



## **WAOC Acting President's Annual Report for 2021 Year**

Many external events had a significant impact on the olive industry during the 2021 year. These include COVID-19 restrictions, significant staff shortages across the industry, a hot dry summer in many parts of WA, and bushfires. While most areas experienced an “up” year for their harvest, quality was affected for some producers due to the bushfires and unseasonal late rains. Olives WA also experienced the very sad loss of its long-time President Steve Milton in a farming accident.

Notwithstanding these things, the Board has pushed on with several new projects which has resulted in a much higher profile for WAOC as we represent our members to prospective buyers and the community.

The 2021 WA Olive Awards achieved a pleasing increase in entry numbers from the previous year, and we saw a range of high-quality oils come from local members and non-members, plus interstate groves. We must give credit to our pool of volunteer judges along with Chief Judge, Isabelle Okis and Chief Steward, Ellen Slobe. This team has ensured consistency and integrity in the competition and has provided growers with opportunities to showcase their quality products.

The competition will continue in 2022, and we hope it will help growers identify better markets, continue to raise the quality of their products and identify future directions in marketing. There has arisen discussions surrounding non-compliant use of award stickers. For this reason, the Board is looking at updating Conditions of Entry to clarify how award stickers can be used.

In other Board activities, the Executive Committee is working on ways to raise our industry awareness to manage disease and pest incursions. Pest and disease management is a national focus and WAOC will continue to have a role in this space.

Olives WA participated in the national Dietitians Symposium held in Perth in November due to the close link between EVOO and olives qualities and dietitians' role in outlining a healthy diet. Our display featuring EVOO and table olives was most popular and we are looking at maintaining a close association in future events.

Research and development remains a focus for the Board, with industry expert and WAOC life member Professor Stan Kailis and current WAOC director Professor Zora Singh both heading up separate R&D projects supported by WAOC.

Professor Stan Kailis is developing a study into olive varieties (or cultivars). The first of a series of information sessions was held in March in Margaret River and was a great success. We already have several growers signed up to contribute to the research. It is hoped more growers will participate, which only involves providing a few olives and olive leaf samples. Further grower meetings will be held; the next is in April in the Great Southern.

Professor Zora Singh's research is about analysing the chemical properties of olive oil produced in different WA regions. The first draft report has been presented to the Board, and there is much more work to be done in this space.



The Board has appointed Ellen Slobe as Media Development Officer to develop a better media profile for WAOC and to develop our newsletters and online presence. A number of new ideas are under consideration and the new and improved newsletter is already being sent to members monthly.

Another exciting project that WAOC is supporting is “Stories from WA Olive Groves 1995- 2020”. This project is being undertaken by members Maggie Edmonds and Thelma Burnett who hope to collect your stories and pictures, which will be compiled into a book about the history of the local WA olive industry for the past 25 years. This project also needs members’ support, so please send in your story and your pictures so you can be part of our documented history.

My thanks to the Directors and to our life members for their work, support and experience. Their input throughout this challenging year has been greatly valued.

I would like to make special mention of Executive Directors; Ken Jeffrey and Russell Lewis, who have been doing great work since the loss of our long-term President Steve Milton.

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