

# VIEWPOINT

## From the President



by  
**Fiona  
Simson**

The Lower Lakes is the 'elephant in the room' in the Basin Plan discussion. Very few groups have been prepared to raise the issue to this point in time, but NSW Farmers' believes it's too important to remain a taboo subject simply because it's politically sensitive.

For too long it has been accepted that the problems of sedimentation at the mouth of the Murray River and salinity issues in the southern lagoon of the Coorong are the result of insufficient flows from upstream.

We believe the actual situation is far more complicated than this and we want the facts of this issue discussed in an open and transparent way.

In the Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan, the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) clearly stipulated that a minimum of nearly 2000 gigalitres of additional water purchases were required to meet the needs of the Lower Lakes system in South Australia. That's two thirds of the total minimum purchase requirement outlined in the Guide.

The problem with the artificial environment in the Lower Lakes is that it requires a constant supply of fresh water every year - this clearly does not reflect the reality of the Australian climate.

Most environmental needs in the Basin have adapted themselves to receive periodic watering as would occur naturally, but the Lower Lakes - in no small part because of their artificial status - require large volumes of water, every year, regardless of climatic conditions.

When the MDBA's 2000 gegalitre figure is viewed in the context of different climatic scenarios, the potential impacts on communities can begin to be understood.

As highlighted in the Social and Economic report released by the MDBA recently, supplying an additional 2000 gegalitres to the Lower Lakes during drought years would require 60 per cent of the high security entitlements from the entire southern connected system. The impacts on communities would be devastating.

NSW Farmers' Association is calling for an independent inquiry into the management of the Lower Lakes.

We're not suggesting we have the answers - we don't. But you cannot take nearly 2000 gegalitres out of rural and regional communities, without considering what this water is being used for and whether this requirement could be reduced.

Investments in environmental infrastructure can save significant volumes of water, but to date the MDBA and Government seem to have ignored the Lower Lakes and opportunities for reducing their reliance on fresh water solutions.

This is not about pitting State against State in the Basin Plan discussion; it is about open and transparent discussion in the national interest.

No issue should be left off the table, no matter how sensitive the politics.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Letters should include a contact telephone number and be no longer than 250 words

## Vale Ron Christie

Dear Editor,

NSW Stone fruit growers have been saddened by the sudden death of Ron Christie, an industry icon.

Ron was born in 1936 at Canoelands to Cecil, a fisherman from the Shetland Islands; and Gladys, a lady with three generations of farming experience in the local area.

Ron began farming at Canoelands with his father and mother virtually from the time he could walk. They grew lemons, Valencia oranges, passionfruit, tomatoes, peas and cabbages.

Ron's family fenced the entire farm and then grew free range poultry which eliminated the need for cultivation or weed spraying. These early crops were dry farmed with a second-hand fire hose, galvanised pipe and monsoon sprinklers used when dire need arose.

They didn't employ permanent irrigation practises on the farm until they planted stone fruit.

At the ripe old age of eighteen Ron bought the neighbouring property and the family then utilised both farms to grow citrus, vegetables and stone fruit.

The passionfruit and citrus eventually gave way to full stone fruit production where Ron became a pioneer in the modernising of stone fruit techniques and practises.

In the early 1970's Ron had the first commercial free standing Palmette system in Australia where he maximised production and minimised land area usage.

Ron had a very limited formal education and was the first to admit the same, but he



Ron Christie was a pioneer in his industry.

possessed a wonderfully creative mind and an inventive cleverness that anyone who had been fortunate enough to know Ron would vouch for.

Many of Ron's original ideas and inventions in different formats are still being used in the industry today.

Ron was always there for anyone in trouble or needing advice and loved assisting any tyros looking to establish themselves as farmers.

The industry has lost one of its finest in Ronald Christie.

**Bruce Carruthers**

## Milk Contract Negotiation Workshops

The Association recently held 3 highly successful dairy contract and negotiation seminars. The first held in Sydney had representatives from a number of collective bargaining groups attending, and more recently, seminars were also held in Casino and Uranga. Whilst the number of farmers attending was down, those who did believe the seminars were very beneficial, and stated that all farmers would benefit from attending.

The seminars include legal and negotiation experts to assist and advise dairy farmers on how to approach contract negotiations. Farmers were provided with tools and information that will support their negotiations with processors.

If any farmers are interested in holding such seminars in their area, please contact Cameron Clark on **1300 794 000** or email [clarkc@nswfarmers.org.au](mailto:clarkc@nswfarmers.org.au).



[www.nswfarmers.org.au](http://www.nswfarmers.org.au)

## Oyster Industry Field Days

### NORTH

Tuesday 20th September  
10.00am - 4.00pm  
Pier 1, Port Macquarie Panthers  
1 Bay Street  
Port Macquarie NSW 2444

### SOUTH

Thursday 22nd September  
10.00am - 4.00pm  
Catalina Golf Club  
154 Beach Road  
Batemans Bay NSW 2536



The Oyster Field Days are the premier events on the oyster industry calendar. They provide an interactive forum to discuss key industry issues and showcase the latest advances in technology, research, and business innovations on offer.

Highlights of the Field Days will include:

- Speakers discussing environmental achievements, research and marketing initiatives.
- Trade exhibits of suppliers to the oyster industry
- Most beautiful oyster competition
- Commercial innovator of the year award
- NSWFA Oyster Section AGM (Batemans Bay)

For more information please contact Emily Kearns on **02 8251 1825** or [kearnse@nswfarmers.org.au](mailto:kearnse@nswfarmers.org.au)

[www.nswfarmers.org.au](http://www.nswfarmers.org.au)

## Carbon tax will hurt horticulturalists

Dear Editor,

I recently attended a Small Business Forum, hosted by the Minister for Small Business, Senator Nick Sherry. The purpose of the Forum was for the Minister to hear about issues affecting the small business sector from a broad range of organisations and operators.

I was most disappointed with the Minister's response to my question about the impact of the carbon tax on horticultural businesses, known to be price takers.

The Minister agreed that the carbon tax will have an impact on horticulture because of its high energy inputs. He also stated that consumers will have to pay for these increased costs as they are being compensated. This infers that horticulturalists are able to pass their costs on - which is definitely not true.

This will be another input cost that horticultural businesses will have to wear, putting further pressure on their sustainability.

I followed up with a question about food security and the Minister stated that he didn't accept that the carbon tax will impact food security as Australia is a large agricultural producer and exporter.

While it is true that Australia exports about 60 per cent of total food production I am concerned that the Government makes these generalised statements.

Export figures are biased by export focussed industries and instead the statistics of individual agricultural industries should be considered.

Australia is currently a net importer of horticultural products. A Growcom report for Horticulture Australia Limited stated that Australia is not as food secure as suggested by simplistic examinations of the relevant data, with Australia importing 34 per cent of fruit consumed and 19 per cent of vegetables.

**Peter Darley**  
Vice President  
NSW Farmers' Association

