

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO AGM 9 OCTOBER 2024

Louise Bickerton

As President of TALGA for the last 17 months I am pleased to say, coming into our 30th year of operations, the Association continues to present a strong financial position which enables the Committee to deliver a number of initiatives to inform and educate our members and support their efforts to grow their lavender businesses.

This year, the Committee have updated our Vision and Mission statements from the original 1995 statements of our founding members, not to override their intentions for this Association, but to refresh our purpose and gear up to address the contemporary Australian lavender industry challenges.

We are committed to making a positive contribution to our industry and to present a unified voice of our members in all issues that affect us. We seek to involve you in all our activities.

I am proud of the recent innovation of our online Webinars offered to members during this past year, working in collaboration with New Zealand Lavender Growers' Association, we have organised and broadcast a total of six webinar presentations, on a wide range of topics, to better inform and give a forum for members to ask questions directly to the presenters in real time.

These webinar videos have then been made available for viewing to our membership via our YouTube private channel. I sincerely hope you have found these to be a valuable member-only benefit.

We have also recorded our recent Field Day sessions and Conference 2023 presentations which also add to our significant bank of video archival material available to members.

One of the highlights of the past year was the release and launch of the Agrifutures 'Australian Lavender Industry RD&E Plan 2023-2028' which is the first government research update on our industry in over 20 years. Much overdue and written as part of the Agrifutures Emerging Industries programme, it is the best collation of market data and analysis of the state of the industry we have and will form the basis of many lavender growers business plans for the next decade.

At the heart of Agrifuture's recommendations in this plan sits TALGA. It highlights the importance of our role as a member collective to grow and shape the Australian lavender industry beyond a localised and domestic-focused market supply.

Although it is a feasible dream for larger growers to export lavender products to eager overseas markets, and we have more than a few members who are successfully focused on this international opportunity, the reality for many of us is that the domestic demand for lavender essential oil currently far exceeds our industry ability to fulfil the supply and thus we are faced with a large import quantity of cheap oil with which we compete.

TALGA believes our industry can both make great inroads into replacing imported oil with local oil and develop international markets for our lavender products, and we will be supporting members to do just this.

Connected to the Agrifutures research plan, was the design and development of an industry database of information, called Lavdata.org, which was a topic of discussion at the 2023 AGM. During this year the Committee analysed our Association's ability to manage and develop this online asset and to this effect, we submitted a Grant application for funding to spend on professional assistance with this asset. It was most disappointing when this grant funding was not successful, and the Committee had to face the facts that we have neither the money nor the expertise to take on such a large project as

LavData potentially could be. Thus we have released our ownership of this website and transferred it to Clive Larkman who intends to develop it for the benefit of the Aust lavender industry. We wish him all the best for this endeavour.

Our TALGA connection to the oldest lavender group in Australia, the Monaro Country Lavender Cooperative located in and around Bombala NSW, was strengthened in January this year when both Fiona Glover and I were invited to attend their 30th anniversary foundation celebrations. Their first conference in 1994, brought together many diverse lavender growers from around the country who consequently decided to form a national association, TALGA in 1995.

So, just as we celebrated with members of the Monaro group, namely Jan Illingworth and Eric and Sherrida Edgecombe in January, TALGA will be celebrating our 30th birthday next year on the 15/16 October. I am pleased to announce the Conference venue will be the RACV Goldfields function centre in Creswick VIC, and our host farm will be Henle Gardens located a short drive away in country Maldon. I hope this celebration will receive the full support of all members and we can express our gratitude to past TALGA members and bring the new generation of growers into the fold.

Now for some words of thanks...

Firstly a big thank you to Moira Bailey who stepped into the vacant Secretary role in Oct 2023. She has worked hard to learn our systems and processes and is a valuable member of our team. Moira has also recently been involved in researching venues for the Conference next year and will be involved in planning this milestone event for TALGA. Thank you Moira.

I am grateful to our Editor of ENews Karen McRae for her consistent and reliable distribution of the newsletter which is our major channel of communication to our members. She has brought a fresh perspective to the design and content and it is something which we are proud to send out 9 times a year. Karen is currently putting thought and effort into attracting sponsorship from suppliers to supplement the income from membership subscriptions. Thank you Karen.

Three members were co-opted onto the committee since last AGM, Pascal Jallier, Eric Edgecombe and Kellie Oxenford have all stepped in to fill vacancies and to help with the workload and I sincerely thank them for their contributions, and look forward to working with them next term.

Thank you to Stuart and Jan Abernethy, the Chair and Treasurer respectively of NZLGA. They have collaborated with us during this past year and created a closer bond with our sister organisation across the ditch, with whom we have so much in common.

Thank you to our major sponsor of the Seminar Field Day held last April, Larkman Nurseries and the host of the farm visit Anne Marie Manders from Warratina Lavender Farm. TALGA is indebted to you both for your time, funding and sponsorship of our members and we are sincerely grateful.

I'd like to finish my report with expressing my deepest appreciation to one Committee member in particular who kept TALGA running smoothly during the months of my absence, Fiona Glover. As you all know, Fiona is a dedicated and hard working part of TALGA, she stepped in to Chair monthly meetings, welcomed new members, arranged with Moira to send out all membership renewals notices, she is an invaluable part of the Committee and ensuring the legacy of TALGA remains intact and achieved! Thank you Fiona!

I move my report be accepted as read and circulated.