

Who is who in Horticulture today

Jane Richter

According to the latest edition of the Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook (2018/19), total Horticultural production is worth \$14.4bn at farmgate.

This is more than for Cattle and calves (\$13bn) and for livestock products such as wool, milk and eggs (\$10bn) across the same period (ABS, 2020), yet until recently Horticulture was simply not 'well connected'.

Horticulture is a complex beast, made up of over 35,000 individual businesses, many of whom are family farms employing just family members.

The industry produces over 100 different crops, in every state and territory of Australia and has over 50 active 'peak industry bodies' (PIB), state crop and regional grower groups representing the interests of horticulture farmers.

Then there are the Research and Development Corporations (RDC) responsible for investing the compulsory and voluntary levies that are collected. Although Hort Innovation is the RDC for most horticulture crops, one crop Ginger falls under the Agrifutures RDC instead.

When you add the various Commonwealth statutory service agencies and government departments that play a part let alone the private companies that are intertwined as service delivery partners, it is understandable to feel slightly lost.

In this summary, we will attempt to identify just who is who in horticulture today. Firstly, let's introduce a few of the key players:

Hort Innovation **horticulture.com.au**

Hort Innovation is Australian horticulture's main Research and Development Corporation (RDC), investing government and industry levy funds in R&D and marketing on behalf of most current horticulture crops.

Each industry is allocated to a team within Hort Innovation who manage the levies collected from growers, advise upon and facilitate the investment in new R&D projects and who manage marketing programmes for those industries with a compulsory marketing levy. The peak industry bodies do not receive grower levies except for voluntary levies.

Hort Council **nff.org.au/nff-horticulture-council**

Originally formed in early 2018, the Hort Council is a nationally representative dedicated, united and tailored body representing the best interests of Australia's production and ornamental horticulture sectors.

It was formed as a part of the National Farmers Federation, and now has a part-time paid Executive at the helm – Tyson Cattle – who has been seconded part time from his role at AUSVEG.

The body was established to 'strive for more efficient, effective, cohesive horticulture policy and advocacy that affects all Agriculture at the national level'.

There are currently 22 full members of the Hort Council which includes most of the large horticulture Peak Industry Bodies (PIBs), with other smaller PIBs represented via their membership of a state body that has full membership, for example, NSW Farmers or Growcom. Berries Australia is a full member of the Hort Council.

Voice of Horticulture (VoH)

voiceofhorticulture.org.au

Voice of Horticulture is a member-based organisation that represents horticultural growers and businesses across fruit, vegetables, nuts, mushrooms, turf, nursery plants and cut flowers.

Originally formed in 2014 as the Horticulture Task Force, VoH was set up to actively promote the development of horticulture and horticultural resources.

Following the successful formation of the Hort Council, VoH is in the process of transferring members across to being represented as a full member of the Hort Council or being represented via a state agriculture body.

Australian Fresh Produce Alliance

freshproduce.org.au

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) is made up of a number of Australia's major fresh produce growers and suppliers including most of the large companies in Australian berries; Costa Group, Perfection, Driscoll's, Pinata Farms and Fresh Produce Group.

The AFPA was established to 'be the first choice industry body that retailers and government go to for discussion and outcomes on issues involving the growing and supply of fresh produce.'

The AFPA has a set of focus policy areas: packaging, labour, market access, product integrity, pollination and water security.

Plant Health Australia

planthealthaustralia.com.au

Plant Health Australia (PHA) is the national coordinator of the government-industry partnership for plant biosecurity in Australia. PHA was established in 2000 as a not-for-profit company, to service its members.

PHA is the custodian of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD; current version as of 30 April 2020). This is a formal legally binding agreement between PHA, the Australian Government, all state and territory governments and national plant industry body signatories. It covers the management and funding of responses to emergency plant pest (EPP) incidents, including the potential for owner reimbursement costs for growers.

PHA members include most major plant based agricultural industries, the Australian Government and all state or territory governments. Membership of Plant Health Australia is unlimited and inclusive and is available to peak plant industries and government. The company has a national office located in Canberra and is run by a team of specialist staff and a skills-based Board.

Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority

apvma.gov.au

The APVMA is an Australian government statutory authority established in 1993 to centralise the registration of all agricultural and veterinary chemical products into the Australian marketplace. Most of the APVMA's operational income is collected from registrants of pesticides and veterinary medicines. Registrants pay application fees to register products, and an annual fee to maintain product registrations. Registrants also pay levies based on the annual wholesale sales value of registered products.

The APVMA not only registers and approves all agvet chemicals in Australia but also sets MRLs for these chemicals. Levels are set based on how much of the chemical is needed to control pests and/or diseases. The product's chemistry, metabolism, analytical methodology and residue trial data are also assessed as well as the potential impact on the environment.

Food Standards

Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)

foodstandards.gov.au

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is a statutory authority in the Australian Government Health portfolio. FSANZ develops food standards for Australia and New Zealand. FSANZ assesses agvet chemical residues in the diet and works closely with the APVMA on these assessments. FSANZ is also responsible for considering requests to harmonise MRLs with international limits.

In Australia, state and territory food regulatory agencies monitor and enforce the Food Standards Code including MRLs. They undertake surveillance programs for agvet chemical residues in food and also monitor the use of agvet chemicals by food producers.

Austrade

austrade.gov.au

The Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade) is a Commonwealth Government agency connecting Australian businesses to the world and the world to Australian businesses.

With over 80 offices around the world, Austrade team members consisting of country experts, industry specialists, and trade and investment analysts, help Australian businesses big or small to navigate complex overseas markets and make it easier for them to go global.

Austrade services are delivered online, in person or via partners, such as the TradeStart program delivered by advisers located within state and territory governments, and industry bodies.

HARPS

www.harpsonline.com.au

In 2012 Horticulture Australia (now Hort Innovation) Ltd initiated a project to harmonise food safety certification requirements for the major retailers in Australia.

The result of this project is the Harmonised Australian Retailer Produce Scheme (HARPS).

The initial HARPS project was funded by Horticulture Innovation using across-industry levies and funds from the Australian Government. The scheme is voluntary and application for certification is open to all fresh produce businesses that supply the major grocery retailers.

HARPS has resulted in the alignment of the major grocery retailers in Australia to accept a suite of food safety standards that will allow growers and packers to complete a single audit against a single standard that will satisfy all retailers, rather than multiple audits against multiple standards.

The major grocery retailers participating in HARPS are ALDI, Coles Supermarkets, Costco, Metcash (IGA) and Woolworths. The HARPS Standard Version 1.0 was released in October 2016. To date over 3,000 audits have taken place across the growers and suppliers to the HARPS participating retailers.

DAWE Levy Management

agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/levies

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment collects, administers and disburses agricultural levies and charges on behalf of Australia's primary industries.

Revenue that is collected from a levy or charge can be directed to biosecurity preparedness and emergency plant pest responses, marketing, research and development and residue testing.

Each industry has a different formula for calculating and collecting levies, as well as a unique allocation of funds collected across the different allowable investment areas.

Some levies are collected at the first point of sale post farm gate and others are levied on nursery plants at the beginning of the supply chain.

The important point to understand is that levy invested in R&D is matched \$ for \$ by additional Commonwealth Government funds up to a maximum of 0.5% of the gross value of production of the industry.

Hort Code of Conduct

www.accc.gov.au/business/industry-codes/horticulture-code-of-conduct

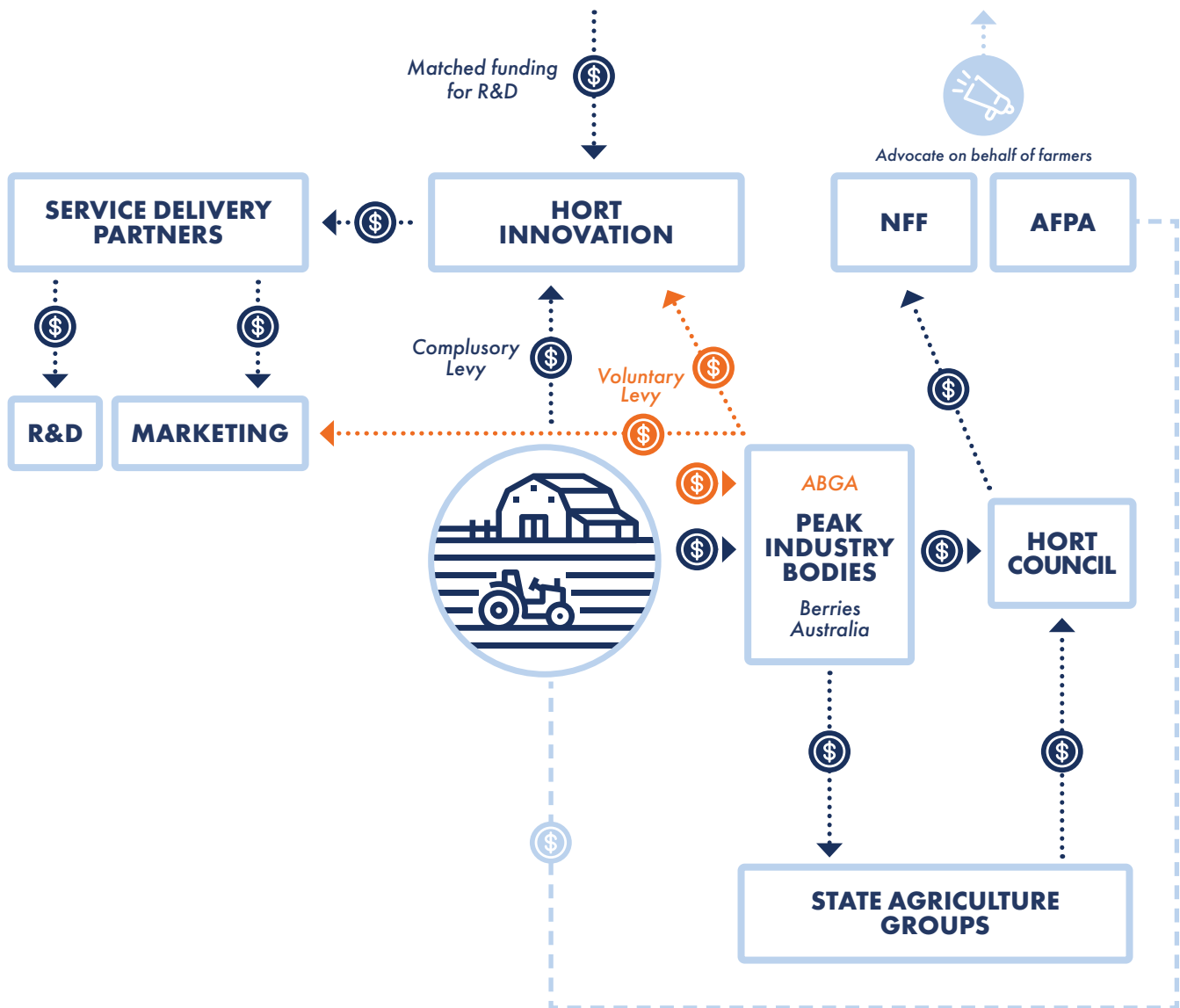
The Horticulture Code of Conduct is a mandatory industry code prescribed under the Competition and Consumer Act 2010. The Code aims to improve the clarity and transparency of trading arrangements between growers and traders in the horticulture sector.

Horticulture growers and traders must comply with the Code. The Code applies to growers and traders. Traders can be either a merchant or an agent. The Code does not apply to purchasers of horticulture produce who sell directly to consumers such as the major grocery retailers.

The Code prohibits growers and traders from trading in horticulture produce without a Horticulture Produce Agreement that specifies certain matters.

The Code now contains penalty provisions. Not complying with a penalty provision could result in the ACCC taking court action seeking a financial penalty for the breach, or issuing an infringement notice.

WHO'S WHO IN HORTICULTURE TODAY & HOW THEY INTERACT



Members of AFPA: Costa Group; Perfection Fresh Australia; LaManna Premier Group; One Harvest; Fresh Select; Mackay's Banana Marketing; Montague; Freshmax; Driscoll's; Rugby Farms; Pināta Farms; 2PH Farms and Fresh Produce Group.