560 4391 or at [protectedcropping@asnevents.net.au](mailto:protectedcropping@asnevents.net.au)

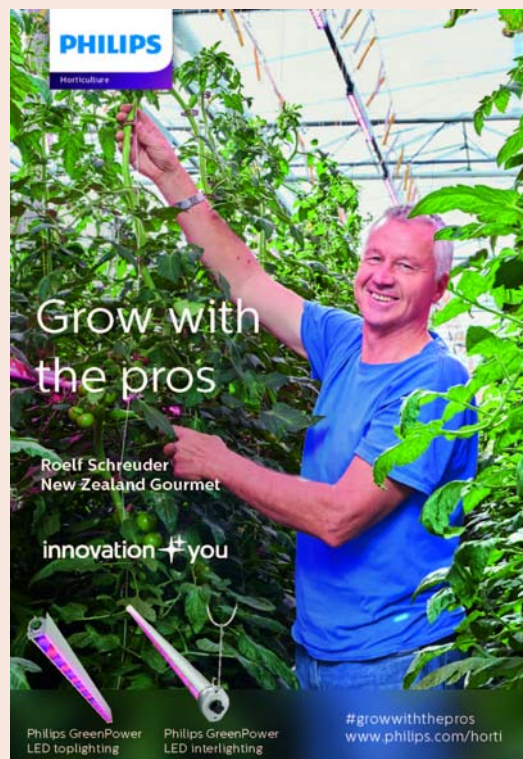
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## Sydney Regional Tour 2021 Update

The Sydney Regional Tour has been postponed and a new date is currently being discussed so stay tuned in the coming weeks.



The poster features the PCA logo at the top left. The main text reads 'PCA Sydney Regional Farm Tour POSTPONED JULY 2021 TBC'. Below this, there are several circular images showing various agricultural scenes: tomatoes, a greenhouse, and other farm-related activities. At the bottom, it states 'The PCA Sydney Regional Farm Tour has been postponed'. Below that, it says 'The Organising Committee is currently working on securing a new date in July 2021. Protected Cropping Australia apologises for any inconvenience caused. We look forward to you joining us next month for the Sydney Regional Farm Tour. Stay tuned for the new date!'. At the very bottom, it provides contact information: '(0)3 8560 4391 | PROTECTEDCROPPING@ASNEVENTS.NET.AU'.



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## Tell us your story!



People love hearing about what their peers are up to - and we're always on the lookout for news about what's going on in the protected cropping industry. Our monthly e-newsletter, Growing Undercover, is a great place to catch up on these stories.

If you've got something you'd like to share, or there's an issue you'd like addressed, we're all ears.

Please give us a call on +61 (0) 3 8560 4391 or via email: [pca-events@asnevents.net.au](mailto:pca-events@asnevents.net.au)

# Australian Medical Cannabis Industry: 2021

## Are you interested in learning more about the Australian Medical Industry?

It has been an exciting year to date for the Australian Medical Cannabis Industry. The industry has been quietly, steadily growing as more Aussie growers (and manufacturers) receive the green light for their ODC licence and permit applications as regulations are slowly (but surely) improving. The number of patients accessing cannabis medicines is exponentially growing, with more Australian grown medicines becoming available. At Cannatrek we are pleased to have launched a variety of Australian grown medicines onto the market in 2021. The growing success of the industry, combined with the inherent export market opportunities and discussions around a potential future adult use market, is leading to a vibrant Australian medical cannabis industry.

## United in Compassion (UIC) is pleased to announce its fifth Australian Medical Cannabis Symposium (UIC2021) being held on the Sunshine Coast from Friday 13 August 2021 to Sunday 15 August 2021 including A Three-Day Trade Exhibition and 2 day Industry Program.

UIC initially began as a patient led movement that assisted in changing the law around medicinal cannabis, inspiring a new industry for the benefit of Australian patients. While the focus remains on patients and helping them with better access – providing better education and promoting development of a viable, professional, and patient focused industry – I am pleased to announce that I have been working with Lucy Haslam (Founder, UIC) to put together a stella line-up of speakers for the first **Industry Program to be held at UIC2021** alongside the health care professional's symposium streams.

The industry focused program will showcase the current state of the Australian industry, hearing from presenters actively involved in the MC space, develop important business relationships, and provide insights into global best practice and innovation. The program will cover everything industry related – from genetics and cultivation through post-harvest, extraction and innovative product formulations.

Are interested in sponsoring or participating in the trade expo of the symposium? For further details visit [unitedincompassion.com.au/2021-symposium](http://unitedincompassion.com.au/2021-symposium)



**Emily Rigby • PCA Director**  
*Conference Chair, UIC2021 Industry Program*  
*Head of Research & Development, CANNATREK*  
UIC2021 will be held at Novotel Twin Waters on the Sunshine Coast. Whether you are from industry, interested in getting into the industry, a health professional, a researcher or other, this will be a great opportunity to learn, network and collaborate to further the emerging Australian Cannabis industry.

Join me and other industry partners, researchers and health professionals as we come together to examine exciting developments in the industry and hear from renowned experts around the country in the Australian medical cannabis industry.

Any queries please direct to [rigby.research@gmail.com](mailto:rigby.research@gmail.com)

I look forward to welcoming you to UIC2021!

**2 Day Medicinal Cannabis Industry Program and 3 Day Trade Exhibition**  
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## Book Review

By Mike Nichols

**Advances in horticultural soilless culture. Edited by Professor Nazim Gruda**

**Published by Burleigh Dodds, Cambridge, UK. 442 pages. Price: £ 160**

Dr Nazim Gruda is a Professor of Horticulture at the University of Bonn, Germany, and has compiled a valuable book with chapters written by many of the world authorities on the science behind soilless culture, the future for intensive horticulture.

The book is divided into 3 sections, namely:

### 1) Materials:

which comprises chapters on

A consideration of:

a) root zone management, b) inorganic media, c) organic media, d) physical properties of media, e) chemical properties of media, and f) biological properties of media;

### 2) Technologies:

which comprises chapters on

Advances in:

a) liquid and solid media systems, b) irrigation/fertigation techniques, c) nutrient management and modelling, d) hydroponic design for plant cultivation in cities, and e) optimizing product quality in soilless culture.

### 3) Case studies

which comprises chapters on

Advances in soilless culture of:

a) tomatoes and other fruit vegetables, b) strawberry production, and c) ornamentals.

The authors of these chapters are from Albania, Canada, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea, Turkey, UK, and USA

This book provides a valuable insight into the science and present-day technologies used in soilless culture and I would most strongly recommend it to all present and future practitioners, scientists and students in this increasingly important food production system. It should be an essential book in all Agricultural Research and Teaching Institute libraries world-wide.

### Declaration of interest

The reviewer of this book wrote Chapter 14 (strawberries).

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*Hort Connections 2021*

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