

Fruit Growers Victoria was formed on the 1st July 2005 following the merger of the Northern Victoria Fruitgrowers' Association [NVFA] and the Orchardists and Fruit Cool Stores Association [OFCSA]. These organisations have a proven history for more than 70 years.

The Orchardists and Fruit Coolstores Association was formed in 1918 whilst the Northern Victoria Fruitgrowers commenced in 1925.

As early as 1930 there is evidence that co-operation between the two associations was necessary to enhance the prospects of the Fruit Industry.

The Northern Fruitgrowers Association was first established in 1925 to represent the fruitgrowers of Northern Victoria. Local fruit growers organisations such as Shepparton, Tatura, Ardmona, Toolamba, Lancaster, Kyabram and Merrigum joined together to become the Northern Victoria Fruitgrowers' Association. Bill Young was the first chairman, (Andrew Prentice is a descendant) and Sid Cornish was the first Secretary, (James Cornish is a grandson). An early chairman was Lindsay Pither and his grandson Ross Wheelhouse has been chairman.

The following formation charter of the NVFA is attached to the minute book from 1926.

Motto: The right to prosper

Preamble:

With the sincere belief in the wisdom of protecting and developing the Fruit growing industry, and our earnest desire to make it one of the foremost in contributing to the wealth of Australia, the fruit growers here set forth some of the essential

requirements to contribute to the progress of the industry.

We seek the co-operation of Members of Parliament, Fruit growers and business men.

Platform:

- (1) The acceptance of the principle on granting bounties on export, to return to the fruit growers at least the cost of production.
- (2) The encouragement of country industries by :
 - (a) loans on easier terms and lower rates of interest:
 - (b) Cheaper freights by Road, Rail and Sea:
 - (c) Erection of workmen's homes at cheap rentals, by Shire Councils' or Closer Settlement Boards.
- (3) **Boards of Control** : Composed of fruit growers and business men with legal powers to enforce their decisions.
- (4) Federal and State financial guarantee for marketing primary produce and developing Country industries.

Grahamvale was opened up for closer selection in 1910 with Shepparton East and Orrvale in 1912.

The first fruit plantings in the area were of fresh fruit varieties. However there was always a glut and more often than not the fruit spoiled in the market.

A meeting of fruit growers held in the Presbyterian Church, Orrvale, in 1918, decided to establish a cannery in Shepparton and so S.P.C. was born.

The first chairman of the new canning company was Zacariah Akers whose property was near the river in Doyles Road.

One of the great supporters of the newly formed fruit growers association and the fruit industry was John Gladstone Black McDonald who guided the association through its early stages. He had arrived in Australia from Scotland with his mother a brother and two sisters. His Mother took up a selection in 1912 in Central Ave. Shepparton East. He became highly involved in the Shepparton fruit growers Association which eventually brought him to stand for Politics. He became the local Member of Parliament for the seat of Shepparton from 1936 - 1955 and eventually was appointed Minister for Water Supply and then became Premier of Victoria.

It was John McDonald who saw the opportunity for Irrigated agriculture in the Goulburn Valley and pushed for the construction of the Eildon Weir and its associated irrigation schemes. We largely have Sir John McDonald to thank for the richness of the Goulburn Valley. His son – another John McDonald became chairman of the NVFA in later years.

Other names like Young, Cornish, Cooper, Hanlon, Pickworth, Simson, Pyke, Fairless, Dobson, Clayton are prevalent in the minute books of the early association and those members steered it to a position of acceptance by the community and by Governments.

The Goulburn Valley fruit growers were well represented, as were the growers in the Southern parts of the State following the formation of OFSCA in 1918 where names such as Tully, Finger, Young and Burgi appear in the early minute books and those families are still represented today. It was imperative that the industry was seen to be speaking with one voice when dealing with Government.

From the minute books of both associations:

8/4/1927 Sydney Agents: Considerable discussion took place with regard to the attitude adopted by some Sydney agents. It was moved- *That the Secretary write to Mr Wills in Sydney protesting against the methods adopted by some Sydney agents becoming merchants. It was also moved that it be recommended to growers that in future business be done with Registered agents only.*

Resolutions to Victorian Fruit Council Meeting:

- That the Railways Department be asked to improve its method of fruit delivery to consumers. And that they reduce the freight on canned and dried fruits.
- That the Horticultural branch be severed from the Department of Agriculture, and that a Horticultural Department be established.
- That an enquiry be made by the Federal Government into the Canning Fruits industry
- That the convention press the Ministry to make available sufficient funds for the establishment of a College and Research station in different fruit areas of the state

Minutes – 1927

- *On the motion of Mr Cornish and Mr James that the purchase of fruit by merchants be made illegal except when the merchant has fixed the price after consultation with the owner of the fruit.*
- *Mr Carling and Mr Clayton moved that the association considers the advisability of marketing their own fruit.*
- **Orchard tax** – *That the ministry be asked to bring in legislation to collect an orchard tax or a production levy and that the tax be on an acreage basis.*

- **1st July 1927** – *That the Department be asked to establish an experimental orchard in the vicinity of Tatura.*

But things didn't always run smoothly

Minutes 1930 – *Meeting held in the star theatre Shepparton.*

*Motion from the Tatura Fruit growers association – That the action of the Northern Association be **condemned** in taking a stand re the marketing bill, without first referring it back to the local associations for consideration.*

The growers also played their part on the National stage as far as improving markets and dealing with the Federal Government was concerned.

National Industry - *The Secretary reported on the annual meeting of the Australian canning fruits association held at Leeton, with Messer's Young, McDonald and Cornish being elected to the Executive Committee*

Arbitration - *Moved that we support the application for the exemption of rural industries from the awards of the Arbitration Court*

Water Cost – *The Chairman and Secretary reported on the action taken by the deputation, which waited on the Minister to protest on the proposed increase in charges for irrigation water.*

Export Control Board- *Report : The members of the Jam and Canning Fruit growers Association recognising that because of the existence of the Export Control Board our present fruit crop is unsaleable. That the association take every step possible to have the board **abolished**.*

Control – *That the Premier Sir Stanley Argyle be written to protesting against the removal of the Canneries and*

Land Settlement from control by the State Rivers and Water Supply to some unknown board.

1933 meeting – *At this stage of the meeting, afternoon tea was kindly supplied by the Shepparton Association. Mr Carling and Mr Cooper returned thanks.*

1935 – *Under the heading of Cannery matters- Cannery Directorate – This position is still unaltered and Mr Fairley stated that they were too busy to worry about it Mr Hanlon moved that We meet with the Cannery directorate and try to arrange a standard of fruit to be accepted.*

Re Manure subsidy: *That we write to Mr. McEwan M.H.R. urging a continuance of the subsidy.*

Re joining the provisional Committee for re staging the Shepparton Carnival : Mr. Hanlon moved that we give every support possible – Seconded Mr. Fairless

Meeting of the Roads Committee : *Mr McDonald was pleased to announce that instead of a \$2 for \$1 grant we had been successful in securing a \$3000 grant against our own contribution*

Mr Parka moved that we should endeavour to secure a grant to construct another ten miles of gravel road.

Mr JJ Young moved that we approach the CRB for bitumen on the present gravel roads

Drainage : *Work on this has been suspended and the men paid off. There was no hope of continuance unless we were prepared to pay a drainage rate to keep the drainage in order. We believe that if we offer to pay a*

drainage maintenance rate, that work in our area would be completed.

1935 General Meeting : Mr McDonald in the chair –
Reported that a complaint had been received from the Kernel processors at the cannery, notifying them that they were committing a nuisance. He took strong exception to this statement as it was a profitable business and he failed to see any nuisance being caused and he thought we should enter a protest to the Council.

Holiday deliveries to the cannery : *Mr Rielly complained that no notice was given with the respect to the delivery of fruit during the Christmas holidays and requested that specific information be given in time to allow growers time to make arrangements. It was also noted that growers with two wheel tractors were being penalised by having to bring their fruit in earlier.*

The chairman promised that the directorate of the cannery would be advised of those complaints.

The first offices of the NVFA were in the A.M.P. building which was where the Rivers Store is now in Wyndham Street.

Hugh Cope was the first paid secretary of the association (later to be called the General Manager).