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### FRONT COVER

PCA members touring New Life Industries in Tasmania as part of our greenhouse growers' workshop in May. (Full story page 9)  
Photo by Marcus Brandsema.



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Nicky Mann grows hydroponic roses and berries that are sold through her own florist shops, farmers markets and farm gate. She was on the PCA Board 2010 - 2014 and Conference Chair for the AIS Greenworks PCA Conference in 2015.



## Chair's Report

By NICKY MANN

Dear valued members of Protected Cropping Australia,

I just wanted to write a personal letter in this Christmas edition of the Soilless magazine to THANK YOU most sincerely for being a member of the Protected Cropping Australia peak industry body.

Without your ongoing support the current board of directors and myself would be out of a role and probably concentrating a little harder on our own enterprises & jobs!

However, we believe that contributing to the industry, builds a better community for everyone. So thank you for being involved too.

### Connected Collective

As a collective team we are feeling really inspired and challenged to try and make a big difference in the coming two years to our amazing industry. Yes, I am surrounded by a group of talented and passionate directors keenly assisted by our wonderful company secretary, Saskia Blanch and we have BIG PLANS.

### So what's in it for PCA members?

Firstly, we are aiming to double our presence and membership numbers to quantity 1,000 getting more growers involved and connected, as well as assist our valued Allied Trade service a larger, yet highly targeted group.

With more members we will have more bargaining power on your behalf with the politicians who hold the purse-strings.

So if you know anyone that SHOULD be a member of PCA please put them in contact with Saskia, thank-you! (All our contact details are on the back cover, as always.)

### Why Become A PCA Member?

Because we target the specialist hydroponic and greenhouse growing industry, across several commodity groups.

### PCA Two Day Regional Study Tours

Secondly, we are planning to hold two 2 day regional tours twice every year. We want to showcase different areas across Australia and we want to really get our growers exposed to new growing regions, novel crops, new techniques, and we want to listen and learn from extraordinary growers doing exceptional things.

#### Central Coast, NSW 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Our first two day regional tour will kick off on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018 and cover Port Stevens, Newcastle, Central Coast, and Peats Ride of New South Wales. There is a huge amount of low-med-high tech greenhouse businesses in this area with diverse crops, greenhouses and systems. And yes, you will be visiting Wade's and my farm, Roses & Berries 2 Go among others.

Naturally PCA members will get the best access to all PCA events.

#### Tasmania, November 2018

The second regional tour will be in Tasmania in November 2018. Again this will be a 2 day tour and showcase some of the finest protected cropping businesses.

So add these dates to your diary now. And Allied Trade, if you want to be involved with these tours, contact myself as soon as possible. We already have Achmea Australia as the coach sponsor and others.

### PCA One Day Workshops

Our one day grower workshops around Australia will continue. The next one is planned for April 2018 in Western Australia to be organised by PCA Director's Charlie Blogna and Nam Ly, followed by another in the NSW Mid-North Coast in August followed by South Australia in September. (See page 41 Soilless Calendar).

Will you join us too? We hope so.

### Membership Survey Feedback

We HEARD you in the 2016 member survey and we are LISTENING.

You say that grower workshops, networking opportunities, farm visits and knowledge transfer are high up on your list of expectations from the PCA. So that is exactly what we are planning for you.

Join us at the PCA trade booth at the upcoming conferences and trade shows;

- **Berry Quest International Conference**  
12 – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018, Launceston
- **Hort Connections**  
18 – 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Brisbane
- **Hydroponic Farmer's Federation Conference & PCA AGM**  
25 – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018, Melbourne

Continued next page 

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## Chair's Report

By NICKY MANN *continued*



These are fabulous opportunities to expose protected cropping to the greater fruit, vegetable and orchard industries who are eager to learn more about protecting their precious crops and using our advanced growing systems. So get organised now to attend Berry Quest, Hort Connections & HFF in June 2018 to begin with.

### PCA Corporate Governance

The new Board of Directors are also getting our governance and house in order with some proposals to make amendments to the constitution which will be tabled at the next general meeting.

The goal is to simplify PCA membership categories, pricing as well as the voting process at elections.

The Board of Directors is also getting all procedures in place to be transparent and professional.

We will appoint an expert to help formulate a thorough strategic and business plan to steer Protected Cropping Australia into the future.

### PCA's 15th biennial conference, trade show & farm tours 2019

Our 2019 conference plans are getting locked into place and it will not be long before the date and venue is announced – watch this space – we are aiming to make it bigger, better and more informative than ever before.

HOW - TO  
GREENHOUSE  
TECHNOLOGY

Lastly, on behalf of the Board and Secretary of Protected Cropping Australia I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. We ask you to be safe on the roads and enjoy time with family.

May your irrigation keep working, controllers not break down, crop covers keep intact and your plants thrive.

Thank you for those of you bringing beautiful, fresh, safe and nutritious tomatoes, cucumbers, capsicums, eggplant, zucchinis, flowers, fish, leafy greens, herbs and berries to our Christmas table this year – We salute you!

Protected Cropping Rocks!!!!!!



# Vietnamese Growers Flourish in the Top End

By KRISTY O'BRIEN, ABC Landline 11/11/17

Michael Quatch arrived in Australia as a refugee of the Vietnam War. Now he is one of the most successful growers in the Northern Territory.

During picking season, work starts well before sunrise and does not end, but Mr Quatch is not complaining – he snags a few hours of rest here and there as he works hard to get the fresh produce from his farm at Lake Bennet in the Top End onto supermarket shelves.

The 45 year old is the biggest hydroponic farmer in the Northern Territory, running 16 hectares of shaded cropping mainly producing tomatoes and cucumbers.

But Mr Quatch had to overcome obstacles difficult to fathom when you first meet this jovial, optimistic farmer.

He came to Australia in the 1980's along with 80,000 refugees who fled in the decade following the Vietnam War. He was just a boy, and said he remembered being very fearful and seeing the sadness in his parents' eyes.

"My parents decided ... to leave Vietnam and find a better life for the future," he said.

The family knew staying in Vietnam could see them killed, but securing a spot in Australia was not easy, especially with three kids in tow.

"We came in 1985 on the boat to Malaysia and we were there 16 months in the camp. My mum, she was crying every night hoping we can come to another, better country and build a better life for us."

Mr Quatch said he remembered his father working hard to build a new life for the family and he has clearly inherited his father's work ethic and has become one of the largest growers in the NT.



Michael Quatch is the largest hydroponic greenhouse grown on the Northern Territory with 16ha of shaded cropping.

"I just built another small block and tried a little bit and ended up ... going good," he said. "Then [it] started getting bigger and thought I'd just do it for a couple of years."

It was then that Mr Quatch was approached by one of Australia's supermarket giants.

"From there things just got bigger and bigger and [the supermarket] wanted me to grow more and more."

### Vietnamese farmers a 'significant part' of the economy

It is not an uncommon story in the Top End – a huge chunk of the region's farming community are Vietnamese refugees. With very little skills or money, many formed small collectives and shared equipment and workers. They now contribute around \$40 million to the NT economy through farming.

Greg Owens from NT Farmers has worked in the Territory for many decades and has watched the growth with amazement.

"To be already a significant part of the economy and community in the NT and providing employment and economic opportunities, we would like to see it recognised."

The produce from the North fills a major gap in the domestic market as its growing season is the opposite to the main markets in Southern Australia. This means producers can demand good prices and keep the shelves stocked.

Mr Quatch said he was grateful to his parents for taking the risk to come to Australia.

"At night-time, when [I'm] missing mum and dad, [I] just want to say, 'Mum and dad what you give me now, I never thought I'm going to be like this today!'"



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