

20 years in business

Scholefield Robinson celebrated 20 years in business with a symposium in mid-March attended by over 160 clients, staff, colleagues and friends. Keynote speakers at the symposium were Andrew Stoeckel, founding Chairman of CIE in Canberra and James Halliday, well known wine judge and journalist.

Andrew's talk was entitled "The changing world economy and Australian horticulture". James' talk, "1998-2008, Two Centuries or 10 Years Apart?" provided insight into changes in the wine industry. Copies of Andrew's and James' presentations are available by contacting Anne-Marie at our Adelaide office.

Peter Scholefield, Ben Robinson (former Director and founder), and Garth Swinburn from Scholefield Robinson Mildura also presented. Peter highlighted the changes to horticultural/viticultural industries over the past 20 years.



industry comment

Wine Industry

The 2009 Australian vintage saw 1.7m tonnes delivered to wineries, 7% less than in 2008. An unknown but large quantity of unwanted grapes, particularly Chardonnay, were either left on the vine or harvested directly onto the ground.

WFA recently reported that a further 13% reduction in production is needed for supply and demand in the industry to become better balanced. Full details of the vineyard area that has been abandoned or removed as a result of water shortages or poor market demand is not available but the area is large.

Further downward pressure on prices is expected for the 2010 vintage and this will impact significantly on the business returns for grapegrowers.

Almond Industry

The 2009 almond harvest went smoothly and the total industry production is expected to show growth with many young plantings increasing production as they move towards mature yield levels.

The investment company Timbercorp is the largest almond grower in Australia with about 12,000 hectares of orchard. The company was placed in administration in May 2009 and there is uncertainty about the future of these orchards as there is insufficient company funds to manage and operate the orchards. With the orchards flowering in July/August, bee pollination is critical to achieve a crop for 2010. The whole industry is watching this situation as it slowly unfolds.

Opening Water Allocations for 2009/10

Opening water allocations for 2009/10 and availability of carryover water are shown below (based on announcements made on 15th July 2009).

River System	High Security Allocations as at 15th July 2009 (% of High Security Licence)	Expected Initial Availability of Carryover Water in 2009/10 (% of Approved Carryover Volume)
NSW Murray	0	100%
NSW Murrumbidgee	0	100%
SA Murray	2%	100%
Vic Murray	0	100%
Vic Goulburn	0	100%

For further information, contact Lauren Thompson at our Adelaide office.

project work

Renmark Irrigation Trust Modernisation (DEWHA)

Scholefield Robinson was part of a team led by ARUP engineering to investigate future modernisation options for RIT, the oldest irrigation district in SA, founded by the Chaffey's.

A plan was developed with options for RIT to meet climate change, market threats and opportunities, and needs for infrastructure and water management improvements.

Vegetable Crop Profitability

Lauren Thompson and Alison MacGregor are finalising a project funded by Horticulture Australia Ltd to develop a "spreadsheet tool" for comparing the gross margins of different vegetable crops or the same crop under different scenarios (e.g. higher versus lower yields, prices and costs). Alison presented a version of the tool at the 2009 Australian Vegetable Industry Conference in Melbourne in May. Arrangements are underway to link with a similar HAL project being conducted by NSW DPI to deliver the tool to grower workshops in major vegetable production regions in 2009/10.

Economic Cost of Pests & Diseases in the Grape & Wine Industry (GWRDC)

A new project has just commenced with Scholefield Robinson and EconSearch assessing the economic costs and losses of endemic pests and diseases to allow GWRDC to prioritise their investment in R&D for this important component of vineyard management.

NVHSC

The National Vine Health Steering Committee continues to address national biosecurity issues in the three viticulture industries, and will be renamed to reflect the expanded agenda, the National Viticulture Biosecurity Committee (NVBC).

Planning Matters

Senior staff are receiving increasing numbers of requests for expert assistance in planning matters, particularly regarding the suitability of land use for many types of primary industry, the economics of and scale required for those industries and regarding required buffer zones between various land uses. The relative importance of retaining peri-urban land for primary industry is another issue for which expert assistance has been required. Areas and regions involved include the Coonawarra, Mt Gambier, Greater Adelaide, Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island.

Almond Bud Growth Disorder

Prue McMichael and Kate Delaporte are currently investigating a bud growth disorder in almonds cultivar Carmel. It has involved bud dissections at regular intervals, and review of temperatures during the bud development stages over two seasons.

Regional Biosecurity

Today there are increasing expectations on agricultural industries to assume more responsibility for regional and on-farm biosecurity. Up to the border, governments carry most responsibility but post-border industries now must develop and implement active measures to protect their crops and livelihoods from exotic pests; surveillance strategies and reporting templates. The Commonwealth government and Plant Health Australia are continuing to develop mechanisms for collation of regional information and coordinated training and awareness materials, so that 'evidence' of our biosecurity status by commodity, region or nation, is accessible by producers and trading partners.

Scholefield Robinson has been funded by the vegetable industry and Horticulture Australia Ltd to develop a stepwise guide for introducing biosecurity measures into the vegetable industry. The northern Adelaide Plains is our chosen case study region because of its horticultural diversity (protected, perennial and annual crops), presence of arterial roads, a compost industry and produce market; and because of its peri-urban and ethnic complexities. One output of the project will be an On-farm Biosecurity Manual. The project is scheduled to start this month.

Orchard Soil Management Project at Waikerie

Ben Thomas recently completed a research project at Waikerie entitled "Managing Soil Degradation in Orchards Which Utilise High Fertiliser Inputs". This project, funded by a National Landcare Programme Community Support Component grant, used strategic soil analysis and FullStop™ wetting front detectors to assess pH and nutrient concentrations of soil in almond and citrus orchards.

Analyses conducted on soil samples collected from almond and citrus orchards in the Riverland West Local Action Planning area highlighted several key issues including significant acidification of soil in two of the almond orchards, accumulation of phosphorus reserves in the citrus orchard soils and accumulation of potassium in the almond orchard soils. The project also resulted in the production of Microsoft® Office Excel® based calculators of soil pH change in almond and citrus orchards which growers can use to assess possible impacts of management strategies on soil pH. These calculators will soon be available on the Scholefield Robinson website (www.srfs.com.au) for growers to access and utilise. For more information, contact Ben Thomas at our Adelaide office.

Bud Fruitfulness Dissections 2009

Winter 2009 is proving to be another busy season for Sarah Kane and Kate Delaporte while they dissect grape buds to determine fruitfulness. Dissection of dormant grape buds gives vineyard managers additional information which when added to their knowledge of the block can aid greatly in making pruning decisions. Overall bud fruitfulness, so far, appears to be good this season.

Biodiversity in Vineyards

Kate Delaporte worked with Dr Cassandra Collins (University of Adelaide) to undertake a review of information and research into integrating native biodiversity into vineyard production systems for the Adelaide & Mt Lofty Ranges NRM Board.

services we provide

Drought Information Delivery

Water scarcity is a major issue for irrigated horticulture in the Murray Darling Basin (MDB). Drought conditions, together with increasing competition for water and low fruit prices, have threatened the viability of many horticultural properties.

Most growers are now at a crossroad in terms of business decision-making and have been faced with the options to 'buy, sell, merge or perish'.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of horticulture in the MDB, it is essential that growers have access to good information to inform their business decisions at this critical point.

Since January 2009, Mildura consultants Yasmin Chalmers and Alison MacGregor have been contracted by the Victorian DPI to assist with delivering a drought extension service to growers in the Sunraysia region. This has involved visiting growers to assist individuals with decision making in times of drought. This service has provided growers with a range of information from water budgeting, funding support, property management decisions and business/re-development plans. For more information contact Yasmin or Alison at the Mildura office.

Management of Biodiversity

An increase in vineyard biodiversity may be essential to the environmental, economic and social sustainability of horticulture (and wine grape production) in Australia. Changes in inter-row management can increase biodiversity in the orchard/vineyard through the encouragement of beneficial invertebrates through the provision of a supplementary food source in the form of high quality, easily accessible nectar and pollen, shelter from the summer heat and low humidity, and over-wintering habitats. Replacing these exotic plants with perennial native plant species, such as native grasses or groundcovers, may increase biodiversity and reduce the need for pesticides and herbicides. Contact Kate Delaporte at the Adelaide office for more information on this topic.

staff news



New Consultant

Scholefield Robinson welcomes Adrian Loschiavo to the team at our Adelaide office. He replaces Mary Retallack as Viticultural Consultant. Adrian was part of the Southcorp (Fosters) Graduate Program after completing studies at La Trobe University in 2000. He was Technical Supervisor at Fosters Wine Estates at Eden Valley before working on Eutypa dieback with a SARDI research project at the Waite Precinct, Adelaide. Eutypa dieback is the most significant trunk disease in viticulture,

killing vines throughout many international and Australian grape-growing regions. Yield is significantly reduced with symptoms most severe in Grenache, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. Economic losses associated with the disease cost the industry millions of dollars.



Wedding Bells

Two of our Adelaide staff, Anne-Marie Broughton and Sarah Kivi, have recently married, Anne-Marie to Ben Strudwick, and Sarah to Adam Kane. Congratulations to all!

New Grandpa

Charles Drew has recently become a grandfather. William Sidney Drew was born on 5th March to proud parents Miriam and Nick.

professional development

Our team has participated in further professional development at conferences and seminars in past months, including:

- International Walnut Conference – ISHS (Melbourne) attended by Peter Scholefield.
- Wine Business Workshop - MGI, Provisor, Carbon Partners (Adelaide) attended by Peter Scholefield.
- 50th Anniversary Meeting and Dinner of the Australian Association of Agricultural Consultants (Canberra) attended by Peter and Charlie.
- Dr Bruce Lampinen Seminar (University of California Almond Researcher) attended by Prue McMichael.
- Outlook 09 – A Changing Climate for Agriculture – ABARE (Canberra) attended by Prue McMichael.
- Prue has also contributed to discussions within the Industry Advisory Committee for curricula in the Bachelor of Agricultural Sciences degree programme.

Fellowship Award

Prue McMichael was recently awarded a Fellowship of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology (FAIAST) for her contribution to the profession. Congratulations Prue!