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AUSVEG Annual General Meeting

The AUSVEG Ltd Annual General Meeting was held in Melbourne on Wednesday 30 January and it was attended by Chairman of the Horticulture Committee, Peter Darley and AUSVEG Directors and Horticulture Committee members Jeff McSpedden and Geoff Moar. Both Mr McSpedden and Mr Moar were re-elected as Directors. The Association is keenly aware of the responsibilities that AUSVEG must meet when using growers' levy money and eagerly awaits delivery of the new constitution to reform the structure of the peak body.

AUSVEG Taskforce meeting

The members of the AUSVEG Taskforce held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday 5 March 2008 to review the draft Constitution provided by AUSVEG. The Taskforce Chair and Horticulture Committee member, Jeff McSpedden conveyed the instructions from the Board of AUSVEG that the Taskforce should make changes to the draft Constitution in light of the Board approved White Paper on the future structure of AUSVEG. A preliminary draft was produced by the participants; NSW Farmers Association, Vegetables WA, Vegetable Growers Association of Victoria and Growcom State members and a grower representing South Australia. This draft has been forwarded to the absent Taskforce members.

AUSVEG Board and Members Meeting

The members of AUSVEG held a meeting with the AUSVEG Board on Wednesday 12 March 2008 to discuss the draft constitution. The Association was represented at the meeting by Horticulture Committee members Jeff McSpedden and Geoff Moar and an Association's Senior Policy Officer was also in attendance. The Taskforce Chairman, Jeff McSpedden presented a document which expanded the voting membership rights to more than one state group but kept Board representation to one per State and it ensures individual members exercise their voting rights through their State bodies. The draft will be finalised within the month and circulated to the vegetable and potato grower members of the Association as soon as it is received.

AUSVEG Constitution

The NSW Directors of AUSVEG have secured an extension to the review of the draft Constitution which will also include an assessment by the Taskforce. This is an important achievement as the Association had some considerable issues with the proposed membership and voting criteria.

Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Price review

The Horticulture Committee has drafted a contribution to the Association's submission using commodity studies to support its case for ACCC enforcement of the Horticulture Code of Conduct and the extension of the Code to include retailers. Camden and Hawkesbury Horticulture Branches contributed their views in early March at their branch meetings.

Apple and Pear Australia Ltd Constitutional Review

APAL are reviewing their Constitution. It can be viewed at

<http://www.apal.org.au/assets/static/APAL-Constitution.pdf>

Please contact Peter Darley, Chair Horticulture, Claire Hull or Jane Littlejohn with any comments on the Constitution.

Concessional Loan for Hail Netting

The NSW Government has agreed to the Association's requests for inclusion of hail netting under the Special Conservation Loan Scheme. The low interest loan is for up to \$150,000 and available by application through the Rural Assistance Authority. The Association has previously undertaken a number of activities on this issue including the development of a submission which contained the results from a survey of NSW fruit growers' on Natural Disaster Relief issues; financial viability and sensitivity analyses of netted vs. non-netted crops with respect to current assistance; and an overview of the operating environment and the unique characteristics of this industry. The Government's extension of the Special Conservation Loan Scheme will enable financial assistance to be provided for the erection of hail netting therefore allowing growers to proactively manage the risk of hail as commercial insurance is either unavailable or unaffordable for many growers. For further information please contact phone 1800 678 593 or visit www.raa.nsw.gov.au/reader/special

Flying fox project update

The Grey-Headed Flying Fox causes significant damages to the NSW east coast fruit industry. The Department of Primary Industries has been monitoring flying fox numbers and the economic impact the foxes have on the fruit industry. The project started in 2006 and has run for two seasons. Results of the study have so far been inconsistent due to the variability of seasons. In the 2006/07 season flying fox numbers were high due to a dry season. In contrast, during the 2007/08 season flying fox number counts were considerably lower due to a relatively wet season and caused less economic damage. The DPI hopes to continue the study until March/April next year to gain more perspective of the economic damage caused by the flying fox.

New Horticulture Policy Officer

Claire Hull has recently joined the NSW Farmer's Association as the horticulture policy officer. Claire has completed a Bachelor of Agricultural science at the University of Sydney, majoring in agronomy. She grew up on her family's mixed enterprise property at Gulargambone and has worked in agricultural related jobs during her degree.

In her new role Claire will be responsible for undertaking research and for providing policy advice to the Horticulture Committee whilst also working on behalf of the Association's Horticulture Members. Claire is looking forward to representing horticulture members on behalf of the NSW Farmers Association.

2008 Horticulture Dinner

The 2008 horticulture dinner will be held on the 26th July at Dockside, Darling Harbour. This year about 400 people are expected to attend. Tickets will become available in mid May and further information will be provided in the coming months.