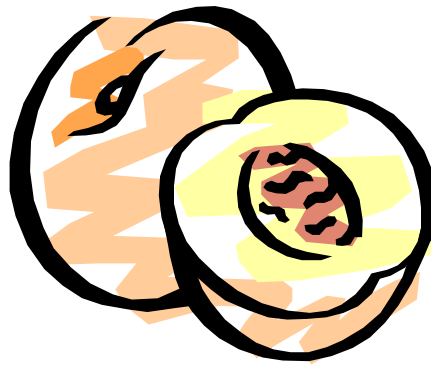


V.P.A.G.A.



1964 to 2003

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**The First Forty Years**  
of

The Victorian Peach & Apricot Growers' Association

# Victorian Peach & Apricot Growers' Association

## Inaugural Executive Committee

formed 30<sup>th</sup> September 1964

**PRESIDENT** Robert J. Cornish

**SECRETARY/TREASURER** Mal. O'Malley

**EXECUTIVE:**

**COBRAM**

Ivor Parkinson Bob Pollock

**DUNBULBALANE**

Cyril Valentine Merv. Wren  
J. Parry

**KATUNGA**

Frank Cantwell Wilf. Trewin  
Harry Routley

## 2002 – 2003 Executive Committee

**PRESIDENT** James Cornish

**VICE PRESIDENT** Ray Pool (Invergordon)

**EXECUTIVE:**

**COBRAM**

Tom Bisogni Peter DeMaio Frank Diaco  
Charlie Gattuso Fred Gattuso Tony Latina  
Philip Pullar Ivan Routley Sam Sorrenti

**INVERGORDON**

Doug Brown Frank Eddy Peter Kemp

# Presidents & Secretaries of VPAGA 1964 - 2003

## PRESIDENTS

**Robert J. Cornish (Bob)**  
30<sup>th</sup> September 1964 - 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1977

**Philip A Pullar**  
23<sup>rd</sup> November 1977 - 30<sup>th</sup> November 1982

**Frank Schoonderbeek**  
30<sup>th</sup> November 1982 - 18<sup>th</sup> November 1986

**Ivan Routley**  
18<sup>th</sup> November 1986 - 20<sup>th</sup> December 1994

**Joe Conti**  
20<sup>th</sup> December 1994 - 16<sup>th</sup> December 1996

**James Cornish**  
16<sup>th</sup> December 1996

## SECRETARIES

**Mal. O'Malley**  
30<sup>th</sup> September 1964 - 27<sup>th</sup> July 1966

**Jim Pfitzner**  
27<sup>th</sup> July, 1966 - 11<sup>th</sup> April 1973

**Helen Hanna (nee Ryan)**  
11<sup>th</sup> April 1973 - 10<sup>th</sup> December 1976

**Lauris Jarvis**  
1<sup>st</sup> October 1976 - 8<sup>th</sup> October 1979

**Margaret Stead**  
2<sup>nd</sup> October 1979 - 15<sup>th</sup> February 1996

**Angela Coonan**  
6<sup>th</sup> February 1996 - 10<sup>th</sup> February 2001

**Barbara Coleman**  
10<sup>th</sup> February 2001

# V.P.A.G.A EARLY HISTORY

## Three Fruit Grower Associations and the Ultimate Formation of V.P.A.G.A.

During 1948-51 the State Government developed 67 orchards for Soldier Settlement at Yarroweyah South and Katunga. The growers who were led by Stan Gregson formed a Katunga Fruitgrowers' Association in 1951 and became affiliated with Northern Victoria Fruitgrowers' Association. Similarly a Cobram Fruitgrower Association was formed in 1957 with 60 members. Cobram also became affiliated with NVFA. Each of our Associations sent delegates to general meetings of NVFA held in the O'Brien Hall in Mooropna.

By 1960 Katunga delegates were concerned about falling prices for canning peaches and became frustrated with NVFA who seemed interested in looking after pear grower interests.

During 1957-61 a closer settlement scheme for growing Canning Fruit was under development at Invergordon. The orchards numbered 81 in total and in 1961 the Invergordon Fruitgrowers' Association was formed and like Katunga and Cobram also joined NVFA.

Frustrations reached boiling point with disappointment over canning peach prices and NVFA failure to support our call for improved prices. Many growers were very concerned, particularly at Katunga. During these years an organization known as the FISCC set fruit prices which most growers were disappointed with. They felt the grower representing them was very pear grower sympathetic and did not push peach prices. A meeting was arranged for all growers from Katunga, Cobram and Invergordon. The meeting, which was held at Invergordon, was very well attended. Growers who belonged to the three associations decided to form a breakaway 'umbrella' association to try and rectify some of our problems.

Many meetings were held with delegates from each association and a draft Constitution which included a formula for the number of delegates from each association was agreed.

It was decided to call the new grouping The Victorian Peach & Apricot Growers' Association.

NVFA at first ignored what was happening but subsequently called a growers meeting in Cobram to try and convince our members to reject the breakaway. Several influential grower members from the NVFA executive attended and tried to influence our members to reject this new association (VPAGA). However it was overwhelmingly agreed to by our growers to affiliate with the new association and withdraw from NVFA.

The Victorian Peach & Apricot Growers' Association was officially formed in late 1963 with Bob Cornish as President and Mal O'Malley as Secretary. The new executive of VPAGA met monthly and held its first Annual Meeting on the 30th September 1964.

Much effort was made to be fully recognized by Government bodies and Canneries. This proved very successful because these people acknowledged we had a just cause.

We also requested membership of the Australian Canning Fruit Growers' Association whose members were NSW Canning Fruitgrowers' Association, the South Australian Canning Fruit Growers' Association and NVFA. This request was rejected for several years even though South Australia supported our membership.

VPAGA grew in stature being readily accepted by the Community, Government Institutions and Canneries as representing a large number of growers and a major tonnage of fruit.

More detailed activities are recorded with the annual reports which follow.

**Bob Cornish**

# History of Events and Happenings over 40 Years

## Annual General Meeting 30th September 1964.

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Acting Chairman: Mr. R.J. Cornish  
Present: Cobram 8, Dunbulbalane 7, Katunga 11  
Reports: President and Treasurer  
  
Elections: President Mr. R.J. Cornish  
Auditor: Mr. L.T. Mogg  
Levy: 3/- per ton on peaches and apricots.

Establishment of VPAGA: Moved Mr. S. Gregson, Seconded Mr. R.B Pollock, that this meeting endorses, approves and confirms all actions taken by representatives of canning fruitgrowers associations in the formation and establishment of the Victorian Peach and Apricot Growers Association as now constituted. CARRIED

## Executive Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> October 1964.

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### Items for discussion

- Serious effect of low fresh fruit prices on industry.
- Competitive position of Australia compared to South Africa and California.
- Representation on Canned Fruits Board
- Better prices – fair deal for growers.
- Growers reduce Peach and Apricots to local market requirements.
- Government subsidy on peaches and apricots to keep the canning industry in a position where it is profitable to grow peaches and apricots for export and enable large volume of canned pears to be sold.
- Discuss the question of Advertising Levy.
- Effect of payroll tax on costs.

## Annual General Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> October 1965

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### President's report

- Concerns about the price received and cost of production.
- Arrangements for blood testing of organic phosphate spray users.
- Cost of cartage to canneries and conditions of roads to cannery.
- Availability of labour for harvest season.
- Introduction of coloured discs to assist in assessment of stages of fruit ripening.
- Mr. Jack Parry, Vice President left the district.

## **Annual General Meeting 10<sup>th</sup> October 1966**

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### **Secretary's Annual report**

Visitors: Mr Ralph Bunje, General Manager Californian Canning Peach Association  
Mr. Lionel Adams, Chairman of the Canned Fruits Board.  
Mr Bradley, President NSW Canning Fruitgrowers' Association.  
Mr. Heading S.A. Canning Fruigrowers' Association.

Deputations: Canberra to the Chairman Fruit Industry Sugar Concession Committee.  
The Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Land to discuss fruit prices, insurance and new cannery and associated matters.

Cannery: Good working relationship developing with the cannery. This is not to say that we achieved all aims for improvements for growers. Availability of peaches may be a future problem, giving trends towards canned peaches and fruit cocktail by consumers.

## **Annual General Meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1967**

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### **Secretary's Annual report**

This has been a busy year for Association striving to obtain improvements in the fruit industry to benefit members.

On 28<sup>th</sup> January the district was hit by the most severe and widespread storm in the history of the area. All areas received damage from hail with some crops totally devastated. Loss of saleable fruit will be sizeable and the financial results severe. As regards prices a slight increase for Apricots and Pears but peaches remained unchanged. Canned fruit pack for 1967 exceeded the 1966 pack with the most dramatic increase being the packout of Apricots which exceeded 1 million cartons.

We were again fortunate to have visitors from California and Canberra to discuss the fruit industry. Delegations went to Melbourne to discuss crop insurance. The association was represented at the Australian Canning Convention in Canberra and representations made regarding water, costs of production, roads, fruit payments and various other subjects.

### **Murray Valley Horticultural Extension Committee**

Block 80 at Invergordon has been set aside for demonstration and research. Meteorology instruments have been installed to ensure accurate records.

Requests for cost of Production survey by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics have not met with success, our requests for representation likewise, yet separation of fruits, the basis of our existence is being proposed in another field.

## **Annual General Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> October, 1968**

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### **Secretary's Annual Report**

- Year of devaluation. United Kingdom devalued the pound sterling but the Australian dollar would not be devalued.
- Drought conditions prevailed, shortage of water and lack of penetration were common problems. Without an additional 10% Water Right it could have been a disaster. Temperatures for February 112 degrees.

- Prices inadequate – Apricots \$100, Pears \$97, Peaches clear centre \$97 Peaches Red centre \$93. The canned fruit pack continued to increase.
- The Victorian Fruit Crop Insurance Investigation Committee was formed last year. The task before the Committee is a long and involved one. We are progressing steadily and hope that in due course we will come up with a workable solution to overcome the problem of Hail insurance for all Victorian growers.
- Mr. Wilson Sim, who gave valuable service to our members as their Horticultural Advisor for almost 19 years retired and was guest of honour at a farewell dinner.
- Deputations & Representations: Major matters under the this heading were representations regarding devaluation, industry representation, tariffs and fruit size acceptance by canners, Minister of Water Supply and the State Electricity Commission District Manager.

## **Annual General Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> October 1969**

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### **Secretary's Annual Report**

There is now general recognition, for the first time since the formation of VPAGA that there are special problems with the production of peaches and apricots in Australia.

The two most important events this year: -

The formation of the Canning Peach & Apricots Growers' Federation of Australia.

The appointment by the Commonwealth Government of a top-level Interdepartmental Committee, chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industry, Mr. Ives. Terms of reference "To enquire into and report upon the Australian canned deciduous fruits industry; its conditions, structure and problems, and to make recommendations regarding steps considered necessary and practical to place the industry on a satisfactory long-term basis"

## **Annual General Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> October 1970**

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### **Secretary's Annual Report**

I consider that your Association has progressed from what was regarded as a "voice in the wilderness" to now be regarded as a responsible organisation of considerable strength. The policy of and the warnings issued by this Association have not altered since the Association was formed.

To illustrate this in part I quote from the inaugural annual report presented by President R.J. Cornish September 1964. "If industry pricing remains as it has been extra plantings would be the logical answer in the long term to our problems". A policy such as this could cause further imbalance in the fruit pack however, peach growers would have no difficulty in selling their pears if they offered them with their peaches.

The Association was involved in Tariff Board hearings and in the matter of a hearing before the Arbitration Commission regarding the wage rates etc. of the employees of fruitgrowers.

The Murray Valley Extension Committee was very active during the year and is proving to be of great value to growers. Special thanks are due to all concerned with the Committee for their efforts during the year.

## **Annual General Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> October 1971**

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### **Secretary's Annual Report**

Much of this report deals with production, cost of production, cannery prices, cannery intake, and other problems associated with the quantity of fruit grown and the sales of fruit at a price suitable to return the growers a viable income. Overproduction is becoming a major problem.

The activities in which the Association participated during the year are too numerous to detail but included many meetings, conferences, deputation's and representations. Subjects involved included harvest labour, water and drainage, fruit crop insurance, tariffs, wages, Melbourne market inquiry and the provision of the usual services to members.

Special mention was made of the retirement of Mr. Keith McAllister from the Executive committee. Mr. McAllister had been a member since the inception of VPAGA.

## **Annual General Meeting 31<sup>st</sup> October 1972**

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### **Secretary's Annual Report**

- Notable events – The first blow was notice that because of excess stock of canned fruit intake would be restricted. Currencies throughout the world including Australia realigned the value and the effect on our competitive position overseas was dealt a severe blow.
- Another year of escalating costs was dealt another blow with the minimum wage increasing from \$46.30 to \$51.00 increasing the rate payable by fruitgrowers by 10%.
- Harvest labour was again recruited from New Zealand and was successful.
- It was noted that within a period of 4 months the President had attended 28 industry meetings plus 4 days at a canning convention.
- There are many others to whom the Association is indebted and these include Mr. Bruce Lloyd MHR, Mr. Peter Ross-Edwards MLA, Departmental Officers, Press, and advertisers in our Newsletter and members of the Association itself.

## **Special Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> June 1973**

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There was lengthy discussion regarding the \$1500 Welfare Grant and the proposed \$10 levy on all growers 1973 deliveries. The tree pull subsidy programme created great interest. Mr. R.P. Field, Entomologist of V.P.R.I. Burnley, spoke on 'Integrated Control of Peach Pests'.

## **Annual General Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> October, 1973**

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### **President's Annual Report**

The year has been most disappointing financially for peach growers. In fact for nearly ten years prices have been inadequate and as a result over 40 members have clear felled their orchards and left the industry in the last 12 months.

The wet winter has caused the loss of many trees with wet feet in some cases up to 50%, causing growers to remove trees and leave the industry. At the time of writing the exact situation of total Victorian losses is not clear. Your Association will be endeavouring to have assistance made available to those growers who have suffered severely.

Prices for apricots was lowered by \$10 whilst pears and peaches remained the same.

Your Executive in association with the South Australian Canning Fruitgrowers Association will be seeing the Minister for Primary Industry, The Hon Senator Wreidt, to explain to him first hand the plight of the peach industry.

Our newsletter is aimed at keeping you informed of the activities of your Executive from month to month and to provide up to date information on technical matters regarding fruit production.

## **Annual General Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> October 1974**

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### **President's Annual Report**

Inflation in Australia is increasing at a rate of 20% - 25% and for a labour intensive industry like ours the situation is of crisis proportions. Prices for canned fruit have increased considerably in Australia and should enable better grower prices next year. However the Australian Dollar is overvalued against world currencies and this is making our position in export markets non-competitive and unprofitable.

Canning Convention: Seven members of your executive along with two other growers attended the 17<sup>th</sup> convention at the Southern Cross Hotel from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> September. The most disappointing aspect to emerge at the convention is the inability of our industry to obtain adequate prices for canned fruit on export markets. Also it was stressed that canned pears cannot be sold without a balance of canned peaches.

Mechanical Harvesting: Your executive provided financial support for delegates to visit the United States to study and report back on mechanical harvesting. The delegation consisted of Vice President Phillip Pullar, Ian Parsons and Leo Van Heek.

Drainage: Your executive is doing everything possible to have improvements made to the various drainage requirements of members. We have members of your executive on Irrigator Advisory Boards, M.V. Irrigation and Drainage League, and the newly formed G.I.R.D.A.C. The State Government has recently offered grants and loans for improvements to drainage in Horticulture areas.

Hopefully these will assist those growers anxiously awaiting improvements to their outlets and underground drains.

## **Annual General Meeting 20th October 1975.**

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### **President's Annual Report**

#### **Tree Pull Scheme**

This scheme has been of some assistance to a few of our members, although the level of compensation is set at a disappointingly low figure. However over fifty of our members have accepted the compensation and removed their trees. When the scheme was first introduced it was expected that pear growers would be those who would be the most likely to participate. The results have been the opposite with only peach growers accepting. This was an inevitable result caused by uneconomic prices for peaches for several years.

#### **Field Officer**

During last fruit season your executive employed Mr. John Gibbs as Field Officer. John did an important Public relations job with our members. He was successful in "ironing out" a number of problems with the Canneries at their receival stations. John also gathered some interesting facts including tree planting figures and age distribution of trees.

## **Union Matters**

Your association has been included as a respondent to the Federal Fruitgrowing Industry Award. The Australian Workers Union is the recognised body to represent orchard workers. Our relationship with the Union has been forthright and cordial.

Members of the Executive have represented the Association on no less than eight organisations which involves a considerable amount of time and effort.

## **Annual General Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> November 1976**

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### **President's Annual Report**

The past year has been the most disastrous this industry of ours has ever suffered. Fruit prices are about half the cost of production and costs are continuing to rise. Many of our members have left the industry and many others have greatly reduced their tree numbers. Part of our troubles can be squarely blamed on the price war in canned fruit in Australia last year that cost the industry \$3m to \$4m in losses. After having sold cheap fruit to the housewives for several months it was then found impossible to get the prices of canned fruit up to a level that would have been reasonable. Consumers will accept steady rises in price but won't accept one big jump to make up lost ground.

Cannery Rationalization: Your association in conjunction with the N.V.F.A. managed to get the three Victorian Canners to agree to the Victorian Government, through the agency of Mr. I.K. Morton and the Rural Finance and Settlement Commission, to investigate and report on the financial situation of each canner. The investigation will hopefully lead to the merging of the canneries and the closing of one or more of the processing plants.

During the year one or more of your executive has met with Hon. Ian Sinclair, Minister for Primary Industry, on three separate occasions. We have met with Mr. W. Borthwick, Minister of Lands, on one occasion and with Mr. I.K. Morton, Chairman of Rural Finance and Settlement Commission on several occasions. Your executive has been involved on four occasions with joint grower canner meetings.

Mrs. Helen Hanna (nee Ryan) is leaving shortly after eight years with the Association. Mrs. Lauris Jarvis has been appointed as our new Secretary.

## **Special Meeting of Executive and Cobram Barooga Citrus Growers 28 July 1977**

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### **Concern at the non-manning of the Fruit Fly Block at Cobram.**

Tocumwal was functioning well, but Citrus Growers were concerned about the entry of fruit fly to Victoria through unmanned Fruit Fly blocks at Cobram and Yarrawonga. Guest speakers were Dr. Geoff O'Loughlin – "Biology of Fruit Fly in 1976" and Mr. Ray Brough who outlined the costs involved with Fruit Fly Operations. Discussion followed regarding having National regulations. Mr Ron Mullett, Dept of Agriculture in Victoria and Mr. Graham Gregory in N.S.W. would be counter parts to contact regarding this.

## **General Meeting VPAGA 8<sup>th</sup> August 1977**

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### **Cannery Rationalization**

The President Mr. R J Cornish briefly outlined the developments towards cannery rationalization. A key meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May was held with the Minister for Lands Mr. Borthwick, grower representatives and cannery representatives. Following that meeting, many others have taken place with an initiative from G.V. Cannery in discussion with the government to make a bid for KY Preserving Company. Henry Jones announced quite unexpectedly and offered S.P.C. a

takeover bid of \$1.10 per share. This was declined. G.V. Cannery have sent a letter of intent for a take over bid for KY Cannery. Will the grower shareholders be happy with what is going on? Shareholders in KY Cannery will be offered a price per share. Growers who take this may not expect to sell fruit to S.P.C. and Ardmona. However, if they leave their money in they may send fruit to either S.P.C. or Ardmona. G.V.C. Board with KY Board recent agreed to an independent accountant to investigate figures. Hopefully shortly a firm offer will be made. S.P.C. can demonstrate to the Government that they are not likely to be taken over by Henry Jones.

## **Annual General Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1977**

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### **President's Annual Report**

#### **Predator Mite**

The Executive agreed to contribute funds toward a Department of Agriculture scheme to release predator mites on our member's orchards. These mite have done an excellent job in controlling two spotted mite on peaches in particular.

#### **Australian Canned Fruit Sales Promotion Committee**

After several years of agitation we were successful in having Mr. Philip Pullar made an observer on this important committee. All growers contribute a levy per tonne of fruit for advertising canned fruit in Australia.

#### **Tree Pull Scheme**

Several more of our members have taken Government Tree Pull compensation and left the industry. This program has now concluded, and although criticized when first supported by your executive, it did provide worthwhile help to some growers.

#### **Weather Forecasts**

Your executive has arranged to have the "advance four day forecast" telexed on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Growers wishing to receive the forecast regularly can do so by the payment of \$1 per week.

#### **Rationalization**

Henry Jones (I.X.L.) Ltd. have successfully taken over Kyabram Preserving Co. Ltd. This means that the Government backed G.V. Cannery Ltd offer for KY has failed. Henry Jones offer to buy S.P.C. Ltd is still pending. The Government insistence that S.P.C. and Ardmona merge before funds were made available hindered the G.V. Cannery offer and was very strongly opposed by our growers. Three operating canneries for this coming season seem a certainty.

In conclusion I want to thank all members of the executive for their continued loyalty and assistance. We have had a very happy team effort for many years.

I particularly want to thank the Vice President Mr. Philip Pullar for his loyalty and help during the year.

This will be my last year as your President. After thirteen years it is time to take a rest and allow a younger man to take over. I have enjoyed working with you all and wish you every good fortune in the industry in the future.

**R.J. CORNISH**

### **30<sup>th</sup> October 1978**

The fight began with the Australian Canning Fruitgrowers Associations to permit representation of Grower Association on a more regional rather than State basis. The VPAGA has been established for 14 years and represents 130 growers. We collect Association levies on over

20,000 tonnes of fruit annually, and we represent over one third of the peaches grown in Australia. We believe our growers have a right to be directly represented on the A.C.F.A.

## **Annual General Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> November, 1978**

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### **President's Annual Report - Mr. Philip Pullar**

This report covers in depth the problems associated with the take over bid for KY Cannery. Concern was expressed that a minority of Canners are finding more and more fine details which they say have to agreed upon before they enter a scheme. If proposals cannot be finalized and Governments give some guarantee of proposed legislation by the end of January at the very latest, I would be very concerned that the industry will see another year of low returns brought about by "aggressive" rather than "productive" marketing in Australia. The new proposal envisages changes to the representation of the A.C.F.B. whereas Canners have allowed for each marketing group to be represented, should all cannery decide to do their own marketing we could have as many as six cannery representatives on the Board. The growers however, in the first instance have been restricted to two representatives; but your Executive Committee is very confident that representations they have made over recent years, and the respect that VPAGA has attained, will lead to one of our growers being on the Board .

Late last year we were accepted as observers at the Australian Canned Fruit Sales Promotion Committee and I have attended many meetings to decide how our \$1 per tonne will be spent. Unfortunately \$100,000 is not a lot of money to be spent in advertising, and quite frankly I believe it is unnecessary to advertise something you are giving away.

## **Annual General Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1979**

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### **President's Annual Report**

1979 has seen many changes take place in the Australian Canned Deciduous Fruit Industry. Growers in Victoria have combined to form the Victorian Canning Fruitgrowers Council. A better approach by cannery to marketing has resulted in supplementary payments to growers and the introduction of a Statutory Marketing scheme.

The ACFA Annual meeting in November replaced NVFA as the Victorian organization representing growers with the Victorian Canning Fruitgrowers Council.

The Aust. Canned Fruit Sales Promotion Committee has continued to promote sales in Australia, but due to increasing costs of T.V. and media advertising the levy collected is ineffective and in future the role of the Committee will change to education.

Moved to new and better offices in Station Street. Mrs. Jarvis retired as Secretary and Mrs. Margaret Stead is our new Secretary.

Mr. Gordon Brown retired as President of the Murray Valley Horticultural Extension Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> November after 13 years and on behalf of members the President thanked Gordon for his time and effort. Mr. Ivan Routley is the new President.

## **Annual General Meeting 17<sup>th</sup> November 1980**

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### **Extracts from Executive Minutes - (President's Report missing from records)**

**Mechanically harvested fruit.** The machine will be taken to one or two growers and anyone interested can look at it working. Mr. G. Brown was concerned that the machine would be taken to only one or two growers. Mr. Schoonderbeek felt they should do larger quantities of fruit if the canneries would co-operate. Mr. I. Routley said that F.M.C. has brought the harvester out for growers to trial and was concerned at the way it was being controlled by Tatura. Some of the demonstrations were not very successful and the machine would need modification to handle V rows.

Citrus growers are concerned that the Fruit Fly roadblocks are going to be disbanded for 2 years. A protest was registered regarding the disbanding of the roadblocks.

There was great concern regarding the unavailability of fruit bins for the Harvest, Ardmona to be contacted as soon as possible.

The first combined growers meetings between V.P.A.G.A. and Cobram Barooga Citrus Growers was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1980 to discuss the closure of Fruit Fly road blocks and alternatives. Dr. David Smith, director General of Agriculture was the Guest Speaker.

Mr. Routley reported the Hume reservoir has only about half the amount of water compared to this time last year, Eildon have a little more, Dartmouth is slow at about 44% full.

Cost of Production survey – Peaches and Pears cost about three and half thousand per hectare but when divided by yield factor it runs into problems, just purely cost of production is \$245 to \$250 per tonne to grow. Pears are a lot closer to the cost of production than peaches.

Registration of bin trailers was another matter receiving attention.

## **Annual General Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1981**

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### **President's Annual Report**

1981 Harvest season was once again one of the best in recent years with excellent weather contributing to increased tonnages of peaches being received by Cannerys.

Sales for 1982 are being budgeted at 6.4 million cartons, coupled the 3.8 million carryover for 1981 and a requirement to reduce the carryover by the end of 1982 to 1.4 million cartons, an availability of 7.8 million cartons is required with a pack of 4 million cartons, exactly half of the 1981 pack. The result being that growers will be required on average to supply half of last years intake, unless there is a dramatic change between now and harvest.

The Executive with the A.C.F.A. realised the potential problems facing the industry at the conclusion of the 1981 canning season. On the 10<sup>th</sup> April we were advised at a meeting with the Department Primary Industry and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics to agree to an Industries Assistance Commission enquiry into the industry. Finally on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October a delegation of Cannerys and Growers met Mr. Nixon and agreed to an I.A.C. Results of the enquiry, which was to last 90 days, and results available by April or May 1982 when the full effects of the appreciation of the dollar will be seriously affecting Sales on Export markets.

Negotiations have taken place with agents from the U.S.S.R. for the possible sale of canned fruit. At this stage it would appear that sales are conditional on the reintroduction of Russian Cruise Ships, which were banned from Australian ports following the entry of Russian troops to Afghanistan.

Mr. Henry Schneider our Horticulture Adviser has settled in very well and is certainly justifying the time and effort the Executive put into convincing the Dept of Agriculture that an advisor was most necessary in the V.P.A.G.A. area.

## **Annual General Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1982**

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### **President's Annual Report**

The forecast sales for 1983 are 5.6 million cartons with a carryover at the end of 1982 of 1 million cartons, this will require a pack of 5 million cartons in 1983 depending on the final carry-in from 1982.

Prior to the 1982 processing season Henry Jones disposed of their market entitlements to S.P.C. and Ardmona and ceased production at the Kyabram plant. S.P.C. and A.F.P. agreed to process the Ky growers entitlement for 1982, but in subsequent year Ky suppliers will have to meet the S.P.C. and A.F.P. intake criteria.

Following pressure from growers the industry finally agreed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1981 to an Industries Assistance Commission Inquiry, a preliminary hearing in Shepparton in January 1982 on short term assistance and a hearing for longer term assistance was held on Melbourne in April 1982.

Members of the executive have represented V.P.A.G.A. on eight organisations during the past year.

The assistance given to the industry in the past year by Mr. Bruce Lloyd, M.H.R. Mr. Ken Jasper M.L.A. and Mr. Peter Ross-Edwards, M.L.A. is very much appreciated, also we hope the Federal Minister for Primary Industry Hon. Peter Nixon and his colleagues will recognise the disastrous state of the industry and be able to give assistance to enable growers to remain in the industry.

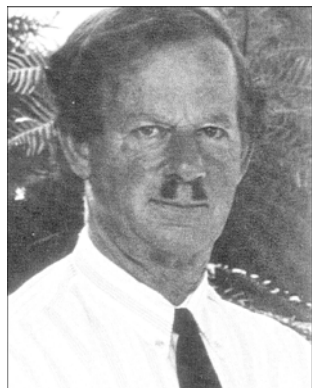
Whilst meeting with Government Ministers the opportunity was taken to inform them of the benefit to the industry of sales to USSR and the benefit of sales tax exemption on carbonated drinks.

I have been your President for the past five years and have enjoyed the involvement of leading the Association and appreciated the respect of members, but I do feel a person can be in the same position for too long and it does not give others the opportunity to progress, therefore I will not be offering myself for the position of President in 1983. I thank all members of V.P.A.G.A. for the opportunity to have been your President.

**PHILIP A PULLAR**

## **Annual General Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> November 1983**

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### **President's Annual Report - Mr W. Schoonderbeek**

The 1983 harvest was again a difficult year for growers, extreme dry conditions plus budgeting of water because of the drought make it difficult to bring the crop up to size.

I consider the new tree pull scheme most unfair, as some growers are now at an advantage and can improve their positions because they fit the necessary requirements, while others in a far worse position are getting nothing, and are financially forced to leave the industry.

Although the final outcome of the new treepull scheme will take some months, I urge growers to keep in close contact with Rural Finance.

The following prices were set by the F.I.S.C.C. for the 1980/81, 191/1982 and 1982/1983 seasons.

Fruit Variety	1980/81	1981/82	1982/83
W.B.C. Pears	\$160 tonne	\$130 tonne	\$135 tonne
Peaches	\$225 ..	\$180 ..	\$185 ..
Apricots	\$290 ..	\$290 ..	\$290 ..

According to the B.A.E., the following cost of production using the 1980/81 levels and applying the appropriate index to equal realistic subsequent levels are

Fruit Variety	1980/81	1981/82	1982/83	1983/84
W.B.C. Pears	\$202 tonne	\$227 tonne	\$247 tonne	\$265 tonne
Peaches	\$305 ..	\$341 ..	\$372 ..	\$399 ..
Apricots	\$338 ..	\$379 ..	\$413 ..	\$443 ..

It is abundantly clear the canners are a long way off paying these prices. However, anyone handling your product, after it leaves the farm gate gets their price. It is high time prices were raised to a reasonable level where growers have some hope to survive.

The recent proposal to merge S.P.C. and Ardmona Canneries may have some merits, but I consider it will take more than just an amalgamation of the two canneries to get the industry on a sound footing. The current trends indicate that total sales will decrease from 5.3 million basic cartons to 4 million basic cartons in 1988.

## Annual General Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> November 1984

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### President's Annual Report

For several years we have reported continuing hardship and a declining industry, this year has not been different. The cost structure in Australia with its inflationary effect on our production costs, has made it almost impossible to export canned fruit except as a loss. Growers have suffered yet another disappointing year. The peach crop was down by about 9,500 tonnes due to bad weather in spring and perhaps a back lash from the drought the previous year and adverse weather conditions during harvest, growers are now in desperate need for a good crop in this coming year and most of all better prices. If canners want all the peaches this year, then realistic prices have to be paid. There has been a trend amongst growers in our area to divert their fruit to the fresh fruit market, rather than supply canneries at unrealistic prices, this trend may well continue unless canners are prepared to pay prices for fruit more in line with cost of production.

**Imports into Australia.** Figures for the three month period ending September 1984 disclose 2,078 cartons of canned pears imported from the Peoples' Republic of China and 6,212 cartons of canned peaches imported from Greece, mainly into Victoria. The Australia Canned Fruit Corporation recommends that this development and the remedy of a countervailing duty be explored with the appropriate officials in Canberra.

**UK Markets.** Recent industry models prepared by A.C.F.C. have shown the decline in profitability to growers in recent years of canned fruit sent to the UK Markets.

The prices received for the 1983/84 season show an increase of \$50 per tonne on Apricots \$340, no increase in pears \$185, and peaches a miserable \$5 per tonne. New South Wales growers supplying peaches to the Letona Cannery received \$260 per tonne, NSW growers supplying peaches to Golden Circle received \$280 per tonne and NSW growers supplying peaches to Riverland Cannery received \$240 tonne.

## **Annual General Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> November 1985**

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### **Extracts from Executive Minutes - (President's Report missing)**

Concern regarding the amount of imported fruit, which escalated late 1984. To obtain anti dumping charges takes time. The approach would be to get a reciprocal agreement on prices with the EEC through Trade, the agreement being we then do take out anti dumping charges.

Mr. Siciliano reported that he had attended several meetings of the Melbourne Fruit & Vegetable Market. Up to date there have not been any problems with stands, they have been issued to all except for one day last week when there was some delay. It would be good to have more casual stands and equal opportunity

Katamatite-Shepparton Road. Reported that it is going to take three years to fully improve this road as they have to wait on funding.

A study visit to Europe will take place in late July-August for our 3 to 4 weeks.

BioControl are in the district at present looking at pest control management. Isomates have gone up this year and they suggest growers by using Isomates have less problems with Mites – there may also be some benefits on the Aphid side and they are investigating one for Codling Moth. The Mealy Bug problem in Shepparton is quite serious.

A farmers march would take place in Melbourne on the 24<sup>th</sup> June at 9.30am to protest against farm costs. Growers urged to attend. Good attendances were recorded at both the Melbourne and Canberra marches.

Hail Insurance, WorkCare and Melbourne Market continued to receive great attention.

Rural Water advised that irrigators are going to have to pay depreciation on works from 1985, it is going to amount to approximately \$1 million this year and phased in over 4 years. The Government said there is no grant money so they will have to get loan money so interest will also have to be paid on that. The increase in budget this year is 20%, they are looking at doubling water charges over the next 4 years. There is also an extra \$2 million they have found in head office overheads they claim have been misallocated. Water Bailiffs are around asking how much water is used from bore systems, maybe a survey to estimate how much water is being pumped.

Orchard Census – about 99% of the ground work has been done in Cobram, Shepparton and Invergordon, Kyabram is still to be completed – details should be available by the end of November.

## **Annual General Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> October 1986**

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### **President's Annual Report**

Specific activities in which the VPAGA were involved in during the year were:

The formation of a Taskforce to resist the introduction of a 36 hour week for Cannery workers by the Food Preservers Union, which if it had been successful would have cost Cannerys approximately \$2 million in increased wages and other associated costs.

A Picker Training Scheme was organised by VPAGA at the start of the Harvest season. We believe this resulted in improving pickers skill, giving better returns to pickers and greatly improved quality of labour.

During the early part of the harvest season your Executive visited local Canneries in order to obtain some tolerance in accepting Hail marked fruit.

Our VPAGA representative on the Melbourne Market Trust, worked long hours and attended many meetings which has resulted in improved House and Conditions.

Our Executive member responsible for negotiating with the Victorian Employers Federation on Industry matters, like overtime, double time, penalty rates and superannuation spent many hours for days on end getting the best possible deal for our members.

Our representation on the Australian Canned Fruit Association and on the Australian Canned Fruit Corporation is in the hands of a hardworking energetic Executive member, he attends many day and evening meeting to obtain the best results in dealings with canners.

Others items under review which your Association has been or will be involved in are:

The reinstatement of the S.P.C. receiving depot at Cobram

I.A.C. Inquiry into the Canned Fruit Industry

Continuation of the Australian Canned Fruit Corporation

The new proposed Horticultural Marketing Corporation

The possibility of a merger between A.F.P., S.P.C., Letona and Berrivale

The efficiency of the Cannerys

Interest Rates

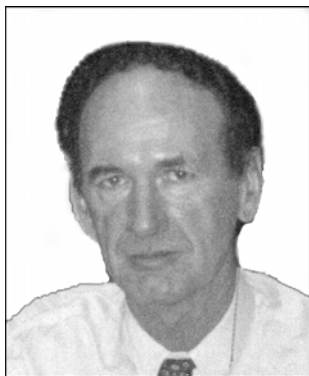
Currency alignments

Supply and demand in other countries.

This was Mr. F. Schoonderbeek's last report.

## **Annual General Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1987**

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### **President's Annual Report - Mr Ivan Routley**

The returns achieved last season, whilst being approximately 7.5% up on the 1986 prices, are still too low to allow growers to invest in new plant and equipment, a vital requirement if growers are to improve their efficiency. Growers by maintaining their solidarity last season were able to convince Ardmona that their prices should be in line with S.P.C.

Following a report by Mr David Hall, who spoke at the A.C.F.A. Annual Conference last year, discussions on the possibility of a merger of Ardmona, Letona and S.P.C. took place. The A.C.F.C. commissioned a report by Peak, Marwick & Mitchell, which showed savings of \$22 million if a three way merger took place.

After being studied by the canners S.P.C. stated that the savings would be in the order of \$10 million. On current production of 100,000 tons of fruit the saving equate to about \$100 per ton of fresh fruit. It is envisaged that the savings would be used for promotion, debt reduction of the canners and better prices for growers. After lengthy negotiations the three boards have unanimously agreed on terms for a merger. It is planned that shareholders will shortly receive details of the proposal and be asked to vote on the matter in about mid December.

## **Annual General Meeting 31<sup>st</sup> October 1988**

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### **President's Annual Report**

This year started with a great deal of optimism, with a merger of the canning fruit industry highly likely and with it the prospect of better returns for fruit. However since the failure of the three way merger in December, the canned fruit industry has suffered a series of setbacks. The crop was up, the prices down by \$20 for peaches, plus undersize fruit. In addition to these problems, the decision by Ardmona to only guarantee to pay 60% of a reduced price created further uncertainty and confusion for growers.

In contrast, the fresh fruit market produced returns equal to, and in some cases, better than previous seasons, and also accounted for a considerable tonnage of fruit.

The mild wet winter appears to have resulted in significant tree losses in the district. With the current crop predicted to be down considerably on last year, the conclusion is that prices must rise substantially if growers are to retain interest in producing canning fruit.

The winding up of the Canned Fruits Corporation in December, and no merger to take its place, A.C.F.A. has been investigating the possibility of the Industry joining the Australian Horticulture Corporation. It has yet to be determined if this body can offer sufficient powers and functions to be a viable alternative to the A.C.F.C.

Members of the Executive again made their presence felt by representing V.P.A.G.A. on eight Committees, Associations and Councils.

## **Annual General Meeting 9th October 1989**

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### **President's Annual Report plus extracts from Executive Meetings**

This past season has not been a particularly rewarding year for most growers. The wet mild winter resulted in light setting of peaches. Deliveries to the cannery were only 70% of the previous season, yet the price we were able to achieve was only \$340 or 11% above 1988. Separate discussions were held with both canners detailing the reasons for and explaining why an increase in price was essential if growers were to remain in the industry.

The only thing to be rescued from the failed merger of 1987 was a marketing agreement between SPC and Letona, saving the Industry from a price war in 1989. The cost to growers of the failed merger will become more apparent as the Canadian market comes under increasing pressure as a result of the U.S. – Canada free trade agreement.

The A.W.U. is leaning on all Awards that do not have a 38 hour week – they have serviced notice that they will be going for a 38 hour week. Suggested that 40 hours would be worked with a rostered day off except during the season. Superannuation and pay increases were of great concern to growers.

Fruit Fly was again a concern, and neglected fruit blocks and roadside fruit trees were a subject of discussion and action.

A meeting of the Rural Water Commission Advisory Boards was attended where they looked at drainage problems, the people with drainage are certainly a lot better off. There are problems at Yalca and some farmers have banded together and had some drainage done privately.

Fireblight – Meeting in Canberra attended by P.A. Pullar. This was a deputation to Senator Cook on Fireblight and to impress the Government again on the serious effect fireblight could have on our industry. Unfortunately they were unable to speak with Senator Cook but had discussion with his staff.

## **Annual General Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> October 1990**

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### **Extracts Executive Minutes (President's Report missing)**

February saw a transport strike which greatly affected the movement of fruit. Mr. Conti was able to strike a deal with those taking part in the strike by saying growers had supported them for a week but were now desperate to move fruit. He was able to arrange for two trucks per day from Cobram and four from Goulburn Valley, however this arrangement was destroyed by trucks breaking the striker's barrier.

February also saw V.P.A.G.A. being requested to take over the C.E.S. agency for Cobram as there would no longer be an official office in Cobram.

**Traffic** - the situation at the corner of Murray Valley Highway and Pullar Road was discussed. Contact Road Corporation to see if situation can be improved before there is a serious accident.

**Wages** - reported employers are being attacked on a lot of fronts - e.g. Portable Long Service Leave, the Federal Government are talking about another 3% rise, we have the 4%, 3%, 3% super and a \$10-\$12.50 rise in 6 months all in the pipeline.

Integrated Pest Management is being promoted by D.A.R.A. It has been suggested that growers using IPM should be given stickers to apply to their fruit. IPM and the benefits need to be promoted to growers if it is to be taken up by the Industry.

The cannery situation regarding S.P.C. refusing to take fruit from dual suppliers was discussed, if growers had not put in an estimate they were cut off, if they put in an estimate they were cut off when they reached last year's deliveries. Mr. Conti said he had phoned Vaughan Ormsby re a query from a grower and told him they were doing a great injustice to Cobram growers, he had replied they did not mean to hurt any growers and gave the reasons why it had to be done. Any suggestions offered to SPC to try and assist growers were not acted on.

Fortunately Ardmona will take all the fruit available so no one should have unsold fruit. S.P.C. are forming a Committee to look at the quota system and they would like a nomination from us for the Committee. Mr. R.J. Cornish was appointed to represent V.P.A.G.A.

Dangerous Goods Regulations - All members will be required to put up placards – Hazchem sign at the front gate, also composite signs where goods are stored. Circulars to be forwarded to growers advising of the regulations.

Mr Pullar mentioned the training Guarantee Scheme where employers with a payroll of over \$200,000 per year pay 1% for training. Training of pickers could be classified under this scheme and T.A.F.A. would be involved.

Mr. Routley reported he attended a meeting in Shepparton organised by the Ex-Mayor Jeremy Gaylard, and the Minister for Agriculture Barry Rowe where there was a Media Release of the National Canned Fruit Industry Plan. Discussions were held on problems facing growers, high Australian Dollar and imports. John Corboy and Ross Turnbull attended and mentioned the problems being faced by S.P.C. and rationalisation as a possibility in the future. Meeting with Rural Finance to see if something can be done to help the immediate problems. Mr Pullar attended a meeting in Canberra to discuss imports, tariffs, Canada etc. No change will be made to tariffs.

The problems of imports, export tariffs, wages and union claims, fruit intakes and prices played a major role in the many meetings attended by the Executive.

## **Annual General Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> October, 1991**

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### **President's Annual Report**

In presenting the Annual Report of V.P.A.G.A. I have looked at some of the previous Annual Reports and noted that some of the current issues are a repeat of past battles. It has been said that the only 'thing' that changes in the Fruit Industry are the faces. The past season has been no exception, with SPC in serious financial trouble and forced to reduce the prices paid to growers (peaches by 10.5%). Ardmona subsequently reduced peach prices by 15.5% and left pear prices at 1990 levels. It is pleasing to note that the new Board of SPC have been able to restore the viability of the Company sufficiently to enable them to pay growers an additional fruit payment to bring prices back to 1990 levels.

The anti dumping action that the Industry initiated over twelve months ago against subsidized imports was recently rejected by the Customs Department, even though they found that dumping was occurring. It would seem that growers don't count, judging by this decision.

The past season has been an active one for the Association with special information days organized to cover the new Tatura peach varieties, Occupation Health and Safety and Workcare. As well a First Aid training day was organised to enable growers and their employees to learn basic first aid. The 15% Flat rate of Tax for seasonal employees was reviewed by the Taxation Department after consultation with the Industry and is now a permanent arrangement.

The proposal to close the Cobram Office of the Department of Agriculture during the year was successfully opposed by the Association, however this will be a continuing battle as staff who retire are unlikely to be replaced, leading to a gradual diminution of the service available.

## **Annual General Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> October 1992**

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### **President's Annual Report**

In recent years the Industry has struggled to export in the face of an overvalued Australian dollar, however the recent drop in value of the A\$ against other currencies, together with the decrease in interest rates, will be of great assistance to canners and should enable them to pay growers at levels closer to the real cost of production.

The anti-dumping action initiated by the Industry against imported canned fruit was, after a protracted process, resolved in favour of the Industry with the imposition of duties on the imports.

The past season has seen the introduction of Chemical User's Courses for growers and Forklift Licence testing to enable growers to meet government requirements in these areas. Award superannuation in its present form is not going to be much benefit to pickers, and will certainly make life more complicated for growers, however the details have yet to be finalized and the Association is trying to get changes made.

As Government requirements and regulations upon our industry are becoming more intrusive and ownerous, the Executive of the association find they are having to spend more time dealing with masses of detail with at most, a less than certain productive outcome.

## **Annual General Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> October 1993**

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### **President's Annual Report**

The increased tonnage together with a modest 6.8% increase in the price of mid season varieties meant that most growers have faired better than last season which produced variable result.

The change to the corporate structure of S.P.C. along with it converting preference share issues, and the move to paying regular dividends means growers must in the future receive prices for fruit which reflect the real cost of production. These costs are the subject of continuing discussions, but your Association believes that the peach price is still below current cost of production.

The reduction in resources from state government for the Department of Agriculture in recent years has meant that our Industry has had to partially fund an increasing share of the research work currently being undertaken for our Industry. The funding is provided through the Canned Fruits Industry Council of Australia, but your Association is directly represented on the committee, which evaluates potential projects and prioritizes the allocation of the industry's funds.

This funding reduction last year forced the stone fruit industry to seek a means of avoiding the closure of the virus tested budwood scheme. The Australian Deciduous Fruits Improvement Association was formed, with both grower associations and nurserymen as members to continue operating on a commercial basis.

However it was not all cutbacks, Minister of Agriculture Mr. Bill McGrath announced the establishment of a new "Northern Irrigation Region" based at Tatura to service irrigation farmers in Northern Victoria. Recognising horticulture as a major industry he announced that one of the three principle scientists appointed would be in Horticulture.

## **Annual General Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> October 1994**

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### **President's Annual Report**

In presenting this Annual Report of the Association the question of how and why V.P.A.G.A. was established and its achievements since are the issues that spring to mind at this juncture. The major issues that were troubling growers thirty years ago were poor prices for peaches, problems with cannery access and intake standards. Since the formation of our Association these problems along with many others have been the subject of continuing efforts of the many members that have formed the Executive of the Association over those years. The result of their efforts and successes on behalf of growers is reflected in the numbers of growers that are still "In the Industry" in the Cobram and Invergordon areas.

The formation of the Australian Fresh Stone Fruit Growers Association is progressing satisfactorily and should enable the "fresh" part of the industry to derive considerable benefits from the collection of a levy to fund research and development and promotion.

This current the Canned Fruit Industry will spend over \$100,000 on research (which attracts matching H.R.D.C. funding). Without this funding a number of important projects would not proceed.

Projects. Variety Improvement program for yellow fleshed peaches, Leigh Issell-ISIA Tatura, Reasons for failure of mating disruption of Oriental Fruit Moth, Ian Barrass – ISIA Tatura.

Developing foliar spraying of phosphonate fungicide and a safer user procedure to controlling Phytophthora on Peaches and Apples, Tom Lim – ISIA Tatura. Epidemiology and control of pear scab, Bill Washington –IHD Knoxfield, Carpophilus beetle, development of a management tool using pheromones, David James – Yanko. And Control of stem rot and tree dieback caused by Silverleaf and Trametes in peaches and apples, Tom Lim – ISIA Tatura.

Both S.P.C. and Ardmona maintain that growers must improve their productivity of the Industry is to remain competitive, however if there is to be restrictions on intakes then it becomes very difficult to achieve, as increased productivity mean increased production.

## Annual General Meeting 30<sup>th</sup> October 1995

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### President's Annual Report - Mr. Joe Conti

My first year as your President has passed so quickly I wonder if the clock has been sped up. However, I think that as growers we are overworked and underpaid for our fruit, and we get so involved in the running of our orchards that the season's come and go very quickly. In presenting this report the problems of the past year are no difference to the previous year or any of the years before that.

It is now apparent that plantings are down and will not meet their requirements in the coming year, growers cannot and will not grow stone fruit if the rewards are not constant and the future more assured than it has been.

The past season also saw growers with moth, hail and small fruit to contend with plus lower prices and tonnages.

This season we had early frosts plus some later ones which have caused some losses mainly in nectarines, plums and apricots, canning peaches seem fair at the moment.

The AFSGFA is now operative and I think will be of great benefit to the fresh marketers in the long term. The co-ordination and the setting of protocols, market research and finding new markets is the aim of the organization with R & D funded by H.R.D.C.

On the Industrial scene, we have a new Award, Mr. R.J. Cornish has had this in hand and has been persevering and battling on to the end result. It has taken a long time and a lot of effort on Bob's behalf to try and get the best deal for our members and I am sure he has doubled checked everything that he presented to get the good result achieved.

## Annual General Meeting 21<sup>st</sup> October 1996

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### President's Annual Report

When I sat down to write this report I initially read last year's report to refresh my memory – I could have sent you the same report this year!

Canners have introduced subsidized trees to growers to increase the tonnage they require which is good in some respects but if the prices they paid for fruit were adequate this would not be required. It is not fair to other shareholders in the industry that have supported the canneries over the years. However this year we would hopefully like to see a more amicable result in the earlier setting of prices for the betterment of cannery/grower relations. Canners are endeavouring to secure fruit from other states at extra costs and therefore should be able to pay local growers that added incentive to produce locally.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> AGM of the AFSFGA was held in Renmark. A new marketing plan for Golden Queen Peach promotion as been achieved. The industry also had two overseas speakers, Jonathon Fields – Californian Tree Fruits Agreement Association and Dr. Carlos Crisanto who is an expert on cool chain handling of stone fruits. Workshops were held on carpophilus beetle, genetic techniques of breeding, long life bags, rootstock seed certification and post harvest handling of fruit.

Included in the Annual meeting reports was a report from Mr. Stan Cornish, Harvest Labour Co-ordinator. Following an extreme shortage of pickers last season, the Fruit Industry in conjunction

with the Commonwealth Employment Service took steps to overcome these problems, with the result a harvest labour Co-ordinator was appointed in September 1995, for twelve months to implement strategies highlighted in a joint report.

All the problems and complaints from growers and pickers were looked at and where possible action was taken to rectify the problems.

## **Annual General Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> October 1997**

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### **President's Annual Report - Mr. James Cornish**

No doubt the threat of 'Fireblight' becoming part of life for pome fruit growers has had an enormous effect on our industry in the last twelve months. Events so far have impacted on fruit movement and subsequently packouts and prices and until we get through Spring and early Summer without any positive samples being identified, the threat of Fireblight remains very real.

Both canneries have gone through a period of broadening their product range and restructure within the factories which is improving their profitability. Unless they trade profitably, our future as suppliers is very questionable and their ability to pay

better supplier prices will not be enhanced.

This year the Executive have been given more clearly defined roles in terms of canning versus fresh fruit matters. Many issues relate to the Fruit Industry in general, but when it comes to fresh stone fruit Vice President Joe, together with Committee have been handling proceedings.

In regard to fresh fruit matters, our industry has grown to a point where we should be seriously considering outlets for our increased productions. The A.F.S.F.G.A. is attempting to exchange protocols with importing countries to enable Australia to disperse this increased production. This is becoming harder as these countries require that Australian produce is quality assured in order that they can accept our fruit. Those who wish to remain in the industry will have to seriously address this requirement.

The Melbourne Market Authority is in the process of change effective 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998 and growers will have adequate notification of market changes before this date.

## **Annual General Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> October 1998**

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### **President's Annual Report**

At this time last year, I made mention of the serious threat that the 'Fire Blight' issue posed to our industry, particularly now that many grower members have diversified into fresh apples and pears, as well as canning pears. Fortunately evidence of Fire Blight was not found so our Industry Fire Blight status seems safe, but many of us suffered very low returns on fruit during the period.

Joe Conti, Vice President and his sub-committee have been looking after fresh stone fruit matters. I would like to particularly thank Joe for his efforts during the year.

During the year, we have arranged several grower nights on various issues. Our plan has been to provide the opportunity for our growers to hear first hand about current issues and try to provide the experts here in our local area.

The Fruit Industry is a vibrant industry with much change and investment going on. These changes include hazardous Goods legislation, S7 chemical registration, ROP's assessments, Quality Assurance requirements, supermarket demands and the need for a bigger unit size or critical mass, the effect that outside investment developments will have, the review of traditional chemicals which may force us to change, computerisation (with or without the millenium bug), constant cost pressure, the obsolescence of varieties, new planting techniques, future irrigation water changes and so forth. We are in a high capital and high risk business which requires us to be professional and at the cutting edge.

We have the ability to grow increasing tonnages but whether we can successfully market this tonnage is a real challenge and concern for the future. Indeed marketing is probably the most important issue facing both the canning and fresh fruit industries.

**Fresh Fruit.** The Ballina Conference in August was a success. One of the most important issues discussed was the large increase in production in both canning and stone fruit and the solutions to deal with this increased production. I am like other growers and put my head in the sand and hope it will resolve itself, but the reality is that this will not happen.

The Melbourne market Authority has led the way with other markets and Associations in obtaining H.R.D.C. funds to investigate the possibility of forming an Intranet to service the horticultural industry in marketing information. The Intranet would service the industry nationally and possibly internationally.

## **Annual General Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> October 1999**

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### **President's Annual Report**

The year has certainly been busy, interesting and challenging with many issues facing our industry.

The recent fruit crop was a surprise to us all with the peach crop exceeding all predictions and approaching the 51,000 tonne mark for canning quality peaches. In addition, the Packham and apple crops were generally well up on the previous year. Fresh stone fruit crops I believe were likewise well up, although it is difficult to get figures for our area.

During the fruit season V.P.A.G.A. funded and ran the part-time fruit harvest labour office in Cobram in conjunction with Employment National. This was an experiment which turned out to be most successful, and as a consequence it has been agreed to do likewise next season.

A significant change of direction for V.P.A.G.A. has occurred recently due to our concerns about union and award matters, legal representations, the right to farm, chemical issues and so forth. V.P.A.G.A. has decided to join the Victorian Farmers Federation to strengthen our position in relations to fruit industry matters. Joining up is more costly than previous arrangements, but the funding will initially come out of existing levies and reserves, with a view to reviewing the situation after twelve months membership.

During the year we hosted two Growers' Information Nights which were generally well supported. It has been my policy to try to get information presented to growers here in our area, rather than have to travel to Shepparton or Tatura.

## **Annual General Meeting 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000**

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### **President' Annual Report**

The recent fruit crop probably surprised all estimators, with crop generally picking out better than expected.

Cannery intake figures for 1999/2000 were similar to the previous season for pears, peaches down a little, and apricots down due to the off year. Apple crops were a mixed bag by variety and grower, but generally the tonnage was acceptable. Packhams in particular were well up.

Fresh Fruit was similar to apples. Consistent to all crops it seems that prices are remaining static or on the slide downwards. VPAGA has made approaches to the canners in regard to processing prices and we hope that with efficiencies gained via technology and now the low Aussie dollar, that some extra money may be found in the future. In spite of the low dollar however, increasing production put onto the domestic fresh market will outstrip demand and prices will edge downward.

Other issues concern Fireblight and the New Zealand apple import protocols. Unless we have in place protocols which are 100% safe, pome fruit growers, especially pear growers, face the future growing these crops in an environment which has Fireblight, and this most likely means not growing pome fruit because it would become uneconomic. Industry is arguing the case against the proposed protocols, but the "Global Trade Situation" is making life difficult.

Fruit Fly last season, and to some growers for this season, has become a reality to us again in the Cobram area. As an industry we must do what is required to maintain area freedom status in order to access international markets.

The Review into Illegal Workers is another major investigation, which could have a sting in the tail to us. As proposed, it could affect the supply of backpackers and effectively make us as employers, 'policemen' for the Immigration Department. We have made submission and now await outcomes.

I extend my thanks to the Industrial Committee and to John Gattuso who has recently retired from the Water Services Committee.

## **Annual General Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2001**

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### **President's Annual Report**

I guess, that the last season could be reflected upon as being reasonable to good for most growers, particularly for fresh stone fruit growers. Crops were generally better than initially expected in spite of the very wet spring and then the extremely dry summer.

Unfortunately, some growers experienced extensive problems with black spot in pome fruit, and the OFM hotspots meant significant problems for others.

The proposed merger of S.P.C. and Ardmona Canneries is currently the major issue facing growers of processing fruit. Who knows what will happen to our industry in the short and long term should a merger not occur, but also where will we as growers be in relation to fruit prices should we only have one effective buyer of our product. Somehow or other, we must get something into place in relation to pricing which will give us access to an independent arbitrator for fruit pricing in the event of a dispute, should a merger occur.

The "Review into "Illegal Workers" is still going on with new legislation yet to be presented. Our position as employers is becoming increasingly onerous. Already we are being threatened with administrative notices if we employ people not entitled to work.

The review into 'Fruit Fly Control' is still progressing with final recommendations to be presented by late December. At this stage, Government are being asked to renew their commitments to the Fruit Fly strategy but over time, beneficiaries including growers are going to be asked to put money into the strategy.

We have again run several grower nights, which have mostly been sponsored. I again thank you as growers for supporting these V.P.A.G.A. nights and extend thanks to our sponsors. This is a good example of growers and industry working together.

## **Annual General Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2002**

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### **President's Annual Report**

Upon reflection, the previous season could be called a fairly ordinary to poor year in the fresh and canning industries.

Being a hot dry summer, canning fruit lines battled to size in many cases, with growers suffering due to the changed cannery intake standards, particularly in regard to nil or reduced tolerances for fruit under 2<sup>3/8</sup>"

The merged Cannery SPC Ardmona became a reality last season, although the cannery has still many facets of its business to fully integrate. Already we have experienced changed intake standards, and we all hold reservations as to where we are headed in relation to our canning fruit operations. Recently we were told of better than expected merger savings, generally good fruit sales and plans to take at least last season equivalent intake.

The OFM Committee has continued to function well and has demonstrated that by working together, we as growers can collectively solve problems. The OFM breakfast meetings have been particularly successful. Well done to all concerned

The problems of Fireblight, Illegal Workers, and the cost of Fruit Fly protection are still current issues and it is important to keep up to date with all the current information.

Grower nights held during the year have been well attended, which is most pleasing.

To get through a year, team players are required at V.P.A.G.A. to take on various roles, attend meetings and generally represent the fruit industry at all levels. I extend special thanks to Ray Pool as my Vice President and congratulate Ray for taking on the role of National Vice President to the A.F.S.F.G.A. Thank you to the Industrial Committee and all other representatives for V.P.A.G.A. during the last twelve months.

At the Christmas function held at the home of James and Helen Cornish, a presentation was made to Bob Cornish in recognition of his services to the Industry as Chairman of the VFF Industrial Committee. Bob has now retired as Chairman but still represents V.P.A.G.A.

## Annual General Meeting 7th October, 2003

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### President's Annual Report

Firstly it is a real milestone for any organisation too not only celebrate 40 years activity, but also to be still going strong. As growers you have continued to support V.P.A.G.A. over a long period which means that V.P.A.G.A. must be being judged as useful and meaningful. Our industry faces threats and opportunities constantly which needs organisation to advocate for grower interests.

The year has been difficult for us all as fruit growers, particularly for our member growers on the Goulburn irrigation system. The drought has not only required extra management skill, but it has also impacted on costs and revenue, making financial viability very tenuous.

The cannery, partly in response to the industry needing direction and more certainty, has come out and announced minimum prices and intakes for next season. Prices have increased which is appreciated but they are not up to what I believe is required for long term grower viability. On the fresh market scene growers are continuing to invest with some degree of confidence.

The Industrial committee continues to work for the Industry, by obtaining the best possible deals with the A.W.U. The OFM Committee has continued their excellent work, achieving a large amount of free media coverage on the control of OFM with isomates. It was great to see the number of town people with trees taking an interest and accepting the free isomates. The OFM breakfast was again a great success.

Issues for the future, Fruit Fly control and funding, The Living Murray proposals, changes to the Immigration Act regarding Illegal workers.

V.P.A.G.A. continues to be represented on the VFF Horticultural Council with many current issues under discussion.

A Dinner Dance will be held on the 7<sup>th</sup> November to celebrate 40 years of the Association.

## Summary

This is a very brief outline of happenings over 40 years taken from President's Annual Reports and Executive minutes. Some items such as fruit prices, fruit intakes, quotas, wage rates, weather, labour are continuous yearly discussions.

The President and Executive members have attended numerous meetings and seminars on behalf of grower members, some months there have been up to 10 meetings attended. They were prepared to travel to Canberra, South Australia Melbourne, just about anywhere in fact to try to obtain benefits and results for members.

To include even 50% of all the happenings and pay tribute to all the work and achievements would require a much larger publication.

Members of V.P.A.G.A. should be extremely proud of the people that have represented them during the past 40 years and no doubt the same sentiment could and will be expressed in another 40 years.

