

MEDIA RELEASE
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A fresh start for Australian horticulture

Australian horticulture growers shaped the future of their industry at the inaugural Annual General Meeting (AGM) for Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation) held today.

Hort Innovation is the sector's new, not-for-profit, industry services body and Research and Development Corporation (RDC) for Australian horticulture. It invests more than \$100 million in research, development and marketing programs annually for Australia's \$9 billion horticulture industry.

Today's AGM saw the retirement of four of the nine founding Hort Innovation Directors, and the first election, appointment and re-appointment of four Directors who will now hold a three year term on the Board.

Over 107 applications were received and after a rigorous selection process carried out by the Director Nomination Committee, seven nominees were selected.

Re-nominating Director, Susan Finger was elected by members at today's AGM.

Sue was appointed a Director of Hort Innovation at its registration in 2014, by the Minister for Agriculture. Susan holds a Bachelor of Business and is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Sue is an active partner in a family owned business which grows, stores and packs apples at two orchards located in the Yarra Valley, Victoria.

Sue has had a strong and active involvement in farmer and industry representative organisations and her local community.

Candidate, Stephen Lynch was elected by members at today's AGM.

Stephen has over 35 years' experience in Australian and international agribusiness, with much of the last 20 years working in Australian horticulture.

Stephen was previously a Director of the Almond Board of Australia (2003–2009), Chairman for three of those years, and a Board Member of the Australian Nut Industry Council (ANIC). He was also involved in the establishment of Pollination Australia.

Stephen previously held a number of company directorships and senior management roles, managing horticulture operations and investments from 1999 to 2012.

Stephen's horticulture experience covers strategy, investment, project management and business development assessment/advice for industries including almonds, citrus, stone fruit, table grapes, avocados, mangoes, and some vegetables.

Re-nominating Director, Mark Napper was appointed by the Board following today's AGM.

Mark was appointed a Director of Hort Innovation at its registration in 2014. He was previously a Director of Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL) since 2013.

Mark has 30 years' experience in Australian agribusiness, 22 of which have been in horticulture.

Mark owns a fruit orchard in Bangalow, New South Wales, and currently grows peaches, nectarines and custard apples having previously grown avocados, mangoes and mandarins.

Mark is also current President of Low Chill Australia Inc., and is the Far North Coast District Council representative on the New South Wales Farmers' Association Horticulture Committee.

Candidate, Richard Hamley was appointed by the Board following today's AGM.

Richard is the Commercial Director – Potatoes for Oakville Produce (formerly MGroup), one of Australia's largest integrated grower/packer/marketers of brushed and washed potatoes.

Richard holds a Bachelor of Science (Biological Sciences) from the University of Natal, South Africa.

Richard has extensive experience over more than 30 years in production environments from broad acre field crops, through large scale intensive orchard and vineyard developments to high-tech glasshouses. His experience, which includes international exposure, comprises agronomy, agricultural research and development, crop production, category management, and operations management.

Richard has previously spent over a decade with the Costa Group, in the position of General Manager for Costa's mushroom, tomato, grape and agribusiness categories.

Richard spent five years with Capespan PLC, an international leader in the fresh produce category out of South Africa and another five years with Danish agribusiness multinational, United Plantations Africa Ltd.

Richard has previously held industry positions in South Australian Citrus Growers, the Australian Mushroom Industry Advisory Committee of HAL and a Director of Potatoes South Australia.

One of the most important parts of Hort Innovation's new operating model is that the company's new members are growers. During Hort Innovation's transition, as the recruitment for members has been underway, a trustee company Tanoa Pty Ltd was established to be the initial member of the company. Yesterday, Tanoa Pty Ltd ceased to be a member and the approved applicants for membership became Hort Innovation's new members.

Hort Innovation Chairman, Mr Selwyn Snell said the AGM was a significant event for Australian horticulture growers.

“Today’s meeting gives the horticultural industry the chance for its leaders and influencers to regroup, collaborate and find the solutions necessary to make Hort Innovation successful,” Mr Snell said.

“Thank you to all who attended the first Hort Innovation AGM. It is important to show support for your industry, for your levy investment, and for the future of your company.”

“Thank you to Mr Ridley Bell and Mr Steve Morrow, founding Directors of Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited, for their contribution and efforts towards building Hort Innovation during its transitional year.”

“Hort Innovation and its new Board looks forward to working positively with growers and industry in 2016.”

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